

Harefield History Society

NEWSLETTER No.3

November 2020

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

In this Issue

Do you recognize this window?



You will need a good memory
(see inside for the answer)

Also in the issue

An article about an ANZAC patient that we first met in newsletter no.1. It demonstrates how much information is out there if only we have the patience to go and look for it.

Do you remember seeing the letter featured in the article on page 2?

You will need a long memory because I think it was written in 1953.

Why might you have seen it?

It was addressed to
All Residents of Harefield

Editorial

The September issue of the newsletter contained an article about a decorative wrought iron lectern made for the local school as a permanent memento of the Coronation in 1953. I wondered whether it still existed. I am pleased to say that Rowena Scott, Chair of Governors of Harefield Infant and Junior Schools (and who was once a teacher at the Junior School), assures me that the lectern still stands in the Junior School hall.

The photo of the bridge in the October issue, generated at least four replies all of which suggested that it shows the tow path bridge over the Troy Cut about 350m south of the Coy Carp. Since the photo was taken the bridge has been replaced with a new one.

Finally, I have received one suggestion for the mystery man in the Princess Ann article - could it be Sid George who was very active in the village and at the hospital and who was heard to say that he once met Princess Ann.

Another Mystery from the Archives

This is another of the many photos taken by Reg Neil and left to the society. It was taken in 1988 so most of the Cub Scouts will now be in their 40s.

The only information given is that the location is Church Hill.

So, the questions are, what exactly are the cubs doing, and do you recognise anyone?



Answers, as always, to the Editor, please.

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Found in the Archives

I came across the letter shown here on the right. It reads as follows:-

THE HAREFIELD SOCIETY – (OBJECT TO PRESERVE THE VILLAGE LIFE AND ITS COUNTRYSIDE)

Hon. Secretary:- Harry Thrift, Belmont, Belfry Avenue, Harefield, Middlesex.

The Harefield Society has already been formed and we want you as a resident, to join it. Its purpose is to preserve the village for all of us to enjoy. The Society is non-political and is intended to benefit each one of us. Membership costs nothing.

We want to preserve and improve our village green, our football and cricket grounds, our gardens, our lovely old Church and the Alms houses, the Churchyard and its lovely surroundings. We want to keep our fresh air and our trees and flowers and fields. We want the village pubs to remain village pubs, and the lanes country lanes. We want all our local clubs and societies, each to have a member on the General Committee of the Society.

Every Harefield resident will be better off, if we can maintain and improve, in keeping with the village, what we have. We should persuade our Councillors to get it into the heads of the Uxbridge Council that we do not want "developing" if that means arterial road lighting for this village, multiple stores, opportunities for "spivs" and houses for people who are not Harefield people, nor do we want a mass of traffic on our roads and the resultant anguish of traffic accidents. What we do want is a better bus service.

Harefield is still a village, surrounded by pleasant countryside. If we do not act, it will soon become a dull suburb of ever spreading London with none of the advantages of a City and a total loss of the great benefits of a friendly community with its green fields and fresh air.

Do you like the idea of the dumping in the lovely old Quarries off Church Hill with the inevitable great increase in lorry traffic up and down Church Hill? Together, we can stand firm or who knows what other dumps or worse will be inflicted upon us. A strong Society of this sort should be able to protect you.

On Coronation Day on the Village green, the Vicar said:- *"We don't want all the artificial life of a modern suburb in this emerald green spot, surrounded as it is by old Inns and houses. We want Harefield to retain its character and to be a place where we can know each other, for if we do know how to live together and co-operate with one another, and to be inspired by our young Queen, we may live up to the spirit of adventure of those men and women who lived in the days of the first Elizabeth"*.

Do you agree?, if so, please post the enclosed card, having signed it clearly with your name and address. The card needs no stamp. Please get every adult member of your family to sign the card.

There will be a meeting of members of the Harefield Society on *Monday 28th September at Harefield School Hall*



Comment on the letter shown above

While including this letter here I am mindful that some of the content (or maybe it's just the tone), does not sit well with today's sensitivities (some might say, over-sensitivities). However, one must remember that the letter was written over 67 years ago and is now an historical document.

It would be interesting to find out (hopefully from readers who remember it) how it was received in 1953. What is clear is that many of the problems foreseen by the writer at the time, in particular, the vast increase in traffic, particularly lorries, and the loss of many of the village pubs, have come to pass. It may sometimes be seen as a losing battle, but we don't give up.

A Brief History of the Methodist Chapel Harefield - Part 2

In part 1 we learned how and why the Methodist Chapel in Harefield came into existence and that it eventually closed in the early 1980s.

Then, in 1986, it was sold to developers and demolished to be replaced by a block of flats. Fortunately, Reg Neil was there with his camera.

Also there was John Rook, a founder member of Harefield History Society, who was able to salvage, from a skip, the two war memorial plaques (shown below).

The memorials eventually went to Christ Church, Uxbridge for safe keeping. They are kept in the vestry where I was able to see and photograph them.

The memorials must originally have been in frames. They are of paper on a card base and hand written in beautiful calligraphy. They both have decorative borders that are slightly different. Sadly the edges are rather dog-eared but thankfully, due to John's diligence, they have survived.

Interestingly the World War II memorial is to the "Sons and daughters of members" who served in the war, not necessarily gave their lives, and shows their service number, rank and name. Some of those listed still live in the Village.



Methodist Chapel Harfield
photographed by Reg Neil in 1984.



Methodist Chapel - stripped
out ready for demolition.



Methodist Chapel - Going going ...



Word War One

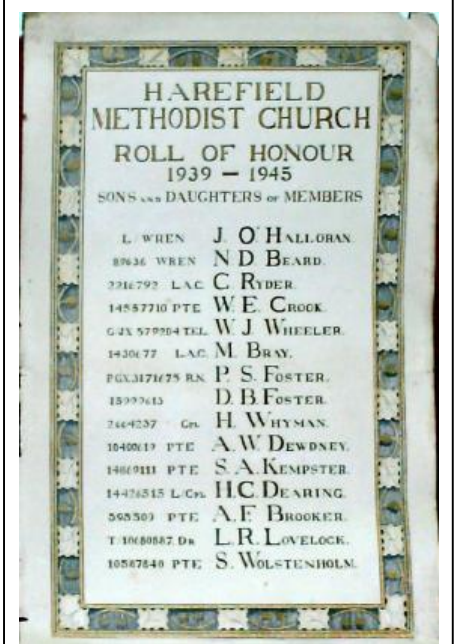
Acknowledgments:

The initial enquiry came from Tanya Britton who was researching the Village War memorials and needed to know if there were any for the Methodists.



Christ Church, Uxbridge where
these memorial now reside.

by Lorraine Percy



World War Two

Thanks are due to the following people for their assistance in this research: Revd Martin Davies and Karen Walton from St Mary's, Maureen Outram from the Harefield Methodists and Peter King from Christchurch, Uxbridge.

A Sad Tale

Readers may remember the Australian soldier, George Reidy, who wrote the postcard featured on page 4 of the first newsletter. The postcard shows him in bed in ward 39 of Harefield hospital in 1917. It is easy to assume that, like many of his compatriots, he had been injured fighting the enemy in France. However, the truth is rather different as will become clear when you read the following story.

George James REIDY: 2658, 36th Battalion AIF

Researched by Dr Nicole Blay

George James Reidy enlisted into the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 10 February 1916 at Dubbo, NSW. He stated his age as 30 years and 7 months, that he was born at Cobar⁽¹⁾, an outback region in New South Wales (NSW), Australia⁽²⁾ and his occupation as 'boxer'^(1a). His mother, Myrtle, was listed as next of kin^(1b).

The military medical assessment found that George had a 'medium' complexion and grey eyes; was 5ft, 9½ inches in height and weighed 158 lbs. Despite being hospitalised for several weeks in 1914 following a 'blow from a bottle'⁽³⁾ and fears that his loss of sight could be permanent⁽⁴⁾, George was proclaimed fit for service and joined the AIF Signallers, Dubbo as a Private⁽¹⁾.

George commenced training on 31 March 1916 with the NSW Signal School, including a three-month period from June to September at the Milson Island Signal School, near the Hawkesbury River NSW. Two months later, on the 9 November 1916 George embarked the HMAT A24 *Benalla* at Sydney, disembarking on 9 January 1917 at Devonport, England. Described as 'sick slight' George was admitted to the Military Hospital Devonport the same day⁽¹⁾.

His illness appears to have been more severe than originally described as on 19 March 1917, George was transferred to No. 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Harefield (1AAH) with neuritis or 'inflammation of a nerve' (5). Whilst in 1AAH, George wrote to the 'Referee' newspaper (enclosing a photograph – see Fig. 1) and stated that he had been a patient in 1AAH for two months due to paralysis of his left side. He also stated that he was improving slowly^(6, 7).

It appears that George remained in 1AAH until 3 July 1917 when he was invalided back to Australia as a result of haemorrhage and neurasthenia or 'nervous exhaustion'⁽⁵⁾. George sailed from Avonmouth on HMAT *Karoola* arriving Sydney on 29 August 1917.

George was medically discharged from the AIF on the 6 February 1918.



fig.1 George Reidy in Harefield Hospital in 1917

Epilogue

George recovered from his illness and returned to his home-town, Cobar, where he was employed as an accountant for C.S.A. mines. In 1918, he married Marion Helen Stokes: a Condobolin nurse who was credited as being responsible for aiding his recovery⁽⁸⁾. George and Marion had two sons; George H. born 1919 at Cobar and John L. born 1920 at Orange.

George died intestate on 13 February 1946 in Randwick, Sydney, and is buried in Roman Catholic section of the Eastern Suburbs Memorial Park (FM21, position 733).

1. Reidy G. National Archives of Australia; 1916. [cited 2020]. Available from: naa.gov.au.
 - (a) Selected newspaper reports of George Reidy's boxing matches:
 - i Boxing. Smith defeats Reidy. The Brisbane Courier. 1909 Thur 18 Mar. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/19568596>
 - ii The Orange Advocate. Boxing. Reidy defeats Dixon. The Cobar Herald. 1910 Fri 7 January. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/103487601>
 - iii Boxing. Devitt v Reidy. The Brisbane Courier. 1910 Sat 19 Nov. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/19665157>.
 - iv Boxing. Robbie defeats Reidy. The Cobar Herald. 1912 Fri 3 May. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/116961058>.
 - (b) No official birth record has been found.
2. Cobar Shire Council. Welcome to Cobar Shire Council 2020 [Available from: <https://www.cobar.nsw.gov.au/>].
3. George Reidy Sightless. The Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate. 1914 Fri 18 Sept. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/75295371>.
4. A Sad Affliction. Dubbo Dispatch and Wellington Independent. 1914 Tues 5 Sept. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/228563680>.
5. Morten H. The Nurse's Dictionary of Medical Terms and Nursing Treatment. 4th ed. London: The Scientific Press, Ltd; 1900.
6. Reidy G. In Defence of Darcy. Referee. 1917 25 July. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/120294062>.
7. World's Boxing News and Comment. Referee. 1917 Wed 5 Sept. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/120290129/12818709>.
8. Personal. Leader. 1918 Mon 9 Dec. Available from: <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/117852578>.

Footnote.

The postcard sent by George from Harefield Hospital started "Dear Sister" and was signed off from "your very sincere friend". This led me to speculate that she was probably not his sibling but possibly a nurse. However, Nicole has added another intriguing possibility. She says that considering that George was Catholic, the 'Sister' George wrote to was probably a nun. Who knows, it may even have been his wife Marion's sister, Connie, who was in Condobolin Convent.