

# Harefield History Society

## NEWSLETTER No.4

January 2021

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

### In this Issue

Have you seen this man?



He might have been on a bus  
(see page 2)

### Also in this issue

Another neglected sign deep in our countryside in need of some T.L.C.  
(see page 2)

The story of a man in strange hat.



(see page 3)

A letter from a soldier to a girl called Mabel.  
(It's surprising what you can find out with a little digging on the internet - see page 4)

## Editorial

By the time you read this, 2021 will be well underway and we will hopefully be headed towards a brighter and more normal future.

The November newsletter sparked a number of interesting messages including a nice letter from founder member **Sue Saward** who many of you will remember and who now lives in Stroud. She is very happy to be reminded of her time in Harefield. I also heard from two other people with a connection to the village, **Colin Smith** who now lives near the Arctic Circle in northern Canada and **Brian Watkins** from the other end of the world in Adelaide, South Australia. Both have sent me memoirs which I plan to work into articles for future newsletters.

I also received a lovely letter from **Ruth Lindsay** about the Reg Neil photo of cubs scouts taken 1988 and published in the November newsletter. She has been able to identify some of the boys and explain what was going on.

The most positive identification is her son, Adam (8 years old at the time), second from the right. Next to him on the far right is Anthony Pierre. Adam has suggested some other names, including 2<sup>nd</sup> from the left, Michael Rogers, followed by Jason Clifford. Further along is Carlos Gomez and Douglas Holloway. Finally, 6<sup>th</sup> from the right (the shortest boy) is Martin Smith.

The picture was taken at the planting of tree saplings between the Alms Houses and the lane down to the Church. The boys were invited to do this as a "thank you" for taking part in a bigger event which may have been a swimming gala. Paul Daniels was there with the boys and Adam remembers his Ferrari, registration MAG1C, which was parked at the bottom of the drive.



Does anyone else remember this event or have anything to add?

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## Found in the Archives

I found this photo of a bus which I believe is shown stopped at (or just passing) the Malthouse on Breakspear Road North. The bus obscures the pond but the building in the background on the extreme right is the (now closed) flower shop on the corner of Northwood Road.

The destination board reads:-

309 Heronsgate  
Rickmansworth  
Harefield Hospital

I have discovered that route 309 was a relatively infrequent service between Chorleywood & Harefield via Heronsgate Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth, Woodcock Hill and Shrubs Corner.

By all accounts, it operated in the 1950s and 1960s and I understand that over the years the route hardly changed at all.

I am fairly certain that this is a period photograph rather than one of a heritage trip for bus enthusiasts. So, the questions today are, does any one remember seeing or using this bus service, and does anyone recognise the gentleman on the right who might have just got off the bus or who was just passing by at that moment?



In the October newsletter, I asked if anyone could identify the location of a sign in the Colne Valley Park photographed by Reg Neil in 1985.

**Karen Kinger** has been on the hunt and has found a similar but definitely different sign (shown here) which she says is "about 2 fields South from Breakspear Road North towards Bayhurst Woods". (She has since kindly given me more detailed directions and I plan to visit it soon).

The sign reads as follows:-

**JUBILEE COPSE**  
Planted by the London Borough of Hillingdon and  
the Colne Valley Groundwork  
Trust to celebrate the  
Green Belt Golden Jubilee  
1938 - 1988



*Karen says "I wonder if anyone remembers planting the copse, which is now so overgrown it's impassable, shame..."*

Further research suggests that this was part of a big effort in 1988 to replace the thousands of trees lost in the great storm on the night of October 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>. (This was the famous occasion when weatherman Michael Fish denied rumours that a hurricane was coming.)

Incidentally, I think that this is the same reason that Paul Daniels and the cubs scout were planting trees (see page 1).

### Leonard Arthur Barron 1957 – 2020

Len was born and grew up in Perivale. He has always had a keen interest in Literacy and studied it at the University of Warwick, he was well known for being quite the wordsmith and his interest in poetry led him to running The Harefield Poetry Group. Len had worked for Hillingdon libraries, at Harefield and others for over 20 years. During this time he had become a cherished and well-loved part of the Harefield Community.

Len has always been hugely popular with residents of all ages, from the young children who visited us and adored him to some of our senior citizens who loved to hear his stories. He was nearly always able to recommend books to regulars and would alert them when a particular book had arrived.

Always a kind and giving gentleman, Len will be sorely missed throughout Harefield. His larger-than-life character leaves us with some wonderful memories and an unfillable void in all the lives that he has touched.

Assistant Branch Manager, Harefield Library

## THE AMAZING COOKE FAMILY

### Who is this man in the outrageous hat?

Here are a couple of clues: he was a military man and a parishioner of St Mary's Church.

He was General Sir George Cooke, KCB, (1768 – 1837), and this portrait is part of the Wellington Collection, Apsley House, Hyde Park Corner. The General wears the badge and star of a Knight Commander of the Bath, gained by his brave actions during the Battle of Waterloo, 18 June 1815.

### George Cooke at the Battle of Waterloo.

Napoleon had escaped from imprisonment on the island of Elba. He reformed his army and marched into Belgium where he was to be met by an allied force hurriedly assembled by the Duke of Wellington. Napoleon hoped to have Europe under French domination, and had been successful so far.

George Cooke, **the man in the hat**, was in command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division of the Guards, located in the Hougoumont farm buildings which, if taken by the French, would have made Wellington's right flank vulnerable. Cooke was at a key part of the battle for several hours, and lost his right arm. Wellington's dispatches, published in The Times 22 June 1815 included, "The Division of Guards under Lieutenant General Cooke, who was severely wounded, set an example which was followed by all".



In the fighting there were terrible losses on both sides, and it was only the belated arrival of the Prussians that turned the tide in favour of the allies. Wellington admitted "The nearest run thing you ever saw". The French army fled, Napoleon was captured, and spent the remaining years of his life on the island of St Helena in the South Atlantic.

### Establishing the Cooke estate.

After his marriage in 1700 Sir George Cooke, barrister, Chief Prothonotary, (Clerk), of the Court of Common Pleas founded his estate in Harefield. Having bought an ancient house called Ryes or Rythes, Sir George then purchased about 200 acres. In 1713 he purchased a small tenement known as Belhamonds and gave that name to his own house.

After his death in 1740 his son, George John Cooke MP, 1705 – 1768, further enlarged the estate in 1752, buying an additional 400 acres and the mills on the River Colne from Sir Roger Newdigate. He later bought more land from William Ashby of Breakspear House.

In 1824 **the man in the hat**, General Sir George Cooke, bought Weybeards from the executors of Robert George Spedding. At about this time the name of the estate was changed to Harefield Park. The mansion house is now the derelict building which may be seen in the grounds of Harefield Hospital.

### The family of George and Penelope Cooke.

George John Cooke MP and his wife Penelope Boyer, daughter of Admiral Bowyer, had three sons and a daughter:-

General Sir George Cooke, KCB, 1768 – 1837,) **the man in the hat**, was in command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division at the Battle of Waterloo. He died, unmarried at Harefield Park in 1837.

Penelope Anne Cooke, 1770 – 1826, married Robert Brudenell, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Cardigan, and had seven children. Their six daughters all married well. Their son became a General and the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl Cardigan, who in 1854 in the Crimea, led the charge of the Light Brigade, which he survived.

Captain Edward Cooke, RN, 1772 – 1799. Had a courageous naval career in the French Revolutionary Wars, including leading the surrender negotiations of the French city of Toulon, and in 1799 engaging and overcoming a much more powerful French ship in the Bay of Bengal. Shortly after this he died of his wounds and was buried in Calcutta. A memorial to him was erected in Westminster Abbey.

General Sir Henry Frederick Cooke CB, KCH, (1784 – 1837). ADC to the Duke of York. Later was a MP and "man about town" with a house in Berkley Square. Not bad for a man who one person said was the ugliest man in the British Army.

General Sir George, **the man in the hat**, died in February 1837, aged 71, and his youngest brother General Sir Henry Cooke died shortly afterwards in March of that year, aged 52. In the nave of St Mary's church there is a memorial to both of these brothers, together with a large stained glass window, and hatchments.


*Written and researched by John Parkinson and Keith Piercy*



## A New Acquisition

I recently acquired this letter which, although it looks like an envelope is, in fact, a single sheet of paper supplied by the Australian Red Cross to the ANZAC troops. I was attracted to it because it was written at Harefield Park Hospital on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1918. It was not sent home to Australia but to a Miss M Levy at 76 Muster Road, West Bridgford, Notts. It reads as follows:-





*Dear Mabel,*

*I have arrived at the same hospital that I was in 2yrs ago, don't know how long I'll be here, but expect it to be a few days at least.*

*It is a splendid place for meals, as much as we can eat, & more, also a pint of milk twice a day. I am feeling fairly well now, hope you are all quite well.*

*I feel rather lonely down here there is no one I know here at all so I'm beginning to think I shan't (sic) stay here very long, even if they don't mark me out.*

*Well Mabel I just arrived late last night & have not been examined yet so will write again & let you know what the quack says.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> Pion - Battn      Good bye for the time      Your old friend Albert*

All we can tell about the writer is that his name is Albert and that he is from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Pioneer Battalion which was an Australian infantry and light engineering unit. It was formed as part of the all volunteer Australian Imperial Force (AIF). This battalion trained in the UK on Salisbury Plain in 1916 and fought in most of the major battles that the AIF participated in between mid-1916 and the end of the war.

As for the recipient of the letter, Miss Mabel Levy, I assumed she would have been a young lady he had met during his previous stay in Harefield. However, on further investigation I discovered that this does not appear to be the case.



The house where Mabel lived, 76 Muster Road, still exists, as can be seen in the Street View image shown here on the left.

The 1911 census shows Mabel at this address aged 26 and described as an Art Student. This means that in 1916 when Albert met her on his first visit to Harefield, she must have been 31 years old.

The 1911 census also shows us that she was living with her parents, Abraham and Florence, two younger siblings and a servant. Her father is described as a Lace Manufacturer, which isn't surprising because Nottingham was the centre of the lace making industries.

She appears again on the survey of 1939, still living at home. Abraham is now described as "Lace manufacturer Retired", with Mabel, her mother and her sister all doing "unpaid Domestic Duties". In addition, there is a note saying that Mabel has "Poor Health".

Name:	Mabel Annie Levy
Age in 1911:	26
Estimated Birth Year:	abt 1885
Relation to Head:	Daughter
Gender:	Female
Birth Place:	Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, England
Civil Parish:	West Bridgford
Search Photos:	Search for 'West Bridgford' in the UK City, Town and Village Photos collection
County/Island:	Nottinghamshire
Country:	England
Street Address:	76 Musters Road, West Bridgford
Marital status:	Single
Occupation:	Art Student
Registration District:	Basford

76 Musters Rd.	130	1	Levy Abraham	-	M	23 April 53	M. Lace Manufacturer Retired
		2	Levy Florence A.	-	F	25 Dec 60	M. Unpaid D. Duties (part)
		3	Levy Mabel A.	-	F	26 April 84	S. Unpaid D. Duties Poor Health
		4	Levy Florence J.	-	F	3 Dec 85	S. Unpaid D. Duties fulltime

Nevertheless, it seems that her health must have improved. There is no record of her marrying and I have not found what happened to her after her Mother and Father died (in 1943 & 1946 respectively). However, she did survive for many more years, not dying until 1968 at the age of 83.

The story above leaves many questions unanswered. For example:-

What was Albert's full name? Was he sent back to the front again after his stay in Harefield? Did he make it to the end of the war and did he avoid the Spanish Flu? Did he go back to Australia? Did he stay in touch with Mabel?

What was Mabel's relationship with Albert? What happened to Mabel after 1939 and after her parents died?

I am sure you can think of many more questions along these lines. Perhaps someone will take up the challenge and try to answer some of them. If you do, please let me know so that I can share your research in these pages.