

Harefield History Society

Affiliated to the Uxbridge Guild of Arts

Newsletter no. 46 Autumn 2003

Committee

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| T. Hillier | Chairman |
| B. Waterman | Secretary |
| A. Batchelor | Treasurer |
| R. Goodchild | Programme Secretary |
| M. Isaacs | Conservation and Newsletter |
| K. Davey | |
| M. Marjoram | |
| J. Hillier | |
| M. Dawson | |



William Cecil, the first Lord Burghley

Winter Programme 2003/4

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 22nd September 03 | Terry White | History of Dawley |
| 22nd October 03 | Michael Dent | Harefield Halt |
| 24th November 03 | Peter Norris | Northolt Airfield |
| 26th January 04 | Eileen Bowlt | 16th Century Ruislip |
| 23rd February 04 | Alan Batchelor | Steam Supreme |
| 22nd March 04 | Dr. Brian Morgan | Stockers Lake |
| 26th April 04 | Annual General Meeting followed by a local studies evening | |

The Harefield History Society winter meetings are held in the Park Lane Village Centre and start at 8 p.m. Visitors are very welcome.

THE TANGLED WEB OF HAREFIELD PAROCHIAL CHARITIES (CONTINUED)

As promised in the last newsletter here are some of the bequests made to the people of Harefield in times gone by and which are still being managed today by honorary trustees.

Countess of Derby's Almshouses Charity.

This charity is probably the one most known about in the village because the Almshouses are in a prominent place on Church Hill and are outstanding with their diagonal chimney stacks and with the coat of arms over the door.

The Countess of Derby founded the charity by will dated 24th December 1636. Her will was not entirely precise, it being more a chronicle of gifts and bequests made in her life time. It is also not clear whether the almshouses were built as a result of the will, whether they were built during her lifetime or whether it just provided for the £36 per annum (a generous amount in those days) for the almshouses, the Master and its upkeep. The almshouses were to accommodate poor widows of Harefield. In 1699 three of the six residents had members of their family living with them. Each almshouse had a downstairs and an upstairs room with a private staircase.

In 1601 Lady Alice, the Countess of Derby, had married Sir Thomas Egerton, an eminent lawyer and they lived the rest of their lives at Harefield Place.

On 23rd February, 1674, Sir Richard Newdigate who had bought back Harefield Place, provided for the Almshouses in perpetuity by a deed which altered the bequest of the Countess of Derby so that certain pieces of land and buildings, including Baldwin's Hall, should be used by the trustees and heirs of the charity to the intent and purpose that they should receive out of the rents and profits £36 per annum over and above all taxes to be applied to the charitable use therein mentioned in perpetuity.

In 1750, Sir Roger Newdigate, descendant and heir of Sir Richard, sold Baldwin's Hall and several pieces of land named in the deed of 1674 to George Cook Esq. but the six old women in the Almshouses were still paid the £36 per annum.

Fast forward to 1934, when Sir Francis Newdigate, who then lived in Arbury, Warwickshire, conveyed land at Harefield in trust for a charity known as the Countess of Derby's Almshouses to the Charity Commission and the Harefield Parochial Charities trustees for them to administer and manage the charity. The charity still gets annual payments from Harefield Hospital because Baldwin's Hall was on its site.



The Almshouses

Mrs Mary Ashby's Charity (including Baldwin's Gift)

This charity was founded by will dated 24th April 1664 and £100 was left to be invested and the income expended on the poor. Mrs. Ashby had earlier given £40 for the poor.

In 1706 Mrs Baldwin gave £20 the interest of which was annually to be divided between six poor widows who were not already receiving alms and who constantly attended church. Mrs Baldwin lived at 'Eversden' now Black Jack's cottage and was the widow of the Rev. John Baldwin who died in 1674 and who had been associated with the Almshouses, probably the master.

In 1879 the trustees of this charity who claimed rent charges or yearly payments for 13 portions of land at Harefield Park reached agreement with William Frederick Vernon, the owner. This redeemed all claims against him and his successors forever by the payment of a sum of £467 in annuities the yearly dividends to be paid to the trustees in perpetuity. The interest from these funds still accrues to the trustees today.

Solomon Burbery Charity

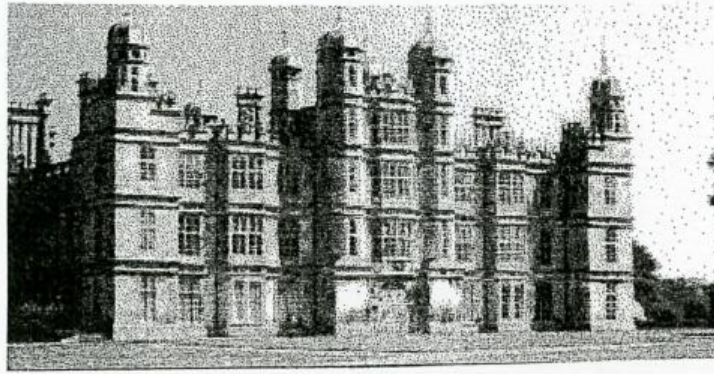
Solomon Burbery in his will dated 5th March 1697 left land in Harefield, the rent from which went to his sisters for their lives and on their deaths to the poor of Harefield forever. This land consisted of 13 acres, 2 roods and 38 perches with a cottage and other buildings thereon, situate on Harefield Common. This is thought to have been formerly 'North Church Fields' and is known now as Littlewoods, Prestons or the Dairy Farm. This is probably the most valuable of the Parochial Charities assets as it produces income from rent rather than interest from funds invested. The property is no longer operated as a farm but there are still people in the village who remember it as a farm and used to help collect the school milk when they were small.

The final instalment of the Parochial charities will be in the next edition of the newsletter!



Harefield Park

VISIT TO BURGHLEY HOUSE, STAMFORD, LINCOLNSHIRE - 19TH JULY 2008



After a pleasant but uneventful two hour drive we arrived at Burghley House just after 11 a.m. Burghley House has been the home of the Cecil family for over 400 years. It is considered to be 'the largest and grandest house of the First Elizabethan Age' It was built for the first Lord Burghley and is situated on the edge of Stamford and surrounded by a lovely deer park landscaped by 'Capability' Brown.

Visitors can enjoy the staterooms and their historic contents but one of the gems is the old kitchen. In the oldest part of the building it is large and roomy, a necessity for the preparation of banquets. It has rows of copper utensils the cleaning of which must have kept someone very busy.

Burghley House has two hundred and ten rooms. In the eighteen staterooms there are wood carvings by Grinling Gibbons, silver fire places and exquisite painted ceilings by Verio and Lanquerre. The Great Hall boasts the largest silver wine cooler in the world!

The Heaven room gives a display of perspective, the walls and ceilings have been painted to give an illusion of standing amongst the clouds surrounded by mythological figures. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were guests at Burghley House and we were shown the ornate bedroom they used with one of the four magnificent state beds.

David, the 6th Marquess of Exeter who as Lord Burghley was a world famous hurdler and all round sportsman between 1924 and 1933. He was the inspiration for one of the characters in the film 'Chariots of Fire'. Some of his many trophies are displayed near the Orangery including an Olympic Gold medal won in 1928 and an Olympic silver medal won in 1932. In 1981 he was awarded the Olympic Order Gold medal in recognition of his faithfulness to the Olympic ideal.

The Orangery, designed by 'Capability' Brown is now a refreshment room looking out onto gardens with a lily pond containing koi carp of every size imaginable.

Some of the stalwarts of our party walked across the fields and over the river to Stamford, a very picturesque town. We arrived back in Harefield in the early evening having enjoyed a lovely day. Thanks to Robert for arranging it for us.

Thanks also to Vi Hardy for this report.

HAREFIELD HISTORY SOCIETY VISIT TO ARBURY HALL, NUNEATON.

On the 10th June 2003 a very full mini-bus left Harefield for Arbury Hall in Nuneaton, Warwickshire, the home of the Newdigate family for over 400 years. Here our party on its own enjoyed the privilege of a fascinating guided tour of this magical Hall.

The Newdigates have had a very long association with Harefield, having acquired the Manor and Harefield Place, which once stood immediately southeast of St. Mary's, by marriage in the 14th century. In 1586 needing money, John Newdigate exchanged most of his Harefield properties with Sir John Anderson, the Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, in return for Arbury Hall, a quadrangular Elizabethan house constructed on the site of an Augustinian monastery, plus a substantial sum of money. The Newdigates retained Brackenbury, still an occupied moated site on Breakspear Road South, and they continued to be buried at St. Mary's.

John Newdigate's grandson, Richard, who made a fortune at the bar and was created a Baronet by Charles II despite having been a judge under Oliver Cromwell, bought back Harefield Place in 1675. The Newdigates continued to own land in and around Harefield until the 1930s.

Sir Richard created a chapel within the fabric of Arbury Hall with a rich plaster ceiling in the latter part of the 17th century. This is a splendid space with wonderful timber panelling, some thought to be by Grinling Gibbons, all painted white as is the fan vaulting of the ceiling.

Sir Roger, grandson of Sir Richard, inherited the family baronetcy and estates in 1734 while he was still a schoolboy at Westminster. On leaving University College Oxford he made a Grand Tour of France and Italy and on returning to England set about establishing himself and in 1741 became a Tory Member of Parliament for Middlesex. He spent three months each spring attending the Houses of Parliament but the greater part of his life was spent on the Arbury estate, where he became obsessed with the modernising and decoration of the house. He worked around the house room by room and by the time he had finished 50 years later very little, apart from the chimneypiece in the long gallery, was left unaltered. Sir Roger built in the Gothick style, which had become very fashionable. He employed the architect Henry Keene who worked on the Hall from 1761 until his death in 1776. Some of the work at Arbury reflects Keene's close association with Westminster Abbey, where he was the surveyor to the fabric. This accounts for much of the detailing in the major rooms. The chimneypiece in drawing room is based on the tomb of Aymer de Valence in the Abbey and the fan vaulting in the dining room is derived from Henry VII's chapel.

In 1774 after Sir Roger's wife died, he set off on an 18-month tour of the Continent. He went sightseeing in Paris, studied some of the great Gothic cathedrals, including Rheims and Milan and brought back statues, casts and paintings. His architect, Keene died the following year and was replaced by Henry Couchman, a Warwick builder who set about completing the south front and began work on the saloon. This is the finest room in the house and took 20 years to complete. The bow window with its intricate plaster tracery was installed in 1795. In 1789 Sir Roger fell out with Couchman and he was dismissed. After that Sir Roger supervised the work at Arbury himself.

When Sir Roger died in 1806 he had been master of Arbury for 72 years. Sir Roger's successors have preserved Arbury Hall well. With its soaring fan-vaulted ceilings, plunging pendants and filigree tracery in all its principal rooms it is a most breathtaking and complete example of early Gothic Revival architecture. Today it is the ancestral home of Viscount Daventry and his family.

The Hall contains a fine collection of Chelsea and oriental porcelain, furniture by Chippendale and Hepplewhite and paintings by such notable artists as Lely, Reynolds, Romney and Devis.

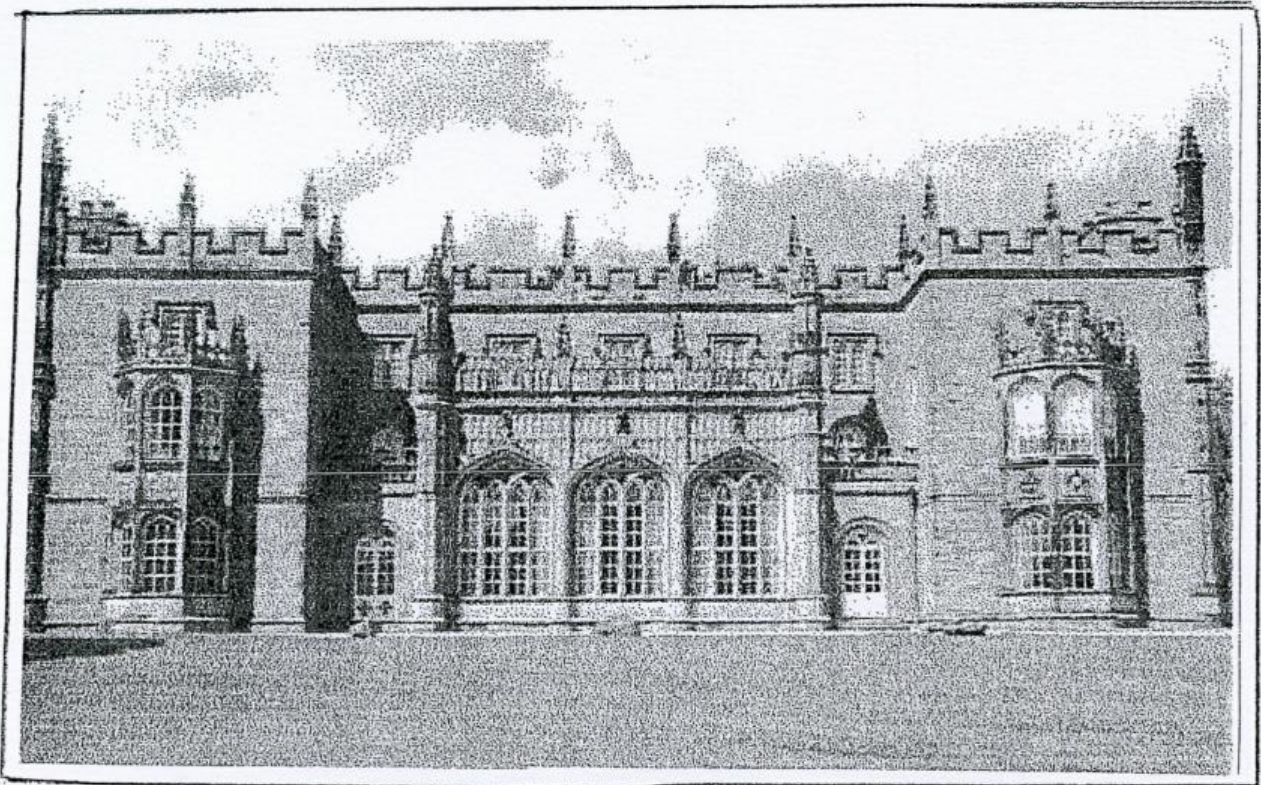
In 1776 Sir Roger re-married but he and his wife were childless. However, in the 1780s Lady Newdigate heard Sally Shilton, a daughter of a miner, singing on a cottage doorstep. She was captivated by the girl's voice and took her to live at Arbury Hall. Sally graduated from the housekeeper's room to eventually share the lives of Sir Roger and Lady Newdigate.

Years later George Elliot, who was born on the estate in 1819 and brought up at Arbury where her father was the agent, used the story of Sally Shilton, who later married the local clergyman, as the basis of one of her '*Scenes of Clerical Life*'. In "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story", she portrayed Arbury as Cheverel Manor and gave detailed descriptions of many of the rooms in the house, including The Saloon and Dining Room.

The Hall stands in beautiful parkland with landscaped gardens of rolling lawns, lakes and winding woodland walks. The spring flowers were profuse and the rhododendrons, azaleas and giant wisteria provided a beautiful setting for the visitors.

A magnificent doubled storeyed 17th century stable block formed one side of a fine entrance courtyard to the Hall and used to accommodate many of the outside staff. This was designed by Sir William Wilson, the Midland architect and sculptor, though Sir Christopher Wren had provided drawings for them. Following the guided tour and a leisurely stroll around the lovely gardens a delicious cream tea was served in this building before the mini-bus left for Harefield after a most enjoyable and interesting day

Report from John Röss



Arbury Hall, near Nuneaton, Warwickshire