

# Harefield History Society

*AFFILIATED TO THE UXBRIDGE GUILD OF ARTS*



Harefield Almshouses

## NEWSLETTER No 36 AUTUMN 1998

<b>Committee</b>	T Hillier	Chairman
	A Batchelor	Treasurer
	K Davey	Secretary
	R Goodchild	Programme Secretary
	V Woodward	Conservation Representative
	M Evans	Newsletter Editor
	M Isaacs	
	M Marjoram	
	I Liddell	

### Programme

	October 26	David Tatterall; The System of Criminal Justice
	November 23	Arthur Dark; Genealogist, A Fool with a Long Memory
1999	January 25	Hugh Granger; Tales of Notorious Highwaymen
	February 22	Paul Veluet; Role of English Heritage in West London
	March 22	Brian Cozens; The Geology of Harefield and West Middlesex
	April 26	AGM. Local Studies Evening.

### Editor's Note:

Being just back from a holiday in Dorset among all those thatched cottages it is difficult to concentrate. My family is hooked on steam, so the annual Great Dorset Steam Fair had to be visited. My nine year old grandson, Jason, is a member of the Steam Apprentices Club, the junior branch of the National Traction Engine Trust. He was delighted to have the opportunity to steer an Aveling steam roller called Daffodil all round the showground. It used to be normal for small boys to dream about being engine drivers, but this one really is!

So, back to current affairs, we have a new secretary and I hope she will enjoy the job as much as I have. All the best, Kay Davey.

M Evans



## Winslow Hall and Aylesbury

The first of the History Society's summer outings started off on a rather dank and gloomy morning from the village green. Fortunately the spirits of our members and visitors from other clubs were high and sunny.

Our first point of call was Winslow Hall in Buckinghamshire and the drive through the Chiltern countryside was enjoyed by all.

The Hall is the home of Lord and Lady Tomkins and a warm welcome greeted us on our arrival. The Hall was designed by Sir Christopher Wren and is the only house outside of London to have survived without major alteration. The house was built for William Lowdes in 1700 at a cost of £6586. 10s 2d. Using a million bricks and 50,000 tiles. Lord and Lady Tomkins bought the house in 1959 and the love of their home, family and dogs soon became apparent with the many portraits, photographs and memorabilia one encountered during the tour of the rooms.

We were split into two groups and Lord and Lady Tomkins took one group each and described the history of the Hall and the past owners. Some of the past owners were as follows; Brigadier McCorquodale 1897 - Barbara Cartland married into that family and often visited. In 1941 the Hall was requisitioned by the Air Ministry, as an airfield had been built nearby.

After the war the Hall was put on the market for £8,000 and was bought by a demolition company. Fortunately the Wren Society notified Bucks County Council who evoked the Town and Country Planning Act and therefore saved the Hall. Two years later a preservation order was put on the Hall. When the guided tour of the rooms ended we were invited to walk round the gardens and view the many plants, trees and shrubs there. By this time the sun had come out and allowed us to continue our outing in pleasant conditions.

Our next destination was the County town of Buckinghamshire - Aylesbury is a market town and the open air market which has been an integral part of Aylesbury since the 13<sup>th</sup> century was in full swing. Quite close by was the inevitable shopping centre which marked the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The town has a very interesting museum which was renovated in 1995. It was bright and airy and held a wide range of galleries combining arts and crafts both traditional and contemporary.

The galleries had touchable displays focusing on local industries past and present. In the art gallery was an exhibition of modern art paintings by Benedict Rubbra with a new concept on producing paintings which had quite a visible impact. Roald Dahl's childrens gallery which I am sure must be a magical place for children and the young at heart. Unfortunately time and weary feet did not allow us to see everything but I am sure it would be a place to go back to again.

We boarded the coach for the journey home and enjoyed the sweets that Reg Neil handed round, thanks Reg. Thanks also to Robert Goodchild who organised the trip.

A Batchelor



## **.Historic Visit to Harefield**

Unable to resist the challenge of replying to a correspondent in the Daily Telegraph, who alleged that nobody in Britain was aware of the significance of ANZAC Day, I wrote a reply giving a very brief history of the close ties that Harefield has with our Australian cousins. I faxed the letter to the Editor of the Daily Telegraph and to my amazement he telephoned me within an hour informing me that my letter would be published the next day, which happened to be ANZAC Day.

That, I thought, was the end of the matter! But no, the next evening I received a phone call from a lady who introduced herself as Mrs Mary Fox, the granddaughter of Charles Arthur Moresby Billyard-Leake. As most villagers will be aware Charles Billyard-Leake was the Australian, who lived with his family in the Mansion of Harefield Park, and who offered his home to the Australian Government for use as an Australian Military Hospital in 1914.. The estate was subsequently sold by Mr Billyard-Leake in 1921 to the Middlesex County Council, and from that beginning arose the hospital we know today.

Mary told me that she had never been to Harefield and knew very little of her background so, at my invitation, some two weeks later she arrived to visit her “ancestral haunts”. Firstly we went to the hospital, and we were given a conducted tour, by Mr O’Keefe, of the mansion, which now accommodates the doctors.

The house was built between 1710 and 1718 and it is easy to see what a beautiful house it once was - if there was money restore it to its’ original state! Mary was obviously absorbing all the atmosphere, and, no doubt, picturing in her mind, her father as a small boy, playing with his brothers and sisters within those very rooms. Echoes of the past were racing through my mind too! It was here that the 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Cardigan courted Miss Penelope Ann Cooke, daughter of Sir George Cooke, the then owner of Harefield Park. Penelope eventually became the mother of the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Cardigan, of the Charge of the Light Brigade fame.

From the house Mary and I strolled to the Australian Memorial Garden on the edge of the lake at the rear of the house. From there we could see the cricket ground established by her grandfather and where cricket is played to this day.

Our next call was, of course, St Mary’s Church where Mary signed the visitors’ book in the Australian Chapel donated by her grandfather. She was astonished at the great stained glass memorial window dedicated to her grandmother Letitia Sarah Billyard-Leake. My husband and I had been in the churchyard a few days previously to find the Billyard-Leake grave and Gordon went back to clean all the stone monumental tablets so Mary was able to read the inscriptions without difficulty.

Here lie buried Charles Arthur Moresby and Letitia Sarah Billyard-Leake,  
their daughter Mary Deyncourt Billyard-Leake and their daughter in law  
Leila Violet Douglas Billyard-Leake.

There is also a memorial tablet to Mary’s father, Captain Edward Whaley Billyard-Leake, DSO,RN, who died in Kenya.



We returned to my house and we chatted over the usual "cuppa". Mary is the daughter of Captain Edward Whaley Billyard-Leake, DSO,RN, and his second wife. She spent her formative years in Kenya, subsequently being educated at Cheltenham Ladies College. Mary and her sister didn't really know their father until Mary was 18. He apparently had a distinguished naval career, and was the youngest officer to receive the Distinguished Service Order for his bravery at the Battle of Zeebrugge in the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

It has been suggested in the folk-lore of Harefield that Letitia Sarah was an Australian heiress and it was she who "had the money". Mary confirmed this fact and told me that when Letitia Sarah Leake married Charles Arthur Moresby Billyard , the Billyard-Leake dynasty was established.

Their daughter, Mary Deyncourt, who is buried in the Churchyard, was only four years old when she died in 1898 and my visitor, Mary, had no idea that she had had an aunt who tragically died at such a young age.

Mary was obviously very moved when she toured Harefield Park and the Mansion as indeed, was I. I have lived in Harefield for 43 years and had never been inside the Mansion, which I think is not particularly impressive from the outside. It is very different on the inside and I had a great feeling of it's rich historical past. Mary's impressions were obviously very personal.

Visiting St Mary's Church must have been quite a moment in Mary's life, and she was deeply impressed by what she called a very beautiful church in a lovely setting. She commented that the village, in such close proximity to London, still manages to appear rural. As we toured the Australian graves neither she nor I felt the need for talk - only quiet remembrance of all those young men who died so far from home. Their compatriot, Charles Billyard-Leake, who together with Sir Francis Newdigate, Lord of the Manor, erected a granite obelisk to their memory, lies only yards away.

Mary was delighted to receive a signed copy of Mary P Shepherd's book, "The Heart of Harefield - the Story of the Hospital" from the Director. Mary has told me that she read far into the night, finding every detail so interesting.

It is strange how life goes in circles. Charles and Letitia left their native Australia to live in England, but Mary's three children, their great grandchildren, have all settled in Australia and are now Australian citizens. Mary too, makes frequent trips to see her children and she told me that she has great admiration for life down under. Mary intends to visit Harefield again bringing her sister with her. I look forward to seeing them both. I hope that her visit to Harefield afforded her as much pleasure as it did me.

V Woodward  
Parish Archivist



## **Church Fete Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July 1998**

A rather windy day on the green, Margaret Evans had set up a table with a selection of her prints and illuminated notes, along with some Gregory King books of Harefield. Unfortunately Reg Neil's display which he had carefully arranged didn't arrive as planned. Quite a few people displayed interest and the proceeds amounted to thirty pounds which was passed on to the Church. Thank you, Margaret.

M Marjoram.

## **Outing to Oxford Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> July 1998**

I was lucky enough to be treated to a trip to Oxford with the History Society. On arrival we embarked on an open top bus trip around the town. Our guide gave us a very informative talk during our progress through the busy streets. Apart from the many visitors to Oxford our visit coincided with Graduation Day for some of the students. The spectacle of the students in their gowns added to the atmosphere of this wonderful place so steeped in history. We were able to enter part of Christchurch College and enjoyed a recital by the choir in the Cathedral, an added bonus. We partook of some light refreshments and then continued by foot, taking in the abundance of architecture and formal gardens. All too soon it was time to make our way home. One more item to be stored in the memory book.

Thanks Mum.

H Upton ( nee Marjoram )

## **Harrow and Hillingdon Geological Society Silver Anniversary.**

To travel over 500 million years in one day was what the audience at Harrow and Hillingdon Geological Society's Presentation of "It's Your Earth - You Lucky People" were able to do on Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> September at the Winston Churchill Hall.

The occasion was to celebrate the Society's Silver Jubilee and eminent geological experts were brought together to give illustrated talks on;-

In the Beginning - the Earth in the Solar System;

Early Development of the Earth;

Making Mountains;

Life through the Ages;

The Impact of Man; And finally, back to the present time with;

Your Local Geology; Beneath your Feet; Our Rivers; Building and Industry.

They were hoping to get at least an attendance of 206 but were delighted when the total audience was nearly 300. It was a very interesting day.

V Hardey



## **Report on Harefield Village Conservation Area Advisory Panel.**

### **Rear of 14 - 16 High Street**

As most of you will be aware the three houses are in the final stages of completion and the area is much improved. Our objection to 4 houses on the site ( historically there were three cottages ) was upheld.

### **Breakspear House.**

The council has withdrawn the proposals for possible development and use.

### **Little Hammonds.**

The appeal by the developer to the Department of the Environment was rejected and subsequently the owner decided that he would not pursue further planning applications. He is now in the process of resuming the refurbishment of the house. Panel members were delighted that this lovely house will continue to be a landmark in Breakspear Road. It proves that public opinion does win the day sometimes!!

### **14b Northwood Road.**

The Planning Department has turned down the application by the owner to build yet another house on this site. We await further developments.

**Medi Park.** No further information has been passed to the panel.

### **Middlesex Antiques - High Street.**

The panel pursued the matter of the bollards erected outside the shop by the owner. We have been advised that planning permission is not necessary as they do not constitute enclosure. However, the Panel is of the opinion that too many goods are on display outside the shop making it something of an eyesore. The sale of goods on the highway is another matter and Street trading legislation may be applicable.

### **Summerhouse Lane.**

The application to develop the site into an area of housing was upheld by the Department of the Environment. Sadly this means that the various small firms presently situated in Summerhouse Lane will have to quit.- The developer has announced his intention to build some industrial units after the housing has been completed. This, of course, will be too late for existing firms. This area does not fall within the remit of the Panel, being outside the Conservation Area.

### **M25 Service Area.**

The Panel has sent a strong letter of protest objecting to the plans, which we believe will seriously intrude in the view of the Colne Valley from Harefield, judged by many to be one of the finest views in what remains of open spaces in Middlesex.

**Finally, the "Tidy Harefield Group " has won a Certificate in the 1998 National Spring Clean Campaign - one of only three awarded in the London area. The Panel offered its congratulations to the Group and appreciation of all their hard work and dedication.**

V Woodward.