



# Harefield History Society

## NEWSLETTER No.6

March 2021

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

### In this Issue

Everyone loves a Wedding but who are they?



see page 2 & 3

A bit of luck on Ebay  
See page 4



Dedicated Research brings us another correction to the History of this house



See page 4

### Editorial

Can you really believe it, but this month marks the first anniversary of the first Covid-19 pandemic lock-down. What a roller coaster year it has been. However, looking on the brighter side, we now seem to be well on the way to putting this little Covid blighter in its place. Of course, it's no less dangerous but at least we now have the knowledge and tools to combat it and eventually relegate it to the metaphorical dustbin where reside all the other plagues that have ravished this planet over the centuries. (Don't forget to go for your second vaccine jab!)

Did you know that the society is the custodian of audio recordings of interviews with local residents, made in the 1970s by our late photographer, Reg Neil. I was reminded about them when I received a request from a relative asking if he could have a copy of his father's interview. The answer was, of course, yes. So, if you believe your relative also took part in the interviews, and you would like a copy too, then please send me your details with your request to the email address below.

### Can You Help?

Gordon Hardy reports that little shiny clay balls (see photo) keep turning up in his neighbour's garden in Jacks Lane. They are crudely made and very hard.

Could they really be an early type of children's marbles, or are they part of an industrial process, or possibly some type of ballast?

The houses were built on the site of an old foundry by Shanly Homes in 2000. They claimed to have removed all contaminated soil.



*Editor's comment:- I found a similar image on the Internet (see left) described as German clay marbles. They look very similar to those shown in Gorgon's photo. Did we have any German POWs housed in the area? Does anyone have any other ideas?*

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## A Story from the Parish Archives

For the last 20 years or so, our Archivist, Robert Goodchild, has been researching the history of the people of Harefield. He has written this article with the help of Marilyn Adcock from Chippenham and the late Chas Cooper from Victoria.

With many of the young men of Harefield serving on the Western Front during WW1 it is not surprising that the young women of the parish would have filled the shortage of eligible bachelors with some of the 30,000 ANZAC men who were recovering in the No.1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital in Harefield.

The parish records of St. Mary the Virgin, Harefield show a significant number of marriages of Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) servicemen, many of which were to young Harefield women.

One such marriage was of Elizabeth Bray age 23 of this parish to Cyril Linton Palmer age 24, a Soldier of Collingwood, Australia. The register shows Elizabeth in domestic service and the daughter of Edward Bray a Moss dealer. Both Edward and his wife Ada Marie had died. Elizabeth or Lizzie had also worked as a land girl. The witnesses were Elizabeth's siblings, Alice (aged 17) and Joseph (age 25).

1918		Marriage solemnized at <i>St. Mary's Church</i>			in the Parish of <i>Harefield</i>			in the County of <i>Middlesex</i>		
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.		
76	<i>November 16<sup>th</sup> 1918</i>	<i>Cyril Linton Palmer</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>Soldier</i>	<i>2 Philip Street 94 Doughty Street Collingwood Victoria Australia</i>	<i>Deceased</i>	<i>Tailor</i>		
	<i>1918</i>	<i>Elizabeth Bray</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>Spinster</i>	<i>Domestic Service</i>	<i>Harefield</i>	<i>Edward Bray</i>	<i>Moss dealer</i>		

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Church of England* by *Licence* or after *Banns* by me,  
*Cyril Linton Palmer* in the Presence of us, *Joseph Bray*  
*Elizabeth Bray* *Alice Bray* *A. H. Huland*

(144cv)



Valarie Woodward, an archivist and former committee member of Harefield History Society, and I have been in contact with a number of family historians over the years (more frequently in the days prior to the now plentiful on-line search engines.) The photos above and the Breakspear Arms photo below were provided by Marilyn Adcock who has links to the Bray family whose ancestors can be traced back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Harefield and the Ruislip area.

The first photo is a postcard sent to "Dear Aunt Flo with best wishes from Lizzie" and show Elizabeth in March 1918. The next photo shows Cyril and Elizabeth on their wedding day 16<sup>th</sup> November 1918, five days after the Armistice. The couple on the left are an unknown Aussie with Mabel Lavender (I wonder if they too got married), and I assume the two on the right are Alice Bray and maybe Joseph.



We do not know the address of Elizabeth in 1918. Her father Edward was living in Harefield Lane (now called Breakspear Road North) in the one of cottages seen in the photo on the right which were by the Breakspear Arms public house.



The picture below shows the four Bray children on the left (Mary b.1897, Alice b.1901, Rose b.1899, Edward b.1808.) outside the Breakspear Arms, now demolished and replaced by its namesake on the same site. This was yards from the boundary with Ruislip, where many of the Bray family have lived.



Cyril and Elizabeth moved to Australia and they can be found on the electoral registers living in Kooyong Victoria over the years from 1919 to 1954 and just Elizabeth for a number of years later.

Was Elizabeth the only Bray to Emigrate to Australia? Marilyn, with another contact, Chas Cooper from Australia, who sadly passed away four years ago, have provided some flesh to the skeleton of the official records.

Ada, Elizabeth's sister, married Daniel Evans, an Australian Soldier, in February 1919 in Uxbridge registry office. Ada had an illegitimate child, James, born in 1914. They were to

emigrate to Western Australia but, unfortunately there was not a happy ending as Ada died, due to a haemorrhage, in June 1919 before they left for Australia.

James, Ada's son, was eventually taken into care by his Uncle Joseph and his wife. He did eventually emigrate to Western Australia through Barnardo's at age 10. He died while training during WW2 in Queensland age 29. He had married and his wife was pregnant at the time of his death.

Joseph worked on the railway and moved to a railway cottage near West Ruislip station.

Alice married Charles Cooper who are the parents of Chas Cooper who later emigrated to Australia. Alice lived to the age of 76.

Another sibling, Mary, who was two years younger than Elizabeth, also died aged 21 of Influenza following a miscarriage. (This is a rather too poignant occurrence considering the current Covid-19 Pandemic.) There were further siblings, Rose who lived to age 92, Edward who died age 82 in St Vincent's near Melbourne, and William who died as an infant and was buried at St. Mary's by Rev. A. A. Harland.

There are records of the Bray family in the Harefield Registers back to 1742 living in the east of the parish on Harefield Lane, Breakspears, Tilekiln and Ruislip Common. However it has proven difficult to connect Edward and his wife Ada Maria nee Collins to the previous generations of the Bray family because of them crossing the boundary to Ruislip parish.

Lizzie's father Edward Bray was born 1867. His parents were Joseph Bray b.1833 and Mary Allday. They married on 6th August 1853 at St. Mary's Harefield.

The connection with Marilyn Adcock is her great grandmother Maria Ann Collins as well as Marilyn's husband. Marie Ann is the great grandmother of Lizzie Bray.

## Do You Have Friends or Relatives in Australia?

I discovered recently that several members of the society have relatives living in Australia and I am wondering whether they might like to receive copies of our newsletter. So, if you have friends or relatives living "down under" (or anywhere else abroad) who would like to go on our digital mailing list, please send me their email address (or invite them to make the request to my email address which I am happy for you to give them).

In addition, please tell them that if they have any stories to tell I would love to hear from them .

## A Lucky Find

I am always on the lookout for postcards of Harefield. Recently I came across the card shown here. It was correctly described as "**Harefield Park**" as it shows a partial view of the front of what is now called the "Mansion" (*for a long time now sheathed in plastic*).

What the caption doesn't mention is the two pairs of people standing about, obviously having a chat. What made me happy is the gentleman in the trilby hat talking to the army officer. He is **Charles Billyard-Leake**, owner of Harefield Park.

For some reason there are very few pictures of Charles Billyard-Leake in the public domain (just Google him and see if you can find one).



In fact, until the book, "**The Accidental Heiress**" was published in 2020 (see newsletter no.2) which is a biography of Charles' wife, Lettia, I had seen only one.



Even in this book there are only two photos of Charles (*one of which is seen here on the left*).

It isn't possible to say exactly when the postcard photo was taken but my guess is that it was shortly after Charles gave the house over to the NSW government for the wounded ANZAC troops.

I assume Charles is talking with the senior officer and that the pair of

figures standing at a discreet distance could well be the officer's ADC chatting with a man in a flat cap (*perhaps a member of Charles' staff, most likely the estate manager*).

## Putting the Record Straight - Part 2



The second error found in accounts of Harefield's history concerns the early nineteenth century Harefield House. The main source is *The Story of Harefield House* which although a labour of affection lacks any provision of sources for its information<sup>1</sup>. It deals well with the time of Count Bruhl and the twentieth century. For the early nineteenth century it states that between 1808 and 1851 the house was in the ownership of Philip Crespigny, a claim which has been picked up by the reliable Eileen Bowl<sup>2</sup> and *Harefield Month* in April 2017.

In fact Count Bruhl surrendered Harefield House to his son, Captain George Bruhl of the Third Regiment of Foot Guards, by 1805. The land tax returns show that by 1808 the younger Bruhl had passed ownership of Harefield House to Thomas Atkins. The Reverend Thomas Atkins was described as a schoolmaster living in Langley Marish parish in Buckinghamshire. He was the proprietor and head teacher of Langley Broom School, which prepared boys for entry to nearby Eton College. How he was able to afford the purchase of Harefield House, or even why he wanted to buy it, is unclear. It may be that the observatory built by Count Bruhl was an attraction. During the greater and latter part of his ownership Harefield House was tenanted by the vicar of St Mary's Church. The sales documents of 1828 reveal that there were offices within the house, so it is probable that at this time the house served as the vicarage.

Thomas Atkins died in early 1827. In his will he left Harefield House not to his main heir but to his widow and their daughter. They quickly put the property up for sale by auction in October 1827. The transfer of deeds from the subsequent sale shows Philip Crespigny of Chalfont to have paid £3676 for the estate<sup>3</sup>. The plan of Harefield House and its estate produced for the auction showed he had bought himself an estate mainly of pasture, but the house itself was set in five acres of formal garden, wooded parkland and an orchard<sup>4</sup>.

1. L D Jarvis and K. Meekams, *The Story of Harefield House*.
2. Eileen M Boul, *Ickenham and Harefield Past* (London 1996) 64.
3. MDR 1828 7 479 at Middlesex Deeds Registry at London Metropolitan Archives.
4. ACC/00857424 at London Metropolitan Archives.