

# **THE HAREFIELD HERALD**



## **2012**

The occasional Magazine of  
**Harefield History Society**

2<sup>nd</sup> Issue

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# EDITORIAL

**WELCOME** to the second edition of our new style magazine. Our thanks are once again expressed to Rosemary Causton for producing it with such expertise and total co-operation.

Since last time we have paid visits to Windsor and Eton College, Canterbury, the Whitchurch Silk Mill and locally to the newly renovated Breakspear House. There are articles within these pages concerning these trips and I am grateful to the contributors who have written such interesting pieces. Chris Dutton lived near Canterbury for several years so who better to provide a local's picture of the city.

We have trips arranged for this year and fuller details are available at Society meetings or from the Officers. On Thursday, 19<sup>th</sup> April a visit has been organised to visit Moor Park Mansion, nice and local, for a guided tour around this splendid 18<sup>th</sup> century building. On Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> July a guided tour around the Bank of England is booked and we have our annual day out with the History of Denham Society on Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> July to the Royal Estate at Sandringham. In the autumn it is likely we will have a trip to Rochester to see the Cathedral, the Castle and to follow in the footsteps of Charles Dickens. Watch this space!

We always have room for new members so if you can bring your friends along we will be happy to enrol them. Membership does give the advantage of first notice of outings and some trips do get rather heavily over-subscribed.

This is a big year for history. The Queen's Diamond Anniversary, 200 years since Charles Dickens was born, Olympic year and an important date for the Enclosure Act. Let us celebrate them all in style.

*Gordon Isaacs*



## WHITCHURCH SILK MILL

We enjoyed a trip into Hampshire for a tour of the Silk Mill, one of the last remaining silk mills still in production. We were blessed with beautiful weather and this enhanced the Mill which sits in a lovely setting on the banks of the River Test.



***The lovely sketch of the Silk Mill above was drawn on the day by Will Spencer and is a welcome reminder of an attractive building and a good day had by all.***

It was constructed around 1800 and originally used as a fulling mill, part of the finishing process in cloth weaving. In 1816 it was purchased by William Maddick, a silk manufacturer from London and by the 1830s it was weaving silk. Weaving was done on large looms powered by the weaver and winding was often done by children. By 1838 it had over 100 employees, 38 of whom were children under the age of 13.

The Mill changed hands again in 1889 when bought by the Hide family who were based in the town and were successful drapers. They modernised production introducing powered looms, winding frames and a warping mill run by the waterwheel. A new and larger waterwheel was installed to provide the necessary power. This method of power is still the one used today as we were well able to appreciate from the information given by our guide. Linings for Burberry raincoats became an important output. Burberrys were based in nearby Basingstoke and were related to the Hide family. Scratch my back....!!!

Production was interrupted during WW2 as supplies of raw silk were not available, but they did produce parachutes. After the war ownership of the Mill changed again and Ede and Ravenscroft took over. They were makers of legal gowns and the ottoman silk for the gowns was woven at the Mill. We were shown all the different types of silk products that are made, like shantung, shot silk etc. and it was surprising to discover how many variants there are.

The gift shop did a good trade and I doubt if anyone left there without at least one silk item as a keepsake. We had a Silk Quiz on the journey home and Ann Spencer claimed the prize.

*Gordon Isaacs*

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## **PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS OF CANTERBURY**

Having spent most of my adult life in East Kent, Canterbury was the nearest city and a frequent destination for shopping trips and starting point for rail journeys. When returning home from the latter the soaring cathedral towers were a welcome sight, visible from either of the lines that led into the city's East and West stations. In





1830 the world's first passenger railway was built between Canterbury and the coastal town of Whitstable. One of the inclines was so steep that a stationary steam engine was sited at the top of the hill to help pull the train up.

The importance of Canterbury was evident before Roman times that began when Julius Caesar drove the Britons from the river-crossing on the site of the modern city in 54 BC on his way to conquering the South-East of England. The river Stour has always been an important feature of the city for transport, commerce and pleasure. It was a vital source of water for the tanning industry which until recent times gave its particular odour to the western approaches. It drained into the Wantsum channel, which cut off the Isle of Thanet (including the towns of Ramsgate and Margate) from the mainland until the Middle Ages and thus was an important transport link. No longer plied by commercial boats it is now the pleasure boats full of tourists that squeeze through the narrow channel between the ancient buildings in the city centre, passing on the way the "ducking stool" used in former times for the watery punishment of those accused of witchcraft and other misdemeanours. The waters could be cruel in other ways; in October 1909 the river burst its banks following torrential rain over a three-day period and flooded much of the low-lying St Peter's area of the city. The city is still at risk of flooding and today is one of the areas threatened with the loss of insurance for at-risk properties if the government and insurance industry cannot agree on funding.

The city began its rise to national importance as seat of the Archbishop following the arrival of St Augustine in AD 597. The martyrdom of Thomas Becket in 1170 meant that the cathedral became the most important place of pilgrimage in England, helped by Geoffrey Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales". The Pilgrim's Way from London is still open for walkers and cyclists along most of its picturesque route over the North Downs. But the mass pilgrimage came to an end following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the sixteenth century when Thomas's shrine was destroyed. The old route of the A2 from London to Dover ran straight through the centre of the town until 1963 when a ring

road was built around the South-East quadrant of the city, running closely along the outside of the city wall which is still standing, along with its defensive towers, in several places. Of the city gates, only the Westgate towers remain intact, the arch being just tall enough to accommodate a double-decker bus. The central high street, which bisects the town centre, is now pedestrianized and is redolent with stalls, selling all manner of wares, and buskers hoping to gain recompense for their performances. Not so very different, apart from the attire, from the scenes several hundred years ago when the jetted town centre buildings that overhang the high street were first erected.

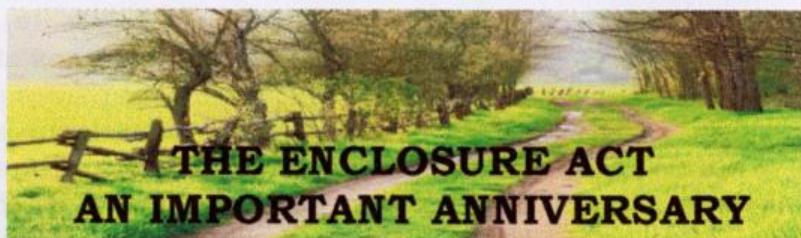
*Chris Dutton*



Photo by John Parkinson

**Society members  
Historic River Cruising on the River Stour, Canterbury**





**1812 - 2012**

We are approaching the two hundredth anniversary of the completion of the enclosure of the parish of Harefield. The Enclosure Act for Harefield was put through in 1812 and the survey, award and map were completed the following year.

Enclosure was the process by which land, which may have previously been held communally, passed into private ownership. This land could then be divided into fields, which were bounded by enclosing fences, hedges or walls. The main beneficiaries were the aristocracy, who were able to develop their estates, and the class of yeoman farmers. Smallholders gained at best small portions of land, which were unlikely to be sustainable, and lost their rights held on the common land which was enclosed.

Most of Harefield was enclosed long before 1813, when only 14% of the parish was still common land. The Rocque map of Middlesex of 1754 shows this as the 238 acres of Harefield Common to the north of the village, and the 333 acres of Harefield, Hog and Cow Moors on the Colne floodplain. There was also just over an acre of common land at New Years Green, 27 acres in a strip along Harefield Lane (the modern Breakspear Road) and the parish also took in 37 acres of Uxbridge Common. On the enclosed land three estates had developed. The largest was the manorial estate of the Newdigates based around the house of Harefield Place, originally by the church, but by 1813 replaced by a new house in the south of the parish adjoining Uxbridge Golf Club. The Breakspear Estate of Joseph Ashby Partridge, shown in a fine estate map of 1771, occupied land in the north and east and at Hill End around White Heath Farm. The more recently developed Harefield Park Estate of George



Cooke was mainly in the north and west of the parish. These estates were made mainly of scattered, tenanted farms. Most of the smaller farms outside the estates were also tenanted, although the largest of these owned by Richard Bannister was developing into an estate in its own right at Harefield Grove.

The first purpose of the Harefield enclosure award was to enclose the remaining common land. 113 acres were sold off and raised £4,531 6s 6d to pay for the costs of enclosure. The remainder was apportioned between the landowners in proportion. The second purpose was to organise a series of land exchanges between the main landowners, of both old enclosures and new, which allowed some consolidation of the estates. The third purpose was to organise the roads and footpaths of the parish. The main system of public roads was completed across the common land in generally straight 30-foot wide carriageways. The key results were the straightening of both Harvil Road to take it away from Harefield Place, and Moorhall Road, to a new ford over the Colne to Denham. Only the western half of Park Lane of the modern system is missing. Finally some land was set aside for public purposes, including gravel diggings for road stone, some fields set aside to raise rents used to help the Harefield poor, and four acres (the village green) to be used for public recreation, including cricket.

The plan produced by the surveyor James Trumper, at a stated six inches to one mile, was essentially a property map. However, it was surveyed in such detail that it gives a very complete geography of Harefield in 1813. It is also supplemented by some surviving preparatory plans, available at the London Metropolitan Archives. It would be fitting for the bicentenary to compare the geography shown by this map to that of modern Harefield. This would reveal continuity as well as change, and would allow for analysis of how the enclosure award helped shape modern Harefield, at both a large and a small scale. Such a comparison would make an appropriate celebration of the two hundredth birthday of the formalisation of enclosure in Harefield.

*Keith Piercy*

# **VISIT TO BREAKSPEARS**

## **A Restored Grade 1 Listed Manor House**

### **OCTOBER 2011**



On Friday, 28<sup>th</sup> October, we gathered at the Breakspears, Breakspear Road North, on a beautiful October morning to be welcomed by the sales manager for Clancy Bros, the developers, and were treated to a tour of the refurbished buildings and grounds. Visitors to the site are immediately struck by the stunning views of the farmland and wooded areas surrounding the house, giving the visitor the perception you are in the midst of a rural west country village.

On entering the main hall there is a sense of grandeur of a past age: the restored fireplace and 17<sup>th</sup> century panelling; the 200 year old bay windows; the beautiful staircase all give a feeling of space. The House has had a chequered history, and it is gratifying that planning laws have saved the building from being demolished; the cost of maintaining it as a safe and secure plot when it was empty must have been very high.



## **History**

Breakspear House was believed to have been built by William Breakspear, who at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century acquired the land. Legend asserts that it stands where once was the home of the family from which came the only English Pope, Nicholas Breakspear, a short papacy, (1154-59). It passed through various owners including Margaret Anjou (wife of King Henry VI) and Sir William Gilbert (of Gilbert & Sullivan fame) lived there in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century before moving to Grim's Dyke House in Harrow Weald; hence some of the road names on the Ash Grove Estate are linked to the operas: Penzance Close, Sullivan Crescent etc..

The house became home to Commander Alfred Tarleton soon after he left the Navy in 1888 and he improved the house, beautified the estate and played a prominent part in the life of the village. Commander Tarleton had a staff of a coachman, two grooms, four or five horses, six servants and ancillary estate workers. The House eventually became a residential home for elderly people from 1956 - 1987 and then remained derelict for some years, maintained by the Council.

## **Development**

Clancy Developments acquired Breakspear House; by then a Grade 1 listed property. A difficult period followed in obtaining planning approval which was eventually granted and work commenced in 2009 to convert the building and grounds into 20 apartments and luxury houses. Period features of the main building include mosaic flooring, a dovecot, ornate cornice walls and fire places.

**Phase 1** of the development consists of the conversion of the main building into nine luxury apartments and the renovation of two existing lodges.



Photo by Denis Hughes

**The 17<sup>th</sup> century Dovecote at Breakspears, newly re-furbished**



**Phase 2** will see the building of eight three-storey coach houses complete with an underground car park. The project is scheduled for completion in 2012.

The largest of the apartments, on the ground floor, has a combined living room and kitchen 33' x 18' and 20' x 18' and excellent views of the surrounding countryside through the large windows. Other apartments have proportionally sized rooms and windows. The original cellar has been kept in the ground floor apartment with an electrically operated trap door; some of us ventured below and could see the large storage racks for wine and food, alas, the wine racks were empty! Yet you could feel something of the atmosphere of yesteryear. The building has been tastefully refurbished by the developers who are local and have their Headquarters close to the Coy Carp Public House in Coppermill Lane. The Clancy Group plc, is well established as one of the leading national construction companies in the UK, operating principally in the utility, transportation, as well as rail, highways, new build and refurbishment, engineering work, rebuilding roads, installing electric, gas and other work in this country and abroad. This project obviously needed a company with a strong financial base to it.

In addition to the buildings a great deal of work has taken place in landscaping the grounds: refurbishing the famous dovecote (as can be seen in Denis Hughes's photograph), and clock tower, the rose garden and ensuring the historic pathways are marked through the secluded woodland. In particular, the walled garden has been returned to its former glory and will be used to plant fruit trees, flowers and much else. The new apartments and lodges have all been rebuilt and furnished to a very high standard.

We were shown around the grounds by helpful staff and the less mobile were conveyed in 'golf buggies' in what proved to be a most enjoyable visit.

*John Spinks*

# History Society Award Scheme for HAREFIELD ACADEMY



The second '**Keeping History Alive**' Award was won this year by Deborah Fashakin and the presentation took place at the Academy's Annual Presentation Evening in January. The picture below shows her with the award, standing between the chairman and Helen Walls, Head of History.



We are happy to continue our association with the Academy and glad that it is producing such worthy winners.

## BANK OF ENGLAND

The Society has a visit planned on 6<sup>th</sup> July and we are privileged to be allowed access to its innermost parts. The Bank was created in 1694 by King William III to pay for the war against France. It moved to its present location in the 1730s and is known world wide as the **Old Lady of Threadneedle Street**. It has eight branches in the UK and started producing banknotes in 1833. It was nationalised on 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1946, but regained its independence in 1997.



It is regretted that there will be no *freebies* handed out!



## THE OLD WORKHOUSE, HAREFIELD



*The Old Workhouse*

The Harefield Workhouse was built in 1782 on about 2 acres of common land to the north of what is now Breakspear Road North, to house the poor of the parish. The total cost of building is not recorded but some idea of this may be gained from the fact that the Ruislip Workhouse in Duck's Hill Road (built to exactly the

same plan some 7 years later) cost £760. Nor do we know precisely how many people were housed in the Harefield workhouse initially, though small parish workhouses were generally built for about 20 to 30 people. Numbers clearly fluctuated over the years: records show that there were just 10 by 1803, 29 in 1815, 18 in 1830 and 15 in 1834. A detailed record which survives of the food and drink brought in for the first week of occupation in April 1783 suggests that if there were about 25 inmates then, they may have eaten rather better than independent labourers in their rented cottages!

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the legal and financial responsibility for looking after the poor rested with individual parishes, who raised money for this purpose through levies on landowners and tenants. Some parishes had joined together under the Workhouse Test Act 1723 to share the cost of poor relief, and by 1776 some 2,000 workhouses existed, each with between 20 and 50 inmates. But during the 1780s and subsequent decades, poverty grew rapidly due to high food prices, low wages and the effects of enclosing land, which led to rapid increases in poor

rates. (In 1784, the cost of poor relief nationally was estimated at £2 million; by 1815 it had reached £6 million.) This was a development which landowners found unacceptable and which led to a hardening of attitudes towards poverty and the poor.

The Relief of the Poor Act of 1782 (known as “Gilbert’s Act”) – which was intended to provide a more humane method for relieving poverty than had resulted from the 1723 Act – further encouraged groups of parishes to form unions so that they could share the cost of relief through establishing “poor houses”. These, however, were intended only for looking after the old, the sick and the infirm – not able-bodied paupers, who were explicitly excluded from poor houses. But the Harefield Workhouse, although built in the same year as the Gilbert Act, appears to have been established purely for the Harefield parish. Indeed, it would be another 54 years before the Uxbridge Poor Law Union comprising ten parishes, including Harefield, would be formed).

The Harefield Workhouse continued in use until it was closed following the enactment of major new legislation affecting workhouses and poor relief, the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. This removed responsibility for poor relief from the 15,000 parishes and gave it to a central authority, the Poor Law Commission, and to locally-elected guardians of the poor. But whilst the new legislation introduced for the first time a professional administration, the reality was that it reflected an uncompromising, middle-class attitude to poverty – namely that it was the result either of idleness or of a personality defect. In practical terms, the Act meant the closure of the small parish workhouses such as Harefield’s and the creation of larger, “Union” workhouses under the control of the Overseers of the Poor. It was these larger workhouses, deliberately made uncomfortable as a deterrent, which gained the brutal reputation highlighted in Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*.

When the Harefield Workhouse was closed in 1834, its inmates were transferred initially to the Ruislip Workhouse and then, in 1836, to the newly completed Uxbridge Union Workhouse located



at Hillingdon (on what is now the site of Hillingdon Hospital). The Harefield building became redundant and it was bought from the Guardians of the Poor in 1837 by one of the local families of gentry, the Ashbys of Breakspear House, divided into five cottages and, for the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, used to house workers from the Breakspear estate.

In 1923, following the death of Captain Tarleton of Breakspears, his estate was broken up and sold off in parcels. The main Breakspear House and land were acquired by the London County Council. Douglas Brown, son of a well-known local family of builders, bought the workhouse cottages. He fenced off roughly half of the workhouse land, built his own house, "Marston", on the part nearest the old building, and, many years later, in about 1960 sold his orchard (the land on the village side of Marston) for building. Four detached houses now occupy that site (El Solana, Cheyham, Inveresk and Heacham).

This left the five workhouse cottages with their five gardens let to tenants of Douglas Brown until 1938, when he decided to get rid of them. He offered them for sale with an architect's plan to demolish the south-east wing and modernise the rest as a single L-shaped residence. In anticipation of the sale, the occupants of the cottages were rehoused by Uxbridge Council; but the redevelopment was frustrated by the outbreak of World War II.

When the bombing of London began, folk fled for their lives from the town to the country and squatters soon occupied the vacant workhouse cottages, remaining in occupation until 1953, when the owner again sought to sell. But the cottages were now in a very dilapidated state. The Uxbridge Council considered them unfit for human habitation, rehoused the inhabitants and sent an inspector to draw up a schedule of dilapidations. The Council considered long whether the building was sufficiently capable of restoration to warrant the release of scarce building materials; but that same year, the house was bought by Walter and Dorothy Winton, who gradually restored it over the following 40 years, converting it into a single dwelling. There is little doubt

that, but for the Wintons, the building would have been demolished and a valuable piece of local history destroyed for ever.

In 1974, the Old Workhouse was included in the list of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Grade II) by the Secretary of State for the Environment, with the following entry: "Building of early 18<sup>th</sup> Century appearance. 2 storeys and attic, 5 windows. Fairly high pitched tiled roof with 3 gabled dormers having old leaded casements. Other windows 19<sup>th</sup> Century small-paned casements, these on ground floor under cambered arches. Short wings running back at either side to form shallow, inverted U-shape, similar to the Old Workhouse, Eastcote. Graded partly for historical reasons, as an early example of a workhouse."

In the early 1990s, land to the immediate east and west of the workhouse was sold and 3 houses built (Trumpers Cottage, Mullacott Cottage and Oakleigh.)

In 2010, a Blue Plaque was unveiled on the wall of the Old Workhouse in honour of Robert Edward Ryder VC, who was born in one of the workhouse cottages in 1895 and became the youngest winner of the Victoria Cross during World War I for "most conspicuous bravery and initiative during an attack" at the village of Thiepval during the battle of the Somme in September 1916.

The Old Workhouse was bought from the Wintons in 1992 by Glyn and Kristin Desmier, who in turn sold it to the current owners, Michael and Susan Rumble, in 2003.

*Michael Rumble*





# **WINTER AND SPRING PROGRAMME 2012 / 2013**

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

Colin Bowlt  
Ruislip Woods  
A National Nature Reserve

**22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012**

Nick Hardey  
The Norfolk Broads

**26<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

Colin Oakes  
Charles Dickens' troubled childhood

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

Gerry Hanson  
'A Talent to Amuse'  
Life and times of Noel Coward

**25<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

David Wadley  
A Brunel Miscellany

**25<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

Dave Twydell  
60 Years of HADS  
Harefield Amateur Dramatic Society

**22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013**

**Annual General Meeting**  
Followed by something interesting!

## **HAREFIELD HISTORY SOCIETY**

Meetings on the fourth Monday monthly  
From September to April (except December)  
at the Park Lane Village Centre, Harefield  
commencing at 8pm.

**Chairman:** Gordon Isaacs (01895 825501)

**Secretary:** Lorraine Piercy, (01895 822371)  
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