

I am very pleased once again to welcome old and new members to the 1990/91 Society Year. Looking back I suppose our thoughts are dominated by the dreadful weather conditions we experienced early in 1990, almost our "1987 Storm", but not quite.

Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society

It was not quite so bad this time, but trees toppled and slates came off roofs. It didn't happen as 1987 during the night, but while we were going about our daily business. My journey home from the City was terrifying and I wasn't surprised, but nevertheless devastated, to find my back fence in one great big heap. One almost hesitated over the repair of fences as the dreadful wind stayed around for some time. You remember, of course, that we felt forced to cancel one of our Society meetings.

However, order is now restored and in common with many other householders I pray that those fearful conditions will not return next winter. Now to the other extreme - our high temperatures and drought. Have you been recycling your washing up water etc. and placing every drop on the garden? A worthwhile exercise if you wish to retain your plants. As I write this, Bexley Council has decided water should not be used in their parks and gardens.

As for the temperature, it has gone to some extremes in an unbearable level. My office cooling system broke down and I am daily working in 30 degrees. Thank goodness we were not in the office. HAVE FUN THIS YEAR!



The village was built from a small settlement. The tower was built in the 14th century. The building was built by the monks of the Priory of St. Dunstons. The building was built on the site of the Priory of St. Dunstons. The building was built on the site of the Priory of St. Dunstons.

"On a recent visit to the village I was struck by the beauty of the village. The village was built on a hillside and the views were superb. The village was built on a hillside and the views were superb. The village was built on a hillside and the views were superb.

Apart from the village, the surrounding area is very beautiful. The surrounding area is very beautiful. The surrounding area is very beautiful. The surrounding area is very beautiful. The surrounding area is very beautiful.

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To enhance the Flora Europaea, John Jones of the Arts Centre hand did in excellent calligraphy a superb bookplate. John also designed, printed and illuminated a fine retirement card which was signed by all present. A fine retirement.

Newsletter
AUTUMN 1990

So may I please thank you for your help and support. Through you, your students, I have detailed what was done and what was planned. I shall pass this information on to your students. Having started here at Lamorbey Park Arboretum in 1977 I look upon both you, my colleagues, and my students as friends. I shall continue to hope to keep in touch with in the

I am very pleased once again to welcome old and new members to the 1990/91 Society Year. Looking back I suppose our thoughts are dominated by the dreadful weather conditions we experienced early in 1990, almost our '1987 Storm', but not quite.

Trees were more stable this time, but fences toppled and slates came off roofs. It didn't happen as 1987 during the night, but whilst we were going about our daily business. My journey home from the City was terrifying and I wasn't surprised, but nevertheless devastated, to find my back fence in one great big heap. One almost hesitated over the repair of fences as the dreadful wind stayed around for some time. You remember, of course, that we felt forced to cancel one of our Society meetings.

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As for the temperature, it has risen on some occasions to an unbearable level. My office cooling system broke down and we were consequently working in 98 degrees. Thank goodness we were sent home at 4pm. WE SURE HAVE HAD A SUMMER THIS YEAR!

Frances Oxley

The following is an extract from a circular sent by D. Nicolle to Tutors and Secretaries at Lamorbey Park dated July '90.

"On a personal note I would like to thank all those concerned for the surprise farewell party I enjoyed on Friday, 29th June. As it was after the end of term many tutors and students could not attend, which was probably just as well as there was hardly room for all those present!

Apart from a superb spread of food and a goodly supply of wine, the quite outstanding event of the evening was the cake. The picture of Lamorbey, in full colour, which adorned the top was great in itself, but was further enhanced by the small reproductions of emblems of my hobbies (wine-making, gardening, botany, photography etc.) on top and of various classes (including class nos.) around the side. Made by Barbara, one of my clerical staff, it was the contribution of her together with Jackie and Ruth of my office.

Earlier I had received a Yoga book from the Wednesday afternoon class. On the 29th was added the two volume book on the Flora of Cyprus, being a really generous present from the Lamorbey Park Archers. Contributions from the Arts Centre, the Sidcup Evening Centre and Lamorbey, together with a generous donation from the WEA, were used to buy for me the standard reference book (no pictures!) on the wild flowers of Europe - Flora Europaea. This is A4 in size and consists of five volumes. How well known is botany as my hobby! This was quite a remarkable present and compliments that of Cyprus (which has an Asiatic rather than European flora). I'm set up botanically for the rest of my life so long as I don't get interested in Africa, America, or!!

To enhance the Flora Europaea, John Jones of the Arts Centre hand did in excellent calligraphy a superb bookplate. John also designed, penned and illuminated a fine retirement card which was signed by all present. A fine memento.

So may I please thank you for your contribution and, through you, your students. I have detailed what was done and what I received so that you may pass this information on to your students. Having started here at Lamorbey in January 1977 I look upon both you, my colleagues, and my students as friends many of whom I hope to keep in touch with in the

future. My wife and I intend, in due course, to move back to Sussex.'

Taxes Through the Ages

(1) Riots, The Poll Tax and other Disturbances.

It is common talk amongst the elderly that things were never so bad in the past. 'We didn't have so many muggings or murders or riots when we were young' they say. And they are almost certainly right for the 1920's and 1930's were a period, apart from the General Strike, when there was relatively little visible disturbance and, of course, television had not been invented to show the world all the nasty things that are going on and bring them into our sitting room making it difficult to tell fact from fiction.

Nevertheless (and television apart), riots and other disturbances are not new in our history. In fact we have had a lot of them in our national and local history since written records were kept.

When William the Conqueror was being crowned in Westminster Abbey his soldiers alarmed by the tumult outside charged into the crowd of cheering Saxons and slaughtered many of them. They were only demonstrating in favour of their new king, but the soldiers being nervous read the wrong signals. This has a very modern ring, hasn't it?

The Peasants' Revolt was a much bigger event and our locality was involved. John Ball, the radical itinerant priest preached, 'When Adam delved and Eve span, who then was the gentleman?' Wat the Tyler, a resident of Dartford, led the revolt across Bexley Heath, up Shooters Hill and on to Blackheath where other bands of discontented peasants and tradesmen came together. London was sacked and several luckless clerics and aldermen put to death. The revolt was put down by the courage of the young king (Richard 11) and the double dealing of his ministers. But it was the nearest thing to a real revolution that this land has experienced.

In 1780, Lord George Gordon led a mob to Parliament to present a petition calling for the repeal of the Catholic Relief Act. The ensuing riots lasted a week, and damage was most severe in the area around the Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam) which is now the Imperial War Museum. In central London, despite two centuries, which have included protests ranging from the Chartists to the pro-Fascist marches of the 1930's, nothing on that scale has happened until the riot in London over the poll tax this March.

The Swing Riots of the 1830's occurred in the South-East. These were occasioned by the slump in farm prices after the Napoleonic Wars, combined with the rising population forcing down agricultural wages to near starvation level. There were several cases of machine breaking in East Kent. The destruction of threshing machines was carried out in a light hearted manner accompanied by singing, shouting and jovial remarks and usually the crowd dispersed without trouble. But when the disturbances spread to West Kent, it became more political in nature. The principal agitator was Robert Price, an ex-naval rating. Groups of labourers gathered and went round from farm to farm demanding higher wages. A witness at the trial of two of the labourers said "I saw a great mob, I suppose about 300 at the gate of Rev. George Moore in Wrotham. The mob conducted themselves in a manner to inspire terror in the neighbourhood'.

So we come to the recent riot over the poll tax. Riots of the past decade were in the inner suburbs - Tottenham, Brixton, Wapping - and were aimed at the police or newspaper owners. The demonstrations in Grosvenor Square in 1968 were the closest that Central London has come to the events in March. The violence then and in March was organised by a small number who were determined to make use of the large crowds and the volatile emotions to create anarchy. What will be the next occasion for this to happen?

John Mercer

(2) Rates and Taxes

The year that saw the introduction of the Community Charge seems the right time to review some of the other forms of Local Taxation that our ancestors have had to bear.

Amober. In Wales and the border counties this was a tax to waive the lord's right to bed the betrothed daughter before her wedding day.

Beaconage. Money paid towards the upkeep of the local beacon.

Berbiage. A rent paid for pasturing sheep.

Brigbote. Money paid for the upkeep of the local bridges.

Burgbote. Money paid for the upkeep of the borough's walls.

Childwite. A fine paid by the father of an illegitimate child to the lord. This was regarded as compensation to the lord for cheapening the value of one of his bondswomen.

Driftland. An annual rent paid by tenants for driving their cattle through a manor to market.

Furnage. A sum paid by tenants to use the lord's baking oven or, alternatively, a price paid for the privilege of owning their own equipment.

Geld. A Saxon term for money or tribute as compensation for a crime. It was also a north country term for a tax.

Marchet/Merchet. A fine paid by a tenant upon the marriage of a daughter, to his lord. In some cases the fine was taken on the marriage of a son.

Pannage. A payment made by tenants to their lord for the right to pasture their pigs in the lord's woods.

Pavage. A tax to pay for the upkeep of the roadways.

Pontage. A toll paid to cross a bridge.

Quit Rent. A payment paid by tenants to their lord to excuse themselves from the customary manor services. This was abolished in 1922.

Scot and Lot. Payments made by town dwellers for the upkeep of the various borough facilities. This was the forerunner of the local rates.

Service Silver. A payment made by feudal tenants to their lord when his heir attained his majority.

Water-Gavil. A rent paid for fishing in the lord's river.

Wood Penny. A payment made to the lord for the right to take wood from the commons and waste.

Whilst on the subject of monies we have not been allowed to keep, national taxes have also been levied in a variety of ways. There was a tax on Armorial Bearings from 1793-1882 and if you owned a carriage from 1747-1782 that too was liable. The possession of clocks and watches from 1797-8, dogs from 1796-1882, female servants from 1785-1792, guns from 1870-82, the use of hair powder from 1795-8, the number of hearths in a home from 1662-89, horses from 1784-1874, any inhabited house from 1851-1924, male servants from 1777-1852, personal belongings that were movable from 1181-1623, racehorses from 1784-1874, registrations of births, marriages and burials in the Parish register from 1694-99 and silver-plate from 1756-1777 were all ways of divesting the individual of income. One can see from the variety of time-spans which methods worked well and which were a fiasco.

Window tax was imposed by Parliament in 1699 and replaced the Hearth tax. This was in order to help meet the cost of reminting the damaged coinage. After 1792 houses with between 7 and 9 windows were taxed at 2 shillings and from 10 to 19 windows at 14 shillings. In 1825 houses with fewer than 8 windows were exempt. The tax was abolished in 1851. The original Poll Tax was a form of personal tax which had been levied since 1222, but it became a more regular and prominent tax from 1663. In 1377 it was 4d on all persons of both sexes over the age of fourteen (except beggars) and a shilling on all beneficed clergy. It was one of the causes of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381.

All the above information has come from **The Local Historian's Encyclopaedia** by John Richardson and **Six Centuries of Work and Wages** by Thorold Rogers, which was lent

to me by Eric Percival (who bought it for 6d).

I.E. Morris

The following article by Mrs. Nash appeared in our 1988 Newsletter. The Bath House is no longer falling into decay but has been restored to its former glory. The restoration took place with monies from English Heritage, Bexley Heritage Fund and an insurance claim re the 1987 damage - so at least some good came out of the storm!

A 1760's Bath House

On an island in the River Cray, in the back garden of a house on the Bexley/Sidcup border, stands a unique and little known building, namely an 18C Bath House.

Originally part of Vale Mascall House, built sometime in the 1740's this attractive building was possibly designed by 'Capability' Brown or one of his assistants. The gardens of Vale Mascall were considerably changed and the natural course of the river interfered with to cope with an elaborate system of sluices and drains to control the input and output of water, to and from the bath. (For plan and photographs see Arch.Cant. Vol. LXXXII, 1967.)

The fact that John Fitch Barkerm, one of the owners of Vale Mascall during the 1760's was an invalid, could mean that the Bath House was built for medical purposes. The British Museum has literature on this subject and lists Asthma, Baldness and Cancer as ailments cured by cold water dipping. Later it is said that it was used by young huntsmen as a cooling off place after an energetic day's hunting.

The building is almost square, with flint cobble walls and red tiled roof and is slightly ecclesiastical in appearance. The entrance is a straight sided opening with brick door jamb and two small slit windows on either side at eye level and two corresponding windows much higher up under the sloping roof. The apex of this wall terminates in a straight sided, rectangular flint cobble chimney, with brick edging. Halfway up the chimney a band of stone runs round and on each side of the chimney face, above and below the band of stone, a long slit window is inserted. The stone mullioned window in each gable gives the impression of an ecclesiastical building. The course of stone is repeated on each side of the house, a short distance above each window and above that and near to the apex is a small diamond shaped window with a stone surround. The small slit windows near the entrance are repeated on each side of the building. Brick quoins approximately two thirds up each edge of the house are filled in with a pattern of flint cobbles and capped with a sloping stone slat.

Inside the house the river runs through and a large fireplace can be seen. Here servants would have been ready with a blazing fire, hot towels and drinks to take off the effect of the plunge into the cold water.

In the early 1820's the property was sold and the land in Bexley ended up in small plots with numerous owners. The Bath House was left in isolation on land known as 'Bath Meadow' and as previously stated is now situated at the bottom of a back garden. Sadly, the building is in need of repair. The owner regrets its condition, but cannot get any financial help to restore it as he cannot open it to the general public. To do so people would have to pass through his house.

What a tragedy it is that a building as interesting and so unique is falling into decay without a voice being raised and a tear shed for its preservation.

Phyllis Nash

Victorian Seafarers with a Falklands Connection

The lettering on a headstone in St. John's, Sidcup Churchyard is very easy to read. 'George Frederick Seymour Born December 7th 1824 Died January 5th 1915' it says. However, this brief inscription leads directly to a family of Victorian seafarers and a hulk in the Falkland Isles.

George was born in Bridport, Dorset and lived for the last twenty-four years of his life in Belle Grove, then a small village on the Dover Road at the bottom of Shooters Hill. The grounds of a mansion, Belle Grove Park, stretched behind his house which was on the opposite side of the road from Welling station. Nearby were Turtle's and Storer's nurseries, but all these rural aspects disappeared under housing development in the 1930's, including his home, 2 Blaxland Villas.

George had two brothers, William and John, also born in Bridport in 1817 and 1827 respectively. They were all sea-captains between 1850 and 1871 and George was my great-grandfather. He had close links with Sidcup, where his son, my grandfather lived. One of John's ships ended up in the Falkland Isles some years after he had left her and she is still there today.

My grandfather, Ernest Seymour, moved to 16 Crescent Road, Sidcup from the family home in Kentish Town when he married my grandmother in 1891. No.16 would have been a new house in the 1890's and, in common with others on the north side of the road, it has a semi-Norman dog-tooth arch over the front door, indicating that it was built by one of the Hawkins family of Sidcup. For me, as a child in the 1930's, one of its main attractions was on the landing, at the head of the stairs. This was a large, quite accurate, painting of a three-masted 'clipper' ship at sea under full sail, showing also the rigging, the crew at work on deck and the officers on the poop. The painting was badly damaged during the Second World War and has now unfortunately disappeared, but the story was that her captain was George Seymour. I later learnt that he went to sea as an apprentice at the age of thirteen, qualified as a mate at nineteen and as a master mariner at twenty-six. This allowed him to command a vessel and his subsequent voyages included New Zealand, India and the Mediterranean. When George retired from being a sea-captain he became a marine surveyor and moved to North London. At about the time of my grandfather's marriage, George and his wife Anne moved again to Belle Grove.

During their time as master mariners the three brothers commanded eleven sailing ships and one steam ship. Of these the Duke of Portland, Her Majesty, Sea Queen and Jhelum are of particular interest. It is hard to visualise ships of that age nowadays, but perhaps the nearest we can get to them is the Cutty Sark, now preserved in dry dock at Greenwich. She is a three-masted clipper of 921 tons, 212 feet long and built in 1869 for speed, with a slim hull. However, true clippers like Cutty Sark formed only a small proportion of the merchant fleet in the second half of the 19th century. The great majority of ships were built as cargo carriers, having the graceful curved bow of a clipper, but with a much more box-like hull for maximum cargo capacity and such were most of the Seymour ships.

The Duke of Portland was a brig of 468 tons and George sailed with her as chief mate from 1849-50, becoming her master from 1853-56 on the New Zealand run. Such a small vessel was apparently fully capable of making such long voyages!

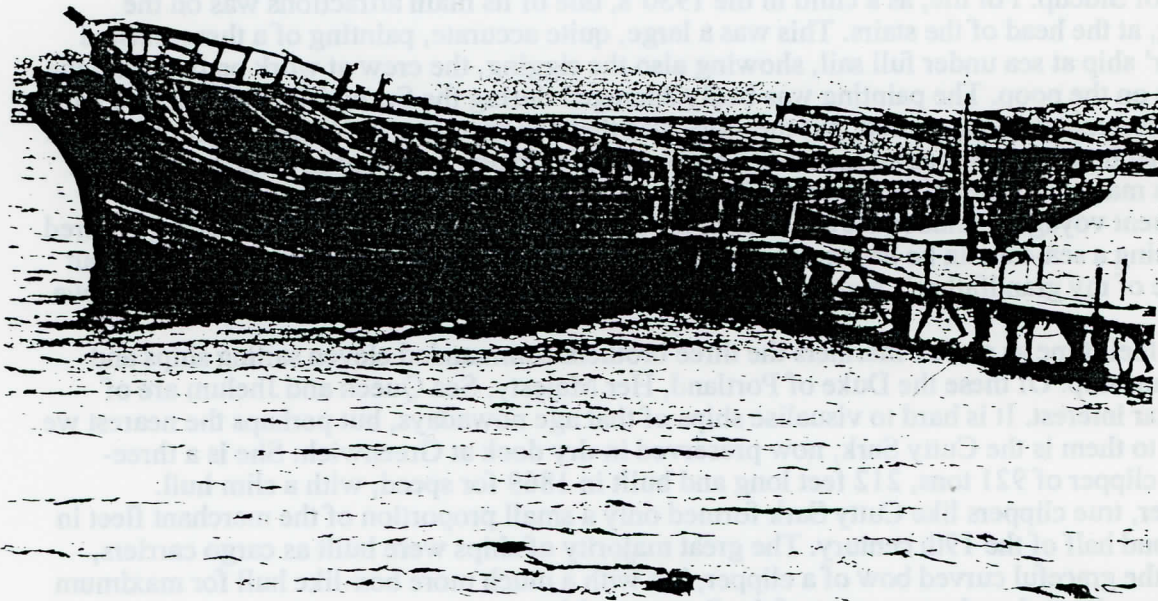
Her Majesty was much larger, a ship of 1112 tons and 205 feet long. She must have been a favourite of the Seymour brothers because George was her master from 1860-65, sailing to India and John took over from 1865-71, with voyages to China. This may well be the ship represented in the painting since it is of the correct type, although the name was not visible.

Sea Queen was an iron screw steamer of 899 tons and 233 feet long. She was commanded by William in 1868 and by George from 1869-70, sailing only to Mediterranean countries.

However, she was *owned* by both brothers from 1867-70. George and William were qualified in steam, while John was purely a sailing ship captain.

Jhelum was a barque of 428 tons and 123 feet long. She was built entirely of wood in 1849, as one of the last of the East Indiamen and so is classified as a pre-clipper. She is named after a tributary of the River Indus and was intended for voyages to India, although she seems to have spent much of her working life sailing to South America. John was her master from 1858-60 and was followed by Captain Stanus. In 1870 she had loaded a cargo of guano for fertiliser at Calloa, Peru and was then badly battered by storms rounding the Horn en route to Dunkirk. She limped into Stanley in the Falklands with serious damage and her crew mutinied, refusing to put to sea in her again. Today she sits at the end of the derelict Packe's jetty in Port Stanley harbour.

According to Mensun Bound, who is a Falklander and also Director of Maritime Archaeological Research (MARE) at Oxford University, 'the most important British ship in the Falklands is Jhelum'. This is because she is the only example of her type of ship still existing anywhere in the world today. Recent photos (1985) show her without masts and with her anchor windlass lying inside her great bluff bows, where it has fallen when the decks above collapsed. Clearly she is in a much poorer condition than the Great Britain when she was rescued from the Falklands in 1970. What are the chances of a similar rescue for Jhelum? Mensun Bound again 'her after cabin is in excellent condition and could be dismantled and reconstructed ashore with ease and very little expense'.



The 'Jhelum', Packe's Jetty, Port Stanley, Falklands.

So at present it looks as though the only way to see her is to go to the Falklands. It's surprising how far you can travel, starting from St. John's Churchyard!

Acknowledgements

The Sidcup Story, John Mercer
Local Studies Centre, Hall Place, Bexley
Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, City of London
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
MARE, Oxford University

John Seymour

In the Wake of Royalty

Starting opposite Prickend Pond on a dull summer evening a band of history-seekers from our Society led by Mr. Roy Hopper went in search of Old Chislehurst. Indeed, it was quite surprising to some to find how very rustic it really was, and how lucky we are that it is practically on our doorstep, as it were. It was delightful too, to discover such hidden 'finds' tucked away in the backwaters of the area, of by-gone cottages and the like.

Mr. Hopper told us that Chislehurst lay on the Blackheath Beds of sand and gravel which overlie the chalk. The name CHISLEHURST comes from the Anglo-Saxon 'ceosol hurst', meaning a 'stony wood'.

Chislehurst grew up as a scattered village centred around the common and surrounded by large country estates. In mid-Victorian times it altered its lay-out and became a fashionable suburb for London business men because of the advent of the railway. Estates of large detached family dwellings developed with many houses designed by prominent architects; some into the 'Arts and Crafts' style (vide William Morris, who lived at the Red House, Bexley). The commons and the country estates have preserved the area from sprawling suburban development.

Walking down Prince Imperial Road and into Wilderness Road we saw some lovely houses by Ernest Newton, E.J. May and William Willett (the same man who gave us 'The Daylight Saving Hour' in 1925).

Walking across the Common we noticed that there were still some reminders of the Great Storm of October 1987. The trunks of fallen dead trees and log piles have been left on site to rot naturally and provide a habitat for wild life. Large areas which were open heathland, probably covered with heather a hundred years ago, are now woodland - chiefly oaks and birches.

From Camden Park Road we viewed Camden Place, named after William Camden who may have lived in a house on this site. It is a fine yellow and red brick mansion, built in 1860, but basically it was built in 1717 by Robert Weston with substantial additions by Lord Camden in 1780 - George Dance being the architect. Then came more additions in 1805 by Thompson Bonar, merchant, who was murdered here in 1810. It was altered again in the French style by Nathaniel Strode in 1860. Strode was a friend of Napoleon III who came to live at Camden Place in 1870 with the Empress Eugene and their son, the Prince Imperial. (Sadly the latter, who joined the British Army was killed in Zululand in 1879. Nearby is a very fine stone cross dedicated to his memory.) Then in 1894 and onwards, Camden Place became a Golf Club.

At Camden Gates, the architect Ernest Newton in 1894 designed in 'Arts and Crafts' style the house for William Willett.

We paused at the convergence of roads, known as Hangman's Corner (on the opposite side is the site of the local gibbet).

Before we crossed over to Watts Lane I could not help noticing the stone water-trough, erected by the people of Chislehurst in 1887 for the thirsty horses who had climbed up Summer Hill and Old Hill. (Alas, the water-trough is now an anachronism, along with windmills, and has been filled with earth presumably for the planting of flowers.)

The West Kent Cricket Club has had its cricket ground at Watts Lane since 1822 - and it is still being used to this day.

Also in Watts Lane is 'The Briars', late 18th Century and was built for Lord Sydney, the Lord of the Manor.

Journeying down the pleasing Crown Lane, we were still conscious of the impact of the French Royal Family in the area by seeing the few 'chocolate-box' cottages on the left, named Eugene Cottages and then further down the lane the Roman Catholic Church of St. Mary where the Empress worshipped. She had the mausoleum of her husband, Napoleon III, built on to the church when he died in 1873.

Nearing Hawkwood Lane, another rural delight is Coopers, built in the 18th Century, now a school. The actual Hawkwood House was demolished in the 1960's. Here, we felt we were 'far from the madding crowd', but for the sight of a few horses being exercised.

We emerged from the lane to 'The Tiger's Head' public house. It is probably 18th Century, or earlier, in origin and altered in the 19th Century. (A tiger's head is incorporated in the arms of the Walsingham family - Lords of the Manor from 1424 to 1655.)

Unfortunately, there was not enough time to go into the Parish Church of St. Nicholas. It is mediaeval in origin and boasts an Anglo-Saxon window. It was rebuilt 1460-1470, with further additions in 1848-49 and 1896. We understand that in the Scadbury Chapel there is the tomb of the Walsingham family.

We passed under the Lych Gate to the churchyard which has some fine old yews. We noticed too, the tomb of the Thompson Bonar family, who lived at Camden Place and who, apparently, were murdered by a mad manservant there in 1810.

Not far from the old church is the delightful Royal Parade, which was the old village street. It is inscribed overhead as being erected in 1870. Here again is another reminder of the French Royal Family, who probably had the shops built for their immediate needs. At the end of the Royal Parade, is 'The Bull's Head' public house, an elegant Georgian hotel dating from the early 19th Century.

On the opposite corner is Abury, a half-timbered house. Nearby at the beginning of St. Paul's Road stood the village stocks.

A few yards along is the Commemorative Oak planted for George V's Coronation in 1911. On the opposite corner of the War Memorial is the site of the old village pond.

Our walk was finalised by seeing, on a raised mound, the interesting village sign depicting Queen Elizabeth I knighting Sir Thomas Walsingham at Scadbury in 1597. The sign was erected in 1953 and unveiled on the Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth II. The present sign was made from a cast of the original and re-erected in 1981.

Our thanks go to Mr. Roy Hopper, the Chislehurst Librarian, for such an enjoyable evening and we hope, perhaps will find time to 'fill up the spaces' of some more aspects of old Chislehurst.

Millie Salmon

Summer walk across Footscray Meadows - Wednesday, 13th June 1990

A group of twenty-one of us from the Local History Society gathered at the junction of Baugh Road and Rectory Lane on a beautiful, sunny evening, after what had been a somewhat disappointing day for June. The walk was led by Dr. John Mercer and we set off across the meadows entering by a footpath just near All Saints Church. That part of the meadows was once a brickfield and John pointed out to us where a cottage had stood to the right of the field where it is reputed William Turner the artist once stayed. A friend of mine, who now lives opposite me in Riverside Road, used to live in this cottage with his parents who worked on the farm, which was owned by a Mr. Mitchell. This farm was in operation up to the early 1960's

and I recall the large herd of cows that used to be in the field. He told me how the cottage was always used by the choir boys for changing into their robes for various services. Also when a confirmation service was held in All Saints the young ladies used to call at the cottage first to put on their veils, which they wore in those days, before processing along to the Church.

We then proceeded across the field and John pointed out various things of interest, including the site of what was once a canal dug out when Foots Cray Place was in existence to provide water for the house. Two trees now stand where there was an island in the canal. There is a beautiful line of lime trees, somewhat decimated by the 1987 gales, which led from the house down to the canal. These were planted by Lord Waring. We stood on the site of the house, which was originally called Pike Place prior to Joseph Lemm owning the property in the seventeenth century. Previous owners had included Lord Cleve (hence the name Cleve Road and Cleve Park School in the area), Lord Bexley and the last owner was Lord Waring of Waring and Gillow the furniture people, after whom Waring Park was named when it was opened in the 1930's. You can clearly see the outline of the house on a rise overlooking the lower fields and the river. On the opposite side of the river once stood North Cray Place.

The only part of the old estate now remaining is the coach house and stables, until recently used as a youth club. It is now somewhat derelict, but the cupola on the roof has been restored to its original state. It is a pity that the kitchen garden, which was once restored, had been let go due I suspect to lack of finance, but this is now receiving attention from Bexley Heritage.

There are plans to excavate behind Cleve Park School to see if any evidence can be found of the laundry which once stood there. The path running behind the school is the original road which led out as far as Penhill.

The Council have plans to turn the whole area of the Five Arches into a nature trail and work has already started. In fact signposts have been erected pointing out the Riverway Walk. Most of the grass is kept mown, but some has been left wild as the South Thames Polytechnic are undertaking a ecological study of the wild life and plants in the area.

We took a leisurely walk right across the fields behind Royal Park School following the line of the river. I pointed out that when we moved into the area in 1964 that part of the fields was very derelict having been used until recently for quarrying before those concerned moved the operation further along by the railway line leading to Bexley. The whole area looks quite pleasant now and is bordered by the Thames Water plant at the end of Riverside Road where all the local water is pumped up from bore holes and then transferred to St. Mary Cray before being fed into local homes. We crossed the River Cray by what is called the old iron bridge behind the children's playground. On this side of the river stands Loring Hall, now used as a nursing home for the elderly. Prior to that it belonged to Goldsmiths College and was one of their halls of residence. The sports field is still owned by them and used regularly by the students throughout the year. When originally built the house was known as North Cray Cottage. It was here that Lord Castlereagh, one time Head of the Foreign Office, lived and where he committed suicide whilst still a relatively young man. We then proceeded to follow the river along on its northern bank back towards Footscray. At a bend in the river you can see the remains of a gazebo.

Another old church in the area is also sited on the north side of the river adjacent to North Cray Road. This is St. James. The area beyond this is known as Bedens Field and it is believed from excavations carried out when the housing estate was built in the late 1950's that this was once used by the Romans as a home for retired legionnaires. So even in those far off times, they took care of people who had given good service to their country.

We continued along this path until we reached the Watercress Beds owned for many years by a family called Johnson until they gave up the enterprise in 1950. We crossed another little bridge behind the old Kolster Brands factory and emerged from our walk at the point at which

we had started some one and a half hours earlier, having covered approximately three to four miles. It was a lovely walk and I certainly learned a little more about the local area of which I was unaware although I have lived here for many years.

Valerie Allen

Our third Summer 1990 evening visit was to St. John the Baptist at Erith. The following article is taken with kind permission from their Parish magazine. The Church is rich in historical detail and the South Door is typical of this.

Frances Oxley

The Door: For seven centuries, people have passed through the door into our Church. Snuggly wrapped babies, about to be baptised, brides and grooms soon to be married and coffins awaiting funeral services, have crossed its threshold. People who have come to confess sins, receive help, find peace, pray, browse and look, but mostly to worship have passed through the doorway. Over the years the door has been opened and closed - it will close by itself with a resounding 'clunk'. Darkened by both age and treatment, the door has nail holes and rusty, embedded drawings pins firmly wedged in it. There is stickiness left by the sellotape of more recent years, and streaks of blue tack. The door has held notices since the local community began to read. Few people look twice at the door, and yet it is an ancient and precious part of the church.

The door dates back to the 13th Century. In those days, much of England was covered in forests of beech, oak, hornbeam and ash. The area around the Thames had, for some time, been cleared of trees for farming. The timber, however, was still probably local and brought to Erith by cart or boat. Trees were felled and their trunks balanced across a saw pit. Men with two handled saws cut and sliced the wood into manageable planks, which could be used for buildings, carts and farm implements. There were several carpenters in Erith, where there was a sandy harbour and where ships anchored for maintenance and repair, some ships were built also. They were made of oak, the largest weighing about twenty or thirty tons and carrying crews of about twenty men. Meat was scarce in winter and the boats were mainly used for fishing. England was a Roman Catholic country and fish was needed on Fridays and other special days when meat was forbidden. Aids to navigation were non-existent so ships did not travel far and stayed in sight of land. The largest ships carried wool across the channel for the Flemish weavers and some vessels travelled as far as Bordeaux, where wine was purchased.

Perhaps it was a ship's carpenter who left marks made by his adze on the door.

Mediaeval wrought iron scrolls decorate the front of the door. Iron ore, in those days, was mined in bell shaped pits in the Weald of Kent and Sussex. The miners dug out the ore, took it to the surface and washed it roughly in a coarse sieve. These miners were respected by all and received many privileges. They were free men (as were the blacksmiths) when most people were slaves or serfs.

The iron ore was taken to a hole dug in the hillside. Air was pumped by hand bellows into a lower hole and fanned the fire made from a mixture of charcoal, limestone and iron ore. Smoke emerged from an upper hole. The ground around this underground fire was covered with clay to retain the heat. The melted iron was separated from the limestone and waste ore. As it cooled unevenly, three kinds of metal emerged, hard and brittle, hard and springy or soft and pliable. It was the blacksmith's task to choose the right sort of iron for the task in hand. He re-heated the iron, hammering out the impurities and shaping the pieces. Iron was expensive, a small knife being a prized possession.

The craftsmen who made and hung our door, in the 13th Century must have done so at some

expense, but with great pride.

Since the porch was added in the 19th Century, the door has been re-hung and protected from the elements. Next time you open it, by the more recent handle, do take a good look at it.

Sidcup Memories of the 1930's

In the 1930's I was a child living in Sidcup and I have attempted to draw a picture of the place as it was then, with emphasis on the Station Road area. Also included are some of my local relatives, with accounts of how they came to live in Sidcup.

It seems appropriate to start at the railway station, since the suburban development of Sidcup can be dated from the arrival of the South Eastern Railway in 1866 and the subsequent electrification in 1926. Alighting from the London train, at the gas-lit platform above road level, there was no footbridge so anyone desiring to go up Station Road had to walk down the ramp. This went past a wooden slide down which baggage could be passed to a waiting taxi. At the bottom of the ramp looking right was the Station Hotel with its stables and looking further right, in the early 1930's, were the tall oasthouses of Vinson's Farm in Halfway Street, near where Lamorbey Bath now stands.

At the bottom of the ramp on the left was a boot repairer in a very small shop, strategically situated for the benefit of commuters. Turning left one walked under the bridge along a narrow path with a bent handrail, providing nominal protection against the traffic. On the Station Approach was the office of G.J. Cockerell and Co. Coal Merchants to Queen Victoria, of whom more later. A red General double-decker bus with an open outside staircase might be waiting on the other side of the bridge, outside one of the large houses surrounded by trees which were such a feature of Station Road. In one of these houses, where Station Parade now stands was the first school I attended. This was a Parents National Education Union school run by Miss Andrews, with the view from the front windows being enlivened by the activity in Station Road.

My home at No.5 Priestlands Park Road, where I lived with my parents Arthur and Dorothy Seymour and younger brother Peter, was reached by turning off Station Road along Manor Road, so we were not far from the railway. Lying in bed at night and hearing the chuff and clank of shunting in the goods yard is an abiding memory. Sometimes it seemed to go on all night and was especially loud when the wind was from the north. Another railway memory concerns a book called 'Our Home Railways', published in 1910, which belonged to my father and was illustrated with some splendid colour plates of locomotives in their pre-grouping livery. This he would show to my brother and I as a special treat, but unfortunately it disappeared during the Second World War. To my delight I recently found that a facsimile edition was available. My father had also kept a 1906 model steam engine and my brother and I provided the perfect excuse to bring this out occasionally. It was filled with water and methylated spirits and set to run across the dining room floor, with the steam whistle in action. This model still exists in working order complete with the original box and instructions in German, French and English.

A shop on the corner of Manor and Station Roads was a bakery with its own ovens. The delicious smell of freshly-baked bread when passing the shop on the way to school in the mornings is a strong memory and in fact baking continued there until the 1970's. All the shop fronts on this side of the road were decorated with a graceful stone arcading which had been part of the outside of St. John's Church. When the church was rebuilt for the first time in 1875 some of the arcading found its way to these shops in Station Road, where it remains visible on two of them. On the opposite side of Station Road, Roadnights the Chemist, was run by the two ever-cheerful Misses Roadnight. This shop had an advertisement in the 1898 Sidcup Directory and is still going strong.

The next turning off Station Road is Crescent Road where my paternal grandfather, Ernest Seymour, lived at No.16. He came to Sidcup from Kentish Town in 1891, just after his marriage to my grandmother, Nellie, who I did not know well as she died in 1932. My grandfather was a keen cyclist from his early youth and I still possess a Record Book of the Athenaeum Bicycle Club based in North London, of which he was a leading member. Club rides are described in detail from March to October 1882, when he was twenty-four, including local trips well into the Middlesex countryside to Stanmore, Pinner and Barnet and others further afield to Salisbury, Portsmouth and Exeter. The club members rode 'penny-farthing' machines and my grandfather retained his in the conservatory at No.16 to the end of his life in 1943. I even tried to ride it myself once, but without success! He was still cycling at the age of sixty, although not on a penny-farthing according to a postcard from Romsey dated August 1917.

My grandfather was in the tea business and in 1906 and 1912 he travelled to Shanghai and Nanking, one way through Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railway completed in 1904 and the other by sea via the Suez Canal. On the landing of No.16 was a large painting of a clipper ship in full sail and I was told that her captain was my great-grandfather, George Seymour. The painting was badly damaged during the War and has now unfortunately disappeared. His voyages covered New Zealand, India, China and the Mediterranean and he was one of three Seymours born in Bridport between 1817 and 1827, all of whom became Master Mariners. At about the time of my grandfather's marriage, George and his wife Anne, had retired to Belle Grove, on Watling Street by the nurseries then near Welling Station, where he died in 1915. Perhaps as a result of this background it was usual when we went to No.16 for Sunday lunch to have a break between the main course and the sweet. Everyone would leave the table and walk round either the garden or the conservatory, to admire the plants. Nuts would also be offered 'to aid the digestion'.

No.16 would have been a new house in the 1890's and, in common with others on the north side of the road, it has a semi-Norman dog-tooth arch over the front door, indicating that it was built by one of the Hawkins family. It was certainly decorated in a completely different manner to the heavy Victorian style. Wallpapers were pale, paintwork was off-white and the well spaced-out furniture was covered in light-coloured fabrics. There could not have been a greater contrast with the home of my maternal grandparents, who met in Sidcup and were married there in 1899. They lived near the top of Station Road at No.14, where Sidcup House now stands.

My grandfather, Claud Beater, was the son of Rev. Orlando Beater, who had been Vicar of Cressing in Essex. He had brought his family first to Blackheath, to complete their education and then to Sidcup some time after 1888 when he became headmaster of Marlborough House School. This was in Chislehurst Road facing Sidcup Place and one member of his teaching staff was Mr. E. Basil Spurgin. He was the brother of my grandmother Rosalie and he later became Vicar of St. John's Church from 1902-38 and Honorary Canon of Rochester Cathedral. His father was Rev. Arthur Spurgin, who was Rector of Gresham in Norfolk from 1857-92. When he died the whole family of seven children and their mother Elizabeth had to leave the rectory and came to live in Station Road in 1893.

My maternal grandparent's home was decorated with patterned wallpaper and dark paint. The curtains were heavy and the furniture was congested. Their house had been built in the 1870's and retained its coal-fired kitchen range, complete with coal cellar down below, until they left in 1954. Even the pipe carrying the main water supply to the roof tank was outside the house and regularly froze every winter! The dining room was dominated by my grandfather's desk and bookcase on one side, while on the other side was a bust of Napoleon. Behind the bust was a large picture of Napoleon on his death-bed, being viewed by the Duke of Wellington.

My grandfather's library was wide-ranging and included books by many authors including Dean Inge, with inevitably a whole shelf on Napoleon. Whenever we went to No.14 for a meal

one of his questions would always be 'And what have you been reading this week?'. If the reply was non-committal then a selection would be offered from the bookcase, which is how I came to read all the Sherlock Holmes and Hornblower stories. This would be followed by a 'Book Review' when he would describe what he had been reading, all with great relish and perhaps the comment 'You ought to try that!'. Other decorations at No. 14 included stuffed birds from my grandfather's early days wildfowling on the Essex marshes and architectural drawings of French cathedrals done by his brother Gordon. In the hall hung an aneroid barometer won by my grandfather for doubles in the South of England Tennis Tournament in September 1899.

The sitting room at No.14 was comfortable but somewhat overcrowded with furniture and knickknacks. Here the main items were my grandmother's piano and my grandfather's two 'wireless' sets. Both my grandmother and mother were good pianists and very active in St. John's Church, so their piano playing was useful when hymns were required. I still have a bound copy of Beethoven's Sonatas presented to my grandmother by the Victoria League. My grandfather's taste in music was selective, as he preferred Rossini to any other composer. In the 1920's, when broadcasting first began, he had bought a wireless which used accumulators and then replaced it with a mains-powered one in the 1930's. However, the early one was retained in case of breakdown and the accumulators were taken every month for charging at a local garage.

Where the Seymours travelled on two wheels the Beaters used four, apart from an early enthusiasm for motorcycles which Claud shared with the young Basil Spurgin. My grandfather disliked being shut in so he had a series of open-topped cars, mostly bought from Cliffords Garage in the Main Road. His last one was a 1936 Austin 10 Tourer which remained in the family for thirty years. On fine days in the summer family runs were a great treat as he had an intimate knowledge of the lanes of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. However, in those days tourers had a roof made of canvas which deteriorated after a few years and let in the rain. My grandfather always knew when the leaks had become unacceptable because my grandmother would put up her umbrella inside the car!.

My grandfather ran an agency in which he negotiated delivery of bulk quantities of coal to firms like the Black Eagle Brewery in Westerham. The coal usually came from Betteshanger Colliery in the Kentish coalfield and sometimes from merchants such as Cockerells or Woolridges. This was an ideal occupation for him, as frequent car journeys allowed him to indulge his fondness for the open air and the countryside. I often used to go with him in the school holidays and in fact he never completely retired.

In conclusion it is worth asking why the various groups of people described above decided, quite independently, to come to Sidcup from North London, Essex and Norfolk around 1890

Perhaps the following extracts from the 1894 Sidcup Directory will provide some clues.

'Sidcup is fast developing into a small unique town, most cleanly and at the same time most compact.'

'Sidcup has a great advantage over most other villages in possessing a number of good shops in the High Street, where all classes of trade are well represented.'

'On account of its healthy position, and being situated in one of the most picturesque parts of Kent, combined with easy access to London, Sidcup has now become a favourite place of habitation....'

'Sidcup Railway Station, on the North Kent Loop Line, affords every convenience to travellers, there being about fifty trains a day to and from the City and West End of London.' Some things have certainly changed since then!

Acknowledgements

The Sidcup Story, John Mercer, Sidcup (1988)
Walsham's Sidcup Directories (1894 and 1898)
Lloyds Captains' Register, Guildhall Library, London
Some Collected Notes on Sidcup Place, B.N. Nunns (1965)

John Seymour

As I was ill at the time John Mercer very kindly sent me his report on the very successful reminiscence evening which is so descriptive that I thought I would share it with you. John has now collated and edited these memories and we hope to publish them in the near future.

Frances Oxley

Report of 'Do You Remember?' at Blackfen Library February, 21st 1990

Leaflets and posters had been placed in the Blackfen, Sidcup and Welling Libraries. When the Committee met on February, 12th the form of questionnaire was agreed and sixteen forms had been received from local residents who wished to come and talk about their memories of their first homes in the district. It was believed that some more forms would be coming from members of Holy Redeemer Church.

In the event some seventy people turned up and the team of questioners were quite swamped! The visitors were put into groups to which late-comers were added. Some groups were as large as ten. As a consequence the method of questioning and discussing on a one-to-one basis that had been planned was overtaken. John Mercer has received two written up reports from members of the team and when all have been received he will attempt to collate and edit them so that a booklet can be produced on behalf of the Society. It may be necessary to visit in their homes some of the people who volunteered their memories. Under the circumstances some rich veins of local history were only lightly tapped. At the next Committee meeting on March, 21st, further decisions will be made about publication and format.

The library staff at Blackfen and the over-burdened team of reporters are to be thanked for all the work that they did (and some have still to do!). The experience of this Wednesday evening shows that there is a good deal of interest in local history not only amongst the elderly, but also amongst the middle aged and the younger generation. Some elderly couples came with their middle aged children and one father came with his secondary school sons.

John Mercer 28.2.90

Our local history friend from Eltham, John Kennett, after receiving a copy of our 1988 Newsletter sent me the notes on an interview he had conducted with a Mrs. Loxley in 1973. It reflects our own Society evening at Blackfen Library on the same theme.

Frances Oxley

Interview with Mrs. Loxley of 103 Old Road, Crayford on 14.9.73

Mrs. Loxley's father, Mr. T.E. Godfrey, had a small nursery at the end of Powerscroft Road, Footscray and in 1924/5 he removed from this rented accommodation to a new nursery site at 433/435 Blackfen Road. This virgin site was right out in the country with no Rochester Way

behind the site - the Godfrey's witnessed the building of the new road which was opened by Princess Mary (later The Princess Royal) who drove along the road in a car.

The nursery site was marked out with pegs and plum trees were later put round the boundaries. The family had to walk each day from 36 Suffolk Road, Sidcup to the nursery, probably pushing hand carts with potted-out plants which had been prepared at home the night before. There was no accommodation at the site, but Mr. Godfrey would sleep in the shed at the height of summer when the coolest time to enter the greenhouses was early in the morning. Altogether there were eight greenhouses - 100ft long and 15ft wide, the houses were built by Mr. Godfrey and the bricks would be made from klinkers recovered from the boilers which provided the heat for the plants. Some of these klinker bricks were used to support the boundaries of the site. Klinker bricks were also 'manufactured' by people who built their own bungalows and houses along the Blackfen Road at this time.

The site was affected by bombing and four nurseries had to be patched up and they were not rebuilt until after the war when war damage funds were available. (Park Mead was also affected by the bombing.) The nursery and the sweet shop by the curve in Blackfen Road, were subject to flooding especially after the Rochester Way was constructed. A ditch ran along Blackfen Road behind the pavement and after Mr. Godfrey had put down a pipe for this water over his land he put boards over the ditch to make a satisfactory entrance to the nurseries. Opposite the nursery was Vincent's Farm which stretched away to Hurst Road and Penhill Road and beyond - it was one of Vincent's workers who showed Mr. Godfrey how to carry correctly a 2 pronged potato dibber on his bike after he had fallen off in Penhill Road.

The nursery is now the site of Westerham Drive and had a 50ft frontage to Blackfen Road. Mrs. Loxley recalls travelling from Powerscroft Road, Footscray Lane (Rectory Lane) Penhill Road to Blendon with her sister who knew the way - plus a barrow. At the top of Penhill Road her sister said that the new nursery was to the right - when they got to the Blue Anchor at Bridgen they realised they had come the wrong way and a few choice words were said as they retraced their steps up the hill to Blackfen.

Before the site was sold, via Marcus King, Estate Agents, to a developer in 1956, lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, bedding plants and two rows of sweet peas were typical products of the nursery. Evans of Sidcup was supplied, as was Katie Dunn at Sidcup Station. Cabbage, lettuce and chrysanthms were sold to local residents who called at the nursery. In the early days chickens and pigs were kept - the pigs were slaughtered at the rear of Tompkins butchers shop at Footscray.

The first two Ideal Homesteads houses were built in Blackfen Road at the corner of Ramillies Road and were finished by moonlight so as to be ready by the August Bank Holiday of 193-? at a cost of £350 each. After work at 5pm Mrs. Loxley would get on her bicycle and deliver pamphlets to the new houses at the Ramillies Road and Marlborough Park areas, and even as far as Albany Park to advertise the products of the nursery.

Produce was taken to London from Sidcup Station where it had to be weighed before transit to London; Mr. Godfrey lodged once in Hurst Road Cottages where he got to know the railwaymen so the weighing was often a formality. Mr. Godfrey acquired a horse and cart to replace the handcarts, but one day the horse dropped dead on the journey to Sidcup Station. Mrs. Loxley recalls taking greenhouse strawberries to London in April - in all 6 1/2lb punnets which were sold at 35/- a lb - to the Hotel Cecil on the Embankment for making strawberry liquors - the 2/- return fare was well worth the early rising!

Mr. Godfrey had a mortgage on his land which was only finally paid up by Mrs. Loxley when she sold the land in 1956. At the border of Blackfen and Avery Hill was the 'Black Cottage' where the Godfreys and other residents would pay their annual mortgages - in this case £6.8s.6d! From this cottage 'Bill the roadman' would sweep the road all the way to Blendon

and would keep his hand cart at Mr. Godfrey's 'Croft Nurseries' - occasionally he would help out in the evenings after he had swept the Blackfen Road.

The ground would need ploughing two to three times a year and a horse team was hired from an Eltham Farm (name forgotten).

For a time check Mrs. Loxley would look out for the Burroughs Wellcome & Co.'s lorry from London to Dartford (before the Rochester Way) at lunch time - he was so regular that she knew that it was 1 o'clock.

There was piped water in Blackfen Road, but Mr. Godfrey had to pipe it to his greenhouses, there was no electricity, only candles and a kitchen range was installed in the shed for the purposes of cooking - this shed was where Mr. Godfrey slept during the hot summer evenings so that he could do his early morning rounds of the greenhouses.

When they took over the nursery site the nearest house was Chapel House owned by Mr. Garth Groombridge, who wrote a pamphlet about his property. He had three bungalows built alongside his house on the Bexley side, but they were recently demolished for the new underpass. Along Blackfen Road people had bought plots of land and were building their own houses at weekends. At No.427, Mr. and Mrs. Cole built a wooden clapper-board shed in the garden, lined the walls with cardboard and covered this with wallpaper, here they slept at weekends and cooked over the oil stove (the oil was bought in Bexley village) as they built their bungalow; many of these families came from London, the Bucketts came from Silvertown.

For tea, sugar and cakes, Mrs. Loxley had to walk to a shack at 116 Blackfen Road which was a pull-in and cafe as there were no other shops. The new premises on the site is called CORBETT and still has a large forecourt - motor vehicles stopped here in the old days. Nearby, at the corner of Fen Grove, was the Post office with Miss Reynolds as the proprietress, she also delivered newspapers. The only time in Blackfen that everything stopped was for Mrs. Warren's funeral, it was an Italian type funeral with 6(?) horses. The family were Italian and made vinegars and sauces for London Italians - things like tomatoes were bought from Godfreys nursery. The name of Warren is kept on in a builders yard at 387 Blackfen Road.

Mr. Godfrey died just after the start of the Second World War and was succeeded by his son who died quite soon after to be succeeded by Mrs. Loxley, who ran the nursery until 1956, cycling daily from Dartford. She now lives in Crayford and works part-time in a small supermarket nearby.

John Kennett

The Tin Box

From the project meeting held at Lamorbey in the Autumn of 1989 came the reminiscence evening at Blackfen Library and also our 'Tin Box' research. At the project meeting Louise Beaver said she had been told of a fascinating tin box which contained papers of local interest about the Landsberg family who had lived in Lamorbey House. The following will be used as the beginning paragraph of Louise's write-up on our research.

'An old metal deed box was found abandoned in a garden shed behind an empty house in Manor Road, Sidcup. The box was stoutly made with a tightly-fitting lid so that although the black paint had rusted, the contents had been kept in good condition. Some members of the Society have had the opportunity of browsing through the contents and have carried out further research to fill in some of the gaps in the story told by the 'tin box' as we call it.

The tin box was filled with papers comprising a few official documents (birth certificate, passport, two school reports etc.), a number of photographs of people and places, many receipts, press cuttings, notebooks and over two hundred letters. None of the papers are very old, the earliest being dated 1889, but they reflect the life of a middle class Sidcup family during dramatic, social, economic and political changes in the first half of the twentieth century. The last of the letters is dated May, 1945.'

Louise Beaver

We will publish the contents of the 'Tin Box' research in our next year's newsletter. Meanwhile if any member has any other memory or detail on the Landsberg Family, please pass it on to Louise Beaver.

Frances Oxley

OBITUARY - *Mrs. Mary Percival*

It was with great sadness that we heard of the death in February 1990 of our dear friend and member, Mary Percival. This tragic event was so unexpected that many of us could not at first accept the news.

Mary had become so much part of our Society having at first joined us on our outings, rambles and evening walks as 'Eric's Wife' and then later she became a member in her own right. An active one, too. She will always be associated with the Society's storm booklet. It was Mary who set to and produced over 160 copies and later took great delight in selling them to Society members and the public.

Mary was such a kind person, helping others in their times of trouble - my sister and I particularly remember her in this vein. She certainly made our little world a happier place. Whilst Eric is in the Society, Mary will be in our thoughts.

Frances Oxley

SOCIETY NEWS

At almost the same time as Eric's loss, John Mercer's wife, Joan, passed away. It really was a terrible winter in so many ways, but summer came and with it a delightful granddaughter for Eric, Sarah Elizabeth and at a band concert at Sidcup Place, John was surrounded by his family and in particular his charming little granddaughter.

We welcome a new contributor to our newsletter, John Seymour and thank him for the hard work he put into his articles.

All sorts of thoughts are buzzing around as to whether you would like one or two Saturday afternoon outings during the winter? Perhaps you will let Norma have your thoughts on this.

Did you enjoy our last meeting at Lamorbey. I certainly did. It was full of variety, sometimes sad but mostly full of laughter with talk of liberty bodices and a moustache cup. Brian Newey with his lovely heartfelt description of Christmas behind the then Iron Curtain certainly gave us food for thought.

I hope you all enjoy the 1990/91 Society Year.

Frances Oxley
Hon. Secretary and Editor