
Lillington Local History Society

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 37

JULY 2024



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The Midland Oak

Believed to mark the centre of England. The current oak was grown from an acorn from the previous tree, which had to be felled for safety reasons. It stood on a small 'island' near the current tree.

Images: Gary Timlin and Warwickshire County Record Office

BAPTISMS – ST MARY MAGDALENE, LILLINGTON :

Following on from the article in the last newsletter, another delve into the records has revealed some more interesting stories about the families of children who were baptised at St Mary Magdalene in the early 1900s.

Doris Adelaide Foote was baptised on 21st December 1904 – the last baptism of that year. Doris was the daughter of Hubert Lionel Foote, a Cycle Agent, and Daisy Muriel Foote (née King).

1904 Dec. 21 st No. 796.	Doris Adelaide	Hubert Lionel + Daisy Muriel	Foote	Lillington	Cycle Agent.	W.C. Wells (Curator)
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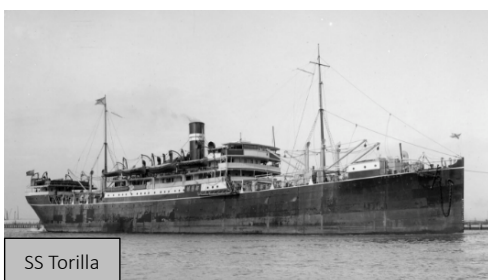
Hubert Foote was born in Exeter in 1881 and was the youngest son of Albert Foote, a School Master and later Clerk to the Exeter Board of Guardians and Superintendent Registrar, and Fanny Smith Foote (née Curme), a School Mistress. In 1901, Hubert was living with his parents and Laura, one of his five siblings, in Exeter and working as a Cycle Manufacturers' Clerk.

In 1902, Hubert was listed as serving in the Imperial Yeomanry, a volunteer mounted force of the British Army that saw action during the Second Boer War. Hubert enlisted on 4 January 1902, but only served for a few months as he was discharged on 26 October having been wounded at Frobisher Bay.

By 1904, Hubert had moved to Leamington Spa and, at the time of his marriage to Daisy on 9th August 1904, he was living at 34 Leam Terrace and working as a Salesman. Daisy was born in 1884 in Cumnor, Oxford, the daughter of Alfred Richard King, a Miller and Corn Dealer, and Susannah King (née Sanders). At the time of the 1901 Census Daisy was working as a Housemaid at the home of George and Eleanor Soltau-Symons at Eton College.

After their marriage, Hubert and Daisy moved to 27 Manor Road in Lillington and Doris Adelaide was baptised at St Mary Magdalene in December 1904. They welcomed a second daughter, Iris Venora, to the family in April 1906.

In 1911, Daisy was still living in Manor Road with Doris and Iris and was listed as Married on the Census Return. Hubert, however, was back in Exeter in 1911, also listed as Married on the Census Return. He was living at his former family home in Blackboy Road with Ada, his widowed sister, and her son, his aunt, Annie Watts, and his widowed sister-in-law, Rose Foote. He was working as Assistant Manager at a Motor Cycle Dealer.



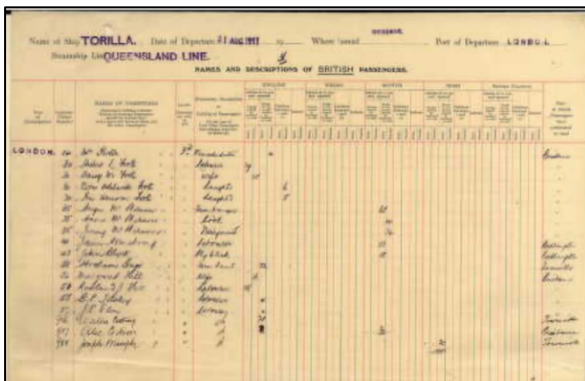
SS Torilla

The family were reunited later that year as on 21 August they departed from London on the SS Torilla, bound for Brisbane in Australia, arriving 44 days later on 10 October. In 1913, the family were living in McBride Road, Pinkenba, Queensland where Hubert was working as a Fuel Merchant. A few years later, in 1919, the family were living in North Pine, Brisbane and Hubert was working as an Engineer.

Doris and Iris both attended Hamilton State School in Brisbane, and later Petrie State School.

Doris married Hugh William Clarke on 9 February 1929 at the age of 24. Hugh was born on 28 September 1900 in Queensland, his parents having emigrated from Ireland.

Iris married Leslie William Fitzgerald on 15 December 1934 when she was 26. Leslie was born in Surrey in 1903 but had emigrated to Australia in January 1913, sailing on the SS Otranto to Brisbane with his parents, two sisters and three brothers.



The image shows a historical passenger list for the SS Torilla, dated 21 August 1911. The document is titled 'TORILLA' and 'QUEENSLAND LINE'. It lists passengers from London, including names like Mrs. C. King, Miss M. King, and others. The list is organized into columns for names, descriptions, and other details.

SS Torilla – Passenger List

Hubert and Daisy weren't the only members of their families to emigrate to Australia. Also on board SS Torilla with Hubert and Daisy were Daisy's sister, Blanche Malletta King, and her husband, Albert Porter.

Later that year, on 4 November 1911, Daisy and Blanche's parents, Alfred and Susanna, also sailed from London to Brisbane on the SS Waipara with four of their children – Miriam Doris (20), Alfred William Thomas (16), Olive Irene Sarah (11) and Joseph Redvers (10).

This left Daisy's other two sisters, Bertha Elizabeth and Amelia Rhoda, in England with their husbands, who were both farmers, and their young children.

Hubert's brother, Sidney Arthur Foote, also sailed to Australia on the SS Overton Grange on 29 January 1912 with his wife, Elizabeth.

Why did so many of the Foote and King families emigrate to Australia? Had other family members already emigrated; did others follow them?

After the Federation of Australia in 1901, when six British colonies—New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania—united to form the Commonwealth of Australia, there was a continuation of efforts to encourage predominantly British migration, and by 1911, 22% of the population were migrants, 78% per cent were from England, Ireland or Scotland.

The First World War, and then the Great Depression of the early 1930s, stopped nearly all migration to Australia. Then came the Second World War, and when the Japanese advanced through south-east Asia and much of the Pacific, Australians believed that their small population made them vulnerable to attacks from more populous Asian neighbours. In the postwar world, defence and population development were seen as reasons for increasing the intake of migrants.

Sources:

Ancestry – <https://www.ancestry.co.uk>

Tyne Built Ships (SS Torilla) - <https://www.tynebuiltships.co.uk/>

Migration to Australia - <https://digital-classroom.nma.gov.au/>

Denise Watson

BASIL THWAITES AND THE MOVE TO KINETON

About the time that Lewis and Watters were building houses in Lillington, Basil Thwaites – then living at 1 Vicarage Road, Lillington - was designing and building farm machinery, based on his father’s Glebe Farm, Cubbington.



Towards the end of WW2, Basil had begun to turn his attention to handling materials for other industries - including the first Dumper Trucks, for which his company now has world-wide acclaim - and a brick hoist, specifically for the building industry. This, in turn, led to a close association with my father, Bill Lewis, and it was one day in 1950 that Basil came into my father’s office and announced, “*Bill, you must come out to Kineton with me, there’s a farm you ought to buy.*”. The circumstances were that Basil’s uncle, Danny Thwaites, had recently died and his property was on the market.

Danny Thwaites and Basil’s father, Captain Sidney Thwaites, were two members of the Blackburn brewing family who had come to settle in Warwickshire, but it was another brother, Hugh, who had purchased Pittern Villa Farm, Kineton – one of the constituent farms of the Compton Verney Estate - when that estate was dispersed in 1930.



It seems that it was always the intention that ‘Windmill Farm’ (now renamed in recognition of the stone windmill tower on the property) would become a home for Danny, and work was put in hand almost immediately to make what was a fairly modest vernacular farmhouse into a ‘gentleman’s residence and hunting-box’ with close proximity to the kennels of the Warwickshire Hunt at Kineton.

Lewis and Watters were invited to quote for the building work, but which was eventually undertaken by others.

It is now clear, from documents which record the transactions, that Danny did not become the legal owner of the property which had been his home for over fifteen years, until he bought it from Hugh’s son (his nephew).

It is also evident from legal documents that Danny had submitted the greater part of the property (all of the farmland but excluding the house itself and immediate surroundings) to a ‘Legal Charge’ in the sum of Fourteen Thousand Five Hundred Pounds. The debt was in favour of (Sir) Frederick Maitland Freake (formerly of Halford Manor, and who, it seems, had been living with Danny at Windmill Farm for some years) and two others.

Danny’s death in July 1950 and the subsequent sale of the property to Bill Lewis would have enabled Danny’s debt to be redeemed, but this would have been of little benefit to Freddie Freake himself who died within days of completion of the sale.

Brian Lewis

Images: Thwaites website

JOHN HOSTLER - 1945-2024



John, a very early member and staunch supporter of the Lillington Local History Society, was not Lillington born and bred. He was a proud Geordie, from a mining community, who left grammar school for art college, and thereafter a life in teaching. He was a child of the Sixties, and although he played the double bass in the school orchestra, his heart was in skiffle and the pop music of the time, which influenced him for ever afterwards.

Art was his real love, and its significance was impressed on him from an early age by the work of the 'pit men painters' and their often self-taught skills of depicting their working milieu and the area they came from. John went on to teach sculpture at what became the University of Coventry, building a lasting following of his own. He was also a champion of The National Society for Education and Design.

He was a man of many parts. Married to Rita, whom he met at College, for well over 50 years, he was a champion of DIY, a hands-on dad, and later, a very proud grandfather. John and Rita shared an interest in gardening and plantsmanship too, though I suspect that it was Rita who had the green fingers.

When the Lillington Local History Society was founded, John became an avid researcher. Without him we would never have known of Herbert Edward Cox, nor had Lillington's first Blue Plaque to him at 7 Manor Road. John's research into the apocryphal stories about 'the artist' led him on to the development of Manor Road, the work of Thomas Pratt and family and the first LLHS published booklet about the area. When the Society embarked on the printing of a quarterly Newsletter, it was John who sourced a printer, and covered the negotiations.

When we uncovered information about John Machen, one of the benefactors of a St Mary Magdalene's charity, it was John who came up with the perfect design of a commemorative plaque to present to the Machen Ward at Warwick Hospital.

In 2014, the Society undertook an update of the 1980s Churchyard Survey, and when others started to flag, faced with lost lettering and indecipherable names and dates on headstones and tombs, John and Rita spent many hours in the churchyard that summer patiently transcribing as much as they could. We will always be grateful for their patient and not inconsiderable contribution.

John was a treat to share research with: find one clue and he would patiently 'dig' to unearth another one. It was John who set me off in quest of the Pratt family and their role as builders of late Victorian Lillington. It was also John who enlightened me about the widening of the alleyway between Cubbington Road and Manor Road - to allow carts to deliver coal to the houses without a cellar.

One of his last questions to me, just before Christmas, was the whereabouts of the 'Lillington No1 Lamp'. I had to confess I had never come across it. A (mild) rebuke followed - we were standing a matter of yards away from it, in that very alleyway, at the time. John had just enjoyed a small victory in the battle with the authorities to have the lamp repaired and working.

John's death came as a shock, when I heard of it from his son, Tom. He will be very much missed by all who knew and worked with him.

Margaret Rushton

LILLINGTON TABLE TENNIS CLUB

The Club began in Lillington Junior School in 1971 when Phillip John, a former pupil at the school, was asked to start an out of school table tennis club. Most attendees at that time were girls, including Rachel Mackriell, a promising player. There were no suitable table tennis clubs locally when Rachel left her primary school, so the Minister of the Free Church offered premises for a club, which Rachel joined along with five girlfriends and a couple of boys. She became the top girl in Warwickshire and played for England Schools.



Lynn Bryson, a young ex-Lillington pupil joined the club in 1973 and went on to win Leamington Ladies title 13 times. Lynn's daughter, Kelly Sibley, became England Ladies champion, coach to the England Ladies team and is now the club president.

Throughout the 80s and 90s the club's girls dominated girls' table tennis.

In 1979/80, Stewart Shearsby became the first Junior Boys Champion.

By the end of the 80s and mid-90s there were several highly-ranked England boys in the club: Stuart Kurle, David Johnson, David Matthews and Jon Williams.

Three coaching groups now meet at Bishop's Tachbrook School, and the top players meet at the Free Church under the guidance of Chris Mulligan and Tom Brocklehurst.

Currently there are 104 club members, half of whom are adults, with the majority ex-juniors of the club, or the parents of present or past juniors. The youngest members are eight years old. Lillington Table Tennis Club is very much a family club.

A friend of mine, Lleryn Gardner, has fond memories of the club where she played and helped with coaching younger players:

"I first started playing at the club when I was ten years old (over 30 years now!). The club ran on a Saturday morning offering three different sessions: one for beginners, one for improvers and the third for more experienced players. The sessions were a great mix of practice, playing matches and fun games for all ages. Phil John, who ran the club, also ran the coaching sessions. We would be taught how to play different shots, strokes and serves. The coaches were always really encouraging and patient.

After playing at the club sessions for around a year, I began playing in the league. The Free Church had many teams playing across the 4 divisions in the Leamington League. The club was always a great, friendly place to be, and I made many friends; it was a social event as well as sport. The club would run the Saturday morning sessions and then also a club night mid-week. All of this was made possible by the adults running the club giving up their free time to open up the building and supervise, something I am very grateful for.

As I improved and moved up into the more experienced practice groups, I would help at the earlier Saturday sessions to coach the beginners. My brother also joined the club and is currently one of the coaches, taking teams to play in the UK Junior League and British League competitions. The Free Church also ran its own tournaments, held at Champion School at first and then later on at St Nicholas Park. These were always fun to take part in and had competitors travelling from other counties to play in them.



The club is still going strong and has two sites that they run practices from. I no longer play competitively due to other commitments, but I know I would be welcomed back into the club if I wished to start playing again.”



Senior British League Team: 2017-2018

Left to right: James Robertson, Dave Ramsay, Charlotte Spencer and Harry Purewal

I would like to thank Lleryn for her memories of the Table Tennis Club in Lillington which she attended for many years, and obviously gained so much pleasure from the experience.

Kathy Hobbs

Images: Lillington Free Church

THE LILLINGTON ORCHESTRA

In a Newsletter some time ago, reference was made to the career of Miss Cutter. The report of her retirement was chronicled in the Leamington Spa Courier for 24th and 31st October 1924. The Annual Parochial Tea held at the Lillington Club was the venue for this occasion when Lillington notables attended to show their appreciation for her years of service as Headmistress of Lillington School. The presentation to her was made '*... after a musical tea (for which selections were rendered by the Lillington Orchestra).*'

Miss Cutter was obviously held in high regard as her retirement gifts were a ring engraved 1884 and 1924, a sewing machine, a purse of money and an illuminated list of subscribers. What is described as a handsome illuminated address listed 365 subscribers accompanied by a view of the Church of St Mary Magdalene.

Below were the following words: '*Presented to Miss A Cutter with the best wishes of those whose names are given below, together with the accompanying gifts, as a mark of esteem on her resignation as Headmistress of Lillington School, after forty years of devoted work March 31st 1924.*'. On either side of the address was a shield bearing the dates 1884-1924.



This image of a May Day celebration in the school shows a female figure in the background. This is probably Miss Cutter, and it is the only known image of her.

The newsletter article is the first reference to the Lillington Orchestra - do any of our members know anything about the said musicians? I am also wondering if the described illuminated address was the handiwork of Herbert Edward Cox - I suspect we shall never know.

With acknowledgement to the British Newspaper Archive. In addition, a more detailed history of Miss Cutter by Margaret Rushton appears on the Leamington History Group website.

Peter Coulls

This Newsletter is published by the Lillington Local History Society, c/o Lillington Free Church, Cubbington Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 7AL. The views expressed in the Newsletter are personal to the contributors and are not necessarily the views of the Society.