



# Lillington Local History Society



MARCH 2014

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## 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



In the early 1880's Leamington Steeplechases were a feature of the sporting calendar, when titled gentlemen made their way to Leamington to race and bet on the performance of men and horses over various courses.

The Champion Hills were the playground of the gentry, where the start of a four mile course could be found.

The frenzy of activity for such events can only be imagined in contrast with the tranquillity of the scene as captured by Frederick Whitehead from 1906 entitled 'Leamington and Warwick from the Champion Hills.'

Image: Peter Coulls

## THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY, LILLINGTON

The Catholic church of Our Lady in Lillington was officially opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1963, by the Most Rev. Francis Grimshaw, D.D., the Archbishop of Birmingham. The building was designed by Henry Fedeski F.R.I.B.A., Dip.T.P., A.M.T.P.I. who produced a cruciform design with a central altar at the crossing with various dedicated side chapels. The successful contractor was Messrs. Garlick and Sons, Ltd of Coventry. The initial discussions for this project took place in September 1958, with sketches being prepared in April 1960 for submission to the Archdiocese.



The Catholic parishioners of Lillington had worshipped in a variety of locations in the Lillington area, their Mother Church was St. Peter's, Leamington Spa. Services had been held at St.Teresa's, Cubbington, on to 187, Valley Road, Lillington, followed by the Community Centre, Lillington, thence to the Health Centre, Lillington, next to a temporary Church Hall before their own church was constructed in Valley Road. The foundation stone was laid on 18<sup>th</sup> July 1962 by Archbishop Francis Grimshaw.

The following is quoted from the Magazine printed to mark the opening of the new Church describing the interior of the church. " There are three entrances on the west, north and south, respectively, each with a small narthex<sup>1</sup>, the main entrance being that on the west. Advantage was taken of the sharp rise from the road by fixing a high floor level with a wide flight of steps to the west entrance.

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<sup>1</sup> *An antechamber or large porch in a modern church.*

The narrow balcony at the west end was constructed to house the organ pipes which are to be arranged so as not to spoil the effect of the nave window. All screens are glazed to give a view of the high altar. A central sanctuary which rises three steps forms the setting for the high altar, and enables the congregation in the nave and north and south transepts to take an intimate part in the service.

The mensa<sup>2</sup> is of 4" thick Nabresina Roman stone marble, and the communion rail and pulpit plinths are of a similar stone. Dark green Westmoreland slate columns support the mensa and communion rail. The floor and steps are of terrazzo, and pulpit and ambo, which are designed as part of the sanctuary, of sapele and stainless steel.

The high altar is crowned with a tester supported on cables over pulleys to enable the tester to be pulled down for changing the covering at the appropriate liturgical seasons."

In many churches the stain glass windows can often be seen as the crowning glory of the building. The Church of Our Lady is no exception, not with traditional glazing out of character with a modern build, there being a French slab glass system (approximately 1" thick). In this instance the surface of the glass is chiselled to create reflecting surfaces. The glass was manufactured in St. Just sur Loire, France. The glass is reported to be the work of Dom Charles Norris who headed a team of monks using the daile de verre (slab of glass) technique, whereby thick pieces of coloured glass are set in a concrete matrix. The finished windows are thought by many to be the best examples in this country using this technique. It is unfortunate that outside the normal services the church is reported to be locked, although it is understood that viewing can be arranged by appointment. This is an important Grade II listed building in Lillington.

Earlier reference was made to the growth of the church and in particular 187 Valley Road which became one of the temporary homes of the Parish Priest. This "Domestic Chapel" was used for morning Mass and on Holy Days, such was the demand in the area that on one occasion 106 parishioners attended evening Mass there, thankfully a permanent home was found.

Peter Coulls

References: The magazine printed to mark the opening of "The Church of Our Lady, Lillington, Leamington Spa." [www.ourladyslillington.org.uk](http://www.ourladyslillington.org.uk)

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<sup>2</sup> *The flat stone forming the top of the altar.*

**“LILLINGTON GREW ROUND ME”**: memories of a childhood in and around Lillington

I have many happy memories of my childhood in Comyn Street, and then Valley Road. I came from a large family: my grandmother R--- had sixteen children.



My grandfather was a fine man. He always wore a waistcoat with watch chain and fob, and often a smock tied at the waist with string. He had two small holdings in the Pound Lane area. He kept pigs and rabbits, horses, and was the fourth generation to run a milk round. The horses were called Dolly, Tom, Snowball and Big Bill. Once we spent all day trying to catch Snowball because we were promised 6d if we caught him. We never did!

I can remember going with my uncle on his round, and measuring out the milk from the churns. Grandad was very strict. If you spoke at the table you were obviously not hungry and your food was taken away to come back at the next meal. He kept [very black] mints in his waistcoat pocket. We ate them and survived!

Grandad would slaughter his own pigs, and hang them on a beam at the side of the house. A sheet was hung up on slaughter days so that the lady next door was not affronted. We got the makings for the swill from the hotels and Elizabeth the Chef. They were boiled up in a big copper. Sometimes we ate some of the cake!

Christmas was a busy time. Chickens would be brought to the house in crates, and all the family helped with the plucking. Christmas was wonderful. There were always people around and lots of music. People played the mouth organ, Jew's harp or accordion, and everyone sang.

Everyone walked everywhere. I remember coming back from school [St Peter's] past the Catholic Shop [now the florist in Holly Walk] that also sold sweets.

Valley Road was a real valley. We moved there when I was 7. The brook went up past where the school playing field is now. It had a hedge on each side. There was a sand pit where the Community Centre is today, and once people found gas masks buried in the sand. Maybe they belonged to the Italian prisoners of war. The prisoners made toys out of wood and gave them to the children.

There was a shed where Tesco's is now. It used to be Village Farm and then the Walnut Tree. You could buy vegetables there, from the crates laid out across the floor. Falkners was on the corner of Lime Avenue and sold the best bread. Old Mr McGregor would chase you off if you went in his fields.

I had a wonderful life!

Mary

## DID YOU KNOW WHERE IT WAS?

The terra-cotta plaque featured in the November edition of the Newsletter can be seen on South Bank, Cubbington Road, opposite the entrance to the old school.



It commemorates the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897. The names of all the principal countries in the then Empire encircle a portrait of the Queen. The terracotta plaque one of three understood to exist was made by Hemming's brickworks of Solihull.

A similar plaque was affixed to a large house in Lewis Road, Radford Semele. The house was demolished in the 1960's, the site being what is now Godfrey Close. The demolition contractors kept the plaque safe. Following on the disastrous fire when St. Nicholas Church, Radford Semele was being rebuilt the contractors thought it fitting that the plaque should be returned to the village during the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. The rescued plaque is now displayed alongside a new plaque commemorating the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II in St. Nicholas Church, Radford Semele. The new plaque was created by Charnley Memorials of Coventry, both plaques being installed by Crofts.

*History Notes extracted from visitor file in St. Nicholas Church, Radford Semele. Photos: Chris Rhodes*

## WORLD WAR 1 PROJECT

Do you have a family member who took part in the First World War? Would you like to find out about any records that may exist for them?



Lillington Local History Society is offering to carry out on-line searches to see what can be discovered. You will need to gather as much information as you can: full name, date and place of birth, number and Regiment or Corps [if known]. Contact Jan or Chris on 01926 339316 or 330057

*Photo: Manchester Libraries*

## **MUZZLING ORDER** Leamington Spa Courier 5 August 1898

Mrs Jeanette Belle (sic) of the Manor House, Farm Road, Lillington, was summoned for allowing a dog to be at large unmuzzled on January 21<sup>st</sup>. The defendant did not appear and PC Ryder proved the service of the summons.



George Taplin, coachman at Abbey Field, said "On Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January, he was in the Farm Road Lillington when two dogs ran at him. They were both unmuzzled. They afterwards jumped through a kitchen window of the Manor House.

On the following Wednesday, one of the dogs came for him. He complained to the police. Mrs Bell told the constable to look after the drunken people down the road and to leave the dogs alone, while her son threatened to throw water over the constable, saying "Move on, man."

*Image reproduced with permission WRO PH 350/1533 img 1919 (3/1823)*

The mayor said that it was a funny thing that after the summons was served the people should let their dogs out again without muzzles. Defendant fined 5 shillings and costs, 17 shillings altogether. The Bench thought it a bad case as defendant was rude to the constable and never appeared to answer the summons.

## **BRACKLYN 77 Lillington Road**

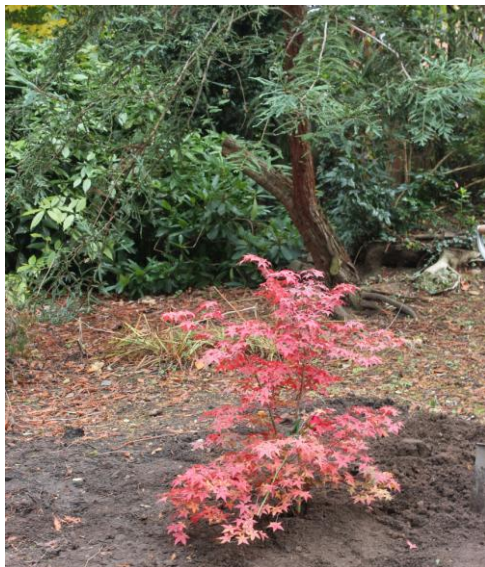
It is good to see that Bracklyn has been restored/converted rather than demolished. The 1891 census shows the house occupied by a widow, Isabel Hattan 49, and her sons Hubert 20 and Nigel 18. They are both listed as students. The live-in staff consisted of the cook Mary Hammond 26 and Louisa Rook 23, the housemaid.

By 1901 the lease was held by Harold [32] and Marie [34] Blyth, 32. Harold Blyth, who was one of the few residents in this part of the road who had an occupation rather than relying on 'private means', is listed as a cement manufacturer. His father Daniel Blyth 71 and his sister Annie 35 were also resident on the census day. Their live-in servants were two parlour maids Ella Morris 24 and Laura Troughton 19. Mr and Mrs Blyth still occupied the house in 1911.

**Do you know anything of its subsequent history?**

## ELAINE RUMARY

Elaine had an enthusiasm for life with one of her passions being trees and growing them on from seeds to saplings. She provided a number of saplings to the National Trust, arboretum and the parks and open spaces within Warwick District Council. She recorded the species, location and other relevant information as to where they had gone meticulously. She had developed a strong bond with Warwick District Council's Jon Holmes, now Greenspace Development Manager.



On Friday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2013 family and friends of Elaine gathered in the Jephson Gardens to mark her passing with a tree planting, fittingly an Acer grown by Elaine. Jon spoke of how over many years he had tried to grow from seed a Hornbeam sapling without success, only to be presented with three which Elaine had grown, now thriving in the Jephson Gardens. The seeds had been taken from a very large Hornbeam that had to be felled in the 1990's.

Elaine's Acer is to be found to the east of the memorial to Dr. Jephson as shown in the accompanying photograph.

*Peter Coulls*

## CUBBINGTON ROAD



Peter Chater remembers these trees which border the footpath and Holt playing field in Cubbington Road. They were planted in 1966 as strong saplings and could easily be handled by one man. Now some have a girth of about six feet. The playing field is the site of the former gravel and sand pit.

Do you have memories of this area?

*Photo: Peter Chater*

## CLOISTER WAY PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

I was very interested to read about the prisoner of war camp at the end of Cloister Way, since, I used to live at The Gables, which site it adjoined. The “huts” were not of the Nissan type, but had vertical wooden walls with gables supporting the sloping roofs. In the late 1940’s and early 1950’s, they were occupied by families, though, I am not aware of on what basis, but we always, perhaps inconsiderately, referred to them as “the squatters”. At least at that time access to them was not from Cloister Way but from Kenilworth Road. If you know where to look, you can still see the traces of the gateways within the now-grown hedge, but, probably when they were built the minor road was used. There were only some half a dozen houses in Cloister Way then and Almond Avenue had not been built. When the huts were pulled down in the later 1950’s, vegetation was allowed to grow roughly over the remains and it was not until the sports grounds were formed for Blackdown School that they were completely obliterated.

Bryn Poore, now living in Nuneaton, lived in Kenilworth Road as a very young child in the 1940’s. He clearly remembers sitting on the footpath at the gates of his house and having sweets thrown to him by troops of American soldiers marching along the road towards Leamington, and their turning into Cloister Crofts, apparently to access the Camp.

The Gables is on the boundary of Royal Leamington Spa, and Turkey oaks grew along the road: one day a large tree fell into the road which cause a great traffic hold-up, though there were fewer cars on that road than there are today. In 1951 Randolph Turpin won the World Middleweight Boxing Championship and was welcomed at that boundary by the Mayor and other officials, prior to being escorted to the Town Hall to be presented with the Freedom of the Borough.

GRAHAM E.COOPER

Printers advert

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