

PHILIP WILLSON

Lamorbey
& Sidcup
LOCAL
HISTORY SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010

LAMORBEY & SIDCUP LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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All the articles in this Newsletter have been written by members of the Society and friends.

Meetings take place at St. Lawrence's Community Centre on selected Tuesdays throughout the Autumn, Winter, Spring & early Summer.
For further details please contact our Secretary Liz Ellicott on 020 8302 7820

(The editor is grateful to Dave Cunliffe for his help in formatting this newsletter)

EDITORIAL

By Frances Percival (Oxley)



I have certainly been down memory lane for this editorial as I thought it would be an idea to see how many issues have actually been published. In my enthusiasm as Secretary it started as two pages in 1983 and this will be the 25th edition since then, with the exception of a few years, when perhaps I was ill or there may have been a domestic reason. I thoroughly enjoyed leafing through my own Editor's copies from 1983 to 2000 and would like to share some of the highlights with you.

There was a sense of déjà vu when I read that in 1984 Eric Percival asked that everyone use up their rolls of holiday film on Sidcup scenes – full circle to today's DVD. The North Cray Hall House was being erected at Singleton. In 1987, the drawing of Lamorbey Park by Iris Morris-Heddle was first seen on the front cover of the newsletter. There was an Open Evening at Lamorbey Park when the Society mounted a marvellous exhibition and Chairman Iris, produced part of a tree trunk asking passers-by to name it's age. She also demonstrated divining for water. In 1989 we went into publishing for the first time – Denise and Kath with their Foots Cray leaflet and after much persuasion we produced 'The Great Storm' which was a real credit to everyone involved.

A reminiscence book was published in 1990, and 1991 was a highlight when Cllr Holland the then Mayor visited the Society together with his macebearer who showed us how he dressed the Mayor for an important occasion.

1992/1993 was an important year when we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the inauguration of the Society and celebrated by having a dinner at St. John's Hall, Sidcup. It was decided in Committee that I should address the Society!

By 1995 we had left dear old Lamorbey Park and had completed the first year in the Birkbeck Hall at Alma Road. The register showed 90 members. The next year in the larger hall showed we had an attendance of 100 members. By 1999, Eric & I installed the Society in the premises we use today, where I shall leave my memory lane, except for the following very happy memories. In more or less the same time we had the marriages of Marion and Maurice Hearn, Olive and John Mercer and Frances and Eric Percival.

Some Sidcup jottings: - The owner of the North Cray Bath House, Mrs Chu has just celebrated her 91st birthday, so does not open up as frequently as previously.

* You will remember that in last year's issue my friend wrote on Guiding in Sidcup during Wartime. She paid for several additional copies that were sent to Derbyshire, Sheffield, Cambridgeshire, Hampshire, Bedfordshire, and Florida, USA. We were certainly noised abroad.

* Holy Redeemer Church, Lamorbey has just celebrated it's 75 year anniversary.

* The threat to the Manor House has been lifted as the Council has approved a restoration and maintenance plan and will be kept as a registry until at least 2014.

* Traffic moved quite well whilst Station Road was being repaired as motorists and pedestrians familiarised themselves with the diversions.

* Liz Ellicott has protested regarding the bus stop in Station Road outside Tesco's that will be moved further north from the station to a narrower part of Station Road.

* At the moment of writing Queen Mary's Hospital is still being used but A & E patients are in a quandary as to where they are to attend after certain hours.

* Along with other High Streets, we lost our Woolworths and now have a 99p shop.

FURTHER IN THE GETTING TO KNOW YOU SERIES

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY (autobiography received by e-mail)

Malcolm Barr-Hamilton was born in 1955, the youngest of three children, and grew up in Hove, Sussex. His father was a keen amateur archaeologist and summers were spent "digging" and visiting country churches, etc. This is no doubt how Malcolm acquired his love of history and historic buildings in particular. Not a particularly bright child, (his words. Ed.) he failed his eleven plus and attended a local secondary modern school. Hobbies at this time included playing the euphonium and membership of the Boys' Brigade (which he continued to belong to until his 20s). In 1967, as a result of a relocation of his father's job, the family moved to Maidstone and Malcolm attended Maidstone Technical High School for Boys. During this time he developed a keen interest in cricket (more as a watcher than a player) and enjoyed seeing Colin Cowdrey and co playing for Kent at Mote Park.

Somehow Malcolm passed half a dozen 'O' levels but after only a term into 'A' levels, the family moved back to Hove and he attended Hove County Grammar School for Boys. Still with the Boys' Brigade he completed the Duke of Edinburgh's Award to Gold Level. Poor 'A' level results meant he didn't get into any of the universities he had applied for but got into Portsmouth Polytechnic to study history. Malcolm enjoyed his three years at Portsmouth. The city had more pubs per head of population than anywhere in the country. Malcolm tried quite a number of them. He had no idea what career he might pursue on leaving college but in the final year of the course he studied Local History as his special subject. This took him to the Portsmouth Record Office and he became taken with the idea of becoming an archivist. On graduating (with a creditable Upper Second) he returned to Hove where he combined working in a Co-op supermarket (which he enjoyed), volunteering at the East Sussex Record Office at Lewes, and supporting Brighton and Hove Albion FC and Sussex County Cricket Club. He was disappointed not to gain admission to the post-graduate course in Archive Studies at University College London; but in the autumn of 1977 he got a job in the Manuscripts Section at the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich. He rented an old house with three others right next to Greenwich Park (some lively parties were held here).



Malcolm enjoyed his time at the Maritime Museum and remained there for about eight years. It was a fascinating place to work and the archives he was cataloguing included correspondence by some very famous people. There were some real characters working at the Museum too. Long a fan of folk music, Malcolm joined the Greenwich Morris Men (he was *Squire* for a couple of years) and started playing the concertina.

Between 1980 and 1982 Malcolm studied (on a part-time basis) at University College London and gained the post-graduate diploma in Archive Studies. While developing expertise in maritime history, it was local history that he was most interested in and in 1984 his application for the post of Local Studies Officer with the London Borough of Bexley was successful. Malcolm was living in Charlton by then but shortly after, bought a house in New Cross with Tanya Sangster who he married in 1987. Tanya was a friend of the girlfriend of Malcolm's best friend and he met her on one of several canal boat holidays he went on in the late '70s/early '80s.

Malcolm ran Bexley's Local Studies Service (then based at Hall Place) from January 1985 to October 1995. During this time he conducted numerous tours round Hall Place and gave many talks to local clubs and societies (Lam and Sid included). In 1989 he moved to North Cray where he still lives. In October 1995 he became Borough Archivist with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and commenced to experience the joys of the Blackwall Tunnel. However he kept his hand in with things Bexley, writing "From Country to Suburb" with Len Reilly, and three picture books on Bexley published by Suttons. Malcolm and Tanya have two daughters, Maddy and Lucy.

VERA WILLMOTT (article edited by Liz Ellicott)

I was born April 1930 in York Way, Holloway, N7, not far from the Caledonian Road Market. Dad and Mother ran a coffee shop after he was made redundant from Maples during the depression years.

There was an older sister named Betty, then mother was blessed with twins. What a shock this must have been for she was only expecting one. The doctor was from Cambridge University originally and as we were born on boat race Saturday and Cambridge won, June being the first was Cambridge according to him, and I, coming last, was known as Oxford. We still support our colours when it's boat race day, even today, and always watch it on TV. I was educated at Brecknock Road School, Infants and Juniors, then at Boreham Wood until I was 15 having taken up the offer of a commercial class for a further year.

My first job was at an insurance company in the City named Bowring's. I started as a Junior making tea and filing etc. It was here that I met my husband Arthur and we got married in 1950 when I was 20. After several difficult years when Arthur was diagnosed with TB, we had our first child Nicholas in 1954, followed by Sharon in 1958.

I had given up my job in the City to become a full-time mum, but when I felt it was time to return to work I joined The London Chamber of Commerce at Marlowe House. I enjoyed this but decided that local life was not enough and went back to London to work for Bowring's.

In 1984 Arthur was made redundant and as he was now aged 60 we both took our pensions and retired early. We had an enjoyable life with our travelling abroad and driving around England, Scotland and Wales. Arthur died suddenly in 1998 and I was so glad that we retired together and were able to enjoy our later life together.

I have been a Queen Mary's volunteer since 1986, working with the Speech and Language Department helping people who have suffered a stroke. I find this very rewarding, but with the closure of many of Queen Mary's departments wonder how much longer this will go on for.

I have been with our Society since Arthur died, making friends and enjoying our outings, and especially making your teas of an evening with Margaret and Dorothy.

I also enjoy classical music and attend concerts given by the Marlow Ensemble, Sidcup Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Artillery Orchestra.

Nicholas and his wife have 2 daughters and live in Welling. Sharon and her husband have no children but they own a farm in Cambridgeshire where they keep sheep, pigs, cows and chickens, which they sell to local butchers. They also own two golden retrievers and five cats – a big family!

I live in the same house that we started to buy in Shuttle Close, Sidcup from the end of our two week honeymoon.

(please see over)

(Vera is part of our three lady team who provide the refreshments during the Society meetings so you have all met her when you go for your 'cuppa'. Thank you Vera and also Margaret and Dorothy - Editor).

OBITUARY

SHIRLEY WATTS 1936 – 2009

Shirley Margaret Ellen Watts was born in 1938 in West London and attended Putney High School. She went into secretarial work and at one time was the personal assistant to a Member of Parliament. She was living in Eltham at the time with her husband Martin. There were several other candidates after this Parliamentary job and when she was interviewed and asked why she should be selected she said that she had applied as it was convenient for travelling up to Charing Cross. Whether this frank answer got her the job or whether, more likely because of her personality, we shall never know. She was sweet natured, calm, friendly and capable. She was a keen member of the Lamorbey & Sidcup Local History Society and came with a girl friend Janet Farebrother. In the later years Martin joined them. She and Martin used to attend the annual quiz held at St.John's when I was the quiz master. Some years ago Shirley renewed her church membership and became an active member of St.John's. She and Martin joined the pilgrimage to Northumbria in 2008 and latterly Martin has become regular in church attendance. She became ill in July last year and passed away on December 30th. She leaves Martin, two sons and grandchildren. She will be much missed. John Mercer.

SIDCUP CAUGHT IN TIME

By Eric & Frances Percival

Late in 2008 various projects were proposed to the Society, the one chosen by members was to make a photographic record of our area of Sidcup during a specific time of the year. It was decided that we should get out and about with our cameras between February and April (2009). Having obtained advice that it was lawful to take photographs of either people or places, providing that the photographer was in a public place (this was somewhat obscured by recent anti terrorist legislation), out went eighteen local historians, who also kept a written note of the place plus any comment they wanted to make. Thanks are due to all involved for their valuable contribution to this project. The main focus was on the High Street and the roads leading off, but choice of area was left entirely to the individual member. This resulted in records being made not only of central Sidcup, but also as far away as Blackfen and Longlands. Over eight hundred images were submitted, of which about three hundred and twenty were used when the final disc was prepared. Having all the material required, then came the technical part of the project. The Society was extremely fortunate in having a member who was a computer enthusiast. Dave Cunliffe agreed to take on the mammoth task of arranging the images together with the captions and create a DVD. To make the disc user friendly, he also produced an index enabling the viewer to easily select a specific area of Sidcup. Having completed all the preparations and produced the master DVD, a trawl of the Internet found a number of possible suppliers, one of which was chosen and one hundred copies of the DVD were ordered and presented to Society members.

Malcolm Barr Hamilton, President, e-mailed Liz Ellicott, Secretary, saying, *What a delight is the Caught in Time DVD, which I thoroughly enjoyed perusing. A great credit to the Society and congratulations to all involved.*

Eric & Frances decided to buy two disks to forward to past important members of the Society namely, Iris Heddle (Morris) Secretary and later Chairman of the Society and Norma Huntley, a previous Outings Secretary and the instigator of the Society logo. So a joint letter was sent to them enclosing a disk for the Sussex postman and an Orkney postman to deliver, with the hope they would both come back with their comments for the Society and for the Newsletter.

On 14th October Iris e-mailed back- *‘What a delightful surprise. An excellent project, well constructed, and full of interest and good photography. It was good to see that I still recognised the names of a number of the photographers too. As to the pictures themselves. It is amazing how much the main shopping areas have changed in 13 years! Occasionally I recognised a building with some nostalgia, but otherwise I felt as if we were in a foreign country. It was good to see that parts of Sidcup still looked spacious but the picture of the ‘Wildlife Centre’ – was tongue in cheek wasn’t it. Congratulations to all those involved in the project. It is a very valuable piece of documentary evidence and has, most certainly, earned its place in the local archives.* (She viewed the disk with her husband Ian who has died whilst this newsletter was being prepared – she reminds us in her comments that it is 13 years since she left the Society to marry and become an Orcadian and Eric became Chairman)

On 23rd October, Norma e-mailed – *As promised a few words re the wonderful CD. Congratulations to the Lamorbey and Sidcup Local History Society in producing “Sidcup Caught in Time”. Having left Sidcup in 1992, I was very interested in it and am amazed at how much has changed in the 17 years, particularly the High Street- no nice little shops to wander in or out of and saddest of all no Woolworths. So thanks to all involved in producing this CD and keep up the good work.*

In November Liz Ellicott took copies of the DVD to Local Studies where the Officers were very excited and said it would complement our previous photographic study of the High Street.



Eric thanking Dave on behalf of the Society

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF EVACUATION

By Frances Percival (Oxley)

During the last few years I have joined the organisation known as the 'Evacuees Reunion Association' and was therefore privileged to join with 2000 other evacuees in the 2009 Service at St.Paul's Cathedral. This remembered the 1939 mass evacuation of children of my generation from their parents and homes to unknown areas and peoples. Some children have happy memories of this time but many were scarred for life and will take this unhappiness to their graves. On this occasion we were asked to wear a luggage label with our name and address simulating how we left the departure points in 1939. We queued up outside St Paul's noticing a fellow evacuee in the person of Michael Aspel who has become very prominent in the Association. Many were remembering the 60th anniversary when they had gathered at Westminster Abbey. There many accents around me of people who had made the effort of coming over from the States, Canada, Australia, NewZealand who had emigrated to those countries many years later. There were also the various accents of folk from the UK including those from our area named the Bexley and Borders Group. The service was most evocative as we all remembered those far off days, leaving the Cathedral knowing that for many, age meant they would never meet up again.



LOCAL HISTORY FAIR SATURDAY 21ST MARCH 2009

By Katherine Harding

Why does the time come around so quickly between this annual event or is that just my imagination (or age). The usual run up to the History Fair is typically a time of head scratching to find a less predictable interpretation of the given theme to that of the many fellow contributors – after all we want Lamorbey and Sidcup to be one of the many bright stars in a sparkling display! With this in mind, we decided to open the discussion to the members and thank goodness we did!

We have learned over the years that it is often the common place that attracts attention and interest: everyday artefacts, familiar places and events, recognisable papers and documents, in fact the indicators of the histories that we all share. When the suggestion came that we focus on the 1950's and display the very items that we had in our own homes then, we knew this would attract the onlookers and those who loved to reminisce. We were not wrong.

From the ex-BT engineer who gave us the full technical spec on the black Bakelite phone, to the many who were puzzled by Eric's (Percival) ingenious toaster, the Lam & Sid table was kept pretty busy all day. Not surprisingly, shared memories from a range of visitors were to the fore on almost every item and all the memories brought smiles. There's nothing quite like picking up an object you haven't seen for years but was part of your past and handling it again.

Something to bear in mind as we go to press without knowing what 2010 will bring in the way of ideas and opportunities for the Bexley History Fair. At all events, pardon the pun, this annual showcase is an important means of attracting new interest and potential members for our society and your interest and support is always welcome.

(I was on the stand for a few hours and found that people were genuinely interested in our display of the '50's but laughing away at our laptop which wasn't very 50's. With the exception of one other table we were the Society that really kept to the theme that had been suggested – 'the home' just 5-10 years after the war. Editor.)

MEMBERS' EVENING – 7TH APRIL 2009

Contributions from the Gentlemen by Eric Percival

This must always be a worry to the programme organiser, are there going to be enough items to fill the evening? No problems however tonight. First off, however was our Chairman, Philip Willson, with an array of instruments which included a slide rule (remember those?). I brought along a travelling candle holder, asking members to guess what it was, then demonstrated by unscrewing it, then assembling the candle holders and placing a candle in one of them. Secondly, I produced an acetylene bicycle lamp and explained how it worked. John Tonks really captured our imagination by bring along a) a piece of chalk, b) small pieces of film negative and c) a reel of cotton. He explained that as a policeman on the beat he would carry these around with him but before explaining the use of these objects he asked the meeting to guess their use. After lots of suggestions he told us that whilst on his rounds the chalk could be applied to car tyres to see if they moved. The film, folded in two, could be inserted in a door and if missing on his next round he would know that the door had been opened. The final item, cotton, was used to stretch across an opening to know if anyone had come out or gone in. We were all amazed that such commonplace items were useful in police work.

Contributions from the Ladies

Denise Baldwin's treasure was a book given to her in her teens by her grandmother. The large suede bound, hard cover book was of the Rime of the Ancient Mariner by Samuel Taylor Coleridge illustrated like an illuminated manuscript by Willy Pogany. Published in 1910 it was signed by Willy Pogany and was a limited edition being one of 525 copies. Denise explained it was a much loved book but she had little idea how it came to be in her grandmother's possession, but thought it was a gift from a friend whose antique shop she used to clean. When Denise was teaching she used to take it into school as the children were fascinated by the parchment type paper, black and white drawings, reproduced water colours and the illuminated writing.

Not much thought had been given to the book until recently. In November 2007 Denise visited the Dulwich Picture Gallery to see "The Age of Enchantment" an exhibition which dealt with examples of the new age of illustration 1890-1930.

Amongst the Beardsleys, Dulacs and Arthur Rackhams she saw work by the Hungarian illustrator Willy Pogany. With some excitement further research revealed that this book was valuable and is now treated with some care in the Baldwin household. She recommended that all members look very carefully at their own collections.

Liz Ellicott, whilst moving her Mother from Broadstairs to Sidcup came across a little daybook, which she quoted from in a most amusing way. Items were from a bygone age and they were making her smile in a gentle manner and us with her.

Frances Percival. I was telling members of my experience in 1977 (Her Majesty The Queen's Jubilee Year) of being present in Westminster Abbey together with my sister Pamela when she presented our Uncle and others with the Maundy Money. It takes place on Maundy Thursday, the day before Good Friday and is in remembrance of when Jesus Christ washed the feet of his disciples. Janette Cunliffe was really interested in the story of the Maundy Money and so I suggested that I would write a whole article on it for the 2011 newsletter. I will, at the moment, mention that when we left the Abbey in 1977 the weather was bitter and many recipients and their relatives rushed over as quickly as possible to the Westminster Central Hall for warmth and lunch. And certainly away from the touts who wanted to buy the Maundy Money from these old people as they were leaving the Abbey. Some perhaps gave in, as they may have needed the money.

Final contribution from another gentleman

Norman Storer ended our evening by saying that Margaret's Father was on a troop train at the end of the War in Germany. The train made a 'comfort stop' just outside Munich and the troops were allowed to leave the train for a few minutes. He stumbled on a chest with books in it, one of which was the book Norman had brought along to Members' evening. The book, which is printed in German, appears to tell the story of Hitler's rise to power. Almost every page contains a photograph, which has been stuck in suggesting it was some form of album. He said perhaps some of us would remember in the 1930's, cigarette companies issued albums with 'blanks' to stick in the relative cigarette card. The difference being that this German book had photographs. He and Margaret had tried to find out more about the book with no success.

5TH SEPTEMBER 2009

By Janette Cunliffe

Is this date ingrained in your memory? If so, you may well be a current or former member of the Guide Association.

The story starts, however, a hundred years and one day earlier. On the 4th September 1909 Lord Baden-Powell had organised a rally for Scouts at Crystal Palace. In those days Scouts was for boys only. Girls wore ankle length skirts and were not allowed to run or jump. A group of girls invaded the rally and demanded "something for the girls". Lord Baden-Powell did not think it would be a good idea for girls to join Scouts. He feared their parents would see it as very unladylike and refuse to allow them to join. He asked his sister Agnes to set up a similar organisation for girls and the following year the Guide Association was born. When asked who started the Movement, Baden-Powell would say, "They started themselves".

The girls that had turned up at the Scout rally called themselves Girl Scouts. Baden-Powell thought that name would give a tomboyish image and alienate parents. He remembered some 'guides' from his days in India. These men operated on the North-West frontier and went on very dangerous expeditions. Even off duty they were still training their minds and bodies. He therefore decided that 'Girl Guides' would be a good name for his new organisation for girls. When guiding started in the USA it took the name Girl Scouts and still keeps that name today.

New badges were introduced in 1912 and included Air Mechanic, Cyclist, Photographer, Electrician, Sailor, Telegraphist and Tailor. Over the years badges became more feminine but today they include a wide range of subjects, some of the latest badges being Number Fun and Healthy Heart. The Queen's Guide Award was introduced in 1946 and is the highest badge that a Guide can attain. I'm a Queen's Guide and I'm sure that others of you are too. If you are, please come and have a chat about your memories/experiences.

A junior section for younger girls was introduced in 1914, called 'Rosebuds'. It was renamed 'Brownies' in 1915. Some packs today use the name Rosebuds for their unenrolled girls. Groups for Senior Guides were started in 1914. The newest section to be introduced in 1987 was Rainbows, for girls aged 5 to 7.

During the First World War, Guides acted as messengers of confidential information for Marconi Wireless Telegraph. In 1940 Guide Gift Week was held. Over £50,000 was raised for the war effort by giving up half a days salary, pocket money, or by fundraising. In 1942 the Guide International Service (GIS) was set up to train leaders for relief work.

In 1918 Olave Baden-Powell (Robert Baden-Powell's wife) was appointed as the first Chief Guide. Olave and Robert shared the same birthday, 22nd February, so this date was chosen as the date for the annual Thinking Day. The day when members of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) think about each other. It was first celebrated in 1926. The Guide Association is now worldwide with members in over 150 countries.

In the shadow of war in 1939 a remarkable international camp was held. Despite knowing that war was about to break out, 4000 girls from 32 countries met in a park in Budapest. Even the Polish girls refused to back out, although older Rangers were substituted for Guides. The Polish girls were experts at mountain climbing and were given maps and special equipment and told that if Poland was invaded by the Germans they were to make their way home over the mountains. This shows the true spirit of Guiding. Most current members will only ever experience it in small ways, but it gives each a determination and way of life that, hopefully, will stand them in good stead.

Princess Elizabeth enrolled as a Guide and Princess Margaret as a Brownie in 1937. Elizabeth learnt car mechanics as a Guide and put it to good use during wartime. Princess Margaret went on to become President of the Guide Association in 1965. On her death in 2003 she was succeeded by the Countess of Wessex (the Queen's daughter-in-law).

Uniforms have changed many times over the years, becoming more and more practical. Currently girls wear track suits in blue for Guides, brown and yellow for Brownies and red and white for Rainbows

And so it was that on the 5th September 2009, myself and my Brownie pack went to Crystal Palace Park, along with around 6000 members of all ages, for a 'launch party' to start the centenary celebrations. We passed Liz Burnley, the current Chief Guide and she stopped to speak to the girls. Afterwards the girls said that was "real cool", I

think that was a thumbs up! During the day we tried out lots of activities including a zip-wire and the new maze. The Guiding maze remains open to the public and is well worth a visit if you are near the park. In the evening there was a pop concert in the concert bowl and a huge firework display. A great start to the centenary.

The centenary officially closes at 20:10 20/10 2010 that is at 8:10pm on the 20th October 2010. At that moment it is hoped that every member will be at a centenary event and we will all simultaneously renew our Promise. Members from the London area, including my Brownies, and myself will be in Trafalgar Square.

This has been a brief fly through Guiding history. If I have whetted your appetite then you could have a look at the new book called 'Something For The Girls' which was published by Girlguiding UK (as it is now known) in 2009. Alternatively, the association's website is well worth a visit & can be found at www.girlguiding.org.uk

VISIT TO ST. BRIDE'S CHURCH IN FLEET STREET

SATURDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY 2009

By Den Brittain

We chose the day in February when the sun shone brightly and made you feel glad to be out and about. We started at Cannon Street, cutting through to see the Temple of Mithras, and on to St. Paul's to view Temple Bar Gate, and then made our way to St. Bride's. We were greeted by the Verger, David Smith, who made us all very welcome, and proceeded to tell us some of the history of this famous church. The site spans two thousand years of development of an island people – seven previous churches have occupied the site, going back to the Celts, Romans, Angles, Saxons and Normans.

During World War II, on the night of 29th December 1940, the church was firebombed and the nave completely destroyed. In 1953 work of reconstruction began and the beautifully restored church was rededicated, in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on 19th December 1957.

The church had also previously been destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666, which in total destroyed 87 City churches. Rebuilding under Christopher Wren began in 1671, and by 1674 the main structure was completed and a year later the church reopened for worship on Sunday 19th December. The tower was not completed until 1703.

In the North East corner is the Journalists' Altar, originally known as the Hostage Altar, because it was established when hostages were being taken in the Middle East and all night vigils were being held. The altar now commemorates journalists from all over the world who have been injured or killed on active service.

After viewing the church we were shown down into the crypt which is quite extensive as the church has been rebuilt over the remains of six previous churches. During 1854 these were used for burials when London was ravaged by the plague in which no fewer than 10,000 people died. In a section of the crypt, which is not open to the public, remains of well over 200 skeletons can be found, which are identified in regard to their sex and age at the time of death and thus form a very important source of research into forensic and other forms of medicine. There is also a medieval charnel house where all the bones are put in their categories, thighbone with thighbone and so on, laid in checkerboard fashion.

A most interesting visit, which I think, was enjoyed by all that took part.

ROYAL HOSPITAL CHELSEA

By Jennie Hicks

Members of our Society had a very interesting visit to the Royal Hospital, Chelsea on the 9th March 2009. Founded by King Charles II in 1682 for retired army war veterans and pensioners and designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

Our tour guide, retired Sergeant, Paddy Fox BEM, met us at the main gate. He introduced himself and explained that he had been in the army for nearly 38 years and had lived at the Hospital for almost 8 years as an inpensioner. He wore three medals and told us what each one was for.



For entry to the Hospital, soldiers need to be 65 years or over with no dependants and in receipt of an army pension. There is accommodation for 400 inpensioners, although, there are just under 300 men at present with the imminent arrival of the first two women soldiers, named Dorothy Hughes and Winifred Philips. (Since our visit they are now well part of the establishment). The well-known scarlet red coats are worn, but the blue coats may be worn outside within a radius of 2 miles from the Hospital.

After a stroll through the accommodation block we came to the Figure Court where there was a statue of Charles II who had bought the land for the army. The statue was sculpted in 1676 by Grinling Gibbons and refurbished to its original gilded glory for the Golden Jubilee year by a kind benefactor.

The Founder's Day is an annual event, which the Royal Hospital holds to commemorate its founding by Charles II. Every inpensioner must attend this ceremony but leave of absence is freely granted at other times and summer holidays arranged if required. (*Founder's Day is indeed a wonderful day when everyone is on*

parade, even those in wheel chairs and usually the salute is taken by a member of the Royal Family. Eric & I were privileged to have tickets one year. Editor).

On to the beautiful Anglican chapel, again completed by Sir Christopher Wren. Inpensioners first parade in Figure Court on Sundays before going into Chapel for the 10.30am Service.

Paddy took our party to the Great Hall (the dining hall) where the large tables had been sawn in half many years ago and now there are two rows of tables along the sides of the hall. Each dining chair has a ledge underneath to accommodate each inpensioners tricorne hat. There are two large leather jugs on the bench table at the entrance, which were formally used for bringing beer up from the cellars. It was on this trestle table that the Duke of Wellington's body lay in state. After staring in awe at the beautiful painted ceiling, our party moved on to the allotments where Paddy grew his lovely flowers and we saw a plane tree that was over 200 years old.

Next was the 'L' shaped building or Orangery, which was the library and a small catholic chapel. Then we moved on to the artist's studio where we met Jim, an ex-prisoner of war, painting a fantastic scene. He was surrounded by so many of his paintings and had made his studio his day home.

Following a well earned cuppa and cake in the restaurant some members departed quickly which left about 12 of us to be photographed with Paddy under the Pub sign 'The Chelsea Pensioner'. The Quartermaster, who just happened to be passing by, took some of the photos.

We thanked Paddy for his time and an interesting tour and made our way back to Sidcup.

*Nov/Dec 2009. To my delight I received a Christmas Card from the Hospital signed with four Christian names. I still had the card that our guide had given me at the end of our tour and so phoned him. Of course he reminded me that he was **Paddy** and that the other names were chaps he had been instructing into also being guides. For those that missed our Christmas evening many photos were taken on our tour but I asked Gerald if I could send his large one of several of us with Paddy at the Pub sign plus a Christmas Card. Paddy was due to spend Christmas at Scarborough with family and within the last few weeks of writing had conducted a tour of the Hospital with 53 from Scarborough! Editor*

VISIT TO DENBIES VINEYARD & CHERKLEY COURT

By Gill Brown

On Monday 1st June we set out for our visit. Our driver took us the pretty way along the A25 through Sundridge, Brasted and Westerham. We arrived at Denbies in good time and were able to have coffee before we started our tours. We were divided into two groups. The first was to see a film about how it was discovered that the land was perfect for wine growing – chalky, in a 'bowl' and south facing. It had formerly been a pig farm. We also learned how the grapes are protected from frost. Hundreds of flares are lit to keep the air around the vines from freezing.

We were then transported by a small railway down to the cellar to taste three of the wines produced. Our guide was very knowledgeable and had a lovely dry sense of humour.

When the tasting was over we went outside to board the land train which took us up through the vineyard to the highest point where we could see the vines coming into

leaf. At the top is what remains of the house built by Cubitt. Only the stable block remains as the rest was destroyed in a fire. A new house has since been built.

We had lunch and were able to look around the shop, which sells a great variety of goods as well as wine.

We set off for Cherkley Court. On the way we learned that we were only able to see the gardens and not go into the house which was a disappointment. However it was a fine day and after a talk about the Beaverbrook family we were able to wander about the beautiful gardens. We were able to peer through some of the windows as the blinds had been left open for us. The afternoon ended with tea in the café before setting off home. This time along a clear M25.

In spite of the disappointment about the house, everyone seemed to have enjoyed their day. I know I did.

SCADBURY ESTATE WALK

By Dave Cunliffe

A number of members joined Neill Trueman for a splendid walk around the Scadbury estate on a glorious summer evening on 16th June. We are indeed fortunate to have such wonderful countryside on our doorstep and many thanks to Neill for once again taking the lead in organising a very enjoyable event.

OUTING TO HAMPTON COURT PALACE SATURDAY 27TH JUNE 2009

By Doreen Farge and Frances Percival

The year 2009 was the 500th anniversary of the accession to the throne of the mighty monarch Henry VIIIth. Celebrations were to be held in particular at Hampton Court. And so on a beautiful sunny day we met up at Waterloo to board a train for Hampton Court Station where, on arrival, we walked the short distance to Hampton Court itself. Prior to taking coffee we used 2 for 1 leaflets to buy our tickets for entry to the Palace.

In the 16th Century, Thomas Wolsey, later Cardinal, acquired Hampton Court from the Order of St. John of St. Jerusalem. Later, when he fell from favour, he presented the Court to Henry VIIIth in an attempt to retain his position. All this was in vain as in 1529 his goods and lands were declared forfeit to the Crown. Henry moved in immediately and removed all trace of the original owner.

We members were there in the 21st Century and were seeing the re-enactment of the marriage of Henry and his sixth wife Kateryn Parr at 11.30am. And at various times throughout the day other visitors were invited to attend. All the participants were magnificently robed and spoke well. Other people in period costume were on hand in various rooms to tell you of the interesting features that you might otherwise have missed. We marvelled at the Tapestries, Paintings and Porcelain that were still there for us to see. The kitchens were so large, but we remembered that vast numbers of courtiers and workers that had to be catered for.

We delighted in the gardens especially in the old fashioned roses with their lovely scent and before departing took shelter from the sun under one of the many yew trees, watching the fountain which had a most soothing effect.

It was good remembering our English history and that the Society was able to be in the very place where 500 years ago and thereabouts so much of it did take place.

One and all had a happy day.

VISIT TO CRYSTAL PALACE ON SATURDAY, 10TH OCTOBER 2009

By Richard Spencer.

How could I have lived in south London for 60 years without visiting Crystal Palace? I recall my father telling me about the time he saw the flames in the night sky from miles away when the Palace burned down before the war, but apart from that, Crystal Palace always meant for me just the great pylon on the skyline where the television pictures came from.

I am most grateful, therefore, for the recent opportunity to have a guided tour of the site and surroundings of Sir Joseph Paxton's great structure. The image of the building, with its terraces, statuary and fountains gave me the impression that this could almost have been London's Versailles had disaster and subsequent decay not struck.

It was sad to hear how the venue failed to survive as a popular attraction owing to a combination of a six-day working week and the prohibition of Sunday entertainment. I was surprised to learn that the Palace was the site of the largest aquarium of its type in the world – a marine, rather than a fresh water aquarium, filled with 120,000 gallons of seawater brought by train from Brighton.

The visit was made all the more delightful by the glorious autumn weather, by the excellent continental breakfast in a nearby café that preceded our tour, by the fascinating account of the Palace's history by our splendid guide and by the great joy of being transported there and back on the top deck of a London Routemaster bus.

Many, many thanks to Ian Bevan (our guide) Philip Willson (our driver) and Frances Percival (trip organiser).



RECEPTIONIST OF THE YEAR FOR 2009

By Frances Percival



This refers to Sue Wells who won Bexley's General Practice Receptionist Award of the Year for 2009. She made the headlines in the local press, the Borough Magazine and local Resident's 'Lamorbey Post'. The award was well deserved.

She has for many years been one of the senior receptionists at the Woodland Practice on the corner of Halfway St. and Woodlands Ave. and was voted for by the patients visiting the surgery. To the many patients at the counter she always greets them with a lovely smile when they arrive for a consultation, which helps if you are feeling down. Most of us have to phone at 8am for an appointment with a doctor and if it is Sue on duty there is no need to give your surname, she just

says, thank you, Mrs Percival or Mr.Percival, which time and time again has left one with a small glow.

It is a very busy practice, where she works on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday from 7.30am to 4.30pm with the exception of Monday when she stays on until 6.45pm.

She was born and grew up in Greenwich, did shop work, married, and had a son and daughter. She commenced work at the Woodlands Surgery in 1993 when it was a smaller practice and Dr.Ritchie and his wife Dr.Hemlock had become the senior Doctors. Now the Surgery consists of five partners and many more patients are on the roll including those from Albany Park.

I understand from Sue that she was also nominated in 2008 but the Award went to a practice in Erith. Come 2009 the Award came to Sidcup and our Sue was the Winner! Quoting the Bexley Magazine 'It was organised by the Bexley Care Trust and designed to recognised the hard work and important public services provided by GP Receptionists in more then 30 GP practices across the Borough'.

Our Sue won Champagne, flowers, chocolates for herself (which I know she shared with the rest of the staff) and a £500 cheque from the Bexley Care Trust to enhance the Woodland Practice.

VOLUNTEERS CIVIC RECOGNITION AWARDS 2009 25TH FEBRUARY 2009

By Frances Percival

Twelve adults were to receive certificates for dedicated voluntary service over many years. Usually, Eric and myself, attend the ceremony at the Civic Centre when the new Mayor of Bexley is formally installed as Mayor but missed out in 2009. The programme of awards was handed on to me, as our sister society of Erith & Belvedere due to their Chairman & his wife, Ken & Bonita Chamberlain being nominated for the foundation and continuation of their Society. In our area Cllr.Aileen Beckwith had

nominated Mrs. Audrey Foxon who had over a 45 year period devoted her life to the community par excellence. The list is endless: - Bexley Ladies Keep Fit Club, Queen Mary's Accident & Emergency, Bereavement help, raising funds for various charities and, until they closed, at both the Brook Hospital and Carlton Road with speech therapy. A lady who well deserved such an award.

I contacted Cllr. Beckwith if I could quote Mrs Foxon's work in our newsletter – both look forward to the article!

THE SAME CEREMONY IN 2008

In 2008, Eric and I did attend the Mayor making ceremony when Cllr. Nick O'Hare was installed (who incidentally charmed everyone during his year of office). Then followed the Civic Awards when, to my delight, the name of Mrs Ethel Evans was called. My ears pricked up as I recognised the name and then herself as a previous Lam & Sid member, going back to the old days at Lamorbey Park. I am pleased to report that she and her friend Maureen Howlett (also part of old days) have rejoined the Society now, not as a twosome but a foursome with their husbands. In fact, Mr. Sydney Howlett, has agreed to be the new Examiner of Accounts!



Reverting to the scene in the Council Chamber in 2008, Ethel had been nominated by Mrs Margaret Abel for CIVIC RECOGNITION OF VOLUNTARY SERVICE BY ADULTS FOR THE FOLLOWING:- She has been the popular Brown Owl or Guider in charge at 2nd Blendon Brownies for over 31 years and the Assistant Guider at Blendon Rainbows for four years. Ethel has been a positive and major influence in encouraging girls aged five to ten years to participate fully in the Guiding movement and to continue their membership in their teens. Ethel has encouraged these girls to try new opportunities, help with community events and help with charity fundraising, participate in charity projects and sporting activities and to attend residential trips and holidays. Above all, Ethel had taught these children to have fun in a relaxed and safe environment. Described as a dedicated Guider, she is always cheerful, kind and friendly and always sees the good in other people. The greatest tribute to Ethel, who has to retire from Guiding this year (2009) because she has reached the compulsory retirement age, is that former Brownies in her care are now themselves following in her footsteps and playing an active role as Guiders.

(This now leaves her time to once again be part of the Society. Editor).

**** STOP PRESS ** STOP PRESS ** STOP PRESS ****

I have just heard that the **2010** Awards Ceremony has already taken place, which is much earlier than usual. Another of our members has gained an award and this time it is for inspiring local people to learn more the history of the London Borough of Bexley. It is of course our own DR. JOHN MERCER. John has handed me a copy a the booklet that was used during the ceremony and shall be able to quote from it in the next newsletter.

DR ABRAHAMSON

The name of Dr.Abrahamson seems to float about so much in the history of the Woodlands Surgery that I requested one of our members, Valerie Allen nee Hall, who originally lived in Valliers Wood Road for some facts and I later received the following letter (Editor): -

Dear Frances, Just a brief note about DrAbrahamson. I cannot remember many details because when my parents first moved in 1929 to 19 Valliers Wood Rd, we used to have a Dr.Miller who came from Hatherley Crescent.

I know we visited Dr.Abrahamson when I was a small child. At one time I suffered quite badly in the warm weather with large sun blisters on my legs. Eventually I grew out of them. Dr. Abrahamson's surgery was in the house in Halfway St. now occupied by the Dentist. In 1941, my young sister was taken ill and mother could not get hold of the doctor but a neighbour offered to ring her GP, Dr.Barnard and within an hour Kathleen was taken to Farnborough Hospital with acute appendicitis. After that time we transferred to Dr.Barnard, at that time in Station Rd. I am still with the Barnard Practice as are my sister and brother.

Dad always remained with Dr.Abrahamson but I do not know the year the doctor retired. Dr.Sims took over the practice and attended my father until his death in 1977 as a result of cancer.

I do know Dr.Abrahamson had another surgery for many years in Longmead Drive (just up the road from me).

I have a book about Albany Park written by a lady who lived in the area and she mentions the Doctor in Longmead. I think this accounts for many people in this area having Dr.Ritchie as their General Practitioner. I remember Dr.Abrahamson as a rather large gentleman but very kind in his manner. He was married and had one daughter the same age as myself.

Do hope this helps. Valerie Allen

A TALE FROM THE HOLLIES

By Phyllis Streets

A year ago I saw an article in the Daily Mail from someone who was trying to organise a reunion of residents of the Hollies Children's Homes and I decided to contact them to tell them of a coincidence which happened to me regarding a young boy who had been there.

Immediately after the War my father became a Park Keeper, patrolling Holly Oak Woods, Willersley Park and Marlborough Park, so consequently my younger brother and I spent a lot of time playing there. One young man I got to recognise was a tall, dark haired Jewish boy, of about 9 named Stanley Ginsberg. Then a couple of years later I was visiting my girl cousin Joan in West Norwood when she suddenly called out "Hello Stanley". I couldn't believe it. Apparently at the end of the road was a Jewish Orphanage and Stanley had been transferred there sometime earlier and she knew him.

After my contacting the Reunion organiser, I subsequently received a letter from Stanley, now living in the USA. He had been transferred from Sidcup along with his two sisters and brother and had finally left there at 16 to enter the hotel trade. He

worked in two hotels in the West Country (quite close to where my cousin now lives). Later he was provided with the opportunity to emigrate to the States at 18 where he joined the USAF giving 12 years of fruitful service to his new country having obtained Citizenship whilst serving, travelling the World and actually visiting England – which he says he is so fond of and which he says holds a special place in his heart. Both his sisters are in the States too. He has made a complete success of his life after an awful start and lives happily with his family in a farming community in Colorado. He was very pleased I had contacted the Reunion organiser with my story and promised to give me news of the reunion when it had taken place.

A month later I received a very sad letter from a different gentleman, which I am copying below: -

“Please allow me to introduce myself; my name is MICHAEL SCHNEIDERMAN. I am British and Jewish. I have just received a copy of the of the Norwood Newsletter for September 2008 and I would like to say to you I was most interested to read your comments in it. I was with Stanley at Norwood but cannot remember him at the Hollies. Please let me tell you a little about myself. I was admitted to Lamorbey Children’s Home, Sidcup at a very young age at about 2-3 years old as an orphan. Lamorbey Home as you probably know consisted of numerous houses – all named after trees. The first house I went into at the home was called “Acacia” then in 1939 when war broke out all the children from the Sidcup Home were evacuated to Cornwall for the duration of the war. At the end of 1945 I was then admitted to a house at the Home called “Willows”. Two nurses, Parker and Snelgrove looked after us and they were very kind to us children, about 10 in all who lived in the house. The Principal of the Home at the time was a Mr.Owen.

I went to Halfway Street Primary School, like so many of the other children there. I wasn’t a very happy boy because I could never get to grips with having no parents or family. I realise I was not the only one at Sidcup in that position but that did not help me at all with my problems.

A lady named Miss Roadnight befriended me whilst I was there; I think she worked for the Red Cross and was really good to me. She often came and picked me up from the Home and took me to her house in Manor Road for a meal. She really was the only friend I ever had in Sidcup. Do you happen to know of this lady by any chance? She used to go to a very small church in Manor Road and eventually went to live in Folkestone and died there. I well remember this wonderful kind-hearted lady even though all these years have gone by. In 1947 all we Jewish children at Sidcup were transferred to the Jewish Orphanage at Norwood. If you can find time I would like to hear from you and thank you for your interest”.

This letter touched me so much because I came from a happy and complete family and I did reply but heard nothing further from him. If anyone reading this article has any knowledge of the names mentioned in my article perhaps they would contact me.

If anyone wishes to read more of the story of the Hollies a book was published in 2005 written in a sensitive manner by Gerry Coll a former resident of the Hollies. In the acknowledgements our members John Mercer, Denise Baldwin and Katherine Harding are mentioned. A Section of the book is given over to the Jewish Children from 1934 to the 1940’s but does not name the children.

*The Title is ‘The Hollies’ by Jad Adams and Jerry Coll – ISBN 0-9548993-0-X
(Editor)*

A STORY OF WARTIME SIDCUP

By Elizabeth Ellicott

In August I was intrigued to get a phone call from a gentleman called Anthony Greenstreet whose grandparents lived in Sidcup from 1927 to 1960. He had recently discovered some letters written by his mother during the war and he asked if I would be interested in having a copy of them. Of course I said "Yes please!"

His grandparents were **Surgeon Rear Admiral Sir William and Lady Pryn** and they lived at 3, Christchurch Road. They were obviously part of Sidcup 'Society' as Mr Greenstreet also has a Visitors' Book with some illustrious names in it. He kindly gave me some of these names with a potted biography to go with them. They were:

Sir Walter de M. Baynham of 'Coronel', Main Road. b.1876. Marine Superintendent of the Orient Navigation Company

Sir Charles Martel of 'Queenswood', Black Fen. b.1861. Chief Superintendent of Ordnance Factories.

Sir William Lake of 'Eastburn', St Johns Road, and later of Cray View Place. b.1875. Director of the National Federation of Iron & Steel Manufacturers.

All three were knighted for their services in the Great War.

These are the extracts from his mother's letters which Mr Greenstreet sent to me. "22/5/43 'We have had six nights of many sirens and much banging. I can even sleep through most of it now – except the gun which is close by'. 23/10/43 '...we had some nasty raids on Wednesday night, particularly when one of the new bombs soared over the house with a frightful zooming and landed just by the station, killing about 9 people and injuring about 17. The next morning when I got to the station the line was blocked and people were having to go by bus, but I was very lucky and got a lift in a private car as far as Westminster...Last night the bangs started as I was going up Station Road, and could see the plane caught in searchlights and trying to dive out. They haven't arrived so far tonight 'Here Mr Greenstreet went on – I have wondered what the 'new bomb' was: it was certainly not the V1 which did not appear until May 1944. I remember my mother writing to tell me of the first one that had just passed her window that morning. Earlier in the war, in Autumn 1940, the house had been damaged by a land-mine that fell somewhere near the Sports Club and largely wrecked the public house more or less opposite Christchurch (The Horse & Groom). The house was newly built when my grandparents moved into it in 1927/28 – on land which, I believe, had been cherry orchards.

My grandparents did not play a prominent role in Sidcup life, although my grandfather was chairman of the Sidcup British Legion.

I wonder if this account has jogged any memories? If you can clear up the mystery of the 'new bomb' or if you remember the people in the story I would be very interested to hear from you so that I can pass on the information to Mr Greenstreet.

(Sir Charles Martel's House – 'Queenswood' was demolished long ago and only now remembered by Queenswood Road. Editor.)

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