

Newsletter No. 10.

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Editorial.

It is very gratifying that the Society seems to be going from strength to strength - the Fourth Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday, April 30th at 8 pm. in Harefield Library.

The notice of the Annual General Meeting is attached with this Newsletter.

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 1984 are now due, and should be paid to the Treasurer at the Annual General Meeting.

ACTIVITIES OF THE SOCIETY:

On September 5th 1983, several members of the Society paid a visit to the Grove Harefield to meet Mr. Yeo, a senior executive of Initial P.L.C. and Mr. Graham Moss of Moss Associates the firm of Architects who has been commissioned by the company to repair and restore the House to its former glory, for use as a Directors' suite and for a fitting place in which to entertain international guests. There will be new well designed buildings on the site of present rather ramshackle out buildings. The garden will be restored and maintained with care. From the plans it seems that this is a very encouraging concept and will enhance the estate generally. Plans and a model were lodged in the Library for some weeks during the Autumn.

VISIT TO HARROW SCHOOL - 1st October 1983.

Bill Faithfull gives us this account:-

"Twenty seven members assembled in the school yard on a very damp and misty afternoon in readiness for our guided tour of this famous old school and its historic buildings. I hasten to add the weather didn't dampen our enthusiasm, or our interest one little bit, although it was disappointing that the splendid views from 'the Hill' were denied us because of this.

We were welcomed by Mrs. Jean Leaf the Tours Manager and introduced to the Custodian of the school (known as Custos), his official post is an ancient one and the names of all previous holders may be seen carved on a panel, inside his office door.

We were given a brief history of the school from 1615, before we started our circular tour of the central buildings. Beginning with the Fourth Form Room the original form room of the school, still more or less as it was in the days of James I, except that the oak panelled walls have been carved with the names of pupils -

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these names were cut from 1660 until the middle of the last century, first by the boys and then by Custos. Amongst them may be seen many famous names including Sir Robert Peel, R.B. Sheridan, Anthony Trollope, Lord Byron and Sir Winston Churchill. The room is not now used as a form room but it was used as such until the nineteenth century.

On leaving the room we traced the history of the school by seeing or visiting some of the eleven School Houses (visitors are not normally allowed inside any of the boys houses), the library built in 1863, the Chapel (1855), the Speech Room (1874) the War Memorial, the old Harrowian Room used for meetings and debates and the old Speech Room Gallery. The latter houses many of the school treasures - the Exhibits vary from month to month and is open on most days for a short time to the public, when the boys are free to visit it.

So our tour of just over two hours came to an end. All of us agreed that it was not only an interesting and enjoyable afternoon but Jean Leaf and Custos were excellent guides and we expressed our sincere thanks to them both.

Finally, a special 'thank you' to Lorraine Piercy for arranging this visit to Harrow School".

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After this visit we were 'at home' for the Winter.

Our first guest speaker was Mr. J.N.S. Roland who came and talked about Acton As It Was.

Maisie Marjoram, herself an Actonian born and bred tells us about it:-

"A very interesting talk by Mr. J.N.S. Roland, a life-long resident of Acton, his choice of slides concentrated on the Main Street, Uxbridge Road, as he assumed that this would be a part of Acton that people would be most likely to pass through. He admitted that he was unaware that there would be so many people at the meeting who knew Acton so well.

As history relates Acton was once a rural area of leafy lanes and cottages, with some larger houses occupied by merchants and professional people who wished to live away from the City, very reminiscent of our own village at the period depicted in "Harefield - At That Time Of Day".

It would be difficult to visualize to-day's Acton as an agricultural area prior to the population explosion of the late 19th Century, but with the help of Mr. Roland's talk and slides it was possible to recapture 'Acton As It Was', As an Actonian I found the talk very interesting".

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We had two meetings in October - An Evening of Photographs. One thing that is so very nice about the meetings of our Society, the evenings always seem to turn out more enjoyable than we ever anticipate, this was no exception, a very informal meeting. John Rooke brought along a lot of really first-class photographs

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of places of historical interest as did Val Woodward and others - John even slipped in one or two celebrities into the bargain, which were intriguing.

The second meeting in October had more than a hint of Mystery, when Mr. D. Tweddell came to talk on "Herbs, Myths, Magic and Physick in the Middle Ages". With excellent slides, he showed the age old remedial herbs which all seem still to flourish today. He even let us into the secret of how Witches flew, or at least thought they did. They used to rub their limbs with a balm that had hallucinatory properties.

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In November Mr. D.F. Edwards told us of the History of Swakeleys House, and the fight for its survival. All credit to those who have involved themselves in this worthwhile project.

Mr. Edwards kept our interest with a host of fascinating details about this beautiful mansion.

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In January we had our 'Christmas Party'. Excellent food and some delicious mulled wine was provided by Pat Ashby and a number of the ladies in our Society. Thank you everyone. Pat also presented an "Anthology of High Days and Holidays" with the help of some of her talented friends.

Later on in the month we were happy to welcome Mr. G. Tyack, who brought us "An oral History of Harefield before the First World War". This, of course, is a fairly new method of compiling Social History, by means of tape recording the reminiscences of elderly people, whose ability to recall is often phenomenal. Reg Neal and Ann Dent, fortunately for us, collected several such tapes a few years ago of local people now sadly all dead, so these were particularly nostalgic to many people.

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This Newsletter has overtaken the last two meetings. Val Woodward's talk on tracing her Family History and Mr. Mayes talking of Chairmakers of the Chilterns which will complete our Winter programme. They will certainly be two good evenings but they will be written up in the next Newsletter.

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SUMMER PROGRAMME 1984 - SATURDAY EXCURSIONS:

May 5th

Jane Austen's Home and Gilbert White Museum with the Oates Memorial Library and Museum

Jane Austen's last home from 1809-1817 at Shawton. Here she wrote "Mansfield Park" "Emma" and "Persuasion". The rooms on show include the dining parlour which has the small round table at which Jane did her writing in this room, the vestibule and the bedrooms. A large collection of documents are on display including some of her own letters, as well as other personal items.

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The garden is much as she knew it. If the weather is good, we can eat our packed lunches here, although there is a good pub lunch available in the village of Chawton for those who prefer one.

In the afternoon we will be visiting the Gilbert White Museum - 'The Wakes' was the home of the 18th century Naturalist, it was here he wrote The Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne - the Curator will give us an introductory talk with slides and we will then be able to wander through the two exhibitions housed here, one on the Natural History of the area, the second on the finds from the excavations of Selbourne Priory. Two rooms are furnished with 18th century pieces many belonging to Gilbert White himself.

The upper floor houses the exhibition of the Travels of Frank Oates and Captain Lawrence ("Titus") Oates the "very gallent gentleman" of Scott's Expedition (1910-1912).

Home-made tea will be served here.

June 9th

Witney and the Manor House Stanton Harcourt:

The morning is free to explore this most interesting old Market Town, the centre for the local woollen industry, or possibly to visit the Cogges Forum Museum which is only a 10 minute walk from the Market-place, across the River Windrush. The town was planned by the Bishops of Winchester just after the Norman Conquest, with a wide market area and Green - the town is full of interest, with an ancient church, 18th and 19th century Alms Houses, the Plague and Butler Cross.

The Manor House, Stanton Harcourt is the family home of the Harcourts ever since it came into their possession through a dowry. We are fortunate as this house is seldom opened to the public. The original house was built in 1380-1470, the Great Kitchen dates from that period and is unique in England. The house has a collection of fine arts.

Home-made tea will be served at the Rose Revived in Newbridge, a well-known Thames-side Inn beside the 13th century bridge (the Newbridge?).

September 22nd

Broughton Castle and the site of the Battle of Edge Hill:

The Lord Saye and Sele has agreed to open his home for our party. Standing on an island and surrounded by a Moat, the house built in 1300 much of which still remains but it was extensively enlarged between 1550 and 1600. Features include beautiful plasterwork ceilings and chimney pieces, fine panelling and period furniture. Secret meetings were held here of parliamentary leaders including the 8th Lord Saye and Sele before the outbreak of the Civil War. After the battle of Edge Hill the castle was besieged by Royalist forces and captured. After our interesting tour, which will include the Great Hall with its display of arms and armour of the Civil War period, we will have a home-made afternoon tea served to us.

On the way home we will be able to stop to visit the site of the battle of Edge Hill, the first serious battle of the Civil War in October 1642.

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The cost of all these visits include all entry costs and Home-made Teas - the deposit of £2.50 per seat should reach Mrs. L. Piercy, Hillside, Park Lane, Harefield, tel: Harefield 2371 as soon as possible to save disappointment, as I think you will agree that Lorraine has once more 'cracked the jack pot' and these will all be extremely popular outings.

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Letters received by the Secretary - who wishes to draw the attention of all members to their content.

1. The Friends of Chiltern Open Air Museum have organised a one day school on "The Carpentry of Medieval Timber Framed Building" at:-

The Theatre,  
Buckinghamshire College of Higher Education,  
Newlands Park,  
Gorelands Lane,  
Chalfont-St.-Giles

on Sunday, 15th April, 1984.

Fee: £7.50 (£6.00 for Friends of C.O.A.M.)

The fee includes entrance to the Museum, coffee, tea and home-made biscuits. They have three excellent Lecturers who will illustrate their talks with slides and examples of early medieval tools, a leaflet with application form is available from the school organiser -

Mrs. J. Marsh,  
49, Dove Park,  
Chorleywood,  
Rickmansworth, WD3 5NY.  
Tel: Chorleywood 2250.

2. The second concerns plans for keeping the Local History Collection and Reference Library running as smoothly as possible during the rebuilding of the new Uxbridge Library.

During the next few months, due to the redevelopment of Block 3 of Uxbridge Town Centre, Uxbridge Library will be undergoing extensive reorganisation. All the departments will be affected, not least Local History. Those of you who use the collection frequently may already have noticed some changes. All our storage facilities are now at the Bookstore in the Civic Centre. This has meant that the local newspaper files are no longer available for instant use but must be ordered 2-3 days before they are wanted. However, the microfilms are always available and we would prefer to use these, as frequent use is very damaging to the original papers.

As part of the redevelopment the rear part of Uxbridge Library will be demolished, including the area where the Local Collection is situated. Our new home will be on the first floor of 21 High Street, which will be reached via a door from the present Music Library. Unlike many of the other departments in the library the Local Collection will benefit from this move. We will have 3 rooms at our disposal, one of

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which will be a public search room while the other two will be work room and storage space. Unfortunately, as the space will be limited we will be unable to use the display cases which were in the former Hamson Room. As there will be nowhere to store them in the interim we have regretfully decided to sell them to good homes, and, when the new Central Library is complete, replace them with cases purpose-designed for the new building. As you may know, the cases hold a great part of our stock and the opportunity has been taken to improve the way we store this material. The cupboards and drawers were becoming far too full and in consequence some of the material was getting damaged. This material will now all be kept in proper archive storage boxes which will assist greatly in its preservation and also the ease with which we can find particular items. The public search room will contain the books and other items at present on the shelves in the Local Collection. As we have suffered greatly from some light-fingered visitors we are also taking this opportunity to increase our security. The door to the public search room will be locked and access will be given on request. Although you may feel this is an inconvenience we are sure you will agree that it is even more inconvenient if the item you want has gone missing. We have already had to lock our map cabinets after the theft of some of our most valuable maps.

However, this is only temporary accommodation until the new Central Library is completed. The new building will have a purpose built Local History room with environmental controls, good security and excellent research facilities. There will also be a permanent Local History display area which will compensate for the loss of the Hamson Room in the old Uxbridge Library. It is hoped that this new library will be ready for use in 1986.

During the next few months we shall be busily packing the collection and as the time for the move approaches much of it will be unavailable. Therefore, if you have more than the briefest, most general of enquiries, please make an appointment before you come, as we cannot otherwise guarantee that there will be anyone here to help you or that what you want is available. The move is scheduled to take place in April, and we hope you will put up with us until we are sorted out and able to give you a service much improved on what we hope has been a reasonably good standard in the past.

To make an appointment 'phone Uxbridge 50600 and ask for Mary Pearce, Carolynne Cotton or Sheila Johnson.

### 3. Manor Court/Conduit Farm

In the seventeenth century this house which still stands in Church Hill, Harefield was known as Marlowes Farm and was part of the manorial estate. It was leased to John Slye in 1662 (1) and the house is listed in the 1664 Hearth Tax Returns (2) as having six flues or fireplaces or stoves. This makes it one of the biggest houses in the parish at that time, only four being larger. John Slye was one of the two Harefield Constables responsible for compiling the Hearth Tax Return and he signed the document. He held the office of Overseer of the Commons in later years. When he died in March 1681 he was described as a Yeoman, a mark of

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respectable social status. The next tenant was Robert Mossendew (another Yeoman) who leased the farm house and about 110 acres of arable, pasture and upland meadow for just over £70 a year. He farmed four fields adjoining the house (Rye Close, Coney Warren, Conduit Field and Red Hill Close) but his other land was well out of the village in the direction of Northwood (3) and he had a barn out there (4). The house was repaired in 1683 and a plasterer, a glazier and a carpenter were paid a total of between £5 and £6 (5). Mossendew was new to Harefield in 1681 but being one of the bigger farmers he was soon playing a part in local affairs as Overseer, Constable and Churchwarden. The Middlesex Sessions Records show that in 1696 he asked to be discharged from being Constable because he had already served for a year and nobody had been elected in his place. Apparently he could not write, however, for in a list of signatures he only made his mark - a capital R. He died in 1698 and his wife Frances took over the tenancy. In 1699 she was living in the farmhouse with two sons, John and Robert, a servant John Ives and a maid Elizabeth (6). It seems quite probable that Robert Mossendew the son later became gamekeeper to the Ashby family of Breakspears who had a large Harefield estate and that he is commemorated by the well-known memorial tablet on the wall of the church which ends "This servant in an honest way In all his actions copy'd Tray" - Tray being his dog. More information about the Manor Court in later periods is given in M. Evans' "Harefield's Old Buildings" (7).

References: (1) WRO/CR136/V 183. (2) Hearth Tax Returns  
In Greater London RO  
(3) GLRO/1085/EM 14 (4) GLRO/1085/EM 11  
(5) WRO/CR 136 V84 (6) PRO/T64/302  
(7) M. Evans Harefield's Old Buildings  
Hillingdon Borough Libraries 1982.

E. Cuthbertson.

#### 4. The School in Harefield 300 Years Ago.

Schoolteaching in Harefield dates back several centuries and a school house was referred to in 1692. Where was this school house? Apparently - and surprisingly - it was in the Almshouses. Among the Newdigate Papers in the Warwick Records Office is a document which reads as follows:-

"Theres one house divided into 6 seperate tenements a school house a wash house and bake house which was given by the Countess of Derby for 6 poor widows (whom the lord of the manor shall choose) to inhabit in ....." (1)

This paper, dated February 1693 and signed by four local worthies, was part of a survey of Harefield which was being conducted then.

£5 a year was available to pay the Minister of Harefield to teach school and read prayers twice a day to the widows but it seems likely that at this time the schoolteacher was a layman called Edmund Priest. A Manor Court document dated 1692 reads:

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"Humble thanks to the hon Sir Richard Newdigate for his benevolence to Edmund Priest concerning the school house who accepts of it humbly and will enter upon it as soon as he shall give him admittance." (2)

Edmund Priest was also employed to write up the Harefield Rate Books and quite a lot is known about his life (in his later years he lived in a cottage at Hill End, near Plough Lane).

You may wonder why the Minister wasn't undertaking the teaching. It was probably because the Curate of the day, Nicholas Farmborough, was actually resident in Watford where he was the master at one of the free schools in the town.

There was no official residence for the Harefield Minister and though Sir Richard Newdigate was negotiating the purchase of a house for Mr. Farmborough in 1693, it is not known if or when he came to live in it.

I hope to write a fuller account of all this for the next History Society Newsletter.

- References: (1) Warwick records Office CR136 C2610  
(2) Greater London Records Office Acc 1085  
M74

E.S. Cuthbertson.

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May I remind everyone once more that our Fourth Annual General Meeting is on Monday, April 30th at 8.00 pm.

New Committee Members will be needed this year. If you would like to stand or know someone who would - but please ask them first, give the information to Stan Kempster, Bill Faithfull or any of the Committee Members.

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