

Lamorbey
& Sidcup
LOCAL
HISTORY SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

AUTUMN 1998

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The articles in this newsletter have been written by the members of Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society. Meetings of the Society take place at Alma Road Adult Education Centre, Sidcup during term time. Miss F.Oxley, the Secretary, may be contacted at 48, Beverley Avenue, Sidcup, Kent. DA15 8HE

EDITORIAL 1998

It is incredible that it is almost a year round since I abandoned my original 1997 editorial to record the initial shock at the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. What followed seemed to be so alien to our British temperament - the outpouring of grief for one person on such a large scale. In consequence, some traditions surrounding the Royal Family were discarded, such as, only the Royal Standard being flown at Buckingham Palace and only when the Sovereign is present. Due to popular demand, the Union Flag was flown there at half mast until after the funeral of the Princess. As a student of history, it was interesting to watch this ground swell of emotion that gripped the country. At this time the instant visual communication through television played a significant part in tuning the emotions of the Nation. In earlier decades the radio welded the people together when during World War 2 we listened to the stirring tones of Winston Churchill as he exhorted us with his "Blood, Sweat and Toil" speech. The wartime Christmas broadcasts by King George VI were significant too as people tuned in to hear him speaking directly to them from Sandringham on Christmas Day. We all have a mental picture of families throughout the UK and the Empire (later the Commonwealth) gathering around the radio for some ten minutes or so listening to the King who had such difficulty in speaking but who was determined to carry on with the tradition his father, George V, started in the early 1930s. So our senses have been used in this mass communication, TV with sight and sound, radio with sound and newspapers with sight. Each era has had its own form of communication, such as the tap, tap of Morse code, semaphore used at sea and the lighting of bonfires one after the other alerting the country perhaps to a suspected invasion. We realise from this that we do not live in isolation but are part of the community and now due to man's inventiveness, part of the world wide community.

Last year I also wrote a short article on Rose Bruford, the founder of the Speech and Drama College at Lamorbey Park. You may remember that she wished to become an actress herself but did not accomplish this due to family pressure. I suggested, perhaps, that her name would not have been so significant had she done so. This was borne out when on a visit to the actor's church of St. Paul's, Covent Garden, I spotted in amongst the memorial plates of our great acting fraternity the following: Rose Bruford 1904-1983 "Inspired Teacher of Speech and Drama". This was amongst the names of Noel Coward, Dame Edith Evans, Dame Sybil Thorndike and Sir Lewis Casson. Rose Bruford, a lady revered within her own profession and whose name will be remembered by those she inspired personally and the many aspiring actors yet to come.

About the Newsletter

Having said that unless I gathered more articles there would be no Newsletter this year, I was taken at my word and so suddenly found I had more than enough material to justify publishing as usual. We have some first time contributors, Jean Davis, Mary Webb and Dorothy Ryder. Phyllis Parker has lived in Lamorbey all her life so her item which she wrote for a second cousin delving into 'Family History' is also a social document for ourselves. It reminds us that not many years back Lamorbey was quite a rural area and how residents shopped in 'The Village' otherwise Sidcup High Street! Kathy Harding and Denise Baldwin have let us into their secret of gathering local history - it certainly works for them. So let me thank each and every contributor to this

newsletter - it would have been such a pity to have broken the chain from when I first started it many years ago with just two pages.

Society News

We were all shocked to hear the news just prior to our AGM on 12th November that dear Beryl Williams had passed away. You will find further on, a moving tribute to her by her great friend, Gwen Dudney. It was always Beryl and Gwen together way back in the Lamorbey Park days. Beryl was always the first to send a 'thank you' card after an outing and, along with the others received, have always been filed away with the outing papers. Her cards are now even more precious and are a reminder of a lovely lady. Peter Granger was just about to take a holiday in China when it was decided by his doctor that he needed immediate surgery. He is now well enough to take up his voluntary work at Crossness Engines House again. Treasurer, Jack Saunders has been in hospital again, this time for a hernia operation. He seems to be recuperating quite nicely.

Most of you realise that Eric and I are Officers of the Kent History Federation to which the Society is affiliated. The Bishop of Maidstone paid a visit to a Federation Meeting when he asked that local history societies remember that the Millennium is first and foremost an ecclesiastical celebration. We agreed that each society should celebrate in their own way. For our Society we felt that Alan Godfrey's Millennium project covers the Bishop's request - we have a write-up of St. Lawrence's Church in Main Road and work will come featuring the Holy Redeemer, Days Lane for the Church of England. Is there someone that could offer an item on a Sidcup Non-Conformist Church, please? Other sources for the whole project might include the new Women's Institutes that are springing up. There are members in our society that are officers in the Hurst Road one - what about an article? Has anyone travelled on the 286 bus route from Queen Mary's Hospital to Greenwich - it must make quite an outing. What about the School Teachers among us telling us of today's teaching world. You do not have to prepare an article by yourself - Mary Boorman and Daphne Prince have combined forces with their work. Who will be one of the first diners at Sidcup Place writing the story of the transition from council offices to a restaurant. Many of you were on the visit the society made when we shown around by council officers. I hope that I have once again set you thinking and that by the end of this academic year - May 1999 - Alan will have enough material for us to make a presentation of it to Local Studies in the year 2000. Lastly, I must thank everyone who was thoughtful and kind towards me at the early part of the year when I sadly had a short breakdown. Two members I would like to mention especially - Janet Woods kept me going with some long phone calls and as for our Chairman, Eric Percival, he was determined that I was going to get better by hook or by crook!

Frances Oxley - Hon.Secretary & Editor

A TRIBUTE TO BERYL WILLIAMS
WHO DIED ON 12TH NOVEMBER 1997



Beryl had been a member and staunch supporter of Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society for many years. She thoroughly enjoyed going to all the meetings and also the walks and outings where she was able to meet everyone. Beryl had a lot of interests, her church, All Saints, Footscray, and the Sidcup Women's Institute. Queen Mary's Hospital was also very dear to her and she had been a volunteer worker in the Maternity Shop over a long period.

Her passing was indeed a great shock to all her friends, and we still find it hard to come to terms with the fact that she is no longer with us. Any problems, Beryl was always there to help, assist and try to solve them - she was always so constant. At her funeral the church was filled to overflowing which was a testament to the love which we all felt for her.

Dear Beryl - we shall never forget you. Your smile, your lovely tinkling laugh, these are things which we shall always remember and remain with us forever.

Gwen Dudney

The following article was given to me by Beryl, very early in the Autumn '97 term. You will see from the opening paragraph that she intended it for the Millennium project but I felt then, that it was more suitable for the newsletter as a social document of the past. In the circumstances, I feel now more strongly that it should be seen by you all in this current newsletter.

"I spent many happy years in the service of the Red Cross and I thought, as my contribution to the Millennium you might like to share with me a few recollections. As my children were growing up having the usual injuries necessitating visits to the local Casualty Department., I thought it would be a good idea if I joined the Red Cross, which I hoped would enable me to cope and be of some use in an emergency. I offered my services and was accepted and duly measured for my uniform at Buckingham Palace Gate. Lectures had to be attended at the old hospital in Froggnal Lane and finalised by exams in both Nursing and First Aid every other year so that one kept up to date with new developments. I thoroughly enjoyed these lectures even though in the winter there was hardly any lighting in the car park and on one occasion my friend lost her shoe in the mud. From then on I always carried a torch in the car. There was a wonderful atmosphere in the hospital. Notes were to be found in the kitchens explaining that food was not to be thrown out of the windows because of the rats. There was a large population of feral cats, so I should have thought they would have made short work of any unsuspecting rat!

Although the corridors were in the open and consisted of wooden planks and things didn't look too hygienic by modern standards, one had wonderful attention. On one occasion my eldest son had broken his leg and we were due at the hospital for a plaster

check, I was completely unable to lift him out of bed, without cries of pain, so I rang the hospital as we were going to be late for our appointment. They immediately sent an ambulance and two cheerful strong men lifted him downstairs. We went the back way up Froggnal Lane to the hospital and lo and behold, a doctor came out to us, did the check in the ambulance and in no time we were home with instructions on how to use crutches being the order of the day. Little wonder I felt I had to give time to Queen Mary's as a 'thank you'. I am still doing so in the hospital shop, five grand-children later.

Sunday mornings were spent with Sister O'Malley who seemed quite stern at first, but had a wonderful sense of humour once you were more acquainted. One had to make sure that one's uniform was spotless, much starching to be done, especially with the head square. A minor op was to be performed by a local doctor and there was a major panic on to clear all the empty boxes from the theatre to make it surgically clean. Thank goodness this didn't happen often. Several evenings in the week were spent at Queen Mary's being on duty wherever the need was greatest. We always received a warm welcome from the Baby Unit, as being mothers ourselves we were able to comfort and to nurse the little one's, having more time to spare.

Every Tuesday morning I had a regular bed-bath to do, after the children had gone to school. The lady in question was particularly ungrateful and demanding and I used to give a silent prayer that she wouldn't depart this life whilst I was in attendance. I was always asked to bring some coal up from the cellar which had no light! This I considered to be beyond the call of duty but, nevertheless complied. Door to collections had to be attended to once a year. Armistice Day at The Cenotaph etc. Clean linen was always part of my first aid equipment in the car boot, which proved very useful when having to attend to two motor-cyclists who came a cropper whilst we were on holiday. As things are in the Health Service sadly our help is no longer required".

Beryl Williams

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE "COMMON" EAST END

By Bess Dzielski

Our Sunday afternoon trip to Docklands was almost a return trip to my birthplace, but not quite. I was born a mile or so further on but it might as well have been in another world. Previously I had only crossed the Isle of Dogs by the Docklands Light Railway and this was the first time I'd seen this new yuppie world in any great detail. The advent of container ships which could not be accommodated in the nineteenth century docks together with the devastation of the Blitz had allowed whole areas of the East End to be completely demolished, so the subsequent rebuilding must have been a planner's heaven. No restricted sites, no older buildings needing to be sympathetically integrated with the new. Miles of open docks allowed the 'common' East End, with its access to quays along one of the world's great rivers, almost to rival Venice. Only a few old warehouses, now mostly Grade 1 listed, but allowed to resurrect into new apartments, are reminders of the past.

For once enthusiastic Government support and co-operation with private enterprise proved successful. The government investment was that for every one pound from them four pounds must be raised. In the event this proved to be six pounds making an astronomical investment, and so successful has the scheme been that now the London Docklands Development Corporation has recently folded its wings and departed - mission accomplished. Some of the new buildings intentionally recalled Docklands origins, with jutting roofs and metal window bars recreating the spirit of the old cranes, some of which are preserved, gaunt, painted matt black. One building, interpreting the prow of a ship apparently invoked the wrath of Prince Charles who described it as a sinking ship! Canary Wharf, or more properly, No.1, Canada Square, on the site of the old West India Dock, is the tower which dominates the skyline from whichever direction you may look. The surrounding glass, chrome, modern skyscrapers, impressive in themselves are still dominated by it, and to which twenty thousand workers come each day. And although it was Sunday the yuppie influence was apparent in the expensive shops and malls. An enormous bunch of grapes was positioned there for no apparent reason, and the splashing fountain with waterfall and sculptured 'cushioned' seats added to the ambience.

The twists and turns taken by the coach lost me my bearings completely. Occasionally in the distance I saw the Hawksmoor spire of St. Anne's, Limehouse and Richard Gerard, our guide (family roots in the area for two hundred years and a former stevedore himself) once pointed to the direction of Pennyfields, the old Chinese quarter. Some names I remembered from my youth, Mowlems, the Graving Dock, Greene, Siley, Weir (where my father served his apprenticeship), West Ferry Road, East India Docks. And new names there were - Reuters, Readers' Digest, The Mirror, Rupert Murdoch! The West India Dock Warehouse, specially built to contain sugar, and now Grade 1 listed is destined to house a museum of Docklands history.

We stopped at Mudchute Farm for tea, a little green oasis amid the new planning and then I realised that, not far from the Brave New World, there existed on its fringe less impressive council houses and flats - not so striking, more pedestrian - and I wondered if the indigenous East Enders were altogether happy with this yuppification and how they reacted to a world which seemed, on the surface, to have little for them.

While the energetic majority took a trip on the DLR we lazier minority did it by coach. Sitting there, looking at a map still containing some of the street names I remembered, I reminisced part of my childhood to a somewhat surprised Eric Percival. A harsh reminder of current events were the buildings damaged by the IRA bombs and still under repair, but a small area of continuity was a terrace of cottages built to commemorate the 1935 Silver Jubilee and miraculously untouched by the war. A brief stop at the Thames Barrier and a view of the runway at the City Airport were the last before we plunged into the Blackwall Tunnel. The surprisingly short journey down the A2 returned us home to a green, peaceful, treelined suburbia which seemed positively sedate compared with our afternoon vista.

TWO WHO DARE - WIN
By Denise Baldwin and Katherine Harding

We've met many people on our travels through various areas of Bexley in search of information and anecdotes for whatever particular field of research we have been engaged in and almost all have shown us great patience and kindness if not to mention an understandable hesitance on our initial enquiries. We have invariably with a knock, a door being opened and a conversation that goes something like this.....

"Hello. You haven't a clue who we are but we are from the Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society....."

"Who?"

"The Local History Society, Lamorbey & Sidcup, you know. No? Well never mind. We're researching into.....and we wondered if we could, as complete strangers, just walk into your house and take some photos and ask you some personal questions."

"Certainly. You look harmless(!) Come In".

Far fetched though it may seem, that is almost, although not quite, how the opening gambit goes and amazingly, because lets face it we could be anyone and not every member of our fair borough has heard of Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society, no one has ever said no or turned us away. We've been welcomed into some lovely and truly memorable homes, The Old House in Rectory Lane and The Manor House at Ruxley Manor Garden Centre to name just two. All the owners could not have been more helpful and responsive to our request for information. We suppose the offer from two 'girls' standing on your doorstep asking to snap your bedroom or loo is truly irresistible but you know what they say about "nothing ventured, nothing gained".

It was with just such an opener almost four years ago that we found ourselves standing outside a pretty bungalow in Somerset, where we had gone, completely on the offchance(there's a pioneering spirit locked away in our souls) to add more details to our research on Douglas Macmillan, the founder of the now renowned cancer charity organisation, who had returned to Somerset on leaving Sidcup in 1966. As many of you will know, our tentative knock that day allowed us the great privilege and enormous pleasure of meeting Nora Hill, Douglas's widow who, with her second husband Percy, welcomed two total strangers into their home and gave us such help and encouragement that we were really quite astounded at such trust and friendship. This little article is by way of an update for now we keep in regular contact with Nora, getting down to see her whenever we can. Sadly, Percy passed away last September and we miss his smiling presence whenever we walk into the house for he was indeed a most delightful gentleman in the true sense of the word. For the last visit, she had decided on a pub lunch and proceeded to pack away a sizeable plate of cod and chips and enjoy a glass of the house's chilled medium dry. We keep her updated on any events and developments in Sidcup regarding Cancer Macmillan. Her commitment and interest in the organisation is as steadfast as ever, and we send her photos and newscuttings of the same. She was delighted that we were able to hand over £500 to the funds a couple of months ago due to the sales of the book. We value her friendship highly. Who would have thought that our cheek would have paid off so handsomely and to our advantage? Although he came from Peckham, perhaps Del Boy was not far short of the mark?

AROUND THE WEALD

By Joan Seymour

On the morning of Saturday, the 18th April, we set off to explore the Weald of Kent. Our coach was driven by an old friend of the Society, and the party included a guide. She proved extremely knowledgeable and kept us informed about places we visited throughout the day.

Our first visit of the day was to Tudeley Church which is situated in fairly isolated country, near the small village. A church has stood on this site for more than a thousand years and is mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1080. The church is small, built of stone on earlier foundations and with a square red brick tower added in 1765, but its fame now lies in the stained glass windows. They are the work of the artist, Marc Chagall (1887-1985) and attract visitors from all over the world. The East Window was the first to be made and was dedicated in 1967. It was commissioned by the local landowners Sir Henry and Lady d'Avigdor Goldsmid in memory of their daughter Sarah, who was drowned in a sailing accident near Rye in 1963, and depicts the scene in glorious colours. Blues and touches of red predominate, with golden hues shining from the Christ who appears above. Sir Henry commissioned seven more windows which were installed in 1974, and Chagall designed a further four windows for the chancel which were installed in 1985. Thus all the windows in the church are by Marc Chagall and make the greatest collection of his works in England. They are truly an unforgettable sight with all the rich, glowing colours filling this small church. Some of the original Victorian windows are on view in the Vestry.

After assimilating the wonders of Tudeley we had a pleasant drive across country, through some orchards and past oasts, to the village of Matfield. We were glad to stop for much needed refreshment at The Star inn, where we were provided with excellent coffee and plates of cake. Much restored, we continued on our way to Tunbridge Wells, passing through several delightful villages with white-painted weatherboard cottages and by farms with lambs in the fields. Again, we saw groups of typical Kentish oasts and more orchards coming into blossom.

Arriving at Tunbridge Wells in a shower of rain, we went straight to the exhibition, "A Day at the Wells". This is housed in the old Corn Exchange in the Pantiles and is a sequence of scenes which takes one back more than 200 years, to Georgian times and all the bustle of the Spa on a summer's day in 1740. It begins with a scene outside a coaching inn in Southwark, with sound effects of voices and dogs barking as the stage prepares to leave for the Wells. After this, the day at the Wells proceeds with a room in a coffee house, ladies strolling along the Pantiles and taking a glass of the medicinal waters, and an evening at a candlelit ball. The life-size models throughout are extremely well done and their clothes were of great interest. In the Pantiles scene, shop windows held displays of goods and handbills advertising events, and through it all came the sounds of the town. It was a fascinating experience to walk through all this activity which was so cleverly displayed. and a book was available explaining how it had all been made and put together.

We now had a well-timed lunch break during which it poured with rain, then we were free to wander around and explore the Pantiles. Here we found some good shops - I remember especially a fine Delicatessen - and nearby the parish church dedicated to

King Charles the Martyr which is one of only four with this dedication in the country. The church was originally a non-conformist chapel built in 1678, when Tunbridge was a village, but as Tunbridge became popular through its Chalybeate spring and grew into a large town, the church was enlarged. The final additions were done between 1882-1912 when the church took the form it still retains today. The interior is very impressive, with side galleries and a beautiful plaster-work ceiling from which hang chandeliers.

It was still raining heavily when we boarded the coach and continued on our way through the Weald to the attractive and always busy town of Tenterden. This town (Tenet-ware-den) is the nearest point in the Wealden forest to Thanet and was the home of the Tent-ware (the men of Thanet) as their 'den' or pig pasture in Saxon times. A reference to this was found in a Charter of 968AD. Here we again went our own ways and many of us made for the tea-shops for refreshment. Some of us met up again in the fine parish church of St.Mildred where there is much to see. The church dates from about 1180, and celebrations were held in Tenterden in 1980 for the eight hundredth anniversary of the foundation of St.Mildred's. The nave has a beautiful carved wooden ceiling which was made at least 400 years ago, and the church tower is most impressive. It is very tall and used to have beacon at the top, and the view from here on a clear day extends to the sea and the coast of France.

With our heads full of all the interesting places we had seen and the lovely countryside we had driven through, we travelled home and arrived back in Sidcup at 7pm. Many thanks to Frances and Gill for another memorable outing - not forgetting our driver, Gordon!

MY CHILDHOOD IN LAMORBEY

By Phyllis Parker

In the days of my childhood a very large area of the land around Lamorbey and Hurst was owned by a Scottish family named Malcolm. They leased it out for cultivation to Mr.Harry Vinson. There were two farms and farm houses - one at Hurst, where Mr.Vinson lived and the other at Halfway Street. The house here was sub-let to a Miss Cowdrey. My grandfather and subsequently my father worked on the Halfway Street farm as foremen.

My grandparents and their large family lived in two of the cottages opposite the church - known as Church Cottages but later moved into No.5 one of the eight cottages built at the beginning of Hurst Road. It was also in one of these (No.8) that I was born and lived with my parents Harry & Eliza Parker and brother George and sister Winifred. Mother's family, the Davis's lived in No.6. All the cottages were occupied by the farm labourers and their families. I would guess that the number of men employed on the farm there would be about ten or eleven, including those working in the greenhouses. Children working on the farm? No, except perhaps at hop-picking time if the schools were not open. Certainly my mother did not do any farm work, though a lot of local women did, when necessary, such as fruit picking, gathering cabbages and sprouts etc. Mother was fully occupied in keeping the home going. Father came in for breakfast

after setting the men to work and also came in for midday dinner and she was always there when we came home from school.

As children we were always proud of the fact that we had a telephone in the house, though of course it was only ever used as means of communication between Mr. Vinson and Father. On working days my father rose at 4.30am because at 5am the farmer would ring through and give the orders for the work to be done that day. By 6am all the men and horses would be at their posts in the fields, though sometimes it would be too dark to start work. I think the day finished at 5pm. Mr. Vinson had no cattle on the farm so I suppose he was really a market gardener. The land was used for growing grain (which was then brought to the farm yard for stacking and eventually threshed on the site) also soft fruits, raspberries and strawberries, or potatoes, cabbages and sprouts and a large garden for the hops. The greenhouses produced tomatoes and cucumbers. A lot of the produce was taken daily to the markets in London. In early years by horse and cart and later by lorries.

The hops were dried in the oasts, of which there were two and then packed into large sacks known as 'pockets' before being transported to a firm in London.

In early summer women would appear at our back door asking for their names to be put down for hop-picking. They were usually the same people every year and lived in the surrounding district - Corbylands - Days Lane - Longlands - and even as far as New Eltham. When the picking started in September they were allotted bins made of sacking in which to put the hops. The quantity was measured at the end of each day and recorded in a book. At the end of the week payment was made at so much a bushel. Children helped by picking into an umbrella stuck into the ground and then transferring the hops into a bin. The measurer would keep a watchful eye so that not too many leaves were amongst the hops.

There was a cow-shed on the Halfway Street farm used by a herd of milking cows owned by Bunton's Dairy. We often went there after school to watch the cows being milked and afterwards saw what would be considered now, a very unhygienic method of cooling! But we drank the milk regularly and it did us no harm.

The shops we used mostly were just round the corner - opposite the farm. Amongst them was Harry Goddard the grocer where Mother did all her shopping and Mr. Spicer, the newsagent, tobacconist and confectioner. That was where we spent our Saturday pennies. Then there was Mr. Potter who sold and repaired bicycles, Mr. Rappitt a shoe repairer and Mr. Dunn the undertaker. Half a mile away, at the top of Station Road was the High Street - known as 'The Village' to older residents. Here there was a good variety of larger shops - well known grocers - as well as high class privately owned provision shops and dairies, plus a fishmonger and a corn merchant. Harry Morris had shops on each side of the road, one for gents clothing and the other for ladies. Further along there was Miss Popplewell's, also for ladies. One could buy almost everything there. There was Mr. Stanger who sold curtain material, also Whomes and Carveth Rowe the Stationers. The biggest store was Dawsons (very high class) for ready made clothes, millinery, dress & curtain materials. As a family we sometimes shopped in Woolwich or Lewisham for clothes - I suppose things would be a bit cheaper up there. Yes, I would say we had a very happy childhood with parents devoted to our well-being. Although a foreman on the farm I don't think father's wages were very large but we never went short of anything. With hindsight, I would say that as we grew up

Mother and Father made great sacrifices for us. We all had jobs to do about the house but it didn't do us any harm. We cleaned the shoes and knives and helped with the cleaning of the cottage and were taught how to cook.

On a lighter side, our parents would sometimes take us out, often up to London on the steam train. Father knew the sights to see up there, having been so many times with the produce from the farm. Or we would go down to Bexley and join up with Uncle Dick and his family and picnic in Joydens Wood. It was lovely having Aunts, Uncles and Cousins living all around us - we were never short of companions and had some very enjoyable parties. I don't remember ever being bored as today's children often say they are. My best friend lived in Cottage No.1, Hurst Road and we spent days together when not at school amusing ourselves, often playing hop-scotch in the road or spinning tops or bowling hoops - no cars rushing by then! With the golf course just opposite we used the rough as a playground, too.

We attended the Parish Church and Sunday School (our day school was a church school, too) and in this connection we belonged to the Band of Hope, a junior section of the Church of England Temperance Society. We had weekly meetings and were guided by a devoted band of volunteers. I remember learning leatherwork and embroidery (I can't remember what the boys did). Our efforts sometimes went to Canterbury to enter a handicraft competition, Then once a year we studied a syllabus and took part in a written examination for which if you were clever, you obtained a certificate.

In the early years of 1900 there was in Lamorbey a wealth family of the name of Beamish. In my childhood the last surviving member was Miss Augusta who lived in the Old Red House in Halfway Street who took an interest in the young girls of the Parish. Several of us met in her house every week and were known as the Busy-Bee Club. We made our own badges in material, to wear, and she taught us sewing and embroidery. For two years in the summer she took us on a holiday to a farm in Dorset, near Charmouth. We travelled by train and when we arrived, the first thing we had to do was to fill a large bag and a pillow-case with straw. This was for a bed - sleeping on the floor of a barn. Adequate food was provided by the farmer's wife who was a friend of Miss Beamish. After walking quite a way across fields we came to the beach where we spent every day enjoying the sea and the sun. Miss Beamish died many years ago but some reason her house was left to fall into ruin and has only recently disappeared and the land used for new houses.

Holidays for the whole family were always taken in October after the harvesting was finished and we nearly always went to Hastings. One house I remember very clearly was opposite the Sussex County Cricket ground and the landlady for obvious reasons named my Sister & I, 'Fairy & Darkie'. One year that stands out in my mind was when the railway workers decided to go out on strike after we had arrived in Hastings. At the end of the week, Mr Vinson sent a driver with a lorry to bring us all home. He had made sure there was comfortable seating for Father and Mother and their young family and had even provided a picnic lunch to have on the way. As the years went by, George became a keen cyclist and many times, instead of coming on the train, would cycle to wherever we were going to stay, even the time we went down to Dilton Marsh near Westbury in Wiltshire. This was the village in which Grandmother Mary Harris was born and quite a few of her descendants we went together on this holiday and became acquainted with some relatives still living there. We also saw graves of our ancestors in

the churchyard at Old Dilton. We visited the area several times after that - sometimes just for a day - GWR ran an excursion train on Sundays to Westbury and from there we walked into Dilton Marsh - what an adventure for us young ones. My Grandfather George and Grandmother Mary are buried together in the churchyard of Footscray Baptist Church.

In 1933 the Malcolm's sold all the land they owned here for re-development, Halfway Street farm and the farmhouse and Church Cottages disappeared making way for shops and a cinema. The many acres of land were covered in modern houses. The first three of the Hurst Road Cottages were bought by Lanes at the woodyard. They sold them to a developer who demolished them and erected in their place a block of flats, Vinson Court. In 1974, the last five received the same treatment - sold - bought and demolished, flats called Greenwood Close then erected on the site. So went the place of my birth and also homes of my Grandparents - both Parker and Davis. I am thankful that the little old school in Burnt Oak Lane that my father attended and the church school that we children went to, are still standing. Also that Holy Trinity Church where we were baptised, confirmed and perhaps married is still in the centre of Lamorbey.

THE GREAT STORM OF 1987 - TALK GIVEN BY BOB OGLEY

Report by Jean Davis

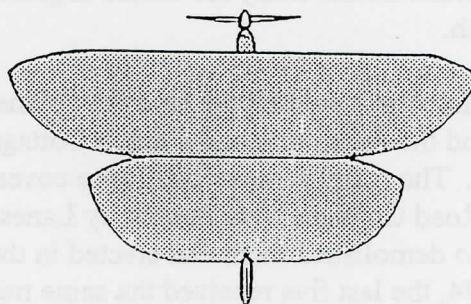
The 20th May meeting of Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society ended the 1997/98 season on a high note with a talk by Mr. Bob Ogley on how his life was changed by the Great Storm of 1987. He told of his personal experiences of the storm itself, which was particularly dramatic as he lives in the woods at Toys Hill near Sevenoaks - which, as we know, came perilously near to being renamed 'Oneoak' after the storm! The morning after, apart from the awful devastation, he was confronted by vistas which had not been seen for more than 200 years. It has since been argued that in this respect the storm did what man would have been unable to do.

Mr. Ogley, who was at that time Editor of a local newspaper in Sevenoaks, decided that this time should be recorded and he negotiated with Biggin Hill to take over 100 aerial photographs of the devastation. Some of these photographs were used in his newspaper and led to suggestions that he should write a book - which he did. This was the first step on a new career. The book sold 20,000 copies by Christmas and raised £15,000 for works to repair local storm damage, including the replacement of the six oaks - thus ensuring Sevenoaks' name. He then published a national version in aid of the National Trust's appeal for storm damage repairs. This raised £65,000 for various projects. The book led to broadcasting with Gloria Hunniford, John Dunn and Derek Jamieson and the book stayed in the top ten every week for eight months.

A decision was then made to leave journalism and concentrate on writing books. His contacts with Biggin Hill at the time of the storm resulted in an invitation to write a history of the aerodrome on its 50th anniversary, which was sold in aid of the RAF Benevolent Fund. Since then there have been several more books - with perhaps the most ambitious being a History of Kent in the Twentieth Century.

Mr. Ogley's masterly talk was full of detail and liberally laced with anecdotes. It was a fitting end to this season of talks on local history.

FLYING FLEAS IN SIDCUP
by John Seymour



The loud drone of a microlight aircraft is one of the sounds of summer nowadays. Since the engine is small, a microlight flies only slowly and the noise it produces seems to last a long time! Microlights offer a return to the early days of flying when the pilot was exposed to the elements and aircraft were small and simple. Today's microlights have an ancestor known as the Flying Flea which first appeared in the 1930s and has Sidcup connections. I am indebted to John King and John Viner for much of the information in this article.

The Flying Flea was designed in France by Henri Mignet, who called it the Pou de Ciel. It brought aviation within the reach of everyone for the first time and Mignet declared that 'anyone who can build a packing case can build my aeroplane'. It was an unconventional design, with one wing mounted over the pilot and a second, smaller wing behind him. In August 1935 Mignet flew his Flea (Pou?) from St. Inglevert in France to Lympne in Kent, crossing the Channel in 52 minutes, and he remained in Britain for some time demonstrating his machine. Kits were available at prices from £85 to £150, including the engine, or a complete machine could be brought "ready to fly away" for £165. As a result of his sales campaign, hundreds of kits were sold and many Fleas were built in Kent, one of them in Sidcup on Sidcup Hill. In the 1936 Aviation Who's Who, there appears the entry *Aircraft Constructions Ltd, Sidcup - Manufacturers of pou de ciel (flying flea) with head office and works = Sidcup, tel Sidcup 196.*

The proprietor of Aircraft Constructions Ltd was a Canadian, Ronald G Doig, apparently also known as Dotty Doig. He purchased a Flea in October 1935 and planned to fly it across the Channel. It was based at Lympne but was blown over in a gale in November 1935 before he could make the crossing. The plane was repaired and Doig flew it later with a group known as Scott's Flying Circus, which gave flying demonstrations around the UK. Doig formed Aircraft Constructions Ltd. in December 1935 with a share capital of £2000 to manufacture Fleas but only one was made at his home, 61 Sidcup Hill. There was no suitable space for take-off in Sidcup so it was test flown at Penshurst, but unfortunately it flew into the ground in May 1936 killing the pilot, Flight Lieutenant Cowell. It was the second UK Flea fatality, and as a result of these and other fatal Flea crashes, wind tunnel tests were carried out at Farnborough. It was found that the design was unstable under certain conditions, so an immediate ban was placed on all British machines and the last one flew in Britain in June 1937.

Some more information about Aircraft Construction Ltd was provided by Jan Den Das of Bakkum, Holland. In fact this article was written only because he contacted Hall Place and his letter was passed to me via Denise Baldwin. He was asking about the Scheldt Sparrow, a small, single-seater biplane which, according to Flight magazine of 20th May 1937, Aircraft Constructions Ltd had planned to build under licence. Personnel of the company were named as: Mr. R. G. Doig, Managing Director; Miss J. Robins, his business partner; Mr. W. B. Shackleton, sales representative. It seems likely that the Scheldt Sparrow would have replaced the Flying Flea after it had been banned, but no record has been found of Sparrows ever being built in Sidcup!

Does any trace remain today of 61 Sidcup Hill? Sixty One would have been on the north side of the road and as far back as 1897 the OS map showed 11 detached houses with long gardens at that side. On the south side there was an open view of the countryside in 1897 and in the 1930s there was also a tennis club to which my parents belonged. I often went to the club with them so I can remember the area quite clearly but do not recall any Fleas! One of the north side houses must have been no 61 and Aircraft Constructions Ltd was probably in a building in the back garden. No trace remains today of the house or garden due to comprehensive redevelopment into apartment blocks.

What of the Flying Flea today? Many Fleas were still unflown when the ban was imposed, with about 21 being associated with Kent. David Collyer describes how in 1964 a Flea was offered for sale in aid of funds for St. Mary's Church Parish Hall, Horton Kirby. It was purchased for £75 by Air Britain (Kent Branch) and towed to Rochester Airport. While being taxied on the ground it inadvertently took off and apparently had all the flying qualities of the packing case claimed as its ancestor! Subsequently it remained as a static exhibit and is now on show at Schipol Airport in Amsterdam. In France the design was further developed by Henri Mignet to overcome its instability and many are still flown even today.

Sources: John E. King, correspondence; John Viner, The Flying Flea in Kent, Bygone Kent col. 4 no. 9; Jan Den Das, correspondence; David G. Collyer, We found a Flea and flew it (almost), Bygone Kent vol. 13, no. 6.

ESSEX OUTING - 30th May 1998
report by Gill Brown

In only one hour we had travelled from Sidcup to Maldon. This was only a coffee stop but we were able to see quite a bit of the town because the Blue Boar Hotel was at the top of the town and the coach park at the bottom. Several of our party fitted in visits to the unusual church, All Saints, the Plume Library as well as looking at the shops. The walk down to the riverside was past the famous Maldon Sea Salt factory. On the riverside there was a man demonstrating knots and giving away magicians' secrets. Several of the red-sailed barges were moored and as the sky was so blue they made a very attractive picture. On the way to our next stop we went through the town of Witham. Bess told us that Dorothy L. Sayers, creator of Lord Peter Wimsey, had lived there. There was a statue of her and we were able to see the cottage where she lived and her statue by quickly looking left then right.

Crossing Temple, our next stop, is quite an amazing place consisting of two enormous barns, a farm house and various smaller buildings. We had lunch and then a guided tour of the barns. We were told of their history and the connection with the Knights Templar, who were builders of the barns, and later with the Knights Hospitaller. Also within the grounds is a beautiful walled garden, which is being restored and laid out as it might have looked in the 15th century. Time for more photos as the sun still shone!

Next stop tea! We were driven through country lanes to the small town of Tiptree where we were to have a cream tea at the Wilkins Jam Factory. As well as the delicious tea, we were able to visit the museum and the shop where all the jams and marmalades were on sale. A most enjoyable day! We were most fortunate that the weather was glorious.

A sad PS to the day, which we didn't know at the time, was that it was our last outing being driven by Gordon. He has gone on to pastures new and I am sure we all wish him well, but will miss him very much.

LIFE IN HOSPITAL IN 1942

by Dorothy Ryder

In 1942 my mother, who lived in Welling, had to have a kidney removed at the Miller Hospital, Greenwich. She was in a ward full to overflowing due to a bomb having damaged part of the hospital. The lockers touched the beds all the way round the ward and there were two rows of beds in the centre. Cutlery was at a premium, and the maids started distributing it one side of the ward one lunch time, and the other side the next day. My mother had a soup ladle to eat her dessert one day, so she had cutlery from home after that. After six or seven weeks at the Miller Hospital, where she received wonderful care having been very ill, she was to be evacuated. It was like a state secret as to where she and the other patients were going. All they were told was that they would be transported on stretchers in a converted "Green Line" bus.

The morning arrived for the move - still no information as to where she was going. After a rather bumpy journey, the bus stopped, and as the door opened my mother said the cry was "Where are we?". Guess her pleasure when told, Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup - only a 241 bus ride away from Welling. The ward was of course a hut which had been built for the injured troops from the 1914-18 war. It was bright: there was room between the beds; and the staff had time for the patients. Life was so different for her at Queen Mary's. She could not believe that the food was so good, even though she was on a very strict diet due to her type of operation.

There were ATS girls in the ward from Army Records in Footscray with broken arms etc., and they were all sad at being discharged when fit. As the hospital catered for the forces, entertainment of all types was put on. One Saturday the Ward Sister said to my mother and another patient, "There is a London show on late this afternoon, you ought to go and see it". They did: the hall was nearly full, mainly of soldiers, and the compere introduced a lady "who had just rushed down from London". She was a singer, and her first song was "Love is All". I am afraid my mother and her friend had

to leave the hall because they were laughing so much at the soldiers' whistles and catcalls. Even though their visit was short, their laughter was a tonic.

My mother was at Queen Mary's for six weeks and when she left the Doctor told my father that her life expectancy was five years after such a major operation, but she lived healthily until 1988.

WALK AROUND THE UPTON AREA

Report by Mary Webb

Although I have lived in Sidcup for 30 years, I had to consult the A-Z in order to arrive at the Royal Oak in time for the start of our walk around Upton, guided by Malcolm Barr-Hamilton. The 'Royal Oak' also known as 'Polly Clean Stairs' has been in existence as a pub since the early 1800s. Three maps of the area and various pictures of buildings helped us to appreciate how this area had changed from the orchards and sparse dwellings of the 1860s to the densely populated area it is today. It was interesting to see the variation in the housing along many of the roads where modern properties had been interspersed with houses of the late 19th century. Some of these properties still retained their original features while others had been altered - some not to the taste of our leader!

Along Lyon Road, the oldest building in Bexleyheath, formerly known as Wye Lodge, was originally a wooden farm dwelling. The building has been converted into a house and extended, but is still a pleasant sight. The only thatched house in Bexley, three farm workers cottages, the original Bexley Cottage Hospital, the Red House, and various houses built in the 1880s were all pointed out to us. I had never had reason to visit this area of Upton and found it a very interesting walk.

. LETTER FROM AN OCTOGENARIAN

written after receiving a birthday card from Joyce Renshaw
which showed a copy of a painting by L. S. Lowry

Thank you for your lovely card. I read all about Lowry in the Reader's Digest. It had the same picture in. You want to put it a little way away and you can walk down that street. You see I can remember houses like this, nearly every room had a family in. Today we live like lords, even the poor.

The card takes me back to my childhood - toffee apple, oz of sweets, ice cream a farthing.. Some never had any and only free dinners. You had to line up and then march through streets to a place to get it. The good old days, let's hope we never see it again. The men went to the pub out of the way of the kids and done all the money in.

A house like this one in the picture I knew had a big box mangle in it, it took up half the room, it was full of stones and you rolled your washing on a roller in a piece of sheet, turned the mangle by hand and the box with stones in went back and forwards so they were like as if ironed - a farthing a dozen. My brother used to go and ask this old lady could we turn the handle for her, we loved it. Years later when I went to the baths there

was one run by electric and when they did away with it, you could not get the parts, the old ladies kicked up a fuss.

Its all in that picture - the corner shop you could buy a slice of bread and jam for a halfpence, a halfpence of jam in paper, tea, sugar and tinned milk, halfpence and many had it on tick as they called it, paid on Fridays, payday, less we forget. Those banners in the back, the start of Unions, better wages, better houses- yes, I love that card, I remember.

People my age with a good memory look back and I am sure there is not, and will not be, another generation who will see what we have. Candle light to gas and electric. Old houses with outside toilets to flats and houses with bathrooms, the first bomb, aeroplanes, silent films to movies, then colour tv, radio, phones, rockets, man on moon, all in our life time. Cars for everyone but I did love the horses, my brother and I used to run behind the brewers dray and sit on a ladder. People would call out "whip behind governor" - those were the days.

Maybe when you are as old as I am you will look back, I wonder what at, the children cannot have the fun we had in the streets, it is no longer safe.

SUMMER RAMBLE
report by Eric Percival

As part of the Society programme of summer activities a good number of us met at Chislehurst station on Sunday, 7th June to take part in a ramble planned and led by Dave & Jeanette Cunliffe. The start was most uninviting with a heavy rainstorm, however this soon cleared allowing the group to commence the walk along a rubbish littered road, which soon became a pleasant footpath. We crossed the slow flowing Kyd stream and commenced a gentle climb through Pond Wood. The walk continued through this gorgeous part of Kent. One could forget that you were still in Greater London and within a short distance of the M20. Suddenly in the middle of a small clearing we came across the memorial to William Willett, the originator of summer time. The memorial consisted of an upright stone with sundial, which was of course set to one hour ahead of Greenwich time. At this point Jeanette and Dave produced several large bottles of soft drinks they had secretly been carrying, a most welcomed interval for refreshments followed. As we came to the end of the ramble, again crossing the Kyd stream, which was much enlarged following the rain experienced at the start of our outing. Our thanks to Dave and Jeanette for an enjoyable afternoon. We look forward to the next ramble.

THOMAS HENRY PLASKETT (1773 - 1850)
by John Mercer

Thanks to Brian Woods, I have found out more about a Sidcopian who lived here more than 150 years ago. On the south interior wall of St. John's church is a memorial that reads: "Sacred to the memory of Thomas Henry Plaskett Esq of Sidcup Place, in the County. He died on October 1st 1850 aged 77 years and his remains are deposited in the

vault under the church." His wife, Charlotte Cecilia, has a similar memorial having died in 1848.

The Plasketts lived in what is now known as the Manor House. Sidcup Place, (now being transformed into a restaurant) was then known as Place Green where the Berens lived at that time. Mr. Plaskett had been Chief Clerk of the Home Office, having worked his way up from being fifth clerk. He bypassed five clerks who were his seniors, so he must have been a man of great ability. He retired from what we would now call Permanent Secretary to the Home Office in 1849. He received a pension of £1,412 a year, no mean figure for those times.

He had three sons: Captain Thomas Henry of the 31st Regiment; Charles Henry of Henrietta Street (off Cavendish Square); and Edward who took over his father's wine business in Old Compton Street. (Mr. Plaskett had this additional interest. Did he supply his fellow Civil Servants with wine?) He had two daughters, Sophia Parisot Phobbs of Union Crescent, Kent Road; and Ellen. His will, dated 24th April 1847 divided his property among his wife and children, but a codicil dated 27th February 1850 revoked his former will and left all his property to his eldest son, Thomas. Why did he do this? He died eight months later. He directed that should he die in Sidcup, he should be buried at the East Chislehurst Church, and we see that he was. (Land south of the High Street then lay in the parish of Chislehurst.). His mother, brother and sister were buried at St. James's Chapel, Hampstead. The property was rented, so it did not pass to the elder son.

The 1851 census provides additional interest. There were new tenants, Mr. & Mrs. James Cousins and family and servants. He was a JP for Kent. A visitor on the night of the census was none other than Edward Plaskett who is entered on the census return as a wine merchant aged 25 years. Another visitor was Maria Woodhouse aged 21, who was born in Oporto, Portugal. It cannot be an accident that some one connected with the port trade was staying there with Edward Plaskett, the wine merchant. The Cousins had five indoor servants, including a footman, several gardeners and a coachman. Surely the Plasketts would have been equally well served? I have been down in the crypt several times and the burial places of the two Plasketts and also Henry Berens are let into the wall and clearly marked.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A FIVE YEAR OLD'S ATTACK OF
SCARLET FEVER IN 1921
by Phyllis Nash

The first thing I remember is being carried downstairs, wrapped in a blanket, to the 'fever waggon' waiting outside. It must have been wintertime as it was early evening and dark outside. We were living in Redhill, Surrey at the time and I was being taken to the Isolation Hospital at the far side of Earlswood Common. Inside the ambulance it was dimly lit and nothing could be seen outside, the silence being broken by the clip clop of the horses' hooves as we crossed the common. When we arrived at the hospital I was put in a cot in the men's ward, near the duty nurse's table, as there were no patients on the female ward. I think at this stage I felt too ill and alone to care where I was. The first thing the nurses did was to take nose and throat swabs, then wash my hair with

something that smelt of tar, followed by a thorough combing with a 'nit' comb. After a few days a lady with a baby was admitted to the hospital and I was moved from the men's ward to join her. Soon other patients joined us. The ward appeared very big to me, with large windows down each side. Of the actual illness I remember very little, apart from lying in bed and not caring what went on around me, and the twice weekly ritual of swab taking. If you were an 'up patient' you waited anxiously for the result, as if it was clean, you stood a chance of going home.

The highlight of our week was visiting on Sunday afternoon. We had to wait on our bed which was drawn up in front of the nearest window, which was firmly closed at the bottom. Then came the anxious time. If some visitors arrived early one would be on tenterhooks waiting for one's own parents or friends to appear outside the window. Communication was difficult as we had to talk through glass, but it was good to see someone from home. Any gifts brought for us had to be handed to the porter on the door. It was forbidden to throw anything through the opening at the top of the window and, if caught, the package would be confiscated. The system was not infallible as sometimes items left with the porter went astray! I have one regret. I never asked my parents when they were alive how they got from home to the hospital. It must have been about three miles from home. There were no cars, nor do I remember any buses and I can only think therefore that they walked. Visiting me may have disrupted their Sunday routine but they seldom missed.

Life in the hospital must have been very mundane as I remember so little of it. Then life changed and I graduated to being an 'up-patient'. The pleasure of dressing in one's clothes and being free to run about felt like heaven. On days when the weather was kind we wrapped ourselves up and were let out in the grounds behind the hospital. The Diptheria hospital joined on to us but we were kept apart from those patients by a high fence. Of course we were able to talk through the fence, and by peeping through the panels we could just see the people the other side and discovered that one boy had ginger hair. For what reason I cannot imagine the Scarlet Fever children would shout "Ginger you're barmy - get your hair cut." What pleasure it gave us I'll never know. It was so stupid and pointless. This went on until we were ordered to go away. Running alongside the fence was a bed of perennial sunflowers, the kind with small yellow flowers, tough leaves and stems and a distinctive smell. To this day, if I see these flowers growing they bring back memories.

Then one Sunday came the wonderful news - I was going home. My parents had been asked to bring in a set of clothes and one day the next week I would be leaving the hospital. The day came. It was my turn at last to be taken over to the 'lodge' for a bath and hair wash and then home. I gathered later from my parents that in desperation they had made representation to the Medical Authority, complaining about the length of time I had been in hospital. Apparently I was a "germ carrier" and as such my chances of a clean swab was low. It was agreed that I should go home, be kept away from other people, and have my swabs taken at the local clinic. So each week we would set off: mother pushing my baby sister in her pram and me trudging alongside. Swab taking was not something I enjoyed, but mother always made it pleasanter with a small gift.

All things come to an end and eventually I was 'clean' and free to return to normal living. What a relief and also wonderful that neither my sisters or my parents had contracted the disease. Looking back it is difficult to imagine in detail the feelings of a

five year old, coming up six, after so many years. It was after all seventy eight years ago!

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES?

by Bess Dzielski

“One person’s treasure is another person’s rubbish dump - so said Mick Scott, Senior Librarian of the London Metropolitan Archives, when he spoke to the Society earlier this year. And this well echoes the principle on which the Society’s own archives are being compiled. Over a period of time, not only the formal records of the Society have been preserved, but efforts have been made to collect the ephemera of our district - those pamphlets, handouts, advertisements, election propaganda - the sort of thing which is glanced at once, then lightly disposed of.

But in thirty, forty and more years’ time these unconsidered trifles will be regarded with interest by future generations. History lessons now include the Second World War, much to the amazement of those of us who remember it only too clearly. Old identity cards and ration books are looked at with interest and humour; my granddaughter received kudos for being able to produce the reminiscences of a real-life evacuee; pictures of bomb damage in familiar roads surprise a younger generation; the original prospectus of houses built in the inter-war years are all things that survive only in small quantities, having been regarded at some time as out-of-date and disposable. So the Society has embarked on a policy of retrieving and preserving those things for future interest. How our district looked only a generation ago is very different from its appearance in the Nineties. The recent survey of shops carried out by members can be compared with one made some thirty years ago, for example.

But it isn’t enough just to collect these things, for if they are to be of any real use they must be arranged and accessible. This is what is being carried out now. The Archives are looked after by the Archivist, Eric Percival, at his home, and he and I have been working on them for some time. Holidays, hospitals and other interruptions have impeded progress and I am under his strict instructions not to indicate a date for completion.

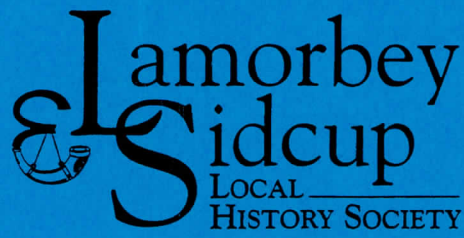
As a past cataloguer, the Dewey Decimal Classification is written on my heart - the system used by most public libraries and with which most people are familiar. We decided to use Dewey and were confirmed in this by the fact that Bexley Local Studies Centre at Hall Place are in the process of changing from their unique scheme by using Dewey numbers in parallel. Inevitably it has been necessary to tailor the scheme slightly for our own purposes, but in essence it is still Dewey with photocopies of the tables amended as needed. First the long process of sorting and arranging had to be undertaken. The material is small, flimsy and some typewritten. None of it easy to handle, but eventually all was classified and arranged in polythene folders and cardboard files. Cataloguing has been done, individual and corporate author entries and cross-references made.

As to format, my handwritten entries were transferred by Eric on to his computer and we had the first hard-copy print-out. A second phase had to be embarked upon to

repeat the process, with newly acquired additions, and this is now in progress. What we aim for eventually is both a classified and an author sequence. Eric assures me that this latter - transferring from classified to author - can be done at the touch of a button! By turning the classified sequence into author order, we can see the range of contributions made by individual members: the considerable body of work by a past Chairman and Secretary, Beverley Nunns, for example. When this is complete, an alphabetical subject index will be compiled. Together with an introduction explaining the parameters, this will provide a complete listing of the Society's possessions.

However, it is important to realise what is NOT there. We make no effort to collect popular material which members might well buy for themselves or find in the library and we would not dare to challenge the collection of local studies. Of course, we list our own publications and those of members - there is an impressive list of John Mercer - but we concentrate on the small, out-of-the-way. For example, as a Churchwarden I attend the induction of Clergy in the Sidcup Deanery, and put my service sheet into our collection. This will record the church, the date of the Induction, details of the new incumbent, the Mayor of Bexley at the time, the Archdeacon and the Bishop. So that at the Dewey number 283 we will build up a collection of the history of the Church of England in Sidcup over a period of time. When there is an election, we try to preserve candidates' publicity, names, party, election manifesto. It will be interesting in years to come to see how many of the promises were kept! With this in mind members might like to consider contributing to the archives by keeping an eye open for any material they come across which has primarily a Sidcup connection, such as Supermarket publicity and prices, garages and the soaring price of petrol, and the campaign being waged against Safeways in Sidcup. These are all examples that can interest us. As I have already said - don't hold your breath. It won't come out as a Christmas present but work is in progress.

Photo via Parker's memoirs of Halfway Street



Newsletter set by Frances Oxley and Janet Woods
Produced by the Print Unit of the University of Greenwich