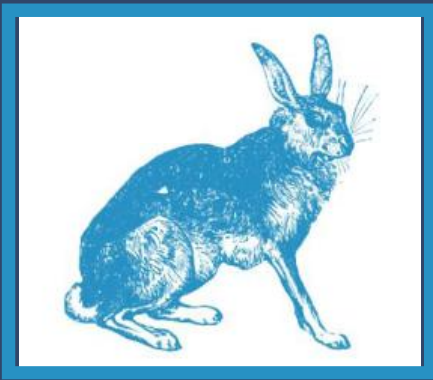


Harefield History Society



NEWSLETTER No.7

April 2021

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

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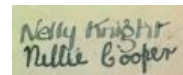
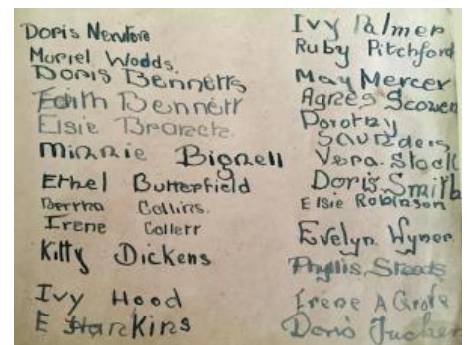
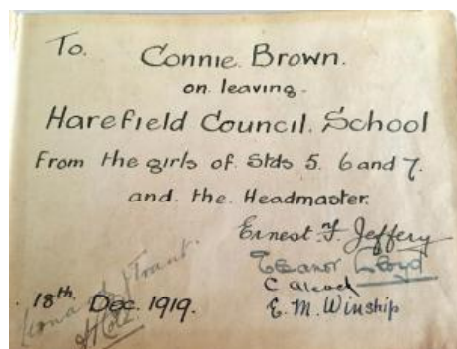
Editorial

We received a good response to the last newsletter. In particular, one correspondent, Christine Kelly, was particularly pleased with the article about the Bray family. She writes:-

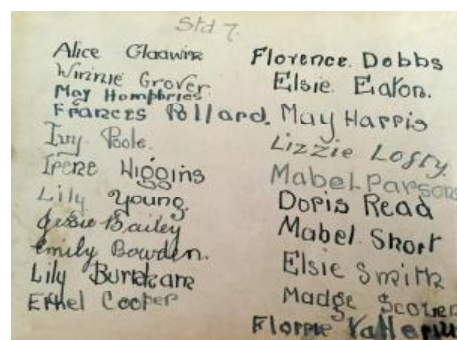
"You have filled in some gaps in my family tree. I am related to the Brays. My great aunt Minnie Brown (b 1879) married William H Bray (B 1884) and they lived at 3 Church Road with their two daughters Connie (b 1905) and Olive (b 1916).

Great Uncle Will worked at the AQD. Connie was adopted and kept her mother's surname of Brown."

She also shared Connie's autograph book from Harefield School in 1919.



Some good Harefield names there.



Do you know whether any descendents of these children still live in the village?

(As always, comments on this or any other subject to the Editor, please)

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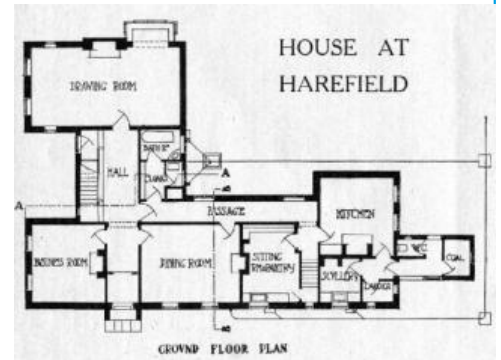
Found at Last

I have been looking for this house for many years. The picture, which is clearly an artists impression, was published on the front page of "Building World" (The Trade & Technical Journal) on August 22nd 1914. A full floor plan and various elevation drawings appear on an inside page.



HOUSE AT HAREFIELD. Architect, Mr. ERNEST NEWTON, President R.I.B.A.

The same picture also appears on a website called "The Victorian Web" with the name "**Four Acres**", the date 1911 and a reference to "*Academy Architecture and Architectural Review*".



The architect who designed the house, Ernest Newton (1856-1922), was associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement and developed a career designing one-off houses largely in Kent but later moving into "high profile" country home commissions across England.

So, the inevitable questions have always been, who commissioned the house? Was it ever built? If so, where exactly in Harefield was it built, and, if it no longer exists, what happened to it?

Then, just a few weeks ago, I was looking at an old 2½" map of the area when the name "**Four Acres**" caught my eye. It is along Northwood Road on the left just before the turning to Shrubs Road. I have been along to look and the property is now called ARIHANTA but you cannot see much from the road. However, I have discovered that the house is the address of a company called AR8D LTD which was first registered in May 2019. The Director is listed a Lady Anoushka Mehta and the business as "Agents involved in the sale of textiles, clothing, fur, footwear and leather goods".

Thanks to the wonders of the Internet we can see the house from above. It has obviously been renovated and extended, probably more than once, but it is still clearly the same property.

I have now done some further research. The 1939 Register shows Four Acres was then occupied by **Albert Cyril Sharwood**, his wife **Isabel**, two servants, (**Isabella Clarke** and **Isabel Reid**), and a fifth person whose details are redacted on the register who was probably a child who was still living when the register was made public in 2015. (*This could be Belinda Sharwood, born 1933 - the mother's maiden name fits*).

Albert and his wife Isabel Abernathy Rennie were married in 1925 at Brompton. He is described as a Chartered Accountant but in 1939 he was the Managing Director of Samuel Hanson (Wholesale Grocers).

Samuel Hanson & Son Ltd. was a wholesale grocery business in London dating back to 1747. The company had a large canning factory in Toddington, Gloucestershire. After the Second World War they bought a chicory factory near Lakenheath in Suffolk where they produced powdered milk and the first instant coffee which sold under the brand name *Cup-Cof*.



Can anyone shed anymore light on history of the Four Acres house or of any of the people mentioned in this article?

A New Mystery

Referring to the article about the grave of the little girl, **Mary Billyard-Leake**, which appeared in the February newsletter, I received a message asking if I had noticed a small ashes plaque nearby for **Mary Fox (nee Billyard-Leake)** who died in 2016. The answer was, yes (see photo). My correspondent says that the Fox family, including one member from Australia, came to the 2015 Anzac day for the 100 year commemoration of Gallipoli.

I am also told that the **Fox family** has asked that, in future, when the acquisition of Harefield Park is mentioned, we should state that it was bought by "**Charles and Leticia Billyard-Leake**" and not simply just by "**Charles Billyard-Leake**" (because it was Leticia's money that paid for it).

I find this a curious request. **Leticia Leake's** wealth came to her unexpectedly when her mother, Amanda, died in 1880. Leticia found herself, at the age of 21, the sole beneficiary of the estate of her late father, Edward Leake, and her uncle Robert. She didn't really understand how rich she was because the money was in a trust administered by her two surviving uncles, Arthur and Charles.

It was at least 10 years before Leticia met **Charles Billyard** who was a lawyer and the son of the Crown Solicitor of NSW. When, in 1891, Leticia finally agreed to marry Charles, their families (Billyards and Leakes) got together and laid on a huge society wedding. The couple took the name Billyard-Leake.

In 1894, Charles decided to look into the family finances and discovered some serious anomalies in the handling of the Trust and of the Leake finances in so far as they affected his wife. After negotiations failed to resolve the problem, they decided to sue. This led to more claims and counter claims and a lot of unpleasantness. Eventually, in 1896, to avoid a public scandal, things were settled out of court. Shortly afterwards, the family sold up and moved to England, settling, as we know, in Harefield.

So what has this to do with the Fox family?

So far I have not been able to discover much about the Fox family. **Mary Fox** whose ashes lie in our churchyard, was the daughter of **Charles and Letitia's son Edward**. She is listed on the "Peerage" website which shows she married **Michael Duncan Alec Cunningham-Reid** in 1954. It also mentions that her married name at the time was Fox and that she had a son **Nicholas Fox**. Mary went on to have two further children, **Fiona** in 1956 and **Duncan** in 1958. (These are the three names mentioned on Mary's memorial stone.)

The "Peerage" website also shows that in 1964, Michael Duncan Alec Cunningham-Reid married for a second time, which suggests that he and Mary were divorced. Presumably, that was when Mary reverted to her previous married name of Fox.

Unfortunately, I cannot find any record of the Fox marriage or of any divorce. Nor can I trace any of the children. So, as things stand, I cannot explain why we received the curious request about the money that paid for Harefield Park. (In case you haven't guessed, I was wondering whether there might be a historical connection between the Fox family the Leake family).

(Please let me know if you have any knowledge or insights which might help to explain the mystery)



Hold Your Fire



This old sign has just turned up in the bushes in Summerhouse Lane and the questions was asked whether anyone knew if, where and when a shooting range existed in this area.

However, dear reader, even before I had a chance to ask you, I learned that, before the Linden Homes development was built, there was indeed a firing range in the old chalk quarry. The targets were against the chalk face.

Lorraine Piercy, who lives at the bottom of Park Lane, remembers hearing the guns every weekend until about 20 years ago.

So, my question are, were you a member of the gun club? Do you remember when it closed? Did it move elsewhere?

(answers to the editor, please)

Odds and Ends

The question about the clay "**marbles**", illustrated in the last newsletter, has generated a lot of correspondence. Several industrial processes such a lime making have been suggested. *(My idea that it might have been connected with a POW camp can be discounted because I have been shown that, although there were many such camps in Middlesex, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, none were close enough to Harefield.)*

The other day I was asked whether I could confirm that **Thomas Wakely** (*the founding editor of The Lancet*), once lived at Harefield Park. The answer is yes and I remembered seeing a plaque commemorating this fact near the hospital gate.

I searched for it the other evening but could not find it. The good news is that it was moved to make way for the new garden (*see page 4*) and a new location will be found for it in due course.



The Healing Garden



I am pleased to record that the **Healing Garden** built just inside the entrance to Harefield Hospital, has finally been completed. It was constructed with money raised by the Royal Brompton & Harefield Hospitals Charity, and is a calming space where hospital patients, their families, and the NHS staff can wander along the winding path or just sit and relax. It already looks very nice and I cannot wait until this time next year when all the many plants have had time to grow.



(top two photos November 2020 - bottom two photos March 2021)

The Lake



While sharing the photos of the new garden above, I wondered how many readers know of the huge amount of work carried out last year to clean out the lake near the Mansion. All the rubbish and dead trees



have been removed as well as all the weed that was completely covering the water. The banks which had become overgrown have been cleared and you can once again walk all the way around the lake.

The biggest mystery came when three wooden landing stages were built. Were there going to be rowing boats on the lake I wondered?

The answer is that the lake will be stocked with fish for anglers.

(photos, clockwise from the top, Jan 2004, May 2020, May 2020 & March 2021)

