

Harefield History Society

NEWSLETTER No.2

October 2020

Staying in touch with members and friends of the Harefield History Society around the world.

In this Issue

Another query from the public solved



This horse is part of the answer but do you know where it is?

Also, in this issue are some more photos from the Reg Neil archive.

For example, who is this lady and what is she looking for?



See inside for the answers and for another dip into the archives.

Editorial

First of all I would like to thank everyone who wrote in or passed on via Lorraine kind messages about the first issue of the newsletter which was distributed in September. (If anyone did not receive a copy of that newsletter and would like one, please reply to this message and I will send you a copy). I hope this second newsletter lives up to expectations.

I also send my thanks to **Jill Hillier** for identifying the missing man (Les Brennan) in the photo of the litter pickers at Black Jack's Lock.

I also heard from **Nicole Blay** in Australia who has carried out some research on the Australian soldier, George Reidy, whose postcard was featured on the back page of the previous newsletter. He arrived in Harefield on 19th March 1917 and was discharged on 3rd July 1917 to go back to Australia. This means, of course, the date on the postcard was 28th April 1917 (not 1919 as I thought). *(There is more to come on this story - watch out in a future newsletter!)*

The Accidental Heiress by John Berger and Carol Grbich, published in 2020 by the National Trust of South Australia. (ISBN: 978-0-646-81922-8)

Many of you reading this will have heard of Charles Billyard-Leake, the Australian owner of the Harefield Park estate who lent his home to the New South Wales government in 1914 for use as a hospital for Australian service men injured in the first world war. Charles had moved from Tasmania to England in 1896 with his wife, Letitia, their three children and a servant, first renting Harefield Park and later buying it. But what do we know about Letitia?



To discover the answer you need to read this wonderful new book. It is an amazing rags to riches tale of the Leake family, meticulously researched from letters, diaries and other archive sources.

(At the time of writing, the book does not yet appear to be available in the UK but the author can supply copies direct from Australia for 30 AUD (about £17) post paid. Please contact Andy Harris for details).

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Evacuated to Harefield - but where?

At the end of April 2020 we received an email and a photo from a gentleman called Charles. He wrote as follows:-

My Mum, sister and I were evacuated to Liverpool from Mitcham, Surrey in early August 1944, via an initial period in Harefield I think on a farm shown in the attached photograph.

It was taken some time after we had returned home and visited Harefield, along with my Dad, to say thank you.

I can find no official evacuation records and wondered if you might be able to direct me towards a Society member who could perhaps throw some light on exactly where this is and the name of the family.

I am sure you will agree that we didn't have a lot to go on. However, we spoke to one of our older residents and she confirmed that the Hospital, by then a TB Sanatorium, had a farm called Mount Pleasant Farm, still operating throughout WWII. She recalls that the farm was eventually sold to the Hutchinson family who ran it as a pig farm and more recently it now provides stabling & livery services.

The farm also gets a mention in the book "Heart of Harefield, the story of the hospital" by Mary P. Shepherd, Quiller Press, 1990. In it we learn that a Mr WJ Brady was responsible for the farm and gardens at the Harefield Sanatorium and devoted all his time to his work. Produce from the farm was used to feed the patients and staff with any overproduction sold on to other hospitals. After Mr Brady's untimely death in 1950 at the age of 53, the farm continued to operate, but its viability was weakened by an outbreak of fowl pest in 1953 and later by other problems, to an extent that it became unprofitable and was sold in 1960.



A map shows that, in 1942, there were five staff cottages along the Park Lane edge of the hospital grounds, one detached property and two pairs of semi-detached. (Later, three more pairs of semi-detached were added). The original farm sign now resides just inside the gate of the last cottage, no.11. However, another member of the society, pointed out that the property which matches the photo is no.1 the detached cottage.



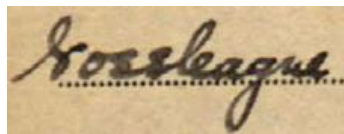
The sign for Mount Pleasant Farm at No.11 Staff Cottages

My guess was that the above mentioned **WJ Brady** may have lived in this cottage. But is there any way to suggest that this might be correct. As it happens, there just might be.

In 1939, the government carried out a nationwide survey of every household in the country, in order to know who needed ration books. I have looked at the records for Park Lane which start at the Kings Arms and run down to number 62. Nowadays, the next property is 1 Staff Cottages but in 1939 it was called Crossleague. It's a curious name but this is what it looks like in the register.



No.1 Staff Cottages - closely matches the photo above.



The residents are recorded as **William J Brady** (Head Gardener MCC Sanatorium), **Dorothy E Brady** (Housewife), **John W Brady** (at school), **Jessie E Hines** (Housewife) and **Margaret Hines** (under school age). *Can anyone add anything to this story?*

Harefield Tenants and Residents Association (HRTA). I am sure that many of you are already aware of the HTRA but just in case you are not, please let me explain. It is an association of Harefield residents that (in normal times) meets monthly to discuss issues that affect our quality of life (eg environment, planning, traffic, crime, HS2 etc). Any resident can just turn up to listen, bring their concerns and join in the discussions. Like the History Society, they publish a monthly newsletter packed with the latest information on everything that is going on.

Contact the HTRA via their website:- <https://harefieldresidents.wordpress.com/>

A Royal Visit

Royal visitors are nothing new for Harefield Hospital. King George V and Queen Mary came in 1915, the Duke of Gloucester in 1937, Princess Margaret in 1950, King Hassan II in 1987 and The Duchess of York in 1988.

In July 1989, the Princess Royal paid a visit to open the Playdome and Children's Ward extension. Our intrepid photographer, Reg Neil was in the crowd awaiting her arrival and snatched this photo (below left) as she made her way through the crowd.



However, a little earlier he took the photo shown below of the welcoming party standing



ready to greet her. I have only managed to identify four of the five of people in this photo and worked out why they were there. In the middle is Michael Shersby, who was MP for Uxbridge. (At that time Harefield was part of the Uxbridge constituency). The man next to him talking to the lady, is David Mellor who was MP for Putney. I wondered why he was there but after a bit of investigation I discovered that, at that time he was the Minister for Health in the Thatcher government.

Either side of the two MPs are the Mayor and Mayoress of Hillingdon, Councillor Ken Guy and his wife Gwen. That leaves the gentleman with his back to us. I wonder whether he represents the hospital and was perhaps waiting to make the introductions. Does anyone recognise him?

Two More Reg Neil Photos



Here are two more photos, a bridge (1981) and a sign (1985), selected from the incompletely documented images left to us by Reg Neil.

I find them tantalising because they look familiar. However, actually tying them down to the exact location has eluded me. So, can anyone help identifying them, please?

Answers to the Editor, please



Ann Dent. I am very sad to report the death of Ann Dent who passed away on October 5th. She was one of the original Harefield History Group at Geoffrey Tyacks' WEA class in the 1970s. She had been increasingly frail since her husband Michael died. Her daughter has told us that she will treasure the memories of Ann reading our newsletter only 48 hours earlier and of being delighted at being remembered and having received the copy.

A Brief History of the Methodist Chapel Harefield - Part 1

In 1863, Robert Barnes, a former Alderman and Lord Mayor of Manchester, moved into Harefield Grove. He had made his fortune from the cotton industry in Lancashire and he was a Methodist. He wanted somewhere where he and his household could worship. Initially the services and Sunday School classes were held at the Grove in his coach house with over 400 people attending, many being adults who wanted to learn to read and write.

In 1864 the Methodist Chapel was built on the Rickmansworth Road (on a plot which is now the corner of Hall Drive). It was separated from the Baptist Chapel by a row of small cottages called Chapel Row (the name of which is preserved in the modern cul-de-sac next to the Baptist Chapel).

Mr Barnes was also responsible for building the Memorial Hall on the corner of Hill End Road and Rickmansworth Road. It opened in the same year as the Chapel and commemorated Robert Barnes' only son who died whilst attending Oxford University. The Hall was run on strict principles of temperance and provided a ground floor reading room where newspapers and journals were available. The first floor was a large meeting room for lectures and community use. Between 1870 and 1907 it was also used as an infants school during the daytime.

Mr Barnes sold Harefield Grove in 1869 and the Chapel was made over to the Wesleyans. The congregation thrived following the arrival in 1884 of another Methodist, John McCallum the manager at the asbestos works. His

enthusiasm for choral music led to the formation of a chapel choir. They sang at Harvest Suppers and meetings of the Temperance Society and Band of Hope.

In 1906 a hall was built next door to the Chapel and John McCallum laid the foundation stone.



The Memorial Hall with the Chapels and Chapel Row on the right (before 1905)



Detail from the picture above showing the Chapel before the Hall next door was built.



The Chapels and Chapel Row in 1920 showing the new hall next to the chapel

In the 20th Century the membership declined especially after the First World War. The congregation was temporarily boosted in the 1940s as evacuees arrived in the Village but after that numbers continued to fall and the chapel and the hall eventually closed.

In 1986 they demolished and replaced them with a private block of flats which still stands.

Bibliography:

Bowl, Eileen N: *Ickenham and Harefield Past*, Historical Publications, 1996

Harefield Local History Group, WEA Class 1974-76: *Harefield 'at that time of day', Life in a Middlesex Village 1800 to the 1930s.*



The Methodist Chapel and Hall (photographed by Reg Neil in 1978)

By Lorraine Piercy

(To be continued next month)