



# Lillington Local History Society



NOVEMBER 2014

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Ayres

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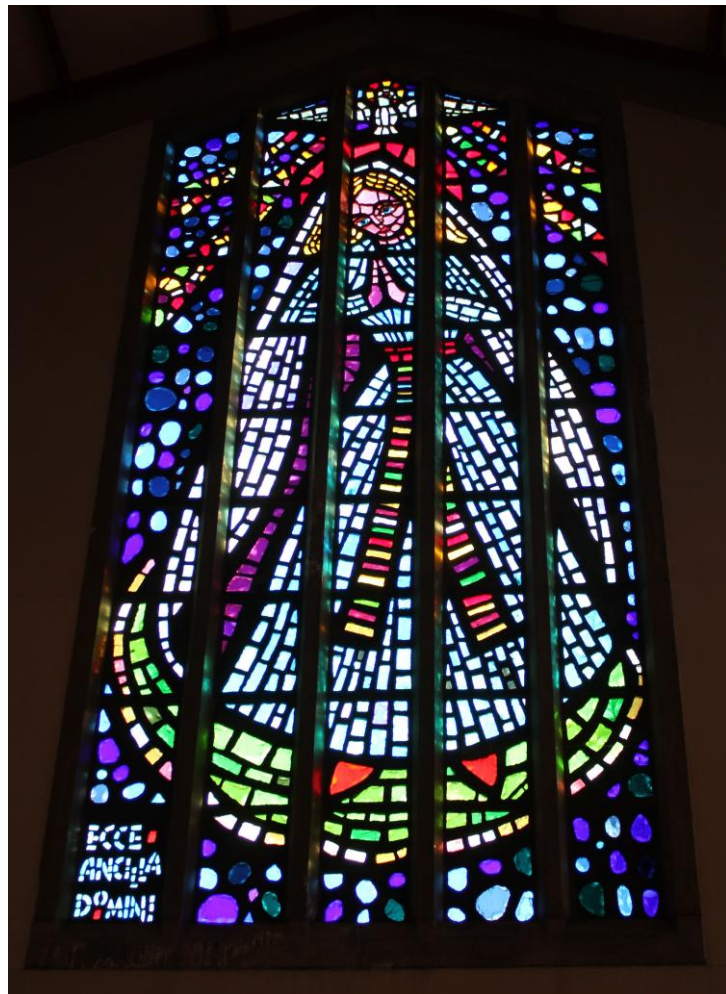
The Walnut Tree

## Programme of meetings

Regular monthly  
meeting 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 referring any queries  
about the society,  
contributions, photographs  
or reminiscences to  
Graham Cooper –  
telephone 01926 426942



Window in the Church of Our Lady, Valley Road, Lillington. Designed by Henry Fedeski, the abstract stained glass is a spectacular feature of this church. The work is of Dom Charles Norris who headed a team of monks to construct glass walls not windows. The designs use thick slabs of coloured glass set in a concrete matrix, a technique known as *dalle de verre*, also to be found in Buckfast Abbey, Devon. *Dalle de verre* developed in the 1920's by Jean Gaudin involves breaking with a hammer or cutting with a saw, slabs of coloured glass. The edges are shaped to increase the refraction and reflection of the glass. The thicker slabs produce richer colour effects. The design is set in a timber former or casting frame before installation. *Image Peter Coulls*

## Great-uncle Frank: Missing in Action

Martin Litherland

Summer was heady in Lillington's meadows,  
Right up to the day when the telegram came:  
Typed were the dreadful words: *Missing in Action*:  
She cried out loud, prayed out loud, calling his name.

They took the trains south to visit those places  
Where Warwickshire's wounded lay, back from the Somme.  
They listened; they searched, for news of their dear one:  
Repeating his name to a soldier called Tom.

'At dawn we attacked,' said Tom in a whisper.  
'We were cut down by Jerry, those German swines.  
Finding a shell hole, I crawled in for cover:  
To wait for the night, then return to our lines.'

'And after a while, Frank crawled in beside me.  
We patched up our wounds, and lay down for a smoke.  
He talked of you, and his brother and sisters;  
Our families and home: that's what we spoke.'

'Night came so late and quietened the gunfire:  
Dying men's echoes from the gaseous black:  
A no man's land shell hole, without a compass:  
So we couldn't decide which was the way back.'

'Frank said t'was that way; and I said the other:  
We shook hands and crawled out each separate way;  
But I made it back, and here I am for you,  
To talk of your son on that terrible day.'

No news from the Red Cross: they never found him:  
So Frank's name was listed on the churchyard plaque;  
But she never left the house unattended,  
So there was a welcome should Francis come back.

*Poem written June, 2014*

*Part of the War Memorial plaque at  
Lillington church, showing Frank's death  
recorded in April rather than August.*

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*The Duggins family at Lillington, Warwickshire. Frank is on the left. His elder brother, James Edward, the artist/photographer, is behind. My grandmother, Marta Elizabeth, is on the right. Father Edward was a watchmaker.*



*Francis William Duggins of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, taken by his brother two weeks before his death at the Battle of Pozieres, 13 August, 1916. He was a water engineer by trade.*



**A LETTER FROM A CROWN WARD RESIDENT:** Margaret Watkins : The Great War

My two uncles lost their lives in the War. Their names, William Thomas and Walter Ayres, are on the War Memorial in the village Church in Offchurch, near Leamington Spa, where they lived with their parents and two sisters.



William Thomas, "Tom", enlisted with the 200<sup>th</sup> Company Royal Army Service Corps, .aged19. He died from Bronchial Pneumonia in October 1918, six weeks before the war ended, and is buried in Abbeville Communal Cemetery in Somme, France. Although he was a driver with the army, I think he also looked after horses. In his last letter he mentioned that he had caught a chill while working in the stables, and had been laid up for two days. It obviously developed into the pneumonia from which he never recovered.

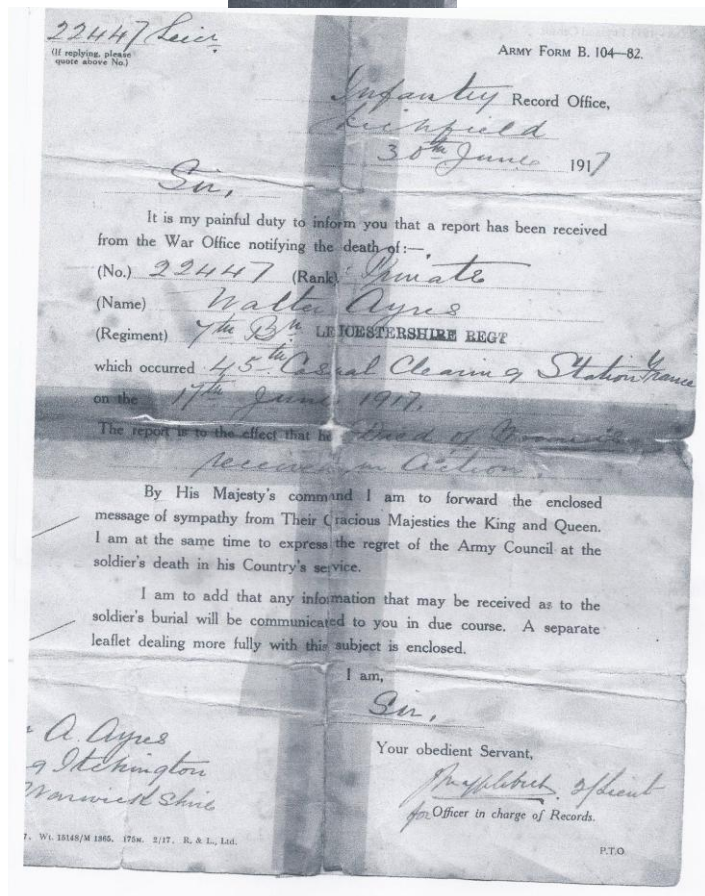


Walter enlisted with the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, aged 24 and died in action in June 1917, he is buried in the Achiet-le Grande, Pas de Calais, France.

They were both awarded the Victory British and Star War Medals.

I have a few of the original letters my Uncles wrote from France. I also have letters from the infantry and Army Service Cops Record Office sent to my

Grandfather notifying him of the deaths of Walter and William Thomas.



Especially this year, we will remember all those casualties of war, past and present, and their loved ones. We will not forget them.

Family images reproduced with the kind permission of Margaret Watkins

## THE PUBS OF LEAMINGTON

Perhaps the most important addition to local history sources of late has been the publication of "Pubs of Royal Leamington Spa" by Allan Jennings, Martin Ellis and Tom Lewin. Its sets out in some detail all that is known about the hostelries of the town, including those which opened and closed long ago. It even makes mention of the Leamside Inn, the refreshments tent of the "Lights of Leamington" in the Jephson Gardens. Well illustrated with old and recent photographs, it lists the known licensees and sets out histories and anecdotes of the various establishments. Of particular interest are the good old traditional names of local pubs, which are usually of greater interest and appeal than some more-recent glitzy re-names.

Of special interest to the Lillington Local History Society is the inclusion of Lillington establishments. Now there are no public houses in Lillington, but until recently, there was the Walnut Tree, on the site of Village Farm, opened in 1958, experiencing various changes of fortune until it closed in 2009, when the premises were acquired to open a Tesco Express.

The Jack and Jill at Winston Crescent and Newland Road, was opened in 1966 and closed for business in 1996. Both of these pubs were of modern design and it might be that, had they been of more traditional aspect, they might have lasted longer.



One which was of traditional style, but nevertheless no longer functions was **the Crown at what is now 67 Lillington Road**. Dating from the 1820's its licence appears to have come to an end in the 1840's, and the building is now a private house.

The book lists premises with marvellous names such as the Britannia, Coach and Horses, Cross Keys, Hare and Hounds, Royal Exchange, Star and Garter and William the Fourth. The book has proved extremely popular and will make a welcome addition to any Leamington library. Its production must have been a labour of love by its three authors and the result is a great credit to them.

In June 2014 the Society was delighted to welcome Allan Jennings to its monthly afternoon meeting when he gave a presentation of the contents of the book with particular reference to the Lillington establishments.

G.E.C.

*Image: Chris Rhodes*

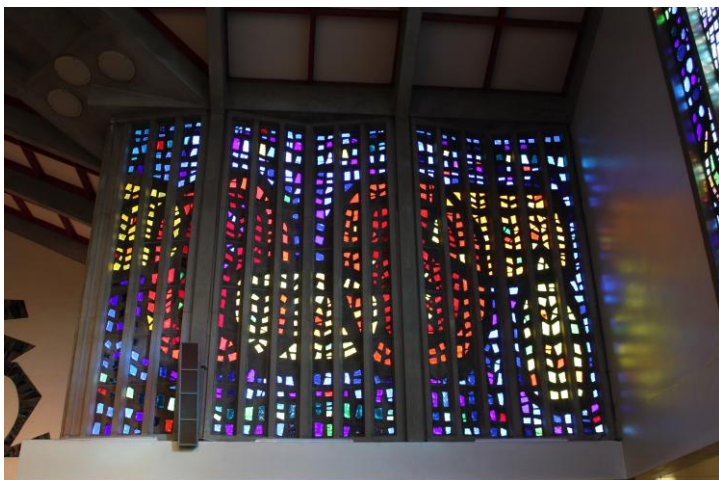
*Leamington Spa Courier dated 28<sup>th</sup> July 1849:-**GROWING CROPS OF WHEAT, BARLEY, BEANS, MANGEL WURZEL, & POTATOES TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION, BY F. KING** On Tuesday, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 1849, at two o'clock in the afternoon, at the CROWN INN, Lillington, nine and a half acres of wheat, three and a half acres of barley, three acres of beans, two lands of mangel wurzel, and a land of blush kidney potatoes. The straw to go off. Credit will be given, on appropriate security.*

## THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY, LILLINGTON

In an earlier Newsletter for this year an article was published giving some details of the history of this modern Church. I had not had cause to go into this building until arrangements were made with Father Crowe for a Society visit on an evening in June. Not being a football fan, little did I realise that it would clash with an England match in the World Cup, this did not deter some 20 members and friends from turning up on a sun drenched evening.



We were greeted by Father Crowe who gave us a potted history of the Church, after which we were given the opportunity to explore the Church for ourselves. The glass walls have a symbolism of their own; the interpretation was assisted by Father Crowe. He also pointed out some features that we might have missed in our explorations.



The whole Church is a kaleidoscope of light in stark contrast to the 1960's exterior. It is difficult to select photographs that do justice to the interior, however two have been chosen from many taken that night. Our thanks go to Father Crowe for making us so welcome.

Peter Coulls

## THE TEW FAMILY OF CUBBINGTON ROAD

Well over a year ago, I met Linda Grant, when she called in at South Lodge, Jephson Gardens to see the display of the garden's history. She told me a little about her family's Leamington and Lillington connections: her mother, grandmother and grandfather lived in Taylor Avenue before and during WW2, then moved to Thomas Street in the 1950s.

Back at home in Lincolnshire, Linda unearthed some family photos which she scanned and sent to me. One in particular caught my eye: her grandfather and three younger siblings taken on Cubbington Road in about 1905. Linda thought the view was of Pound Lane, but I was able to tell her that the photo was taken at the end of Elm Road, looking up towards the Crown Way junction. Apart from minor alterations to frontages, the view has hardly changed.



I first assumed that the children were related to the owner of the fishmonger's cart, but correspondence with Linda proves this not to be the case. They are indeed her relatives, but have no family connection to John Tew. The cart was simply a prop for the photo-shoot. Investigating the name, I found that John Tew the fishmonger lived elsewhere in the town, but by an amazing coincidence, another John Tew lived at the house on Cubbington Road, and he too had a family of about the same age.

The Cubbington Road John Tew was a gardener and beekeeper who grew up in the village of Whittlebury in Northamptonshire, where he started his career at 'the big house'. By his early twenties, he had become a gardener at Combe Abbey, Coventry. He later gardened for a Mrs Bland, at The Firs, Newbold Terrace, Leamington, and according to the Leamington Courier, of 12 August 1899, won prizes in the 'Gentleman's Gardeners & Nurserymen' category of the Leamington and District Flower Show, for his table plants, begonias, gloxinias, and honey.

John Tew married Elizabeth Alford Bell from Devon at Offchurch in 1895. They had two children, Amy Clare and Dorothy Annetta, who were baptised at the church there in February 1896 and October 1897 respectively. By the time Sidney John was born in 1899, John was working in Leamington: Sidney was baptised at St Paul's in Leicester Street in March 1899, and the 1901 census shows John and Elizabeth living with their three children on Cubbington Road. The 1911 census noted that the Tews had been married 16 years, and had had 7 children, 6 of whom were still alive. Their children still at home were Dorothy Annetta (13), Sidney John (12), William Thomas (9), George Henry (7) and Arthur James (3). Dorothy, Sidney, William and Arthur all married. William later lived at Gaydon and George and Arthur right on the doorstep, in Avondale Road and Kinross Road Lillington. Amy Clare remained in the district but did not marry. She died in 1955, aged 59.



The Tew family lived in the house directly behind the photo, then numbered 19 Cubbington Road. By 1933, following building development northwards along the road from Midland Oak park, it had become number 94 Cubbington Road. The gate behind the children led across farm fields to the Campion Hills. When Lillington School expanded in the 1950s, the gateway became the school drive, allowing vehicular

access for the delivery of coke for the school boilers and school dinners from Central Kitchens. The long thin garden behind the house which once held a small laundry, now has houses built on it.

*Photo: Margaret Rushton*

John Tew was clearly a figure of note in the community. In May 1912 the Leamington Courier quoted him as the expert witness at an enquiry at the Town Hall appearing on behalf of Lillington workmen who were trying to find land for allotments. Three plots of land were on offer. In John Tew's professional opinion, one was inaccessible, another became a bog in wet weather and the third baked as hard as brick in dry weather. He stated unequivocally that the land was unworkable and he "would not have it as a gift for allotments." It took quite a while to resolve, but eventually, the Lillington appeal carried the day. A better site was found and within the year, was being fenced and marked out, doubtless thanks in some measure to John Tew.

#### *Postscript.*

Miss Dorothy Tew was listed amongst subscribers to the publication of William Cooper's History of Lillington, published in 1940.

Margaret Rushton

*Sources: National Archives Census returns, 1871-1911; Leamington Spa Courier.*

## HERBERT COX



Our thanks to the members of the Society who tidied up Herbert Cox's grave in the churchyard.

Herbert Cox was an artist, teacher and watercolourist.

He lived at 7 Manor Road.



*Photos: Margaret Rushton and Chris Rhodes*

## THE WALNUT TREE

It had been thought that the wood from the walnut tree that stood on the corner of Crown Way and Cubbington Road, and which gave its name to the pub on the current Tesco site, was sent to America and used to build a staircase in the Waldorf Astoria hotel in New York.

I visited the Waldorf Hotel this September. The entrance hall is very grand and has several majestic staircases leading to different levels and floors. Sadly, they are made of marble with metal banisters and handrails. A helpful member of staff explained that wooden staircases were prohibited because of the danger of fire. I visited the hotel's museum and looked at about twenty images of various staircases from the past- but unfortunately, no wooden structures.

Another member of staff recalled that, many years ago, old wood was used in the refitting of one of the hotel's bars. Maybe, the well-to-do of modern New York rest their dry Martinis on a piece of Lillington. If so, this would make a neat link to the Walnut Tree public house. CR

*Printers advert*

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