

Harefield History Society

Autumn Newsletter - October, 2005

No 49.

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The Society meets at the Park Lane Village Centre on the fourth Monday from September to November inclusive, and from January to April as well. Meetings start at 8 o'clock.

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This edition of the Newsletter is mainly a blast from the past. The articles give an insight into what was happening in the village when local societies were being formed and how they developed over the years.

There is also a very interesting picture which was given to us from Phil Burroughs of Amberley Prints.

It is a picture of the Harefield Peace Bonfire which presumably was lit on The Green in 1918. The more you look into it the more you can see. Firstly the size is huge which can be measured against the men in the foreground and the long ladder leaning against the pile. There is a Union flag plus a White Ensign which is the flag of the Royal Navy. Does this have any particular significance? Also there is the Stars and Stripes but it is upside down.

The bonfire itself seems to be made of old munition boxes, old planks and anything available. There are two figures hanging from 'the yardarm' and the one on the right is definitely in German uniform. Perhaps the other one too.

It is most evocative to look at these old prints and to try and imagine the scene all those years ago. Do any of our readers recall the bonfire or have they heard tales of it? Please do let the Editor know so that we might be able to shed more factual information on it.

If anyone wants a print of the picture stocks are available in Amberley Gallery.



MAREFIELD PEACE BONFIRE.

HAREFIELD YOUNG WIVES [WOMEN'S] CLUB

1953 – 2004

This Group was the idea of several people in the village, who thought that the young wives might like to have an occasional break away from the home at a time when their husbands could look after the children. At that time women did not usually go to work, and sometimes life could be a bit lonely. In those days before television, there were no distractions in the way of daytime entertainment.

So the Young Wives Club was formed: the original Committee included Etta Connor, Eleanor Morrison and Dorothy Winton. The old St Mary's Church Hall was the original venue, and at the first meeting there was a very good attendance. From there it went from strength to strength. It proved to be very popular and filled a void in the social life of the young wives. Country dancing, picnics, games and speakers were all included in the fortnightly programmes, and many lasting friendships were formed amongst the members.

Over the years there had been many changes: When the "young wives" became older the title was changed to the "Harefield Women's Club." When St Mary's Church Hall was demolished to be replaced by the new one, a move was made to the Cricket Club. At one time there were over one hundred members, with a waiting list of new comers wanting to join. At our 25th anniversary, there was a very strong membership and we enjoyed many varied activities. We had make-up and cooking demonstrations, and speakers from all sorts of backgrounds: charities, occupations, hobbies and professions. We also went out to theatres, ice shows, television studios to watch recordings, and fashion shows. In the summer we went to the seaside, historic houses and gardens, and on several occasions we had weekends away on the Continent – Rome, Paris, Amsterdam and the Rhine.

When the Park Lane Village Centre opened, we moved again. By this time our membership had fallen – people had moved away, many of our number had died or become physically unable to come out to the Club. There was also the problem of economics – the business houses who used to provide demonstrations for publicity purposes were cutting back on their expenditure [perhaps relying on television advertisements to reach a wider audience] – the speakers who entertained us were becoming more difficult to find and those who did still come were more expensive. It was becoming increasingly difficult to fill the programme for the nightly meetings, so that many of our more active members stopped coming.

So, the Young Wives Club had now become a group of mature ladies without any hope of recruiting younger members who would help them carry on as a group, and it was finally decided that it was time to call it a day. With great sadness, the final meeting of the Club was held in February, and we went out in style with a fish and chip supper. We had happy memories, had made many good friendships, and enjoyed good times together and had been very glad to be members of the Harefield Young Wives/Women's Club.

Personally I recall many happy days, holidays I would never have taken on my own, places I would not have been to, people I would never have met, had I not been a member of the Harefield Women's Club. I am sure there are many other people who feel the same way and I would like to thank all those people in the past who served as Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers and on the Committee for all their support over the years.

Betty Westbrook: The Last "President"
Harefield Women's Club

SUMMER TRIP TO DOVER CASTLE - JULY, 2005

A coach load of members, friends and likewise from Denham History Society set out for Dover on Sunday 10th July to enjoy the castle and its environs. This was a special day as it commemorated the 60th anniversary of the ending of WWII.

The weather was very kind to us and we arrived just before the castle opened at 11am. It was as well we were in good time for English Heritage had only one kiosk open to admit a large throng of people and it was not at all well organised. There were many interesting things to view. The castle itself - known as the Key of England - was founded in 1066 by William I and added to in various other reigns.

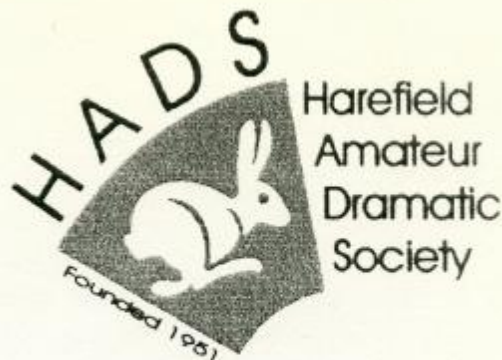


There were many underground tunnels, both ancient and modern, with the latter used extensively during the last war as offices and adaptable as hospital wards if required. The lowest level of all (the seventh) would have been where the country would have been governed from in the event of a nuclear attack.

The church was interesting also with unusual decoration inside. The whole day was based on nostalgia with a showband recalling all the old wartime songs - especially those of Vera Lynn - and it was lovely to join in with the 'Bluebirds over the White Cliffs of Dover' (whilst on the actual cliffs) and 'We'll meet again'. There was a flyover, tented shops selling souvenirs, a BBC stand recording interviews about the war and even a jitterbug teach-in! My, how things have changed in sixty years.

The decent restaurant was renamed the NAAFI and it provided fare that I never was offered in Naafis during my National Service days! It was a good day, a day to recall some of our glorious past and those men and women who made the final sacrifice that we would live in peace.

Gordon Isaacs



BRIEF HISTORY OF HAREFIELD AMATEUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY

HAREFIELD AMATEUR DRAMATIC SOCIETY (HADS) was formed in February 1951. To one of our early meetings, Tom Barnard a leading light in the Uxbridge Guild of Arts, was invited to attend. He was very helpful in giving advice and pointing the Society in the right direction. Indeed the Uxbridge Guild of Arts has been extremely helpful and financially supportive over the years. To put the time in perspective, some food rationing was still in operation and being a bona fide organisation the Group was allowed a small butter and cheese ration. Thus our meetings and rehearsals were very popular with butter, cheese and biscuits with our tea.

The venues over the years for our presentations were :-

St.Mary's Old Church Hall, Harefield School (now the Junior School) which had only recently been wired for electricity, British Legion Hall, the new Secondary Modern School (now John Penrose), New St.Mary's Church Hall, Harefield Community Centre and Harefield Hospital Concert Hall.

During this time the Society has flourished because of all those who have been dedicated and worked hard, whether for brief periods, longer periods or a great deal of the 53 years of the life of HADS at present. The presentations over the years have resulted in 90 Three-Act Plays, 33 One-Act Plays, Anthologies, Festival Entries, Variety Concert, Music Hall, and Musicals.

Looking to the future, new members are always welcome whether wishing to act, help back-stage, costumes, make-up, helping to erect our sets which have brought forth praise over the years, or helping with Front of House jobs.

The Society normally meets every Tuesday at Park Lane Village Centre at 8 p.m., or Telephone Zoë Dobbs Hon.Secretary 01895 822354 for further information.

There is also An Associate Membership for anyone wishing to support the Society but not wishing to Act. For an Annual Fee they receive 2 tickets for each production, invitations to Social Events and an opportunity to attend the Summer Anthology.

Leslie Baxter

Remaining Founder Member

A Review of the last Forty Years at "Ashleigh"

We acquired "Ashleigh" in May 1965 from Sidney Charles Filkins, nephew and Executor of Mary Jane Filkins who had lived there with her sister Charlotte since 1913. The semi detached house, originally built in 1834, was derelict and had been empty and vandalised since the death of Charlotte a year previously; but a survey suggested it could be a good family home, which is what we wanted for our four children then aged eight to six months. We managed to get the promise of a mortgage provided that we demolished and rebuilt the rear part of the house to include a kitchen and bathroom and we included a fifth bedroom by enclosing with a flat roof what had been a 'valley'. We were influenced by the "modern" sixties and naive in that we knew nothing about buildings and builders or how to deal with them.

Luke went to see Harold Turner, the landlord of South Cottage our other half, to discuss re-roofing the property. They sat talking into the dark and cold at Langley Farm, but Mr Turner would not co-operate, so we had our half done. Finally the Wades (Kath and Bill) the tenants persuaded him to do their half because the roof supports were completely rotten, and he got the benefit of the equipment already on site. The house had clay tiles which were thrown down and broken and were replaced with concrete ones. Also there was a wash house on our back lawn, with beautiful pantiles, but the roof was collapsing, so it was demolished.

We asked Mr Brown (of Brown and Shaw) who had surveyed the house to supervise the alterations and he had put us in touch with Mr Williams a builder and we expected things to happen! Six months later, after the timber treatment and re-wiring, and with financial pressures we moved from 48 Northwood Road, putting a caravan (borrowed from Stan Bourne) in the garden as the building work had not even started. However living half in the house and half in the caravan with Matthew our youngest just on the move. was so difficult that once the concrete was laid on the ground floor, replacing timber that was two inches from the soil and covering the insulated new pipes for a heating system, we moved in. We had an Elsan under the stairs and our gas cooker installed in the hall with a series of gas pipes from the meter by our kind ex neighbour, Warren Meek. Ada Parsons invited us to go to Walnut Trees, where she was caretaker, for baths!

So we lived through the building work of Mr Williams and his team, seeing one fellow breeze block himself into the cloakroom to be, by not allowing for a door, and in the final stages another man replacing floor boards, putting a nail through a water pipe on the top floor! By the time Mr Williams left we had a kitchen, a cloakroom, and the old part of the house to restore ourselves.

John Ross, who had recently come to the village, designed our carport with a brick shed to house a huge second hand freezer a work bench, tools and garden equipment. The brick work was done by Mr Coster and his son Alan, and the carpentry by Ken Currie. The Costers also built a handsome arch between our two small rooms giving us a beautiful spacious living room on the common side, and took out two cast iron fire places from bedrooms which, with hindsight, was a shame.

Doug Bishop came into our lives at this time and taught us decorating tricks. We used "Sale" wallpaper upside-down and learned to bandage crumbling plaster. We had the hall and stairs re-plastered by Jim Davidson. We spent a weekend repairing the potholed gravel drive with a hired mechanical roller that Luke strapped himself to, only to be told by my uncle a week or so later that the drive needed repairing! Eventually it was

resurfaced by the builders of Fallowfield Close, paid for by ourselves and the Hepplethwaites, our then neighbours at High Pines.

We had replacement wooden windows fitted into the existing frames, in 1983, which after years of rattling windows with very thin glass was a great improvement. When the boiler packed up Mick Bridges installed a larger one, allowing us the luxury of radiators on the first floor which Mr Davis (of Ealing), the original heating engineer did not believe in! Mick also installed a long needed shower which, with the house full of teenagers was a blessing.

In 1984 we found recurring cracks in the plaster on both sides of the bedroom wall above the arch downstairs. We had specialist advice and it was decided to put in strapping as the outside wall facing the common was developing a middle aged spread... The work was carried out by Page in Northwood. They found it cost less than the original estimate and kindly charged us the lower amount. We removed an enormous cabinet which housed over two hundred shellac records which had been placed immediately above the new arch. This may have contributed to the "bulging" but the main cause was due to the first floor joists running parallel to the long outside wall whereas a tighter bind would have been ensured had they been at right angles.

At about this time the Handicotts became our neighbours at South Cottage. They totally gutted the inside of their house but were able to keep the original brick structure intact. They loved the house and modernised it sympathetically. Jan's father, George Gott, painted the outside of Ashleigh twice; using a three tiered ladder and being tall he was able to reach the top of our eaves.

In 1989 we took out our sixties-style sliding door cupboard units in the sitting room together with an art nouveau fire surround we had bought in the Portobello Road in the sixties which had replaced a yellow tiled fireplace. Finding that we could not match the dimensions with an old fire surround we had a wooden reproduction surround and mantelpiece installed as near as possible to what the original would have been.

More recently we have had a fitted kitchen installed and a wooden double-glazed conservatory to blend with next door, adding a light and sunny dimension to the house. The conservatory was constructed by Robert Saunders and his team and Robert Ricketts made the window units. At that time Lyndsey Daiche, the planning officer would not allow us to use UPVC, even though we were replacing our original Crittall windows with UPVC double-glazed units designed to blend with the ones in the old part of the house. We also replaced our flat roofed front door porch (from the sixties) with a pitched roof one. The house is locally, but not nationally listed.

Chris Handicott put radiators into our top floor bedrooms with thermostatic controls, and he, Pat Price and Jim Davidson made us an en suite shower room up there.

The most recent change has been the replacing of our original windows with powdered aluminium double-glazed units in tune with South Cottage, and replacing the rotten wooden sills with custom moulded concrete. This was heart breaking but an economic practicality.

Ashleigh is a lovely house, and we have been fortunate to have lived here.