

LAMORBEY & SIDCUP LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NO.2 AUTUMN 1984

Once again our valued member, Mr. Pip Hayward, commenced our year by illustrating and explaining the many signs appertaining to the Inns of Kent. Mr. Graham gave the speaker a vote of thanks on behalf of the Society for such an interesting and enjoyable evening.

A few days later, I happened to be looking at a Kent Local History Magazine of 1974 and to my amazement found the following on the "Woden Horse" that had been described by Mr. Hayward ...

"KENTISH CUSTOMS - CHRISTMAS

At Ramsgate, they begin the festivities of Christmas by a curious procession: a party of young people procure the head of a dead horse, which is affixed to a pole about four feet in length; a string is affixed to the lower jaw, a horse cloth is also attached to the whole, under which one of the party gets and by frequently pulling the string, keeps up a loud snapping noise and is accompanied by the rest of the party, grotesquely habited with hand bells: they then proceed from house to house, ringing the bells, and singing carols and songs; they are commonly gratified with beer and cake, or perhaps with money. This is called, provincially, a Hodening and the figure above described a Hoden or Woden Horse... It is, I find, general on the Isle of Thanet on Christmas Eve and as far as I can learn, nowhere else.

From a letter signed J.J.R. in The Sporting Magazine for December 1807. Submitted by Mr. J. Goulstone of 10 Haslemere Road, Bexleyheath, Kent. "

I would also mention that there is a booklet published by Shire Publications Ltd. on Inn Signs.

SNAP IT !

Every day the face of Sidcup is changing, sometimes slowly, sometimes apparently overnight. The old house with large garden disappears and is replaced with a mini estate of town houses or the gradual rebuilding of a complex road system. Memory can be fickle, after a short while it maybe difficult to recall exactly what stood at a certain point. Probably the easiest way of recording our local history is the photograph - this does not mean that one has to be a David Bailey - any of the small popular cameras will give you a recognisable image and a useful way to use up those ends of film left over from holidays is to go out and snap Sidcup, but take two and give one to the Society Archives.

Eric Percival

P.S. This is by way of being a lecture to myself, but maybe someone else will take note.

Carrying on Eric's theme of destruction, Halfway Street Infants School has now been demolished and in its place McLean Homes is building a complex of houses to be known as "Lamb Abbey Fields". The name of Lamb Abbey does not reflect that the site was originally that of an abbey, but that Lamorbey was for some time spelt in this manner.



#### NORTH CRAY WALKABOUT

This walk took place on the 3rd March 1984 and was led by Mr. & Mrs. Nash.

The ten members and three guests who braved the cold, blustery weather were richly rewarded for their efforts.

The afternoon commenced with a conducted tour of St. James's Church. This church incorporates features from earlier times and many memorials to local dignitaries. Our visit was made memorable by the eloquence of Mr. Osmond Peacock, who was a mine of information on not only the Church, but local history. He told us that the Church had been saved from destruction from a flying bomb by the intervention of a tree. We also understood he is adept at metal work, having renovated the Church chandelier.

From the Church we moved on to the old section of the North Cray Road. This was once a bus route, but now a secluded country lane. Here we paid respects to the site of the old Alms Houses, which were a casualty of the dual carriageway.

Our next stop was the old school house which was still in its original livery and displayed a commemorative plaque to bygone times. Alas the occupier was not at home and we were therefore unable to see the interior.

We were luckier next door where Mrs. Harrington allowed us into her secluded walled garden, which was indeed an arbour away from the windy North Cray Road and where hellibore flowered and memories of last summer hung in the air.

With a brief glimpse of Loring Hall, once the home of Viscount Castlereagh, we arrived at Vale Mascall, a pleasing eighteenth century house and were allowed to see the gardens by Mrs. Grant, the present owner. The gardens, which encompass the river Cray are well laid out and include a gazebo, grotto and extensive flower beds where kingfishers are frequent visitors. Many garden parties are held here in the summer.

Number 112 North Cray Road, our last stop and the home of Mr. Chu, was to offer a real surprise, an exquisite Regency Bathhouse which once belonged to the Vale Mascall Estate. The building, constructed of flint with brick corners and resembling a small church was located on an island at the end of the garden and was virtually original in all respects. Mrs. Grant of Vale Mascall had previously told us that she would dearly like this bathhouse to be once again part of the Vale Mascall Estate.

The afternoon ended as it had begun, cold and blustery, but thanks to the hospitality of the owners of the buildings we visited, we all returned home the warmer for the experience.

Vic Mayes

P.S. (Frances) Many of us turned back with Mrs. Nash who showed us the now empty Cray Hall. From there we carried on to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Nash and were kindly entertained to tea.

#### NORTH CRAY HALL HOUSE

Many years ago Mr. P.J. Tester, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries discovered a Hall House in North Cray. The house was dismantled and for many years held in care by the Bexley Borough Council. However, this year the



house has been re-erected at the Weald & Downland Open Air Museum, Singleton, Nr. Chichester. The museum illustrates the history of vernacular architecture in the Weald & Downland area from mediaeval times to the nineteenth century. During the interval of our "Inns of Kent" meeting, Kathy Harding was showing photographs of the house now erected at Singleton. Co-incidentally, a few days later, Mrs. Joy Saynor at her Crayford Manor House evening class showed slides of the actual timbers being lowered into position. A visit to the museum is well worthwhile, especially as our local area is now represented. A further co-incidence is that I received a list from Mr. Nunns, our previous Chairman, of the material he had deposited at Hall Place prior to leaving Sidcup for Deal. Item No.42 is "Portion of Daub from the North Cray Hall House 14th/15th Century".

#### HISTORICAL NOTE

Our Chairman, Miss Iris Morris and her colleague, Miss Kitty Roome, have now had published a book on Iris' favourite place - Wilmington. I am sure that Iris will be only too pleased to give you details of where this book may be obtained.

#### ANNUAL OUTING

This year we travelled to Lavenham and Ickworth which was once again arranged by our outings secretary, Mrs. Nash. It was an awful day from the weather point of view, but in spite of this I know that the members enjoyed the day - the sing song on the return journey kept the spirits flying.

#### SUMMER EVENING WALKS

In general these were well attended, especially the walk led by Eric Percival around Chislehurst. He and his wife had reconnoitred the area and consequently everything went well. I myself felt that there was a most companionable spirit that evening which reflected the need for outside activities in order for members to get acquainted.

The St. Mary Cray walk was also well attended with the bonus of finding St. Marys Church door ajar and obtaining permission for the party to peep inside. Denise and Kathy were overjoyed to get a chance to look at the brass work. A further bonus was listening to the bells being rung so joyfully.

#### KENT VOLUNTARY SERVICE COUNCIL

May I once again enquire whether a member would be prepared to attend the quarterly meeting (held on Friday afternoons) of the local History Committee at Maidstone. With the exception of the Kent Archaeological Society (their Annual General Meeting occurs on a Saturday), this is the only foot we have in the County of Kent. Even Lewisham sends a member and it would be rather nice if we could once again have a representative from the Society.

#### FOOTS CRAY MEADOWS

It was upsetting for one and all to learn of the plans put forward by the Bexley Council for this site. However, I was indeed pleased with the reaction that Denise Baldwin and Kathy Harding showed on this proposal. They rang various members requesting them to write to the Council objecting to the plans for a caravan site. Due to them and many other residents, in the October 4th issue of the Sidcup Times an article appeared saying that the Council are reconsidering the scheme in the light of considerable public interest and concern.

We were saddened during the late summer to hear of the passing of Mr. Swindlehurst, a very quiet but valued member of the Society.

Mr. Drake our Vice Chairman and Archivist died in the autumn of 1983 having attended a Society meeting only two days previously. He was not only a member of our Society, but also of the Bexley Civic Society. The secretary of the Civic Society, Mr. Peter Barnes, suggested that a tree be planted to his memory in the grounds of Lamorbey. Mr. Drake's daughter was agreeable to this suggestion and so one Saturday morning during the spring many of his Society and Civic Society colleagues and friends gathered on a very inclement morning to watch his daughter plant a beech tree in memory of her father. Mrs. Nash spoke of Frank Drake and his accomplishments and how sadly his presence was missed.

A warm welcome to all our new members and should you wish to read up on the local area, I am sure our Archivist, Eric Percival, will be only too pleased to help you with your studies.

I do hope you will all enjoy the 1984/85 Local History year - don't forget you are all members of this Society and any suggestions, ideas or snippets of information you may have will be very welcome. Please do not hesitate to let a member of the committee know. Cuttings from the local papers, magazines etc. would be welcomed by our Archivist.

Have you noticed that on this second newsletter I have been joined by Messrs. Mayes and Percival. May I thank them for their participation.

Frances Oxley  
Hon. Secretary

24th October 1984