

Harefield History Society

Newsletter Number 35

Spring 1998

Committee: I Liddell Chairman
M Marjoram Treasurer
M Evans Secretary
R Goodchild Programme Secretary
T Hillier
V Woodward Conservation Rep
K Davey
Mrs Williamson



Programme: There will be coach outings to:

Winslow Hall	Cost £12	6th June 98
Oxford	cost £12	18th July 98

If you would like tickets for the above trips please ☎ 01895 823993

On September 28th at the Park Lane Centre Antony Smith BSc will be giving a talk on Bee Keeping.

Secretary's Note:

One thing which seems to be still hanging over us is the possible demolition of Little Hammonds and the building of ten small houses close to the cricket field. They will definitely need windows of unbreakable glass, but we hope that they will not be built.

There is now another threat involving the Medipark that never was. Apparently all the rules are to be ignored and any commercial or industrial company may buy it without any "medical" restrictions. Immediately the traffic problems are raised and as I hear they will have parking for 500 cars one can imagine the chaos as they all arrive and depart each day. Also of course the building will be on Green Belt land.

Around twenty five members enjoyed Robert's Local Studies evening, especially the refreshments! Several people suggested that we should have this type of refreshment at every meeting. Any comments?

Did you imagine that there were so many books about Harefield? If you found something specially interesting please tell Robert or me and we may be able to find some more information among our documents.

M Evans.

The Fifteenth Local History Day: 28th February 98. held at Winston Churchill Hall, Ruislip.

The subject of the day was the Parish Church. It began with coffee and a welcome from the Chairman of the Stanmore and Harrow History Society.

The first illustrated talk was about St Lawrence Church, Little Stanmore, a very old church with a very interesting and decorative interior. Well worth a visit. The nearest underground station is Cannons Park on the Jubilee Line and the address is Whitchurch Lane. The church is open on Sunday afternoons between 2 and 4pm.

Pat Clarke a well known speaker on many local buildings chose "The Dissenters" for her subject. With the changes in the past from Roman Catholic to Protestant religion in this country there were Dissenters a plenty but the talk referred to mostly local priests and vicars.

The next talk was Victorian Church Restoration seen through the eyes of an architect. The Victorians have been blamed for spoiling a lot of the Medieval Buildings, but it seems they had their reasons for what they regarded as "improvements" and probably did save the complete destruction of some.

There was a lunch break from 12.35 - 1.45pm. The first talk after lunch was about the Bells of St Mary's, Acton. This was of particular interest to me as I was born in Acton and recently paid a visit to the tower of the church with the Acton History group. Near the church is a pub called the "Six Bells" but the church now has eight bells, one of which was rung at the time of the Armada.

Church fonts were the subject of the next illustrated talk and what a variety there was. After this there was a half hour tea break, followed by a demonstration of the ringing of hand-bells, a very skillful operation with an incredible number of changes.

The old church of St John's, Stanmore concluded the day. A fund of information on local churches, and enjoyed by all.

Maisie Marjoram

About Adelaide

Before the arrival of white man 160 years ago, the 1000 square miles or so of the flat Adelaide plains of South Australia was a mainly dry savannah sprinkled with large gum trees, annually watered with rain from the surrounding 1000 ft high hills, and well able to withstand the occasional weeks of 100 degrees of heat.

Here there lived no more than 300 or so friendly aboriginals of the Kauma tribe, chasing kangaroo meat and themselves quite often being raided by hill tribes, sometimes killing the tribesmen in order to steal their women. This had gone on for thousands of years, some tribes even becoming extinct, until the white settlers arrived in 1836 and stopped this sad habit. An advantage our Aboriginals sometimes overlook. The diary of one early British pioneer relates how some young Aboriginal women hid, panic stricken, inside her tent for fear of being taken.

Now to Tasmania. In the late 1700's or early 1800's a certain young man named Groom left Harefield to sail off to Tasmania. It is not known whether he was a retired marine, or a ticket of leave convict given a grant of land. He married and built for his thriving family a large house which he called "Harefield". This still stands and a small township grew around it which he called St Mary's. It looks like he built a church also and named his village after his home church in the English village of Harefield.

Harefield History Society

Following a WEA course on the history of the village, and the publication of "Harefield at that time of day", a meeting was held at Harefield Library in January of 1980 which resulted in the formation of this society. A committee was formed, of Mr T Ashby, Mr B Meads, Mrs M Evans, Mrs I Clark and Mrs G King. A draft constitution was being prepared. By July there were 45 members, and several talks on local buildings and a tour of the Weald and Downland Museum had been enjoyed. An objection had been strongly expressed about the proposal to surround the Old Workhouse with small houses. Mrs Bowlit gave a talk on Ruislip and our former tutor, Geoffrey Tyack, came and talked about Rural Middlesex in the 19th Century. HHS was truly on its way.

Over the years membership has fluctuated. At present we are not far off the original 45. This year five new members joined following the Village Fete, at which we had a stand. This newsletter is number 35.

In 1990 we were asked to organise the Local History Conference at the Winston Churchill Hall. The subject was Education and we gave it the title "Chalk and Talk". Members gave a presentation of a village school, and speakers dealt with "Bishopsholt and the Early Grammar Schools", "Commercial Travellers' School, Pinner", "Brentford Sunday School", and other educational subjects.

In 1995 we were asked to join forces with Rickmansworth Society, again to organise the Conference. The subject was "Families - people great and small". We were able to persuade our dramatic society, the HADS, to act out a murder trial from the 18th Century.

Our summer outings to historic places are always popular and our Programme Secretary is kept busy finding speakers for winter meetings and places to visit in the summer. Our collection of documents began humbly with the notes made by the writers of "Harefield at that time of day". It has grown to fill a large filing cabinet (kept in our library and available for searchers). Much of the information there is a result of Elona Cuthbertson's research, which resulted in the publication of her book "Gregory King's Harefield".

This article was written at the request of the Guild of Arts and our own members may be interested.

M Evans

The Globe Theatre

After three hundred years the Globe Theatre has reopened. It was officially opened by Her Majesty the Queen on 12th June 1997.

In Shakespears day Bankside was a flourishing district for entertainment and the Globe Theatre, where many great English plays were first performed was the centre of that area. In 1613 the theatre was destroyed by fire when a spark from a stage cannon, during a performance of Henry VIII, set fire to the thatched roof.

In 1949 Sam Wanamaker, an American actor and director, saw a plaque to the Globe on a wall and could not understand why the British people had never shown an interest in rebuilding it. He then decided to try to do it himself. The Government refused to help so he begged from firms and individuals. It was not until his death that people came forward to help to build it for his sake.

Skilled craftsmen trained in Elizabethan building techniques and using traditional materials such as unseasoned oak, lime, goats hair and water reeds from all over the country, set to work to create the Tudor theatre once again. The green oak came from some of Britains' ancient forests to be fashioned into mortice and tenon joints. Willows were split into laths, sand from Chardstock was

mixed with lime and goats hair to create plaster for the walls. York flagstones were laid on the piazza: even the bricks have been moulded to the same size as they were in Elizabethan days.

The Globe Theatre has been rebuilt as an International Shakespeare Centre, an educational and cultural complex. Shakespeare's plays are being performed with audience participation as they were in Elizabethan days. Afternoon and evening performances seat 1000 people under cover on wooden benches and 500 standing "groundlings" in the open. History has been recreated at Bankside, London.

J Thirkettle

The last, but not least, report from our three members who travelled to Northumbria:

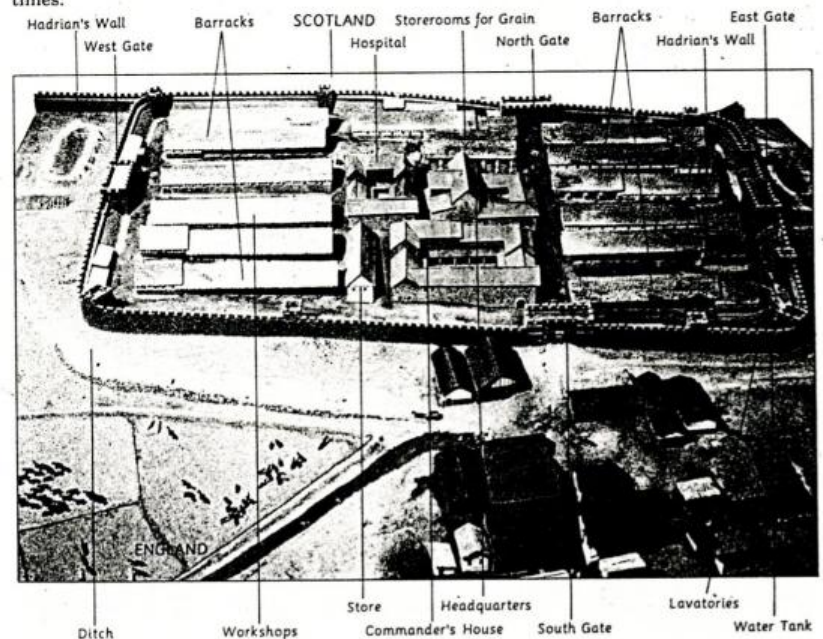
Hadrian's Wall

Alarmed by the inability of the loose - knit defences of the occupying Roman Army to control the tribes in the north of England, the Emperor Hadrian in the year 122AD ordered the construction of a defensive barrier from the Tyne to the Solway Firth, hence Hadrian's Wall.

On a coach tour there is never time to see everything one wants to but the scenery en route was of "incomparable grandeur". This alone compensated for the loss of a more extensive exploration.

The tour commenced at Heddon on the Wall. Here there was not a very large expanse but enough to walk along. Next we travelled to the National Trusts four mile stretch of the Wall from Homesteads to Steel Rigg in the central sector. This includes one of the thirteen forts and three of the eighty milecastles which punctuates its full length. Elsewhere there is little left of the original wall and so this four miles is very significant. Some of the stones from the wall are beneath the streets of Newcastle. Others were used in the construction of the east-west military road in the 18th Century, and some can be seen in the walls of the local farm buildings.

This model shows how the fort at Housesteads looked in Roman times.



Along the stretch of wall can be seen the remains of military works which many centuries ago constituted the northern frontier of the Roman Empire.

Nestling beneath the robust stone of the fort walls are the remains of the civilian settlement which once catered for the off duty hours of the garrison. The fort itself has natural protection provided on either side by steep ridge faces.

The great bare grassland fields around the fort today were probably covered with thorn and scrub; the monotonous blocks of coniferous woodland lying to the north are 20th century and form part of the largest man-made forest in the UK.

Each of the wall forts has features of interest today and at Homesteads can be seen the robust

stone piers which supported the massive gateways, the graneries and the well preserved latrine system. The latter had stone basins in the central part, deep sewers either side over which seats were placed and a large water cistern behind.

The builders of the wall and its forts were legionaires, the elite of the Imperial Army. They had the technical knowledge and skills but it was not their task to garrison this frontier barrier. Auxiliaries manned the completed defence system.

In the north east corner of the fort at Homesteads can be seen the remains of a barrack divided into living quarters, each for eight men.

Originally the wall was ten feet wide and fifteen feet high. Later the width was reduced to eight feet. Our homeward route took us through more beautiful scenery.

V Hardey

The Navigator

Its a devil of a life on the old navigation
I just carried my shovel, my pack and my ration,
The summer was fine but the winter pure hell,
And I never had nothing of value to sell.
I came from Killarney to find me a station
And joined a navvie gang on the new navigation.
I hadn't no training and I hadn't no luck
And I never earned more than my whiskey and tuck.
I was only a lad when Bridgewater began
And worked in a gang that was run by Big Dan,
Who stayed as our leader by crippling all who
Challenged for leader of our working crew.
That First year was hard. The weather was worse,
We worked in the mud and the cold was a curse.
I lived in a dugout with Black Taylor and Ned,
But before end of winter Black Taylor was dead.
On the first mile from Worsley five navvies died,
But we must have canals and we still had our pride
And I had to keep working or I lost my place,
Ned died in the mud when it covered his face.
Our shelter was canvas stretched over our heads,
Damp sacking was all that we had for our beds.
Our money was spent in the Company store
And our feminine company only a whore,
But we dug the canals, Boy, in sunshine and rain,
Through hailstorms and snowstorms and often in rain.
From Worsley to Manchester, Bridgewater ran,
Then we walked to the Mersey and started again.
I've worked the Grand Turk, the Grand Union too,
Alongside old friends, some who've lived through
From Humber to Mersey to Bristol and Trent
And even afforded a share in a tent.

I've known some good lads. Many died through the years,
And I've known me good women that I've left in tears.
I've had many friends but not a good pal,
And I've drunk enough whiskey to fill the canal.
For fifty -five years the canals were my life
I've no children I know of and I've not had a wife.
I've nothing to show and there's no one to care
And I've not seen Killarney since first I left there,
But I dug the canals on the old navigation
And there aren't many left who can claim that distinction.
I've worked and I've stunk in the mud and the grime,
But I dug the canals and they're there for all time.

R Harris

Rare Plants in Harefield

Following the article by M Evans about Mr Blackstone's list of rare, wild flowers growing around Harefield, published in 1737, members might like to know that some plants are still alive and blooming. Several have been recorded in local nature reserves which are managed by Herts and Middx Wildlife Trust, the London Wildlife Trust or Hillingdon Natural History Society.

Townhall Clock (Moschatel) grows very sparsely in Old Park Wood but covers an area of several square metres in Harefield Place Nature Reserve.

A single flower of Bee Orchid was also found there in June 1994.

Spotted Orchids are well established in Dews Farm Sandpits.

Bladderwort once grew in the ponds near the Green Man pub at Moor Park but has been seen more recently in a pond off Park Road, Uxbridge.

It would be interesting to know of other discoveries. Do pass on your findings. If anyone would like more details of these plants or the Natural History organisations please contact me.

Ann Rix on ☎ 01895 466804

Report on Harefield Village Conservation Area Advisory Panel

Harefield House Car Park

This is now operational, and as everyone will be aware, the Council have installed an island in the road to make crossing safer. The road has also been narrowed in places in order, it is hoped, to slow traffic down. Time will tell!

Rear of 14 - 16 High Street

Approval was granted for three houses but a further appeal for 4 houses has been lodged.

Breakspear House

The panel has seen a draft planning brief and it agreed in principle to the proposed possible uses. Members of the panel felt that any of the proposed uses were preferable than leaving the house empty.

Little Hammonds

Plans were submitted for approval by the developer for the demolition of Little Hammonds and the construction of twelve houses on the site. A meeting was held, attended by interested parties, ie Harefield Cricket Club, the National Playing Fields Association, Harefield Football Club, the Parochial Charities, local Councillors, John Wilkinson MP, Tenants and Residents Association and most of the neighbours. Following this meeting the Planning Committee is to recommend refusal of both applications. English Heritage has now suggested that the house is of sufficient interest and enhances the Conservation Area to the extent they recommend it be preserved. It appears that the strong opposition voiced by public opinion has won this battle - however - will we win the war?? Members of Harefield History Society will no doubt, have seen reports in the local Gazette.

Conservation Area

No further information on the proposal to split the present area into two parts has been recieved.

14B Northwood Road

The Planning Officer feels that a further house on this site would constitute over development. The Panel strongly agreed that another house would do nothing to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area and, in fact, would detract from it.

Harefield House Cedar Tree

An application was submitted to do some tree surgery on this very important tree. The Panel accepted the Tree Officer's decision on the matter.

Medi Park

Members of the Panel agreed that the new plans submitted by Trafalgar House were totally unacceptable in the village Conservation Area. Some of the buildings are three storeys high and seen to be entirely composed of glass and aluminium. In addition the plans include car parking space for some 500 cars. These new plans bear no relation to those approved some years ago. It was also felt that the village would become grid locked with an extra 500 cars coming and going!!

We can but do our best to preserve our village atmosphere and it is essential that, as individuals, you write voicing any objections you might have to the Planning Department, London Borough of Hillingdon.

Val Woodward
15th March 1998