

Harefield History Society

Affiliated to the Uxbridge Guild of Arts

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Committee

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Chairman

Secretary

Treasurer

Conservation

Programme



*Edith wife of William Newdegate, 1444
from a Brass in St Mary's Church Harefield*

Programme for the forthcoming season

24th September 2001	Eileen Bowlt	Breakspear House
22nd October	Dr Audrey Hogarth	Kosovo - nine months after Kfor
26th November	Nick Hardey	From Clouds Hill to Berlin a historic wander through England and Europe
24th January 2002	Rowena Scott	Bell ringing
25th February	John Ross & Reg Neil	Harefield Past & Present
25th March	Alan Batchelor	Wine making in Harefield Chateau Church Hill
22nd April followed by	Annual General Meeting Local Studies Evening Harefield Family Tree a look at Harefield residents using sound, vision and computers	

Editors Notes

My sincere thanks goes out to everyone who supported the society during our summer programme. And a special thanks to those who have taken the time to write one of the articles about our day trips.

Following on from Julie Lazou fascinating Milton history in the last issue, Brian Watkins has added a few memories of pre war Harefield. Should anyone have any Harefield stories to tell either first or second hand, we would love to hear from you.

THE 1920'S AND THE WAY WE LIVED THEN Continued. from Newsletter 39

By Dr Cuthbertson

MENDING CLOTHES

Clothes were almost entirely made of natural fibres, cotton, wool, linen and silk Rayon was the only synthetic material for textiles.

Men's socks were knitted of wool or cotton while ladies stockings were of cotton lisle (except for the very rich who could afford silk). Wool and cotton wear rapidly so holes usually developed at the heels of stockings and socks within a week. It was then the custom, and the women's duty, in almost every household in the land, to devote an evening (usually Fridays) to darning socks. This was done with the help of a darning needle with a large eye, a wooden "mushroom", and woollen strands of colour selected to match the sock! The invention of nylon was therefore double gift to womankind – but also, later, when this, and other synthetic fibres were used in men's socks, for the respite it gave from the drudgery of mending the foot wear of the men in the house!

PETS

Cats and dogs were kept by most families as hard working members of the household. Though regarded with affection they were normally fed on the scraps from the table. Dogs would be given bones, from butchers, or on occasion be offered dog biscuits. These were like the old sailors hard tack or ship biscuits, made from baked dough but as hard as bones. The dog variety usually contained small black inclusions, which looked like currants but actually were scraps of dried whale meat – or so it said on the label.

Cats were given nothing but the remnants from the table such as fish bones and skins, gristle, cheese and bacon rinds or milk that had soured. Cats were expected to support themselves from mice, and whatever else they could catch be it birds, rats or young rabbits!

Veterinary surgeons were rarely, if ever consulted except to put down sick or infirm pets or to spay cats.

W.F.J.C

STRATFORD ON AVON

13th MAY 2001

We departed from Harefield on the hottest day of the year, so far The coach journey went well, we were treated to Reg's goody box at regular intervals along the way

Alan Batchelor gave us a very interesting commentary on places of interest en route.

We arrived at our destination at approximately 12 o'clock. We picked up a local bus, which took us into the town centre. We then transferred to a tour bus, which took through Stratford, and we were given a talk on the journey

As we were booked at the Shakespeare Theatre to see "Twelfth Night" we had to cut our bus journey short. We found a very pleasant garden next to one of Shakespeare's house, were we ate our lunch enjoying the sunshine. Afterwards we made our way to the theatre, which stands on the riverbank. There were plenty of people around and revellers in rowing boats, experts and novices.

We had front row seats in the theatre and enjoyed the play very much indeed. At the end of the performance it was time for us to make a leisurely return to the coach. The architecture in the town was amazing and to see shops such as Marks and Spencers and British Home Stores in situ made it all the more interesting.

We enjoyed a good journey home and arrived back about 7 o'clock.

Helen Upton, nee Marjoram

1473
not in
capitals

OUR VISIT TO BRIGHTON ROYAL PAVILION, 15th JULY, 2001

After an interesting visit to Michelham priory in the morning, we arrived in Brighton for a tour of that truly fantastic palace, the Royal pavilion.

Built by George, Prince of Wales, later Prince regent and, later still in 1820, King George IV, the pavilion began as a humble farmhouse, which as "Brighton House" was rented to the prince in 1786. During the next twenty-five years or so, it was enlarged and altered again and again, decorated and re-decorated to become the extraordinary, eccentric, and extravagant building we see today. Its premises included the addition of the new stables, housed in a large domed building nearby, which is now used as a concert hall.

The exterior, looking like some eastern fairy palace, with its onion domes and pagoda-like roofs, must be familiar outline to almost everyone in the land. The interior, combining various exotic styles derived mainly from India and China, is almost beyond description, but everywhere combines the highest degree of craftsmanship and excellence of materials.

Reception rooms, banqueting rooms, drawing rooms, are all breathtaking in their splendour, with gilded pillars fashioned like bamboo, exquisite hand-painted wall-coverings, huge chandeliers ornamented with dragons and lotus-blossoms in all, a vision of opulence and magnificence which is unique in the history of interior decoration.

In the Banqueting Room, the gigantic central chandelier is suspended from an enormous silvered winged dragon, the lights themselves, in lotus-form, are linked by jewelled festoons of crystal, from which rise six other dragons. This contrivance is thirty feet high and weighs a ton. Even the great kitchens reflect the oriental theme, with iron palm-tree columns and tent-like copper canopies.

The great Music Room which, like the Banqueting room, was added by John Nash, is ever more opulent. Here are more huge serpents and flying dragons, amid golden, carved ornamentation, all rising to a dome of hundreds of gilded, scallop-shaped scales. It was in this room that disaster struck twice – once in 1975 with an arson attack, which caused serious fire damage, and again in 1987, when hurricane-force winds brought the external dome crashing through the ceiling. Restoration was twice completed, using faithful reproductions of the original designs and materials.

When the pavilion was finally completed, three years after George IV came to the throne, it was said that the king cried for joy when he saw its splendours.

Queen Victoria, however, was not so amused. The new railway was bringing hordes of trippers from London, and she expressed the view that "Brighton is far too crowded" She sold the Pavilion furniture and fittings, including fireplaces, doorways, pilasters, and even the tiles from the kitchen walls.

Brighton town Commissioners were public-spirited enough to resist calls to demolish the

building and sell it off for scrap, and went ahead with the purchase, for £53,000, with the intention, fulfilled to this day, that it should be made available for the people of the town.

In 1948, renovation was begun on the neglected interior, and many of the items of original furniture and fittings were returned by the Crown. In 1980, structural damage, due to sea-air and pollution, was found to be extensive, and a huge programme of restoration was begun. This took over ten years to complete and cost over £10 million, much of which came from the worthy citizens of Brighton.

It is therefore to them that we should express our grateful thanks that this unique treasure still stands in all its glory for us to visit and enjoy today

Betty I Dungey

WILLIAM ASHBY, AN AFFECTIONATE HUSBAND AND APPRECIATIVE MASTER Eileen M. Bowlt

William Ashby, the son of Francis and Judith Ashby of Breakspears, Harefield, was baptised at St Mary's, Harefield in July 1696. At the time of his birth he had one brother and two sisters. Two other brothers had already died in early childhood, and when his father died in 1743, only William and a younger brother, Robert, survived, so he inherited the estate. Their sister, Sarah Blackstone was buried on the same day as their father.

William lived to be 63, and was married twice.

The first wife, Anne Alleyn, gave birth to four children in successive Decembers from 1718 -1721. Francis was born on the 31 December 1718, John - 2 December 1719, Anne 11 December 1720 and Elizabeth - 31 December 1721. The three eldest did not live long. Francis died in April 1719, when the mother must have been in an early stage of pregnancy with John. He died in January 1721 and Anne in May of the same year, by which time she was expecting Elizabeth.

Such appalling child mortality was common in the eighteenth century, even in families like the Ashbys who lived in plenty. Many parents must have been in a constant state of mourning. Anne Ashby, herself, died in July 1723 aged 27, after a brief and tragic life.

Anne Bulstrode, who succeeded her a few years later as William's wife, was much more robust, living to be 93. She was in her mid thirties at the time of her marriage and produced three daughters who all lived into adulthood, but only one of whom married.

William died in 1760 and his will betrays a certain distrust of lawyers, but great affection for his wife. 'I shall use as few words as may be, knowing that it is the trade and custom of the lawyers



to turn and twist words to such meanings as may serve the ends of their clients.' Having got that off his chest he proceeded to leave absolutely everything to 'my affectionate wife, Anne Ashby,' and continued in extravagant language 'was I possessed of a trillion of pounds I would give her, the said Anne Ashby, every farthing and farthingsworth'

Although Anne received all his household goods, plate and jewellery, along with a carriage, a chariot and a chair (sedan), William did not mention Breakspears in his will, as it was presumably entailed in the male line, and was in fact inherited by his younger brother, Robert.

Just where the widowed Anne and her unmarried daughters lived thereafter is unclear. They may simply have remained at Breakspears as guests of Robert Ashby. It was after all a large and commodious house, although not so large as now, for it was extended in Victorian times.

The Ashbys were buried in their own chapel at St Mary's Church, a short walk away down the fields from their house. Nowadays known as the Australian chapel, it has its own external door, so the family could come and go without being noticed by the rest of the congregation. The walls and floor are filled with their memorials.

The outside wall of the Breakspears chapel bears a most unusual wooden monument, erected by William Ashby, in memory of 'his faithful servant, Robert Mossendew, who departed this life February the 5th 1744, aged 60 years'. Robert Mossendew (after whom Mossendew Close, Harefield is named) was a gamekeeper, and is depicted in a carving with his gun and gamebag, accompanied by a spaniel, apparently called Tray. Beneath, a long verse pays tribute to both dog and servant. It ends 'His spaniel of true English kind, Whose gratitude inflam'd his mind, this servant in an honest way, In all his actions copied Tray'

The memorial was restored and rededicated in memory of Elona Cuthbertson, well-known local historian and energetic member of Harefield History Society, who was organising the work at the time of her death in 1992. Her book 'Gregory King's Harefield,' has the carving on the front cover and is available at Hillingdon Borough Libraries.

William Ashby's brother, Robert, having outlived his own son, who worked at the Custom House near the Tower of London, left Breakspears to his daughter, Elizabeth. She was the last in a long line of Ashbys who had owned the estate from the time of the Wars of the Roses in the fifteenth century. She married an apothecary, John Joseph Partridge, and had a son John Ashby Partridge who died without heirs in 1857. After that the owners had family connections, as Breakspears passed to Mrs Partridge's relative, William Wickham Drake and then to a cousin, Commander Tarleton. He died in 1921, but his widow lived on at the house until her death in 1951, even though the estate had by then been sold to Middlesex County Council.

Harrow took over the house and established an Old People's Home there. Since 1987 the grand house has stood empty while the boroughs of Harrow (owners of the house and immediate surroundings) and Hillingdon (owners of most of the grounds and outbuildings) wrangle over planning applications. Meanwhile a rather beautiful dovecot, which dates from the early seventeenth century and is listed Grade II*, has had absolutely no maintenance and with cracks in the brickwork descends ever further into decrepitude.

The Ashbys must be turning in their graves beneath the Breakspears/Australian chapel.

HAREFIELD BROOME FAMILY OR WAS IT GROOME? OR BOTH?

Brian Watkins. Adelaide

In 1988, Dorothy Watkins (ex Highway Farm 1913 to 1951) told me before she passed away (1993) how our Highway Farm Watkins family were related to a Mr Broome, whom she told me was resident in the USA. I'm still hopeful that someone over there can provide some sort of information for me. In my search via the Internet to find how he may have been related, I came across these following articles plagerised from the Internet's Denham and Ickenham pages.

FIRSTLY, 'BROOME' From The Denham Page :- The Air Training Corps had Squadron 2370 in a shed in Denham village, but unfortunately the land where they held their meetings was needed by the local council to build a housing estate, so the aerodrome was very pleased to offer a site. A certain number of people did not want that to happen and opposed it, but with difficulty it went ahead. Many young people have achieved various successes through their commitment and perseverance. AIR VICE MARSHALL SIR IVOR BROOME was gracious enough to become President and perform the opening in 1985 He had been to Denham before, in 1941, when he was flying a Blenheim to Northolt. The weather had seriously deteriorated and he told how he was so glad to have found Denham [and put down there]. (Or did Dorothy say GROOME?? Much like Tasmania's Groomes of 'Harefield', St Marys?? Brian Watkins)

SECONDLY, SOUTH HAREFIELD RAILWAY STATION ,
As a young child visiting Highway farm (circa 1939) I was too young to see the one time South Harefield railway station. However, at a loose end and playing in Highway's south paddock, I can well remember being enthralled by the sudden appearance of a fast travelling steam engine and carriages.

The attraction was high lighted as we walked down the narrow Harvil laneway to where the railway bridge was and where we loitered to catch sight of steam engine. With no bus service in Harefield, we would catch a bus at Ickenham to get us to the terminating underground railway at Uxbridge. Always interested in what went on at the bottom of Highway Farm, I was so please when I read as follows:- THE SUBURB THAT NEVER WAS! 1920's "An unspoiled beauty spot only 25 miles from London - served by the new South Harefield Station" This is how developers of the Harefield Place Estate described their project for large houses in their own grounds along Harvil Road. There were even to be shops but, despite the signs shown here, the purchasers never materialised. The halt opened as Harefield Halt on 24th September 1928, with 40 trains calling there a day Then the name changed to South Harefield in September 1930, finally closing on 30th September 1931 In 1936, London Transport planned to take the Central Line through to Denham and there was to have been a station here called "Harefield Road"



The Metroland building boom comes to Ickenham! In 1921 the Gilbey Family left Swakeleys, and the ancient social order in Ickenham was changed forever (With thanks to the Denham and Ickenham History Societys).

LIVING AS IT USED TO BE

Our House

We lived in a thatched cottage with a timber beam framework in-filled with wattle and daub. Where the white wash had been worn or cracked one could see strands of the horse hair and straw which had been added to strengthen the plaster

From the bedroom window the church seemed to dominate the village and even dwarf the elm trees where the rooks noisily circled over their nests. Often the air reverberated with the sound of bells - long ago a bequest had been made to provide bell ringers with support and refreshment so they were to be heard, not only at weddings, funerals and festivals, but every day, to call for the morning and evening services or just for their practice and pleasure.

Many other sounds reached up to the slight rise where our dwelling was located. In the middle of the night dogs would bark- while an eerie 'to whit to woo' often sounded far away, or near at hand, as owls called to each other while gliding to and fro over the farm fields, rick yards and barns. All year round, just before first light, the village cockerels would loudly crow stirring our neighbour's pig to wake and grunt to show his hunger

In the spring time there was a particularly noisy dawn chorus. Then every bird in the countryside seemed to burst into loud song to greet the lengthening days. In the dark hours of the summer nights the honking of agitated pheasants was heard in the woods while on the bright nights of the full moon, the trills of the nightingales sounded sweet and clear

There were always noises in the roof above our heads. There was no wire mesh to protect our thatch so holes and spaces in the straw were used as homes for many birds - certainly, starlings, sparrows and blue tits. They made soft rustling noises while sheltering in the winter but, in the spring and summer there was great commotion as nests were rebuilt and then greedy nestlings demanded food.

This was our home at the edge of the village. There were a dozen or so houses near ours by the church while others were dotted like beads on a string, along the straggling lanes that wandered between us and the great straight road, the old Roman road, and the river Ouse.

Alongside the main street there was the village green with a great elm tree on which public notices used to be pinned - the only one I remember boldly proclaimed 'Nothing less than 30/- per week' This must have been in 1925 when there was real hardship amongst the country folk. Under the elm there was a well worn smooth bare patch where we boys used to play marbles.

Getting up.

My memories begin, in 1922 as a six years old boy I remember waking on a winter's day to the dawn light showing through frost patterns on the window panes. Then moving my feet, out from under the heavy warm blankets to the tiny rag rug - the only covering on the bare bedroom floor At those times there was no central heating - or fitted carpets - and the fires were never lit in a bedroom, except when someone was ill!

Next the chill of emergence from the cosy bedclothes into the icy air to stand on the rough wooden floor boards while hastily donning chilly clothes - or sometimes, when it was really cold, struggling to dress while still in bed !

Cleanliness was imperative - In those times every one knew of the need for fresh air and the dangers of germs. Normally one washed with bar soap, either yellow, as used for the laundry, or pink carbolic, smelling of disinfectant and certain to kill germs! Soft translucent soap in special shapes (Pears for instance) was reserved for ladies and babies i.e. those, with sensitive skins or complexions. Especially delicate fabrics - silk, ladies' stockings, lace and the best of woollens, were cleaned with a soap preparations, (such as Lux) made in the form of flakes.

Hot water was never available in the bedroom. Our faces (and necks) as well as the hands had to be washed, using cold water in a basin. On occasion, in especially bitter weather, the water in the jug might be frozen and the moist flannel stiff with ice - then one would be permitted to wash one's face and hands in

the kitchen. This was the warmest room in the house - the kitchen range was fed at night with slow burning fuel, dross or nutty slack. The next morning a little kindling, a few sticks and small coal lumps or split logs, would be added. These combined with a stir from the poker to remove the ash, and opening of the dampers, usually sufficed to restore a lively flame to the grate.

Breakfast.

A large black iron kettle was kept on the hob. The water it contained was always warm and rapidly came to the boil when placed over the flame. So tea could quickly be made.

There were no tea bags only the dried leaves, of Indian black tea, or the less popular Chinese green variety, could be bought loose but often in packets of thin cardboard lined with lead foil - or in sealed tins. The tea was brewed, The dried leaves were measured, with a tea spoon, usually one for each person and also 'one for the pot' into the tea pot. These vessels were commonly of china pottery though enamelled iron would be used. Tea pots in normal use were made of china pottery though less breakable enamelled iron vessels were often used in the kitchen and by workmen. There were porcelain teapots, often kept in glass fronted cupboards, but were rarely used, except to grace a special occasion. The infusion was made by adding boiling water into the tea pot from which it was poured through a metal strainer into the mugs or china tea cups from which it was normally drunk with milk and sugar. Only on special occasions would the best tea cups be used. For the children a cup of tea was often a sweet milky drink with lots of sugar. In spite of the use of strainers some fragments of the tea leaves would be found in the cup after the tea was drunk. Often for fun, but sometimes in earnest, the future was read and fortunes foretold, by 'reading' the patterns made by these tea leaves after the cup had been swirled and inverted.

Most farm worker's families obtained milk directly from the farm but there was a milkman who served most of the houses in the village. He used pint or quart measures to ladle the milk into the customer's jug from a churn on his cart.

Freshly baked bread was also delivered from the village bakery every morning.

At breakfast we occasionally had butter but normally it was bread and margarine (the taste was then very different from butter) or perhaps bread and dripping, this was delicious at the rare times when it was from chicken and duck. There was also porridge made from rolled oats boiled with water in a pan on the stove. It was served in bowls with milk, sugar, black treacle or golden syrup but never with salt. Everyone enjoyed this porridge. However none of us liked cleaning the pot in which it had been prepared - in those days there were no washing machines or even liquid detergents - only soap, washing soda, and a very little hot water!

Although cereals ("Grape nuts", "Shredded wheat" and "Force") could be bought, we still preferred our porridge. Often we would have some fried bacon or perhaps a sausage or faggot for breakfast though eggs and tomatoes were only available in the spring and summer season. Eggs could be preserved in jars, under waterglass, not for ordinary meals but for special dishes on festive occasions.

Bread came as the half quartern (1 3/4lb., 0.75 kg) loaf. The rounded cottage type, was made from two pieces of dough joined one on top of the other and sharing a firm crust and often bearing on their bases, traces of ash and charcoal from the oven floor on which they had been baked. There were also 'tin' loaves of rectangular cross section showing the shape of the metal containers in which they had been baked. Rolls and bloomers could also be bought but, like brown and wholemeal breads, not commonly used by ordinary families such as ours. There was no ready sliced bread - rounds were cut with a bread knife (usually saw toothed) - on a circular wooden bread board inscribed around its circumference with the word 'bread' and representations of sheaves and heads of wheat.

Toast, especially hot buttered toast, was a real delicacy usually reserved for tea time. It could only be made when there were glowing coals in the range or fireplace (and butter in the butter crock). Then a round of bread impaled on the long toasting fork, would be held close to the fire, when hot and crisp and still steaming in the middle, it would be spread with butter - then to be eaten, and to savour, the combination of delicious warm new bread, the crispness of toast and full flavour of the melting butter. What could be better!

To be continued.....