

HAREFIELD HISTORY SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER NO. 24.
AUTUMN 1992.

Committee:

Chairman T.Hillier
Hon. Sec. V.Spicer
Hon.Treasurer G.Allen
Members R.Neil
M.Marjoram
S.Piepenstock
M.Evans



The old workhouse, Harefield.

Many things have happened since the Newsletter of Autumn 1990, the last edited by Elona Cuthbertson. We do not expect to match her standards, but we shall do our best.

Sadly and suddenly, Elona died on 5 July 1991. She had done much for the Society. Apart from all the research which she continued to do, she organised the restoration of the Mossendew memorial, which was replaced in April and dedicated in August. Elona's book, 'Gregory King's Harefield' was launched at Harefield Village Centre on 3 June 1992. We shall not see her like again.

Dr. Cuthbertson has given Elona's study papers to the Society, along with a filing cabinet. These 1994 sheets of paper have first to be copied by the Central Library, after which they will be indexed and stored in the Society's cabinet in Harefield Library where they can be used by any member of the public studying Harefield's history.

Bert Meads, a founder member of the Society, died last January. He and Eileen were members of the W.E.A. History Group which published 'Harefield at that time of day'. They had moved to King's Cliffe near Peterborough. Gwen Thomas, also a founder member, recently lost her husband. Gwen did the local Barns Survey, and was Hon.Secretary to the Conservation Panel for Harefield.

Other events in '91 were a walk round West Drayton, which was not well attended, a visit to Eton College, and a coach outing to Milton Keynes and Canons Ashby - two absolute contrasts. The most interesting things I saw in Milton Keynes were the Banana flowers and fruit growing in the shopping centre.

Among our Winter talks was the first half of the Journey round the Boundary by Reg and Guy - a winner, and everyone is waiting for the second half next January, among the other 'goodies' planned for us this Winter.

The '92 Local History Conference at Winston Churchill Hall, organised by Pinner Society was quite an eye-opener, as full advantage was taken of its title 'The Pleasures of Leisure' and we were truly entertained by Mummers, Morris Dancers, and incidental songs, all much enjoyed as an addition to the talks. Next year's is to be on 27 February, organised by Stanmore and Harrow Society; on 'Celebrations and Jubilees'.

Due to moving house, Dorothy Winton, who stepped nobly into the breach as our Chairman, has felt she should resign. We are fortunate to welcome Tom Hillier, who, I feel sure, will keep us all on our toes.

M. Evans.

History Society Walk.

On April 26 1992, nine members of the Society met under the guidance of Margaret Evans, for a walk in the area of Harefield. Starting from Dovedale Close, we proceeded down Bird Lane, passing a fine specimen of Mediterranean Pine. Following the footpath we passed the allotments and crossing the stile, climbed up the hill to the top of the old rubbish tip. This is now covered with topsoil and hosts a variety of plants presenting a very pleasant green appearance. There is also a host of wild life present. We saw mallard on a pond, a kestrel hovering in search of food, and as we breasted a rise, rabbits rushed for cover among the scrub of the hillside.

A part of the junction of the original surface of the hill and the quarry had been left uncovered intentionally in order to leave the various geological strata exposed. In a layer of white chalk we saw the evidence of the borings of the segmented annelid that glories in the name of 'Terrebella Harefieldensis'. The evidence consisted of tubes just under an inch in cross section, that showed black against the chalk. In a sandy area nearby we observed the pencil sized holes made by the boring of Solitary bees as they went about the process of perpetuating their kind. In a similar area we found the dead, dried heads of last year's teasels, used in past years by the weaving and spinning trade.

Retracing our steps to the top of the dump once again, through a brief but heavy shower of rain, we progressed downhill to the canal where to our delight we saw a duck with a flotilla of new fluffy ducklings in tow. We crossed the bridge to Black Jack's Mill with its splendid weather vane, and walked along the towpath disturbing mallard and at least one heron. The latter merely flew round us and continued his fishing behind us.

Passing Horseshoe Falls we noted the forge on the opposite bank, and then the new settlement of colourful houses each with its frontage on to the canal. On our side was the inlet in which the Narrowboat 'Albert' had been rebuilt, and just outside was a semi-derelict narrowboat that looked as if it could do with the same treatment.

At the Fisheries Inn we crossed the canal again and passed in front of the old Mill working, and the 'Manor House' now awaiting reconstruction, and fronted with a wistaria in early bloom. At the junction of Park Lane and Summerhouse Lane we viewed the old cannon embedded vertically in the ground, painted a bright yellow and with its mouth blocked with an old cannon ball.

Progressing along Summerhouse Lane, parallel with the canal, we passed the Industrial site with Amberley Prints, to the shooting range, where at the side of the path we found some excellent examples of that pale green pointed flower, the wild arum that traps insects within itself to assist pollination of its seeds. From hereon we traversed paths that some of us had

never been on before. We climbed up the hill surveying on the way the insect life in a rotten piece of wood. We came out into green fields, with muddy paths, well above the canal and passed the pipes, containers and odours of the sewage works, and the colourful crowd of canal boats in their basin, and the reed bed nature reserve. We turned up the hill just before the barns of the farm and passed a spinney carpeted with bluebells, past an old sawbench and to the top of the hill. From here in front of the new Springwell Farmhouse, we had a magnificent view across the valley from Denham Airport on the left past fields of oil seed rape at Maple Cross, to the M.25 motorway on the right. We finally progressed along Springwell Lane, past Cripps Farm and the new buildings infilling the lane to Hill End Road. We passed the eighteenth century farmhouse of Whiteheath, and the attractive florally decorated entrance to the new Medipark before splitting up to go our separate ways. This concluded an interesting and educational exercise with pleasant company and conversation.



T.Hillier.

The Second Footpath Walk.

On Sunday 24 May Margaret Evans arranged a walk for members of the History Society. Time - 2.15 near the entrance to Breakspear House. Only two people turned up, myself and a friend. We waited until 2.30 and then set off over the stile and into the fields that give you a fine view over South Harefield. Turning left we went through a spinney and on to the path leading to Bayhurst Wood and the Tarleton Reserve. Margaret was rather disappointed when instead of a bank of spotted orchids, there were only nettles to be seen, such is the changing face of Nature. The lake was completely dry, but after the recent rains there may be a different picture. We retraced our steps and then walked along the path which has now been designated a Bridle Path, leading to Harvil Road. We did see the ceremony held here when we had a show of Reg. Neil's pictures at the A.G.M.

The walk was to have been extended to the canal, but it was rather humid and as we were in our own backyard as you might say, we called it a day and had tea and cake in my friend's garden. We enjoyed it, but it would have been more encouraging had more people been there.

M.Marjoram.

The Third Footpath Walk.

The third Walk set off on July 24 down Hill End Rd. over Cripps Farm stile and along paths between head-high nettles, thistles and seeded 'Granny's Lace'. Downhill we skirted Cook's Wood where we found a fallen cast iron Victorian post marking the entry into Middlesex where coal and wine tax was levied. I subsequently found a report in the Gazette for July 23, 1887, stating that this tax had been abandoned, and urging all to keep watch so that they should not again be saddled with 'this unreasonable strain on their purse strings'.

Over the canal we entered Stockers Nature Reserve, welcomed by the blue flash of a kingfisher. From hides erected by the Herts. and Middx. Trust, we watched several patient herons and a large party of Canada Geese. Along the canal were a family of ten ducklings and a more dignified group of mute swans with cygnets; numerous blue damozel flies and a few banded Demoiselles with broader wings of intense blue-green.

The party of five survived the climb up Park Lane in the heat, deciding that we should do more walks in the Autumn and Spring, so, anyone who would like to plan and lead a walk, please contact me. Whatever the weather it is a most enjoyable form of exercise.

M. Evans.

Conservation.

Our local Planning Officer is keeping the Panel informed of progress regarding the proposed development at the Old Workhouse. The owners of the two building plots which now have planning permission are requesting various changes to the plans as passed, and are involved in detailed discussion with the Historic Buildings Advisor. The Panel will continue to defend vigorously the principle that any development affecting the setting of a listed building should receive the closest attention.

A new developer has come forward with proposals for the Harefield House site and is involved in ongoing discussions with the Planning Department. The proposed flats to which the Panel objected have already been removed from the plans, and negotiations continue.

There will be further 'blitz nights' on dangerous parking near the Horse and Barge; hatched areas and double yellow lines are planned for the near future.

The Panel welcomes the refurbishment of the King's Head P.H. but regrets the change of name and style. Unfortunately there is no legislation to cover such cases: no planning permission was required for any of the alterations.

Pat Ashby.

Elona Cuthbertson 1926 - 1991.

With the death of Elona Cuthbertson in June 1991 Harefield History Society has lost an inspiring researcher and an energetic and wise exponent of all those causes - conservationist and environmental - which are most dear to the hearts of all local historians.

She was a founder member of this Society, having joined Geoffrey Tyack's class (1974-6), which first drew together a group of local people interested in uncovering Harefield's past. She was never a passive member. Since 1978 she has served on the committee, edited the Newsletter, which she remodelled, from 1987-90, and was Chairman at the time of her death, but it is for the depth and quality of her research into every aspect of Harefield's history and her vital and entertaining publications that

she will be most missed from the point of view of local history.

Elona's interest was especially aroused by Gregory King's 1699 survey of Harefield and using that as a starting point she tried to build up a picture of the lives of the people named in it, their homes, occupations and inter-relationships. The survey included all classes of Harefield society and Elona in pursuit of their wills and inventories their land and business transactions, travelled to Record Offices in different parts of the country and even corresponded with Universities in the USA. She moved both backwards and forwards from that magic date of 1699, for Elona's enthusiasm could not be circumscribed and scarcely a document with a bearing on Harefield exists, which she has not perused and commented upon.

The results of her work have been published in the Society's Newsletter, in contributions to 'Harefield at that time of day' and 'Here and there in Harefield' and in her posthumously published book 'Gregory King's Harefield'.

However, Elona's interests were varied and not confined to local history. She was active in the British Federation of University Women and the National Council for Women, and constantly wrote to Hillingdon Borough Council and other interested bodies defending the environment, the green belt and ancient buildings. One of her last causes was the restoration of the wooden Mossendew memorial on the outside wall of St. Mary's Church, which has happily now been accomplished in her memory. It was rededicated at Evensong on 9th. August 1992.

On a personal level her loss is felt deeply by those who knew her and who can no longer rely on her wise and often witty way of unravelling difficulties and making puzzling matters clear simply by approaching problems from an unusual angle. All our sympathy must go to her family who have lost a wife and companion and mother of outstanding qualities.

Eileen Bowlt.

'Give us back our eleven days'

An event of national importance which could not fail to affect the inhabitants of even a country village such as Harefield occurred in 1752. It was the reform of the Julian calendar by lopping off eleven days in the month of September.

Julius Caesar had presented the Roman world with a calendar which had served the whole of Europe well for many centuries. Unfortunately it was based on two erroneous assumptions of which the more serious was that the solar year consisted of three hundred and sixty-five and a quarter days which could happily be adjusted into twelve months by giving February an extra day every fourth, or leap-year. In fact each year has only three hundred and sixty-five days five hours, forty eight minutes and forty six seconds, so that the Julian year was too long by eleven minutes and fourteen seconds. This error may seem insignificant, but it

amounted to an advance of a whole day in one hundred and twenty eight years and, over the centuries, a perceptible shift of the equinox towards the beginning of the year.

In the year 1582 Pope Gregory XIII decreed that the ten days between 5th. and 15th. October should be lopped off the calendar, and most of the Catholic countries followed suit. The countries which had embraced the reformed protestant church did not adopt the Gregorian calendar until around 1700; Russia not until the twentieth century. The English parliament belatedly passed the Calendar(New Style) Act in 1750, so that the error, now amounting to eleven days, was eliminated. September 3rd. 1752 became September 14th. and the intervening days disappeared.

What could people make of such a change? It is hardly surprising that there was protest in many quarters that they had lost nearly two weeks of their lives, nor that people went around clamouring, 'Give us back our eleven days.' If you went to market on Saturdays, all was normal on August 29th. but the following Saturday was not the fifth, as you would expect, but the sixteenth September. If you were away from home for a week, you might go on Tuesday, 1st. September, but you would return, not on the 8th. but on the 19th.

The Overseer of the poor in Harefield, Ralph Trumper paid relief to seven parishioners on August 29th. as he had earlier in the month at regular seven day intervals on August 22nd., 15th., 9th., and 2nd. The next time he paid the poor was September 17th., which was a Sunday, then seven days later on September 24th. and October 1st. If the days of the week were kept in sequence without juggling about with them, he must have changed his day for paying from Saturday to Sunday; the relief paid on August 29th. certainly had to last eight days instead of seven!

It was not only ordinary people who were bewildered. The taxation officials appear to have thought that they were losing eleven days' tax. New Year's Day had traditionally been March 25th, Lady Day, one of the quarter days. Now the end of the financial year was fixed eleven days later, on 5th. April, where it has remained ever since.

From 1752 onwards, January 1st. became New Year's Day. Although parish business continued to be concluded and new officers elected at the Vestry meeting around March 25th., the change in the numbering of the years seems to have occasioned no trouble whatsoever. Indeed the law seems to have followed established custom rather than introducing a new idea. As early as 1727, Sir George Cooke's accounting of income and expenditure for the poor's land shows the date 11th. January as in the year 1726/7, as though January could be considered in either of those years. In the year 1737 Thomas Shoard, Overseer, dated his first rate 5th. October 1737, and his second 8th. March 1737/8, but April 24th. was in 1738. Henry Engleton's second rate in January was firmly in 1749 but his third on 28th. March was in 1750. At any rate, in the year of legislation, 1752, the new year was clearly numbered as beginning in January.