

Harefield History Society

NEWSLETTER NO. 26. AUTUMN 1993.

COMMITTEE; T.Hillier, Chairman. R.Goodchild.
M.Marjoram, Treasurer. L.Piercy
M.Evans, Secretary. A.Batchelor.
R.Neil. B.Dungey.

Newsletter time comes round very quickly, especially if you're supposed to be editing it.

Yet another severe blow fell on us in April with the sudden death of Vi Spicer, our secretary. Although Vi had suffered heart trouble for some years she never mentioned it, and she was so involved in her many interests that it was a great shock when the blow fell. We received a letter from her son and daughter in law thanking all members for their help with the reception following the funeral.

When Guy Allen left he presented us with some photocopies of 'Harefield at that time of day' the book published by Harefield History Group, which led to the founding of this society. These copies are available at £3. Please notify the Secretary if you would like one.

The buried bottle known to have been hidden in the foundations of the A.Q.D. workshops has now disappeared along with its brick covering, so we shall never know what was in it !

The next Local History Day at the Winston Churchill Hall is on 26 Feb/94. It is called 'A Roof over your Head' and deals with all types of housing through the ages. We shall be putting on a display. Tickets £4 will be available shortly.

M.Evans.

COUNTRY LONDON by J.Talbot White.

Harefield is a useful starting point for exploring the Middlesex farmland. As a village its best feature is the square four-acre green, typical of the thirty or more greens that existed in the county. Harefield's green serves one of its traditional functions when the August Fair arrives. But the buildings round the green, apart from the inn which manages to retain some rural charm, do not deserve close attention. The High Street too, is unexceptional until it slopes down towards the isolated church of St.Mary, and there on the left stands a brick building of great beauty, a Tudor house built round a courtyard, with a fine cluster of chimneys.

Just beyond the churchyard is the beginning of a footpath, generally well signposted, that leads due East not only through typical farmland but to the best woodland and open spaces in the district.

The elm was the main hedgerow timber and the edges of the fields sometimes resemble a graveyard of trees so the sight of Bayhurst Wood one mile to the East is all the more reassuring. Bayhurst is the best parcel of woodland in the Northwest, a survivor of the old forest of Middlesex, similar in composition to Epping, with oak and hornbeam dominant and a variety of other deciduous species

such as the elm, beech, birch and one or two wild service trees, botannically speaking, a very ancient wood.

Extract sent by Guy Allen.



CHRISTMAS WITH A DIFFERENCE.

In November 1992 we decided to celebrate Christmas without the hassle of cards, presents, shopping and cooking. We followed a suggestion by the Sipson Community Association Monday Club to join an event known as 'Turkey and Tinsel', and duly set off in a gaily decorated coach for Torbay Chalet Hotel high above Paignton. Greeted by the staff dressed as clowns, we settled into our chalet on Christmas Eve. After breakfast on Christmas morning we found two identical parcels on our bed - copies of the Autobiography of Fred Pontin ! Before lunch we had a coach trip on to the moors, stopping at Widdicombe on the Moor. While in a cafe we wondered at the staff using binoculars and making frantic signals from a window - it proved to be, not a rare species, but a coach far up on the hilltop warning of a spate of customers approaching.

Along the roadside we were told of a legend about the suicide of a young girl misused by the Lord of the Manor in the seventeenth century. She could not be buried in the Church yard, but her grave had been dug at the roadside. The mystery is that flowers are put on the grave and no-one has ever been seen doing it.

Our next trip, on New Year's Eve, was to Dartmoor Prison, which I have never thought of as a tourist attraction. Luckily it was far too misty and the driver decided to stick to the coast via Totnes and Kingsbridge and back along the side of Slapton Sands where the American forces trained in their Landing craft in preparation for D Day. A magnificent bay with long stretches of sandy beach - an ideal area, but unfortunately a German E Boat had spotted the activity and wreaked havoc among the craft and their occupants and many Americans were killed. There is a tall commemorative stone standing on the beach which was presented by the U.S. Army to the people of Slapton who had to evacuate their farms and homes. We returned for lunch via the Dartmouth ferry, and were then advised to rest in the afternoon to prepare for the New Year's Eve festivities.

Maisie Marjoram.

VISIT TO GREENWICH PARK, JUNE 26th. 1993.

This particular visit was originally organised by Vi Spicer, our late Secretary who died suddenly last April. She was a most efficient and dedicated historian. She will be sadly missed.

Greenwich Park was one of the first of England's Royal

Parks to be enclosed. The King's Council on January 30th. 1443 granted to Humphrey Duke of Gloucester and his Duchess Eleanor, a licence to 'empark 200 acres of land, pasture, heath and furze at Estgrenewich'. In 1675 Charles II commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to build the first Royal Observatory on the site. Now abandoned by the Astronomers Royal for a modern building at Hurstmonceux, East Sussex. The observatory still contains a comprehensive collection of astronomical instruments and is part of the Maritime Museum. Many new trees were planted in the park during the reign of Charles II. Very few have survived apart from Scots Pine and Spanish Chestnut.

The weather forecast was cloudy and dull on the 26th, brightening in the afternoon with sunshine...ideal conditions for a walk-about in Greenwich Park. The coach arrived on time and 26 members and friends clambered on board- one enthusiastic young gardener literally jumped aboard. I felt a little apprehensive knowing that we had to travel through South East London, whereas normally we start our journeys through country lanes. However the majority of our group was quite happy viewing this part of London. We arrived ten minutes before schedule at Blackheath Gate (the other main entrance is St.Mary's Gate by the Cutty Sark. We were able to park our coach a few minutes walk away and were welcomed by Mr.Woodcock (Under Manager) who invited us into his office to explain how the system of running the Park has changed due to Privatisation. It is estimated that 3,000,000 people pass through the gates each year. He is on call 24 hours each day through the year, but fortunately has only been called out twice. Formerly they had complete control over all the plants, having their own nursery so that if plants were showing signs of wear and tear, they could easily be replaced. Now the nursery has gone and all plants are ordered by contract. There are no verbal requests and if there is deterioration in plants nothing can be done. Mr.Woodcock said, however, he enjoyed his work in spite of occasional headaches.



We strolled across Blackheath Avenue lined with Chestnut trees. One member was heard to say how his bees would have enjoyed the lime trees. There are 7,000 trees and 250 species within the 200 acres. Some have been replanted to replace those lost in the 1987 gales. Trees are inspected each year in case some have to be lopped. We could see many Scots Pine, a few Tulip trees and Cedars - a splendid home for squirrels and we saw several at work. The Summer bedding area with Pelargoniums planted with standards in the centre was superb. Pink Petunias, red Salvias, Busy Lizzies with Codryline and silver Salvias was very attractive; Geraniums and blue Salvias with Helierysum made a strong contrast. The semi-tropical beds mixing Hostas etc. with small grasses and an imaginative edging of beetroot was charming.

Mr.Woodcock told us that the bandstand was often hired by film companies, which helps with revenue. We were entertained at the Tea House by two musicians on a clarinet and

a small Wurlitzer organ. We had a rest period and ate our lunches under the limes and chestnuts, and remarked on the cleanliness of the entire park.

We then explored an experimental Herb Garden, designed as a 'Knott Garden', and the longest herbaceous border in the country, 250 metres approx. It was backed by a beautiful brick wall with only a few honeysuckle and roses climbing it; all the plants looked tired and unhappy and in need of water. Our guided tour came to an end and many thanks were expressed to Mr. Woodcock. We had two hours to wander as we pleased; in the Maritime Museum, the Queen's House, the Deer Park, by the pond containing 80 large carp, the children's area where there was a Thailand fete, with costumes, music and flying dragons like kites.

We returned by Canary Wharf, the driver giving us a short history of this part of London. The architecture was not impressive. We all enjoy living in Harefield where we arrived at 6.15 pm. It really was a lovely day's excursion.

Thank you, Vi !

Reg Neil.

OF HAREFIELD GREEN. (See FILE 4 No.22)

One tends to forget that the village green with its pond is the residue of the ancient common. The Enclosure Act of 1813 tells us:

'All that piece or parcel of land or ground containing four acres, being numbered XL on the said plan hereunto annexed, situate on late Harefield Common near or adjoining to the village of Harefield which said allotment thus hereinbefore awarded, is to be forever hereafter held and enjoyed by the inhabitants of the said parish of Harefield and used by them for the purpose of Recreation.' This parcel amounts to four acres.



The pond then known as Shepherd's Pond, shown as parcel XLII for 'a public watering place one piece or parcel of land or ground containing one rood and nineteen perches'.

The green is registered as a Village Green under the Commons Registration Act 1965 and is presently regulated under the Parks and Pleasure Grounds Byelaws made by the London Borough of Hillingdon in September 1985.

And I wonder how many of us know how long is a perch. The last time I used roods and perches was in School, and I have never needed them since.

M. Evans.

HAREFIELD AND DENHAM - SOME CONNECTIONS.

We left Harefield in August 1992 with great sadness. We had lived there since Coronation Year, 1953 - thirty nine years; our children were enrolled at the Harefield School on the eighth birthday of the eldest; it was of course an all-age school at that time, before the building of John Penrose for older children. We had rescued the old Workhouse from demolition and decay when the council thought it worthy only

of destruction. We had really put down roots and found it difficult to imagine living anywhere else.

But the enormous house and garden had become too much for us to manage. We steeled ourselves to sell and settled at last in a bungalow at Denham Village, in fact in the very next parish.

The Old Workhouse too settled down well without us, accommodating to its new owners who love it as much as we did. Have you noticed that the new house built in its grounds at the corner of Gilbert Road is called Trumplers' Cottage? You may recognise the name from the roundabout on the by-pass to the South of Uxbridge Town Centre, Trumplers Way. In it, Uxbridge remembers the surveyor from Harefield who administered the enclosure of common lands not only in Harefield after the Enclosure Act of 1813 but in many other parishes as well.

But there has been, up to now, no memorial in Harefield to any of the Trumplers. They came to the parish early in the eighteenth century (they were not mentioned in the survey Geoffrey King made for the Newdigates in 1699). They were yeoman farmers, tenants for the most part, begetting large families, working the various farms and as a family playing a major part in the running of Harefield community as churchwardens, overseers of the poor, or constables. At one time there were five Trumplers on the Harefield parish Vestry all at the same time. I am glad to think that now at last, their name is perpetuated on the old Workhouse site with which the family was so much concerned over two centuries.

We found the links were very strong between the old and the new. There were residents who had trodden before us the self-same path from Harefield to Denham. One of them left a basket of goodies on our doorstep to help us through removal day. She had lived with her family in the Victorian house called 'The Cottage' on Church Hill.

The first time I took a walk through Denham Village I found in the churchyard a very old friend, Henry Morten, who died on December 21st 1841, aged sixty-five years. His tombstone reminded me that the Morten family were paying rent to the overseers of the poor at Harefield two hundred years ago for land along the river Colne, the boundary between Middlesex and Buckinghamshire as well as between Harefield and Denham. The fact that he became the owner of some of the common land along the river is attested by the Harefield enclosure map. I now know exactly where the family lived in Denham. It was at The Savay, a most distinguished fourteenth century timber framed Manor House of which the aisled hall is reputed to be unique. The Mortens were farmers there.

The tomb in the churchyard tells the usual poignant story of numerous children decimated by early death. Henry and Sarah Morten had six live children between 1809 and 1822. First Henry's sister Mary, ten years younger than he, died at the age of 21. Perhaps it was in childbirth. When Henry was 41 his daughter Harriet died aged 2 years 4 months; when he was 46, Belinda died at 6 weeks; at 49 years he lost his two sons, Joseph aged 16 and Thomas aged 8 within two months of each other; his wife Sarah died when he was 51 and she 44, and finally two months before his own death at 65, he lost his only surviving son, John Whitfield, who had lived to the age of 28. There remains in the churchyard one solitary tombstone to the memory of the last child of the Morten family, Sarah, who outlived both her parents and died at Savay Farm on 1st. December 1852, aged 42 and unmarried, the last of the line. A street name near the farm commemorates them.

Savay Farm, which enjoyed a certain notoriety as the home of Sir Oswald Moseley in his early fascist days, has now for many years belonged to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Cakebread. It is pleasant to think that here also are traces of neighbouring Harefield in the grassy bridge which crosses the river and was for centuries the only path from Denham to Harefield, and in the five year old walnut trees; they came from the Old Workhouse, Harefield.

Dorothy Winton.

CONSERVATION.

This Conservation report will be very out of date by the time the Newsletter appears, since the August meeting of the Conservation Panel was postponed owing to industrial action.

Discussions continue concerning plans for Manor Court and for the second new building in the grounds of the Old Workhouse. There is as yet no news on Breakspear House. Building on the Harefield House site continues apace; Harefield House itself must be refurbished before any of the Phase 2 houses can be occupied. Panel members continue to raise the issue of street names for the estate in the hope that these will reflect links with Harefield's historic past.

An application has been made to build two houses on land to the rear of 14/14a Northwood Road where valuable trees have been felled, apparently in calculated defiance of planning and tree conservation regulations. Members of the Panel feel strongly that no-one should be allowed to benefit from such an action, and were unanimous in urging the Planning Dept. (which now calls itself L.B.H. Environment Group) to take a firm line. The trees should be replaced in their original position. This would make it impossible to erect the houses shown on the current application. This issue is likely to prove contentious.

Pat Ashby.

FROM BRIAN WATKINS OF THE ADELAIDE BASED HAREFIELD SOCIETY,
AUSTRALIA.

Dear Fellow Members,

Five years have passed since my brief visit to Harefield but I remember well your April 1988 meeting when you kindly inducted me as an honorary member. Since then I have eagerly looked forward to your newsletters and sorely missed those many outings and interesting talks that I thirst to listen to. But we do have a somewhat enlightened State Library where I eagerly read up anything to do with Harefield and surrounds.

Harefield members may ask why I registered myself as the 'Harefield Society (Australia)'. The reason is that I myself felt the dual nationality, being Anglo Australian strongly, and recognise our diminishing historic ties especially since the first world war when Harefield villagers' efforts helped those 50,000 war wounded Australian diggers who went through Harefield Park Hospital (partially documented in Mary Sheperd's magnificent book 'Heart of Harefield') at a time when many of Harefield's own were killed, including an uncle, Richard Watkins. Also I had temporarily forgotten, as had so many Australians and New Zealanders, the homage that Harefield residents still pay at St. Mary's - until I visited your ANZAC day ceremony in 1988.

When I recognised the various small distant outposts of interest dotted around this huge continent of ours, I decided to become the Communications Number, relaying and collecting those items that are in the memories of the few. It has not been easy getting recognition out here, but a few items have come my way.

Gilgandra is a small town in Southern New South Wales, where the famed COO-EE Marchers started in 1915 on a 600 mile volunteer recruitment march. Unfortunately one of the leaders, Bill Hitchin found an early grave in St. Mary's A.I.F. Cemetery before getting to fire a shot. A somewhat amateur COO-EE Re-enactment Film was produced in 1987 and now another is being made to honour the 75th Anniversary of the Armistice. By the way, 13 or so other Australian Volunteer recruitment marches took place around Australia because of what Bill Hitchin's own achieved. Ties with England were much stronger then, and in years to come future generations really should know why.

By the time most of you will have read this item, a small contingent of interested Australians with film cameras will be travelling from France to visit Harefield's St. Mary's Church and Bill Hitchin's grave for a further filmed remake. No doubt Reg Neil will be there with his camera to keep me informed - thanks, Reg !

Unfortunately the all important school visit will have found them still on holiday. Important because the Union Flag used to drape all 114 gun carriage funerals down along Harefield's main street from the hospital was donated by the school to Adelaide's Education Department in 1920 with a message from the children of England to the children of Australia. (I plead for more details of that message. PLEASE CAN ANYONE HELP ?) Not forgetting to thank Guy for the book he sent me. My limited efforts to have this very (now shabby) old flag encapsulated in clear acrylic, suitably engraved, have got snagged with Adelaide High School's desire to keep it hidden in a cupboard. But an interested military historian, ex Brigadier Wayland of the Australian Army Museum is proposing that it be ceremoniously marched to a more public place in our museum. After all the Adelaide High School do have a replacement flag, and this I fear may be burnt any time by the independent republican movement. Heaven forbid if they burn the original flag !

Some time ago Aunt Hilda Watkins told me the old flag was possibly from Lord Cardigan's possessions at a time when he was connected with Rythes House. Again, I plead ! Do any of my fellow historians there have any information about this ? I am aiming to get a permanent memorial suitably inscribed into the adjacent parkland in return for Harefield's 75 years service, but it is difficult in these times when we are supposed to be looking East to Asia.

Finally, my quest to learn more of Mr. Billyard Leake, who handed over his house to become Harefield Hospital. He was the son of a Queen's Councillor in Castlereay St., Sydney. Some time after 1891 he married Letitia in Tasmania. QUESTION. Does any kind person over there know of anyone directly related to the Billyard Leakes ? I believe Billyard Leake went to Harefield because of his friendship with Governor Newdigate over here.

It's my intention to publish my findings from the Australian point of view eventually. I would welcome any information from any fellow members. Does anyone remember Charles Wade, 51, or his grandfather, lock master at the Fisheries ?

All the best, and do try and keep those developers out !

Brian Watkins.

AUSTRALIAN VISIT TO HAREFIELD.

Just in time and just enough space to report on the Australian visit, following on Brian Watkins' letter.

On Friday 3rd. September a small party of Australian Army Reservists from Adelaide arrived to hold a small ceremony of Remembrance round the grave of Bill Hitchen, who initiated the 'COO-EE' Recruitment marches in Australia, collecting volunteers to fight in the 1914-1918 War.

Their leader was Brian Bywater, and with their flags and a drum they marched from the Church to the Australian Cemetery where the Last Post was sounded and a minute's silence observed.

Some Scouts and Guides took part in the ceremony, and a number of residents with Australian interests were present.

After looking round the Church, especially the Australian Chapel, where Mrs. Dent had hung the embroidered quilt given to the Church in memory of the Australian Hospital, the party had refreshments at the Hospital before departing. They had received an enthusiastic welcome in Belgium and France where they had also visited Australian War Graves, and they were well pleased with their pilgrimage.

M. Evans.
