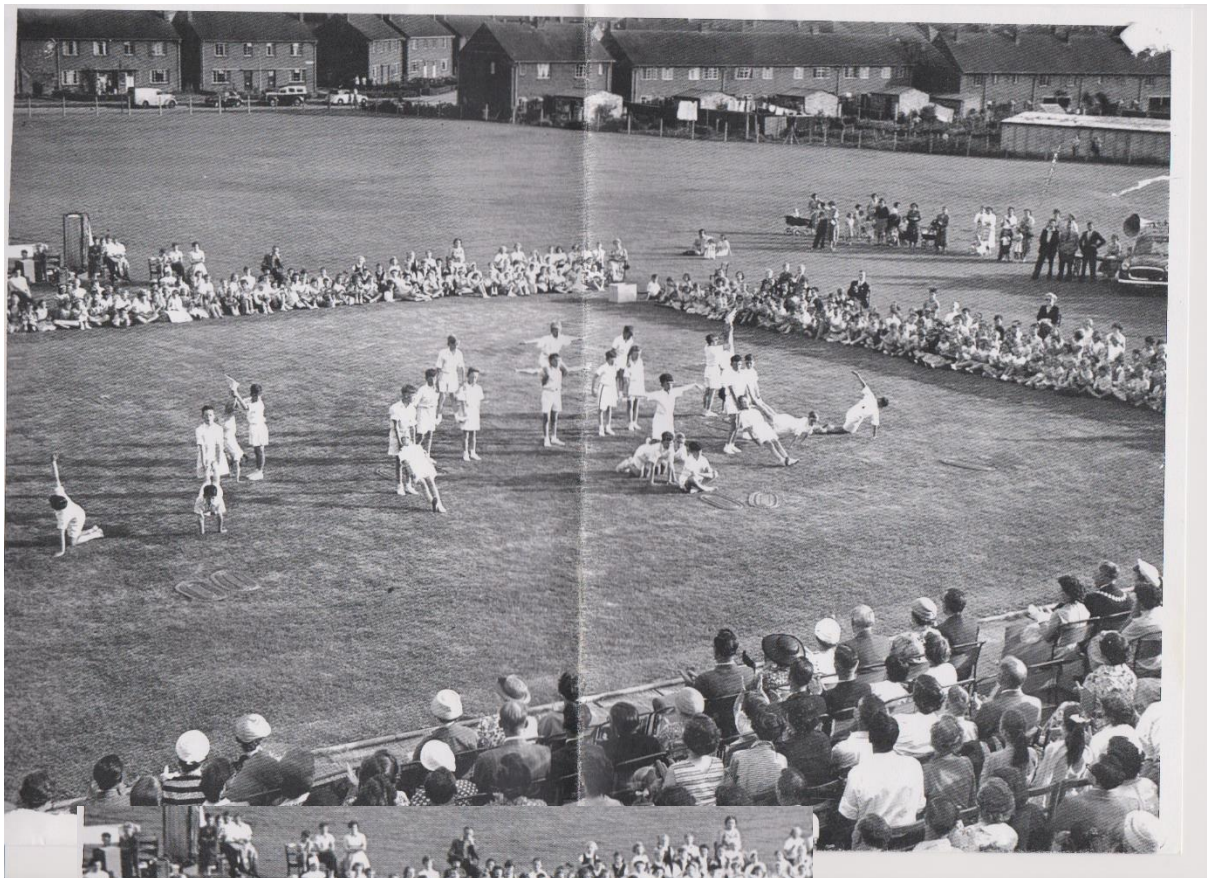

Lillington Local History Society

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 33 MARCH 2023

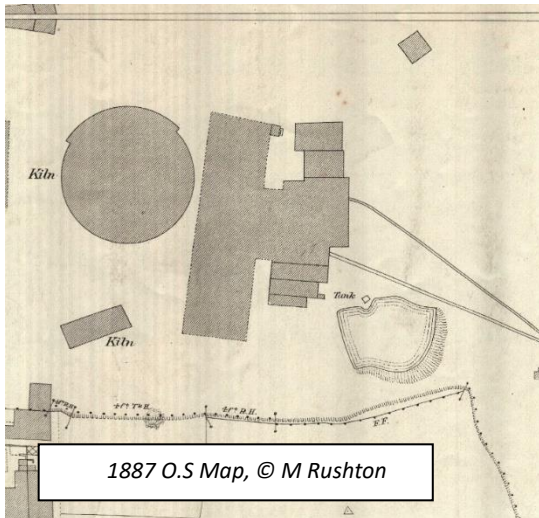


Lillington School 1958

Gymnastics Display

Were you there?

LILLINGTON BRICKYARD: MEMORIES OF MICHAEL - A LILLINGTON MAN



The Leamington and Lillington Brickyards were originally owned by Edward Willes of Newbold Comyn, and covered the land between Midland Oak Park, Leicester Street and Lillington Road. Its bricks could be found in almost all the Victorian and Edwardian buildings in Leamington and Lillington and continued to support the local building industry until the brickyards closed in about 1960.

An area known as "The Cliffs" ran across the back of the site, where Kiln Close is now. It was an almost sheer face of heavy clay, with steps (The "Monkey Steps") cut into the face, leading up to the old allotments at the back of Gresham Avenue.

This area was the regular playground of local children at weekends when the machines were not working, and a handy pedestrian route down to town from Campion Hills and Lillington Prefabs. When Michael left Campion School, his first job was at Ford Foundry, where his dad worked, but within a week the factory closed down for the "fortnight" and his wages amounted to just a few shillings. So, to earn some pocket money, he and two friends got work at the Brickyards, off Campion Road. Using a crowding barrow (a flat-bed trolley), the boys were expected to move the still-warm bricks from the kiln where they had been fired overnight, to a loading area where two men were waiting, one on the back of the lorry and one on the ground.



30-40 bricks fitted the trolley, laid side by side, in threes. So far, so good, except that the uneven ground sloped steeply, the trolley had no sides and was impossible to control on the way down to the loading area. As Michael set off with his load of bricks the trolley dipped and swerved, shedding some of the load, much to the irritation of the waiting workmen.

Crowding Barrow, Cherry Orchard Brickworks ©The late Derek Billings

The boys were expected to do as the regular brickyard labourers did - wasting no time, they had to pick up the bricks in threes, as they had been laid in the kiln, and pass them to the man on the ground who tossed them straight up to the man on the lorry. He caught them, expertly, and laid them neatly in their threes, at his feet. The men made it look effortless, but the three 15-year-olds found it exhausting and potentially dangerous: it was heavy physical work without hard hats, safety boots or gloves all for 15/- (60p now) a day. (This was the late 1950s).

The boys didn't stay long. By the third day, they could hardly keep their eyes open. Michael went back to work at Ford Foundry, eventually leaving to become the foundry technician at Coventry University where he stayed until retirement.

MMR.

MORE MEMORIES OF LILLINGTON SCHOOL 1957-1961

Sue [Mary] James remembers.....

Other children in the class were John Leighety [Grange Road], Simon Funge [Gresham Avenue], Susan Foster, Susan Gibson (whose mother Mrs Gibson was also a teacher-she taught me).



I was in the middle stream – 3/2 and 4/2. My teacher, Mr Hawkins, used to say “Slap-dash boy” when exercise books were not neat and tidy. We were in the high classroom and were allowed to watch the spire being put into place on the new Catholic church next to the library,

Other teachers included Mr Pearce, a tall quiet man who smoked a pipe, Mr Mowat, Miss Badmin (my teacher), Miss Hill, Mrs Saunders (no relation to the headteacher), Mrs Woodward, Miss Roberts (a Welsh lady who tried to teach us Welsh!), Miss Faulkner who taught us country dancing accompanied by Mr Newton on his accordion. Mr Pawley played the piano and would enthral us with excerpts from Gilbert and Sullivan. Mrs Wainright taught us French. Mr Saunders was the headmaster and I remember in assembly before prayers he told us that President Kennedy had been assassinated.

At lunchtime two children were at the head of each set of formica tables and they were allowed to dish out dinner from metal trays. If you were ‘one of the gang’ you got big helpings but if your face didn’t fit you literally got a spoonful of the creamed potato etc - very unfair. At Break time boxes of goodies emerged from the stockroom with cakes and sweets, but everyone’s favourite were the packets of potato puffs. (Remember those?) I remember sports day and shouting for those who represented my House. Guy [(he yellow badge), Leicester blue, Greville green and Beauchamp red. Every Monday morning you had to give a penny for school funds and however the house that received the most would go to the top of a chart. Some children who had more money used to give more than a penny so that their house went to the top of the chart.

The school Christmas party was always very popular, with the girls showing off their best party frocks and the boys in their best suits (if they had one). Cakes and jellies galore. Sometimes, for a treat, we all sat in the Hall to see a film. I remember the stand-up screen and the old cine projector.

Our class had talent and there were a lot of good singers. One or two of us made up pop songs and we would sing them in groups by the bicycle sheds next to the kitchens. The kitchen ladies would open the windows to listen. I have one or two of their autographs along with teachers in an old autograph book.

Other classmates in 3/2 and 4/2 were Pat Loveridge, Patricia Walton, Peter Godfrey, David Austin, David Swain [who gave me a metal tag with his mother’s name on it; a prisoner of war made it for her], David Stapleton, Steven Dunn (a big lad from Cedar Close), Stephen Checkley, Richard Groom, Philip Blakeman, Christopher Darlington, Steven Green, Cherry Smith, Linda Anderson, Pauline Archer, Linda Webley, Belinda Walsh (who had one brown eye, one green), Corrine Docker, Janet Cross, Bruce Doe, Jean Hockinghull, John Davis, Kay Harrison, Alan (who broke his leg and was allowed to leave half an hour early in case he got knocked over by the other kids in a rush to get home), Angela Simmons and Dale Heath.

100 YEARS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN LILLINGTON

The year 2022 saw Warwickshire Libraries celebrate 100 years of public libraries serving the community in Lillington, and a (COVID-19 related) belated 60th Anniversary of the opening of the present library in Valley Road. As part of the celebrations, staff at Lillington Library created displays of historical images and ephemera relating to Lillington's public libraries, and also collected stories and memories shared by customers and staff.



In assisting with the displays, I was very interested in the earliest photographs of the new library in Valley Road, both its exterior on the newly built suburb (looking very stark without the beautiful trees that have grown up in the years since), seen in photograph 1 and also the interior photographs of the library's layout and modern fixtures.

Photograph 1. Exterior of Lillington Library c. 1960.



The bookcase seats made by Libraco seen in photograph 2 were 6ft long, 4ft high with an upholstered seat at the front and a bookcase for 180 books at the back. Recent Warwickshire Library refurbishments have also featured seating built into shelving units, so it was reassuring to see this marrying of stylish book storage and welcoming places to sit and relax has a long history in Warwickshire's libraries.

Photograph 2. Libraco bookcase seats in Lillington Library c. 1960.



Photograph 3. Interior of Lillington Library, c. 1960.

In other interior photographs it can be seen that, cosmetics aside, the building hasn't changed greatly in 60 years as can be seen in photograph 3. This lack of alteration to a rare example of Festival of Britain library architecture was one of the factors leading to Lillington library being awarded Grade II listed status in 2015.

As with the consistency in the library's architecture, it was uplifting to read from shared memories that Lillington Library's importance to its customers has been unchanged for the past 100 years. Customers have strong memories of past librarians and staff who have helped to cement in them a love of books and reading, and families particularly appreciate



children’s events that have been enjoyed over the years, from regular “Rhyme Times” to develop young children’s language and literacy skills, to more unusual events such as the visit in 1986 by Flight Commander Paul Lea, of the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy as seen in photograph 4.

Last year was a fantastic opportunity to invite the public and former members of staff to look back and celebrate Lillington Library’s history and its place in the community. We look forward to creating and documenting another 100 years of memories in Lillington’s public Library.

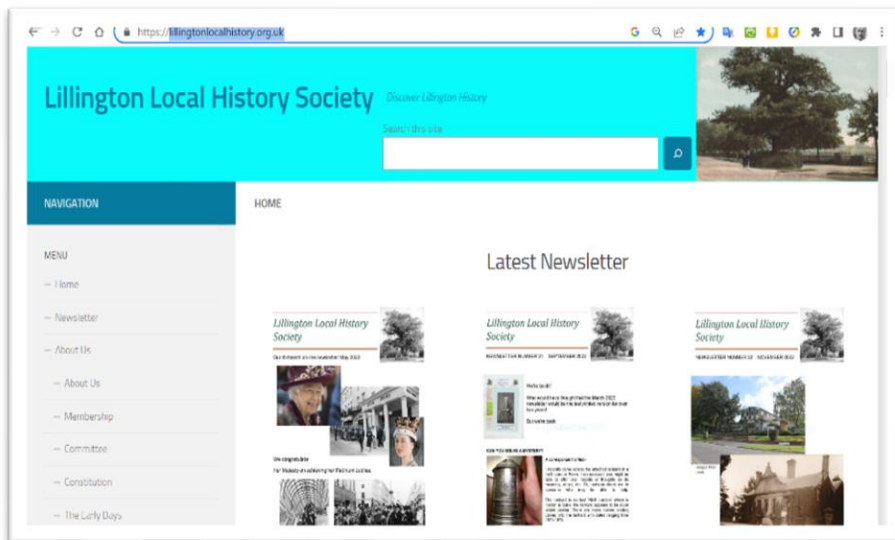
Zoe Boulton

Library & Information Advisor

Photograph 4. Royal Navy helicopter visit as part of library summer activities, 1986. All photographs copyright of Leamington Library photograph collection.

HOW TO VISIT OUR NEW WEBSITE

Type in **lillingtonlocalhistory.org.uk** into the search bar using your preferred search engine, Bing, Google, Yahoo and so on. The page below should appear once you click ENTER.



If you would like to save the website to your favourites for ease of access, click on the star

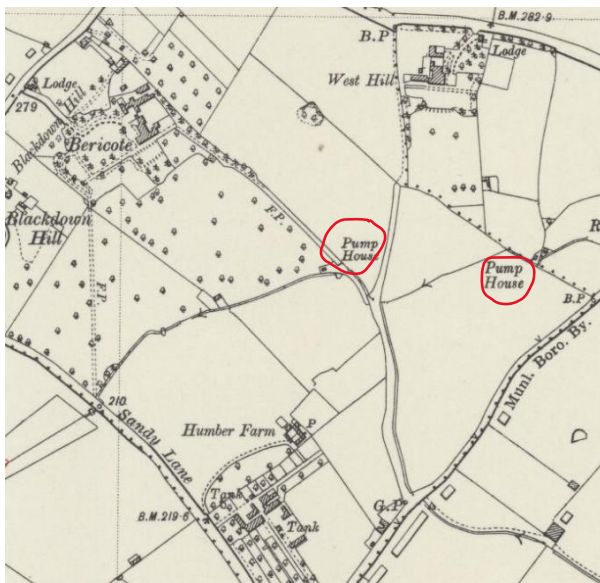


Click on DONE and you will find the website in your bookmarks.

Gary Timlin

LILLINGTON LANE – 1900s. Further Thoughts (see Newsletter number 32)

Subsequent to the article published in the previous newsletter, Maurice Atkins has indicated (via Margaret Rushton) that as a boy he knew the footpath running from Leicester Lane to West Hill as Lillington Lane. Maurice used to ride this route on his bicycle, and remembers crossing the road to Kenilworth, and continuing on towards Bericote. The 25-inch OS map shows that what is now a footpath starting at Leicester Lane and going to West Hill was a wide track almost as wide as Leicester Lane itself. This can easily be imagined even now, for the ground is flat either side of the present footpath, and it is only the encroachment of vegetation that has narrowed the way. As this track approached West Hill grounds it narrowed significantly to the width of a footpath. However, there is no evidence of a track or footpath continuing north beyond West Hill on any available maps.



Map 1 – Ordnance Survey 6 - inch Revised 1938 to 1939 Published ca: 1947

There was another footpath branching off to the northwest of the main track where the stream is culverted under the present footpath (see Map 1). This track went to the grounds of Bericote House and is shown on the OS 6-inch map as recently as 1938–9. A pump house was also present where the footpath branches off. Perhaps this was the original source of fresh water for the house, and the reason for the footpath. There was another pump house close by which might have similarly served West Hill – quite a walk, if true! I believe Humber Farm may have obtained much of its water from a source southeast of Leicester Lane.

Studying the photographs forwarded by Dr. Lachlan Shackleton-Fergus, the bend in the track seems to be more pronounced than that on any of the maps of the track to West Hill, or as the footpath appears today. Also, the scene looks slightly too formal to me to be the track off Leicester Lane, but I could well be wrong. So, the mystery continues as far as the location of Lillington Lane is concerned – was it Coventry side or Leamington side of Lillington?



Photo: Lovers' Walk – courtesy Gary Timlin

Regarding Nathaniel Hawthorn, and the quote from his book "Our Old Home", the identification of the path, "It connects Leamington by a short cut with the small neighbouring village of Lillington..." appears to be more straightforward. Hawthorn states that the access to this path is from Lovers' Grove. From his description his Lovers' Grove must be what is known as Lovers' Walk (Ref: In The Footsteps Of The Edwardians - Washer). This is the track which runs from Black Lane along the western edge of the allotments towards the radio mast at the top of Campion Hills.

As you walk along this track away from Black Lane, the land gradually rises, and looking to the west reveals an uninterrupted view of Warwick Castle. Fortuitously, the line of site is across the Edmondscote Sports Track, and then St. Nicholas Park. The whole of the southeast wall of the castle rising up from the river can be clearly seen (under ideal conditions!). Lovers' Walk can be identified on Map 2. as the line of trees near the bottom righthand corner. Note that the Walk connects with Black Lane at a crossroads with Black Lane aligned roughly east / west, and a footpath tracking north towards Lillington.

At first, I thought the short cut to Lillington could have been Black Lane. Before the mini cutting for the Leicester Street / Gresham Avenue road had been constructed, Black Lane continued across where the road now is, before turning north towards Lillington. There would have been a view of Warwick Castle almost directly in front of you as you approached this corner. Black Lane (yellow – Map 2) emerges at the side of the shop on Pound Lane. This was an old road established before Hawthorn's time, and so would have been the shortest route to Lillington.

However, this route is discounted, as Hawthorn states that the footpath “soon terminates in a high-road”. The high road of course has to be Cubbington Road. Thus, Hawthorn's footpath can be identified (red – Map 2) as that proceeding straight over Black Lane traveling north from Lovers' Walk. The route of this footpath has disappeared completely in places or been much modified since the middle of the 20th century but is that which passes between the houses of Taylor Avenue, to emerge on Cromer Road.



Map 2 – Ordnance Survey 25 – inch 1892 – 1914

The present path (blue – Map 2) goes between the houses on Valley Road, around the school playing field to emerge onto The Greenways. The original path having entered into what is now Cromer Road would have gone through the garden of 95 Valley Road in a straight line to the school entrance, and then across the school field and corner of the playground, and eventually onto the Cubbington Road a few yards to the west of The Greenways.

Les Markham

MEMORIES OF CROWN WAY

Work in November 2022, preparing for a new business in Crown Way, triggered memories of the former wool shop.



Did you shop at Jean's?
Do you have a memory to share?

Images: Gary Timlin



Jeans Wool Shop is now
Crown Street Food.

Did you bank at the
Coventry Building
Society? Now Coral's
bookmakers'

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