

Harefield History Society

NEWSLETTER No 32. Autumn 1996.

Committee: I Liddell Chairman
M Marjoram Treasurer
M Evans Secretary
R Neil
R Goodchild
V Woodward

Programme:

- 23 Sept 96: Seven Roads to Harefield II by Reg Neil
28 Oct 96: Harefield Parish Records by Eileen Bowlt
25 Nov 96: The Centenary of British Films, Pinewood Studios,
Past and Present by Cyril Howard and Steve Jaggs.
27 Jan 97: Puritan Peopling of Bermuda by Dr Greg Shipley
24 Feb 97: Medieval Timber Framed Buildings by Pat Clarke
24 Mar 97: The British Empire Exhibition by Alan Sabey
28 Apr 97: A G M. followed by Motor Memories, Alan Batchelor.



From the Chair:

Welcome to another season of meetings, visits and friendship. I'm pleased to say that Robert Goodchild has put together a very enticing programme of meetings for this year, with a good balance of home and away topics: I'm sure that you will join with me in congratulating him on his excellent work.

It was encouraging to see good attendances at last years meetings, and I hope that everyone will be able to come along and bring friends to swell the numbers at this years activities. Please, if you have any ideas for speakers, or for visits to suitable historical sites, get in touch with any member of the committee. It's your society, so speak up for your wishes.

Of course we are always excited by the thought of new members to join the regulars, and to make sure that Harefield's past is not forgotten by those who now live in the village. There is no doubt that the village has changed greatly, and it is also obvious that we cannot turn the clock back to Harefield's being a self sufficient community: people will come and go, and will commute into or out of the village for work. I am, of course, an incomer, still with a lot to find out about my home area. I look forward to the meetings which will help me link what I see around me to what has gone before.

This year's programme takes us around the parish and around the world: I hope you all enjoy the trip.

Iain Liddell

Adelaide calling

A tireless Brian Watkins has kindly sent his latest newsletter for the Harefield Society of Australasia: he has been working hard at tracing the history of the lady whose gifts provided for the hospital which is now such a central part of our village life. He is anxious to receive any information about Letitia Sarah Billyard-Leake (who grew up known as Letty Leake), and her family, who stayed in Harefield between 1896 and 1924. Letitia was educated at a collegiate school in London between 1873 and 1878.

If you have any information for Brian, please pass it to a committee member or contact him directly at 19 Davenport Terrace, Hilton, 5033 South Australia. If you would like to see a copy of his enthralling newsletter, then again please contact the committee.

NASA, Sainsbury's and the History Society

Spot the odd one out? No, we're all in the same group now: like the other two (and, as it seems from all the adverts, everybody else), we now have the year's syllabus on the Internet's World Wide Web. I put it there mainly as a demonstration tool, but we may yet see Reg's happy smile beaming out to Net-surfers in a hundred countries. For the record, the main point of access is ;

<http://www.brunel.ac.uk/~iain/hhs/>

but you'll all be relieved to know that we're not giving up on print.

Secretary's Report

Our last indoor meeting in April was the AGM when we were entertained by Reg Neil's talk with slides on the Seven Roads into Harefield. Since then we have enjoyed our trip to Hampton Court Palace. Unfortunately the outing to Waddesdon had to be cancelled as only 4 people booked seats for it.

The Society has sent £20 to the Mayor's charity, which this year was Age Concern.

We have been unable to fulfill the requirement of the centre for Saturday coffee mornings during the summer months as no members had volunteered. It is hoped some members will offer their services for the two dates in the winter session, Saturday 26 October and Saturday 18 January 97.

St Mary's Church Fete was held on the Village Green for the first time, and was a great success. The Society was invited to take part and so Reg Neil put up a photographic display and competition which attracted great interest. We sold a few books and leaflets and happily collected two more members. We were able to donate £14 to the Church.

It is a great relief to know that the plans for a lorry/rail centre in Denham have been turned down by a huge majority. Let us hope that the Warner Bros. Theme Park meets with a similar fate! The proposed development of Northolt Airport has also been refused. The recent crash of a plane on the A40 indicates how right the decision is.

I would like to thank everyone for their many cards and letters offering help and support following Ted's sudden death. A photograph of the flowers kindly sent by the society is on the table.

Margaret Evans.

A Visit to Hampton Court Palace

The village of Hampton in Middlesex is on the left bank of the Thames. About a mile from the village are the Palace and park of Hampton Court.

Originally built by direction of Cardinal Wolsey between 1515 and 1525, it was presented to Henry VIII, unfinished in 1529. It has been said that Cardinal Wolsey had no option but to do this. Henry enlarged and completed it and it remained a Royal residence until the time of George III, when it was divided into private apartments allocated to distinguished members of the Crown. There are over 1000 rooms.

It was a particular favourite of William III who commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to rebuild it. Of the original buildings remaining are most of those surrounding the Base Court and the Clock Court to the west.

The Great Hall with its rich hammerbeam roof, the great kitchen, and the tennis court are of Henry VIII's time. The eastern buildings surrounding the fountain court are by Wren. These courts are spacious and peaceful.

A grapevine planted in 1769 is still flourishing and of course the famous maze. There are 44 acres of gardens to admire with lovely herbaceous borders and flower beds.

A valuable collection of pictures by Holbein, Lely, Kneller and West, among others were of particular interest to the fine art admirers of our party. Also the wonderful wall length tapestries.

The Hampton Court Conference took place at Hampton Court Palace in 1604 under the presidency of James I in order to remedy the ecclesiastical abuses of which the puritans complained. The royal judgement did not satisfy the puritans although the King agreed to the suggestion that a new translation of the Bible should be undertaken. This, the Authorised Version, appeared in 1611. So much history, so much to see and explore.

In recent years fire destroyed part of the building. There is an interesting video to watch giving the different stages of the fire and the painstaking salvaging of precious pieces which were either used again in the restoration or used as patterns. The video showed the craftsmen at work. The restoration had been completed some time before our visit. A "help yourself" restaurant provided refreshment. This had a pleasant setting with some of the tables and chairs *al fresco*.

Thank you Margaret for arranging this outing and also a thank you to Reg for those sweets.

Vi Hardey

Hawksmoor Restoration

In 1711 an Act was passed authorising the building of 50 new churches in London. Only 12 were built and six of these were designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, assistant to Sir Christopher Wren. Hawksmoor's best known church is Christ Church in Spitalfields (the area of silk weavers) in Commercial Street E1.

I was very glad to read in the Link, a Church of England paper, that at last this church is to be restored. It is a very unusual building, and perhaps the most dramatic of Hawksmoor's churches. I went recently to have a look at it and sure enough the church was surrounded by busy men digging and pushing barrows which looks very promising. Moreover the streets in that area have definitely been cleaned up.

Margaret Evans

A Week in Lyme Regis

Lyme acquired its "Regis" in 1284 when Edward I made it a Royal Borough. It began as a small settlement in 774. The main trade was through the harbour, and two local ships fought under Drake in 1588. Ships were built in Lyme, with smuggling as a second industry. Lyme became a revenue service HQ with cutters offshore and mounted officers ashore. The smugglers would sink long strings of kegs weighted with stones.

In 1644 the town was under siege and held out for parliament. In 1685 the Duke of Monmouth landed beyond the Cobb to try to take the English crown. He was defeated at Sedgemoor by James II.

Mary Anning a local fossil collector, discovered the fossilised skeleton of an ichthyosaurus in 1828.

Jane Austen, Lord Lister, James Whistler all stayed in Lyme. In 1915 HMS Formidable was torpedoed in the bay. The railway came in 1903 and was closed again in 1965.

The cliffs are unstable and each slip exposes more fossils. The worst landslip happened in 1839 on Christmas Day above Monmouth Beach. There has been a recent mudslide above the East Beach, but we did not find many fossils. Lyme is a fine place for energetic people - the streets are built on hills far steeper than any in Harefield!

Margaret Evans

Expensive Lady

In 1066 the country was divided into Manors. The Manor was one of very few things which could pass to a FEMALE if she was the heir.

However in such a case there was normally a fine of "twenty horses and £1000".

Middlesex Quarterly 1955

Notes collected by Dorothy Winton concerning the Harefield Victoria Cross, Bob Ryder

Bob Ryder came to see us about 1955 whilst paying a visit to his family. We had purchased the Old Workhouse in Breakspear Road in 1952 and Bob Ryder was interested to see once more the house where he was born and grew up. He must then have been about sixty years old.

The following document appears to be the outline of his career which he sent to his Commanding Officer, Major Newman MBE, for submission to the War Office. It was successful and Bob Ryder became Harefield's second VC, the first being General Goodlake in the Crimean War.

Other information comes from Uxbridge Library.

Statement by Bob Ryder

I was born on December 17th, 1895, in the small village of Harefield, Middlesex, in a house in Breakspear Road which is the oldest house now standing in that village. (Mistaken of course. DW) I was the youngest of thirteen, there being six boys and seven girls. I started school at the age of three, my parents paying one penny per week for my education. At the age of fifteen I was driving a hay cart to London. This meant starting at 12 o'clock at night and finishing at seven o'clock the following evening. At the age of eighteen I married and went into the building trade. Along came the First World War when, on September 3rd, 1914, I enlisted at Mill Hill in my County Regiment, the Middlesex, and was sent to Colchester for training. I was posted to the 12th Battalion under command of Colonel Glover, the Battalion having just been formed as part of the 54th Brigade of the 18th Division. The Divisional Commander was General Sir Ivor Maxse.

Early in 1915 we went to France, moving straight into the fighting line. From then on we held the trenches along the Somme, until the Battle of the Somme in 1916, during which, after bitter fighting, we took Trones Wood. I was a number 1 Lewis gunner, and, after the West Kents, who were cut off, had got a message through asking for a Machine Gun Section to help them. I volunteered. Unfortunately we were driven back, four of my section being wounded. For this action I was recommended for bravery.

Next we were at Thiepval, which had been taken and lost several times. At midday, September 26, 1916 we went over the top to attack.

At the first check I volunteered to take my gun on and take the trench that was holding up the Battalion. I succeeded in getting to the parapet of the German trench, which was two hundred yards from the English lines, and enfiladed it with fire. The trench was taken and it was reported to my Colonel that I had killed from 100 to 120 Germans. Of my section I had lost the other five. After this trench was captured I went on to the next, about forty yards further on. Halfway we had to take cover and await the tanks. Then, having run out of ammunition, I abandoned the guns and collected the bombs from the dead and wounded and started to bomb the second trench, when I was wounded in the hand and leg. I was then ordered back by an officer of the Northampton Regiment. On my way back I met two German prisoners whom I made bind me up and go back with me. For this, I was again recommended, the third time since being in France. I was sent home to England and went to Norwich Military Hospital where I remained for about two months and was then sent on seven days sick leave, my first leave since leaving England early in 1915. Whilst on leave at my home in Harefield, I received the following letter from my Colonel:

Dear Ryder

A thousand congratulations on your VC which was splendidly earned. It is nearly two months since I recommended you and Edwards for the award, and was beginning to get very anxious when todays newspaper brought in the great news.

I felt wonderfully proud of the Battalion: two VCs, four Military Crosses, three DCMs, and thirty four Military Medals for one action. I do not think another Regiment in France or anywhere can touch this record. I hope you will be recommended home in due course to be decorated by the King, that will be another great day in your life. Best of luck to you, and again, many, many congratulations.

F W Maxwell

The newspapers of the day record that when the news of Bob's VC reached Harefield Village a motor (rare in those days) was sent to the High Street to bring him to the asbestos mill where he had worked before enlisting. He was given a tremendous reception by his former workmates; the Reverend Harland, as Chairman of the School, granted a holiday to all the pupils; and the following Wednesday he was decorated by King George V and carried shoulder high. When he returned to the front he was given hearty greetings all the way to Denham Station and courteous salutes from the Australian soldiers (the wounded from Harefield Hospital).

Bob Ryder was the model for the life sized soldier on the memorial of the 12th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment at the Middlesex Guildhall.

Bob Ryder was the narrator of a story that greatly interested us during our ownership of the Workhouse. The occupier of the cottage nearest to the village was "Tarpot" Milton, a market gardener who worked the area of land stretching from the Old Workhouse, through what are now "Marston" and many other houses, right up to a wall just short of Brockley Cottage. It seems that Tarpot's father, a hedger and ditcher, was known to possess 38 gold sovereigns. On his death only 20 could be found. In spite of major reconstruction work, we never found the rest!

Bob Ryder told us that his parents paid for him to attend the school belonging to the Misses Billmins in the Memorial Hall. He reminded us, that the Master of the main school who preceded Mr Jeffries was Sammy Blewd (I believe that Reg Neil has a photograph of him in his collection) and that Sammy Blewd is buried "just outside the church door".

Ryder's great grandmother, Mrs Morley, was the first tenant of the middle cottage when the Workhouse was closed in 1834. It was two years after the "Union Act" had deposited the Harefield poor in the Ruislip Workhouse.

Bob Ryder was born in the corner room on the first floor at the Spotted Dog end of the Workhouse and remembered nostalgically a Wellington apple and a syringa which grew over the dry bucket closet supplied in 1836 for the convenience of each of the five cottages. He remembered the arches which spanned in two places the stream which ran from "Shepherd"'s pond on the green to the pond at Knightscode Farm. Breakspear Road was just gravel, and they used to fill in the arches over the stream with stones picked off the fields.

Women did "thistle spudding" with a long hoe and also haymaking. (We own a spouted jar, given to us by Bob's cousin, Bert, which was used for cold tea in the fields at harvest time). Everyone was very busy from morn to night. They worked early and late, especially at harvest, so that they didn't lose any of the corn out of the ears. Each family cut so many "lands" and laid it down in "yealms". Wards of Egham went round from farm to farm with the steam threshing machine. Later it was Boughtons from Amersham Common, but Wards were still about.

They took the hay to London - 72 trusses it would be, with two horses on a pole and a van behind. They took it to Orchard Street, to Albany, (In 1955 an old car market) and elsewhere. Later they made their own arrangements and cut out the market, so that they got eighteen pence for loading home and 2p or 3p for clearing the cage of manure and feed for the horses. They brought the manure home and sometimes oats and cattle cake from the docks.

Bob Ryder joined the Army largely because he could not stand cowering to Mr Tarleton.

I believe a special house was allocated to him in Northwood Road when he left the Army. I imagine it would be perhaps in Northwood Way, where municipale housing was then being built on land which had been allocated for the use of the village by the Enclosure Act of 1811. But there will be people in the village who still remember.

Dorothy Winton

Conservation Report

The Conservation Report will follow later. Our representative on the panel is at present in Australia.