

Harefield History Society

NEWSLETTER No.8

May 2021

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

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Do you recognise this house?



It is the back of the house on Page 2

All Aboard !



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Editorial

Shortly after the April newsletter was published, I received news that the national TV channel in Australia (ABC) was going to broadcast a film about the Billyard-Leakes, the ANZACs and the Harefield connection. I immediately circulated this information to readers who receive their newsletters by email. The response was very positive and I am happy to say that the film is still available on Youtube at this link:- https://youtu.be/Wwg_SLCdMBU

Several items in the newsletter also drew responses including the piece on the **Four Acres House** which it seems was officially called **Whiteacres** (see page 4).

The article about the firing range in the old quarry in Summerhouse Lane brought forth the following snippet from Keith Piercy.

*“A visit by the Geological Society to the Harefield Cement Works in 1913 reveals that London Clay was the rock forming the top stratum in the quarry, and it was quarried and used in brick making. In the 1911 Census **Alfred Powell** identified himself as a digger of clay at the cement works and **Arthur Peverill** declared himself a clay miner at the same place. Both men lived in **King's Cottages** (also known as **Moorhall Cottages**) colloquially named in Harefield as **The Bogs.**”*

Finally, some of the children whose names appear in the 1919 autograph book can be seen in this school photo when they were in level 2 (c.1914).



Next to the teacher is:- **Evelyn Wymer**, then **Vera Stock & Dorothy Saunders**

Elsie Hankins 2nd row

Kitty Dickens middle of the front row. To her right is **Nellie Coffins & Mabel Short**

(Do you recognise anyone?)

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Harefield Workhouse

The 1601 Poor Law made each parish look after its own poor. A poor rate was to be levied on local property and administered by overseers of the poor working for the parish church vestry. As well as giving help to the poor the parish was expected to provide an asylum for the old and sick. The paupers who couldn't pay rent could move into a poor house. There would be provision of work for the able-bodied.

In much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the poor housing was located in sites along the High Street, of which the buildings of "the four cottages on the waste" still survive at their unusual angle to the High Street near the Church Hall.



Eventually in 1782 a workhouse was built to meet the needs of housing the poor, at a site on what is now Breakspear Road. There was a Governor in charge who was paid an annual sum to feed and clothe the poor. There were usually twenty to thirty inmates who could be employed in making goods in the workhouse for sale, or they could work in the one and a half acre garden to produce foodstuffs for sale. Before 1800 a row of six two-up two-down cottages were built for housing the poor next to the workhouse.

The overseers of the poor also had responsibility to provide fuel and other assistance for the needy who did not require full parish relief. This was done by using the income from the land rented out by the overseers. This came firstly from the Dairy Farm lands left in the will of Solomon Burberry, and after 1813 from the land set aside at the enclosure to compensate for the loss of grazing and wood

collecting rights on Harefield Heath (this land is now the site of the secondary school).

In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act, which set up the system of unions and workhouses made infamous in *Oliver Twist* ended the career of Harefield Workhouse. It was bought by the Breakspear Estate and converted into mainly rent-free accommodation for workers on the estate, as was the row of cottages next door.

After a period as a market garden the workhouse decayed until it was rescued and turned into a single dwelling by the Wintons, and after their time it redeveloped into five units again. The row of cottages was eventually demolished and replaced by the current housing. The overseers of the poor's descendants still provide fuel and relief for the needy by the regular charitable aid at Christmas.



Colne Passengerboat Services

Here is another document I found in the archives. It is for a service I was unaware of. It is a passenger boat service that ran on the Grand Union Canal from the wharf near the Swan and Bottle in Uxbridge.

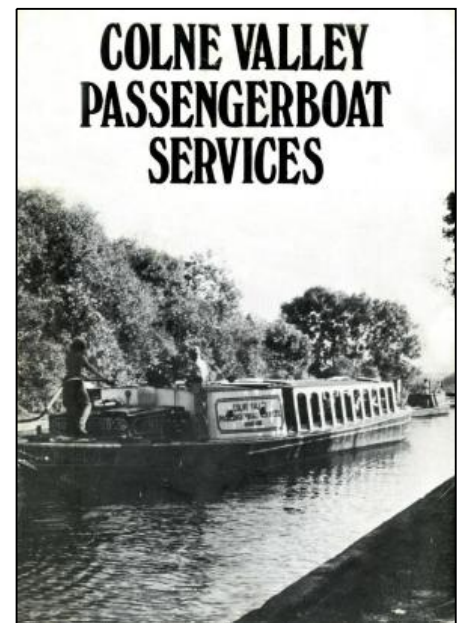
They operated "two colourful canal barges called *Farnworth* and *Atlas* which had been built for cargo but were now converted to take 70 passengers in comfort". It would seem that a lot of their business was day trips for School Groups, with picnic stops at Denham lock, and on reaching Widewater lock, a visits to Park Lodge Farm.

They also catered for Elderly and Disabled Groups with a popular stop being Black Jack's Mill for lunch. The brochure (dated 1984) goes on the say:-

During August and September we run public day trips at special rates, mainly for parents with children on holiday, but many elderly people take advantage of them too. The boat leaves "The Swan & Bottle" at 10.30 a.m, and journeys for about 2 hours through 4 locks to Black Jack's Mill. A two hour stop is made here for a self-supplied picnic lunch. Passengers may explore the area via the numerous footpaths, or picnic in the fields rising from beside the canal and which give a splendid panoramic view of the Colne Valley.

There are two pubs within a few minutes walk, and of course, as with all trips, our own bar is open for the duration of the trip. Tickets are available in advance or when boarding, and fuller details are given in the local press in July and August.

Did you remember ever going on this service? Do you have a story to tell?



Childhood Memory

One night during the War in Truesdale Drive by Peter Mitchell

I was about 7 years old. My father had a reserved occupation with the [GLCC], Gas Light Coke Company. He was on call out at Pinner, which covered Harefield if any bombs were dropped. Anyway, this particular night the air raid siren went so Mum said we had better go to the shelter. We had a small torch and a box of matches which were in the shelter with a couple of candles. It was an Anderson type shelter. We made our way to the shelter and settled down for the night. I do not know how long we had been there when we heard this screaming sound getting louder and louder and then a big thud, the candles went out and a lot of things started falling on the shelter.

Meanwhile at Pinner they received a call from the police "You had better get to Harefield as soon as possible because there may be a gas leak where a bomb has dropped on a house in Truesdale Drive". Not knowing the house number at this time Dad and his team made their way there as fast as their lorry would go. When they arrived he was relieved to find we were OK but the Cales' house next door but one had been hit. Chiltons' house next door to us was OK but our roof was badly damaged by falling bricks and clay. Cales were safe in their shelter as were the Chiltons and the Wiggins the other side of Cales. We at the time had no idea as to what had happened until Dad appeared to tell us. He was a very relieved man!

There were two bombs that night, the other one in Harvil Road. That hit the water main and caused a few problems down as far as Moorhall Road opposite the bottom shops. It flooded their air raid shelters and the crater it left was a problem for the emergency services. A policeman directing traffic managed to fall into the crater but was not hurt, but got rather wet.

It was a night to remember!

Editor's Note

During the "Blitz", a record was kept of the location of every bomb that fell on London between 7th October 1940 and 6th June 1941. There is an interactive map on the Internet (<http://bombsight.org/>) and the extract below shows the two bombs mentioned in the article. As you can see, several other bombs were also dropped nearby.



On the 29th September 1939 the government conducted a survey of the population for use in the production of identity cards and ration books. The illustration below shows the entries for Truesdale Drive (Mitchells at 35, Chiltons at 33 and the Wiggins at 29.) The Cales house must have been no.31 but was unoccupied when the survey was taken. (The blacked out entries are for people who are believed to be still alive. The first of these below will of course, be Peter who wrote the article above.

35 - ditto	95	1	MITCHELL SIDNEY WS	-	m	12 SEPT	04	m	Gas Yell
		2	MITCHELL MAUD E	-	F	11 JULY	06	m	Unpaid domestic duties
This record is officially closed.									
		4	GORE ETHEL V	-	F	22 JUNE	00	S	Leisure machine
33 - ditto	96	1	CHILTON GEORGE	-	m	29 JUNE	99	m	Longhand long dress
131-804 3rd GG		2	CHILTON GLADYS W HANCOCK	-	F	24 JUNE	06	m	Unpaid domestic duties
31-50 ODZ M	310	3	CHILTON GLADYS (JUNR) EMMONS	-	F	24 OCT	29	S	at school
This record is officially closed.									
		5	CHARLES CHARLES HENRY	-	m	12 OCT	09	m	Lorry Driver
V 31 - ditto -	97	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
29 - ditto -	98	1	WIGGINS ALFRED J	-	m	9 FEB	04	m	General labour
		2	WIGGINS DORIS M	-	F	1 JAN	04	m	unpaid domestic duties

Another Find

Another interesting postcard has come my way this month. I found it for sale advertised for the photo of the Cadillac car. What I spotted was the message on the back. (See transcript below)



958 H. Palmis
W.21 AAH
Harefield
Middx

Dear Nurse
Just a line to let you know I am still alive and kicking and like Jonnie Walker going strong and hope you are the same. I went up to say good bye to the folks at Ruskin Park last week and they told me you were on night duty so I am dropping you this card to say good bye and good luck to you and give my sincere thanks for the way you looked after me at no.3. I hope to be leaving for sunny Australia next week I had a good look around the Big Smoke last week went to Edinburgh and seen all the sights in the village and believe me I had some good feeds. Say nurse do you like fried onions I had plenty when I was in London also tomatoes which are great. Say nurse gaze on me taking the boys out for a ride in my Cadillac. Well nurse I think that's about all I can get on this card so I close with Best Wishes
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Pedlar Palmis.

I am not exactly sure whether I have read the soldier's name correctly. It appears twice (at the top and bottom) - see enlargement above.

In the message the writer refers to **Ruskin Park** which is almost certainly the place described as follows:-

In 1914 **King's College Hospital** Denmark Hill, SE5 9RS was the 4th hospital requisitioned by the War Office for the military. In 1915, as casualties began to mount, the **Fourth London General Hospital** as it was now called, was extended into the adjacent **Ruskin Park**, where huts were erected to accommodate sick and wounded servicemen.

The writer also refers to being looked after in "no.3" which I assume he means AAH no.3 :-

Orchard Hospital, Dartford, Kent was empty at the outbreak of WW1 but in 1915 it became the **Orchard Military Hospital** for sick and wounded soldiers. In October 1916 it became the **3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital**.

Now we come to the photo of the car. Is this really our writer at the wheel with his comrades or is his comment about "taking the boys out for a ride" just a bit of wishful thinking?

Four Acres - The story continues

Following the story about the house called "Four Acres" recounted in the previous newsletter, our intrepid researcher, Keith Piercy, unearthed details about the property on HM Land Registry. The first mention is in 1910 and refers to the land at the time it appears to have been sold off from the Grove estate. Various conditions were specified including that only one house could be built. The next mention is in 1937 when it was purchased by **Isabel Abernethy Sharwood** (who I had already found living there in 1939.) The address is given as "Whiteacres" and not "Four Acres" (as is shown on the 1939 survey - I doubled checked). In 1976 an additional piece of adjacent land was added to the plot (on the Shrubs Road side) and in 2008 the report show that the owner was **Shilpa Vimal Mehta** (same surname as the current owner). The address is again given as "Whiteacres".

Finally, an Internet search reveals that between 1995 and 2000, a company called **Cribton Ltd** operated from the site whose only director was also **Shilpa Mehta**. This time the address is given as "Whiteacres Estates".