



Lillington Local History Society



JULY 2013

JULY 2013

Contents

The Midland Oak- 25 years later

Laxton's open fields and Court Leet

Lillington Brickworks

Lillington and the Quarter Sessions

A local walk in 1815

Programme of meetings

Meetings take place in Free Church Hall, Cubbington Road, 4.30 pm on the first Friday of each month.

Contact us by

-Coming to one of the Society's monthly meetings, - or by introducing yourself through committee member Gladys at the Chain Office, 89 Crown Way. 01926 739402 or 07815565370

-or by referring any queries about the society, contributions, photographs or reminiscences to Graham Cooper – telephone 01926 426942



Photo: Peter Coulls



"A small group of children find time to pose for the camera in Cubbington Road as we look towards Lillington Viillage with Grange Farm on our right."

Cubbington Road.

The view point is the same!

THE MIDLAND OAK: 25 YEARS LATER

On 2nd February 1988 the Midland Oak was planted by Tony Hemming and Neville Richmond. This, of course, was the Oak to replace the original which had been felled in 1967. For several centuries the old Oak had been growing in the road at the junction of Lillington Road and Lillington Avenue, in a position more or less between the two flower beds on the present new roundabout. The decision to fell the Oak was made on Thursday 27th April after a 3 ton branch had fallen onto the pavement three days earlier.... and there is photographic evidence of the damage to the tree and the danger to the public. And so the historic Oak, said to mark the Centre of England, was felled by Peter Owen on 30th April 1967 and the 12 foot stump remained until November when it was removed by the Council.

Twenty years later Dr. Tony Smith of the Rotary Club, with their support and the co-operation of Mr Alan Pedley, Amenities Officer for Warwick District Council, began working towards commemorating the site with a plaque and planting a replacement Oak. The Midland Oak Construction Group of Kenilworth originally had their office in Lillington Avenue, an acorn's throw from the Midland Oak, and they also became involved. Architect David Rathbone designed the plaque, and the wording was agreed by Rotary Council, the Amenities Department of WDC and the Midland Oak Group. The exact position for the replacement tree was discussed with WDC Engineering Department, and Mr Pedley organised the actual transplanting. The plinth and plaque were constructed by the Midland Oak Group at their expense.

Whereas the original Oak stood in the road and therefore became a hazard when motor transport succeeded the horse, the replacement Oak was planted nearby in the field known as Ginns Furlong on the James Fish map of 1711. In 1730 the Enclosure Award changed the appearance of the landscape. Fields were enclosed with hedges and it was stipulated that the roads at this junction were to be 60 feet broad.... but there were no instructions to remove an oak tree standing on the common grass for grazing beside the roadway. The Oak therefore remained in position where it had been marked on several of the James Fish Survey sheets in 1711.



The photograph shows the planting almost completed on 2nd February 1988 by Tony Hemming, WDC Arboricultural Officer, left, and Neville Richmond.

[This photograph was given by Tony Hemming, but the photographer is unknown].

On 26th April 1988 HRH the Duke of Gloucester unveiled the handsome plaque.



Twenty five years later, almost to the day, Tony and Neville were invited to meet again at the Oak to be photographed. We met at midday and the sun shone. The photograph records a flourishing Midland Oak and the two planters also looking that little bit more mature and gratified that the Oak had made such good growth over the previous twenty five years.

The lower branches, reaching over the plaque and the pavement, had been pruned back in August 2011.

Photo: Peter Coulls 31 January 2013

In the spring of 1993 flowers appeared on the tree for the first time, so the first crop of acorns was produced that autumn, and in each successive year. From acorns collected in 1993, 1995 and 1997, 194 oak trees were grown and subsequently planted out locally and further afield by individuals, by Warwickshire County Council at Ryton Pool, by Warwick District Council at Crackley Wood, by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust within the county and by the National Trust in Herefordshire.

It is good to see that the Midland Oak is flourishing. When you are next passing on foot, pause for a while to stand and stare.

EMR

Space for the printer



The open field system which is so clear in the 1711 James Fish map of Lillington was once the common pattern for farming in many parts of England. The system disappeared with the Enclosure Acts when hedges and fields replaced the open fields. Laxton in Nottinghamshire is the one remaining place which can show us what Lillington's fields might have looked like three hundred years ago.

LAXTON'S OPEN FIELDS AND COURT LEET

Local historians near and far have heard of the Nottinghamshire village of Laxton, which still has its open fields and where the farmers work the three course rotation which we associate with pre-enclosure northern Europe. What is perhaps most distinctive about Laxton, but is least known to the wider public, is the Court Leet, which retains its legal powers having been specifically exempted from the 1920s legislation abolishing copyhold. In 2012 I was privileged to accompany the farmers round the fields on jury day, and to attend the annual meeting of the Court Leet.

Jury Day is the last Thursday in November (29th in 2012). The thirteen men – twelve jurors and a foreman – assemble in The Dovecote Inn at 10.30 to drink coffee and swap news and information. Then the field foreman gives them instructions. In 2012 it is Roy Hennell of Corner Farm. Roy is a Laxton man, born and bred. He farms where his father farmed before him, and his son will, in due course, farm in the future. The field being inspected is the Mill Field. Roy details a couple of the men off to check the ditches and drains around the field. The rest, including myself, climb into Stuart Rose's tractor/trailer for the journey to Mill Field. We sit on straw bales and under our feet are the wooden stakes, which have been prepared by Robert Haigh, the bailiff of the manor, who farms at Ivy House farm.



Once in the field, we stop off at various points to check the width of roadways and to hammer in wooden stakes. It is a beautiful day with blue sky and low sun, but that also means it is chilly in the open landscape so no one hangs around much. All decisions about 'shovelling in' or 'ploughed too far', are taken collectively by the jurors, and all measurements are by eye and rely on tradition – no one carries a tape measure. At different points we leave the trailer altogether and walk, carrying the stakes and the odd sledge hammer, until, about two hours after we set out, the job is done. The most difficult issue, on which all the jurymen are consulted, is a dyke which appears to have been 'ploughed out' by the farmer. He is not on the jury this year and so cannot defend himself.

The jurymen return to the pub, where the traditional lunch (soup, roast beef, apple pie or Christmas pudding) is served up by the landlord. Every plate is cleared. Farmers do not leave food! Then Robert Haigh calls order. He brings out the 2012 Presentment Paper and it

is passed round the table for each of the jurymen to sign. A discussion then ensues about the activities of the morning, and who is going to be 'presented' to the court a week later for an offence, with what recommendation. Stuart Rose, who also holds one of the traditional positions in the village as clerk of the gaits and commons, is fined, just to show that no one is exempt, and Nick Gent – the farmer who had ploughed out a dyke – is threatened with one of the largest fines the court has ever proposed, £50. As the winter sun sets and the evening gloom begins to descend, the farmers disperse to their homesteads.

A week later on 6 December we are back in the Dovecote Inn. Again it is 10.30 and coffee is served, but this is a more formal occasion. Robert Haigh is even wearing a tie, and the meeting of the court leet is presided over by the steward of the manor, Alastair Miller, a Newark solicitor appointed by the landlord, the Crown Estate. Haigh calls the court to order, the steward swears in the jury that will operate in 2013, the 'suit roll' is called over (in other words the names of everyone entitled to be present is called out and those present answer to their names), and then the presentments are read out and the farmers have an opportunity to object. Stuart Rose half objects, but everyone knows he will pay. Nick Gent has been briefed in advance of his misdemeanour, and does not object, but Mike Jackson of Crosshill Farm suggests that £50 is too much in 'these difficult times', and the fine is reduced to £25. Gent does not object!

Haigh calls over the court again, and it is finished for another year. He sits down and the farmers begin a long and complex discussion, which includes presentations and interventions from representatives of Natural England, the Crown Estate and their land agents Carter Jonas, about subsidies and other financial matters. These are about the modern business of farming: in the past the farmers would simply have discussed the general conditions of agriculture and gone home, but Single Farm Payments and special allowances of one sort or another (CSS and HLS are among the acronyms bandied around) make this part of the proceedings all the more important. But by lunchtime it is all over. A few farmers stay in the pub for a drink. The rest return home, or in some cases to the other activities which they pursue to make a living. The steward returns to his office in Newark, taking with him the presentment paper. Presentment papers survive all the way back to 1650 and there must have been many prior to that date.

For two Thursday mornings I was witness to a piece of history, proceedings which disappeared in every other manor centuries ago. Will it continue? Local historians everywhere, and farmers from near and far (there were 8 German farmers lunching in the Dovecote on 6 December) must hope so, but the key players are the Crown Estate. Let us hope that Alison Nimmo, who took over as CEO at the beginning of 2012 sees it that way, despite lacking experience of rural issues.

John Beckett

Professor John Beckett is Professor of English Regional History at the University of Nottingham and author of Laxton: England's Last Open Field Village. He was Director of the VCH 2005-10. This article is reproduced with his permission and that of the photographer Joy Allison from the Winter edition of the magazine of the British Association for Local History. Map: with acknowledgements to Warwickshire County Record Office: [WCRO AC/CR 26/2/4]

LILLINGTON BRICKWORKS

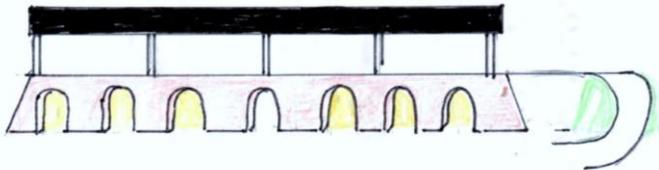


Today, apart from the street named Kiln Close, there is little to remind us of the once thriving brickyard that once occupied the area between Campion Road and Villiers Street.

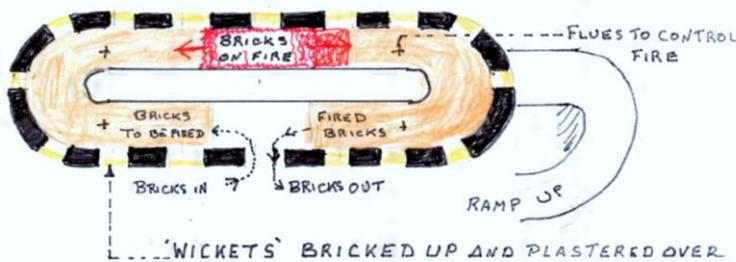
In the 1950s the brickyard was owned by the Shepherd family, who also owned brickyards at Studley, Kings Norton and Earlswood. The Shepherd family consisted of Mr Shepherd senior, his two sons and a daughter. They also ran a haulage firm called Shepherd and Hough. Mr Hough, however, was killed in an accident at one of the brickyards.

In the 1930s a small railway was used to transport the clay from the pit to the pan where it was crushed into powder.

By the 1950s, the railway had been replaced by a dumper truck. The machinery had been steam powered and there was a large building housing a now redundant boiler.



Also in the fifties, bricks were being manufactured by a different process that rendered the old drying sheds redundant.



BRICKYARD KILN Circa 1955

The sheds were rented out as storage for large rolls of paper. There was also a firm making stone fireplaces and so forth, called Spa Stone. 'The Super Paint Craft Co', which specialised in spraying dodgem cars, was also located in the yard. There was also a row of lock-up garages. Most of the employees were Italian apart from the foreman and lorry driver.

This was a busy time in the building trade in Leamington and A.C. Lloyd's lorries would be waiting first thing in the morning for the bricks to be loaded straight from the kiln.

I believe the brickyard was closed down about 1960.

Joe Claydon

LILLINGTON AND THE QUARTER SESSIONS

The Quarter Session records show how Warwickshire was administered in the seventeenth century. They cover everything from the actions taken following the Great Fire of Warwick in September 1694 to the fines for numerous minor offences. One of the most curious must be the “laying of a dunghill in the way to the church” in Southam.

1631-1674

In 1635 Humfrey Nicholls of Lillington was indicted for breaking into the pound in Milverton and taking 15 sheep. In 1636 John Westley was fined for trespassing on Lillington land owned by Simon Gillyon in the Marlpits Furlong [near the current Melton Road, off Lime Avenue] and making a ditch. In an earlier entry for the same year we read that Cecily Gillyon, wife of Simon Gillyon, was indicted for assault and battery upon Anne Westley!



In 1650 John Arnold of Lillington was fined for “rescuing” his mare and 30 sheep from the hayward. The hayward was the parish official responsible for rounding up stray animals and putting them in the pound. Clearly the “rescue” was illegal and another attempt to avoid a fine.

[North Elmham village pound, Norfolk](#). With acknowledgements to Wikipedia.

Failures to maintain the road from Lillington to Kenilworth across the low lying land just before the Chesford Bridge often appears in the records and fines were levied in several years.

1690-1696

Lillington appears to have been reasonably law abiding between 1690 and 1696. In 1693 it appeared that Robert Brown, of Lillington, was involved with others from Ashow in a case of sheep stealing involving a ewe, a wether sheep and a lamb. Robert was bound over for 10 pounds for his good behaviour. It would have taken him about eight months to earn this much.

The parish of Lillington was in trouble again in 1691 and 1692 for not gravelling their section of the road from Lillington to Kenilworth. Things were in order by 1693: the Lillington inhabitants having “well and sufficiently gravelled the highway.” However, Lillington was fined later in the year for an undisclosed “nuisance”, possibly the potholes had returned. At least they didn’t suffer the same fate as Hannah Bradley of Stockton who, in the same year, was indicted for stealing a silver thimble valued at 11d, was found guilty and, because she had “no chattels”, was whipped at Warwick.

In 1696 Abigail and Hannah Robbins of Lillington were each indicted and fined for assault and battery on each other. Hannah was fined two pounds [480 pence] and Abigail 6d. Assume a daily wage in the region 10d.

Acknowledgements to the County Record Office: Proceedings in Quarter Sessions 1946

A LOCAL WALK IN 1815

I have recently had access to a book published in the year of the Battle of Waterloo, entitled "An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Town and Castle of Warwick and the Neighbouring Spa of Leamington" with a frontispiece by "W.F." dated 1st. September 1815.

In a chapter on Rides and Walks Round Leamington there is an interesting description of an excursion towards Kenilworth. It has to be remembered that, at that time, there was no Kenilworth Road from the top of the Parade, since that was constructed only in 1840, so the traveller had to progress via the present Lillington Road, then along Sandy Lane, Blackdown, and join on to the present Kenilworth Road just before Blackdown Mill.

So, putting yourself in the position of the 1815 traveller, the book's description reads, "This road from Leamington leads through rural lanes. About a mile from Leamington - leaving on the right, the village and church of Lillington - the road bends to the left, and the usual gravelly soil changes for a short space, into sand. Here the ground ascends, and a prospect of some extent, but no great interest, opens over a flat tame tract of corn and pasture land - terminated, however, by a striking distant view of Warwick Church and the towers of the Castle. On the descent from this sandy eminence, passing one little lonely cot, Blackdown Mill appears; and, a little beyond, Chesford Bridge, stretching with three arches over the Avon. This mill belonged, so early as the reign of Edward I to the monks of Combe Abbey, ten miles distant; upon whom was imposed the expense of keeping the bridge in repair; as appears from the report of a trial held, in the reign of Edward III between the inhabitants of Kenilworth and other neighbouring villages, on one side, and the Abbot of Combe on the other. The same obligation of repairing still rests with the present possessor of Combe Abbey, the Earl of Craven.

"Till lately, this ancient Bridge was a fine picturesque object. The arches and buttresses were pleasingly shaded, in large irregular masses, with ivy; the joinings and small fissures overgrown with loss or lichen; and the smooth surface roughened, or, in parts, broken, by the mouldering or injuries of time, and deeply tinged by the discolouring hues of age, or the streaming marks of weather-stains. But of all these beauties, in the picturesque eye, it is now stript, by the unsparing chisel of the mason, employed lately in some necessary repairs. The scenery about it, is, however, still beautiful. On one side in a fine bend, the river is seen working its quiet way; the ground, on one of its banks, is richly adorned with hanging wood, and sinking on the other, spreads into soft and luxuriant meadows".

One can still recognise some of these descriptions today, though it is interesting to wonder where the "one little lonely cot" was before Blackdown Mill.

GRAHAM E.COOPER

This Newsletter is published by the Lillington Local History Society, The Chain, Crown Way, Lillington. All references prefixed CR refer to documents held in the County Record Office, Warwick. For further information, contact The Chain, Crown Way, Lillington. The views expressed in the Newsletter are personal to the contributors and are not necessarily the views of the Society.