

# Harefield History Society

## NEWSLETTER No.9

June 2021

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

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to this house



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### Editorial

When it was suggested we start a new sequence of newsletters last year we had already been feeling the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic for over six months. We had only managed to hold two meetings in 2020 before everything was shut down and the rest of the 2019/20 season was lost. It had also become plain that we were not going to be able to resume our regular programme of meetings any time soon.

The plan was to issue a newsletter to coincide with the dates when in normal times we would have been holding a meeting. Now, with this issue, we have reached the end of what would have been the 2020/21 season and so, sticking with the plan, this will be the last newsletter (at least for the time being).

The good news is that the newsletter has reached a much wider audience than originally expected and along with the website (where, incidentally, copies of all the newsletters can be found), has generated a lot of appreciative comments and interesting feedback.

Now, with the vaccination process well advanced and the prospects of a return to some sort of normality beginning to emerge, the committee will be meeting over the summer to evaluate the possibilities of resuming our normal meetings in time for the start of the 2021/22 season in September.

Please check the website for details of the plans as they evolve, and I expect to send another newsletter in mid-September to make sure everyone knows what to expect.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has supported the production of the newsletters including original articles, photos, comments, suggestions and, of course, the printing and delivery.

Newsletter Editor:- Andy Harris

(13 Pond Close, Harefield, Uxbridge, Middx, UB9 6NG)

Website:- [www.harefieldhistorysociety.co.uk](http://www.harefieldhistorysociety.co.uk)

Email Address:- [harefieldhistorysociety@virginmedia.com](mailto:harefieldhistorysociety@virginmedia.com)

## Connections

When conducting research online it is very easy to get carried away and to follow every lead and every link in all directions. Of course, really one should be more disciplined and stay focused on the particular subject being investigated; but it can be a lot of fun and sometimes you can turn up some curious connections (even if they are not truly important).

Here is a case in point. My investigations the other day, started at home and ended up at **Chequers** the country home of the UK Prime Minister. To understand the connections, I will show the journey in reverse.

**Chequers** is a country house in Buckinghamshire built around 1565. It passed through several families over the centuries and we pick up the story in 1909 when the house was taken on a long lease by Arthur Lee and his wife Ruth (an American heiress). They set about restoring the house and in 1911 engaged a man called **Henry Avray Tipping** to redesign the garden.



**Henry Avray Tipping** was born in France in 1855 to English Quaker parents. The family moved back to Kent where he grew up. He read modern history at Oxford University and had many interests including drama, genealogy and wood carving, but his main passion was gardening and garden design. In 1921 he bought **Harefield House** which became his main residence. In 1922 he purchased some land in Wales where he commissioned a new country house, **High Glanau Manor**, (which is now Grade 2 listed - seen here on the right), and where, in addition to designing the garden, he turned his hand to architecture designing several cottages for the estate.



Amongst his many other roles, he became the Architectural Editor of Country Life magazine.

The magazine published an article in 1934 about his last project, completed just before he died in 1933, which was to design **four new houses** on his estate in **Harefield**.

**Four Houses in Harefield.** The houses in question were built in the grounds of Harefield House facing Breakspear Road North, three of them opposite the pond and one just up the road, (the first house after the cricket club.) Two of the houses had three bedrooms and are described in the article as “*small servantless houses*”. The other two had four bedrooms and are “*considerably larger*”, (presumably with enough room to accommodate at least one servant.) All the houses had generous gardens.



Three of these houses, (in case you have not yet guessed), are still here today:- the two smaller houses are Apple Trees and Pear Trees (see left) and the third house, one of the larger houses, is Little Hammonds further along the road.

A lot of effort was made to keep the construction costs to a minimum by efficient design but without loss of quality or convenience. The cost of each of the smaller houses was less than £750.

The two larger houses were of a more elaborate design with great attention to the appearance as well as to convenience of use and to maintenance.

The article summarises the construction of these houses in the following words:-

*Directness of design combined with studied economy and convenience in plan distinguish all four houses, showing Mr. Tipping's ability to achieve a successful result in the most unaffected way and with the simplest of materials.*

So, what happened to the fourth house which, incidentally was called **Walnut Trees** (see right).



The answer is that, in 1969 it was sold, along with the bottom half of the gardens of both Apple Trees and Pear Trees. The house was knocked down and 16 new houses were built in what is now Pond Close.

If you look closely, the nearest house in Pond Close to Pears Trees has inherited the Walnut Trees name although I believe it is usually known as no.16.

Why do I find this story particularly interesting? It's because I live in one of the houses in Pond Close.

## Yet Another ANZAC Postcard

Postcards with a generic design but customized with the name of a particular town were common at this period for all the major holiday resorts but much less so for little places like Harefield. However, I assume that the presence of the ANZAC hospital was the catalyst which made it commercially worthwhile in this case.



Like many postcards I have seen sent by patients at Harefield, it does not show the name and address of the recipient and must have been enclosed in an envelope which, from our point of view, is a shame. We can only speculate who it might have been.

In this case it is not easy to guess. It was clearly not sent home to his parents but probably to a sibling.

However, the sign-off is a mixture of familiar (*with love*) and formal (*yours very sincerely*) - very curious.

Ward 40 1<sup>st</sup> Aux. Hospital  
Harefield  
Middlesex  
3. April '17

*Hope you are all well no letters from you lately.*

*Have been in bed but I am well again.*

*I suppose you have had no letters from Mother*

*With Love*

*Yours Very Sincerely*

*Errol*  
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## Another ANZAC Story

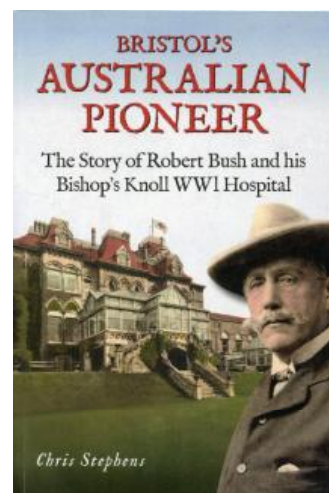
Most residents of Harefield who have any interest in their local history cannot fail to have heard of the Australian couple, **Charles and Letitia Billyard-Leake**, who, on the outbreak of World War One, in an act of great generosity gave over their house, **Harefield Park**, for use as a hospital for the ANZAC wounded.

Of course, this was not the only country house used as a military hospital during the war because the UK Government requisitioned many stately homes and other buildings for just this purpose. But it never occurred to me to ask the question, "**was the Billyard-Leake's gesture on behalf of his homeland unique or were there any other stately homes offered as hospitals exclusively for the ANZAC troops?**" The answer to that unasked question came suddenly when I stumbled across this book "**Bristol's Australian Pioneer – by Chris Stephens**". It tells the story of a young English man, **Robert Edwin Bush**, who went to Australia in 1877 to find his fortune and returned in 1905 a multi-millionaire.

**Robert Edwin Bush** (11 October 1855 – 29 December 1939).



Bush was born in Bristol; his father was Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Bush, who commanded a detachment of the 96th Infantry in Western Australia in the 1840s. Robert Edwin was educated in Bristol at Clifton College where he was already playing county cricket for Gloucestershire by the time he left. In 1877, just after his father died, Robert and friend, decided to try their luck in Western Australia where the family still had contacts. They departed from Gravesend on December 15<sup>th</sup> on the "Lady Elizabeth" and arrived in Fremantle on March 12<sup>th</sup> 1878. Robert kept a detailed, day by day log of the voyage and of his subsequent adventures from which we learn that he immediately set about establishing contact with the local people of note, including "**Sir George and Lady Leake**". *(I have not been able to establish whether there is any connection between this Leake family and the Letia Leake who married Charles Billyard.)*



After many hair raising adventures he acquired a bit of pasture land on the banks of the Gascoyne river and started a sheep farm. 10 years later he was able to buy an 800,000 acre farm further up the river and a subsequent purchase brought his holding to 2 million acres.

The State of Western Australia came into existence in 1889 and the following year Bush was appointed to the first Legislative Council of Western Australia. However, in 1905, he returned to Bristol, (probably so that his children could have an English education), where he bought a large estate and a country house called **Bishop's Knoll**.

Having spent 30 years in Australia, Bush was not as well known in Bristol as many of his contemporaries. However, in 1911 he was elected High Sheriff of Bristol and by the end of his year in office he had firmly established himself in the community.

### Bishop's Knoll

Bush still considered himself **an adopted son of Australia**. So much so that in 1914, only three days after the outbreak of World War One, he and his wife Marjorie decided to turn their house into a **hospital for Australian service men**. They opened for business on August 24<sup>th</sup> and received their first patients soon after. There were 100 beds spread around the house and throughout the war over 2000 Australian soldiers were treated there.



The book is an amazingly detailed record of the hospital, the staff, the patients and even visitors to the hospital. It contains many photos and first hand accounts from staff and patients.

It is a tour-de-force.



Regrettably, the house was demolished in 1970 but the gardens and arboretum now come under the care of the **Woodland Trust**.

**Notes.** The book is published by Bristol Books ISBN: 978-1-909446-06-9 More information about the hospital and many photos can be seen on this website:- <http://www.cliftonrhistory.co.uk/other/rbush/bishopsknoll.htm>