



MARCH 2020

Lillington Local History Society



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NUMBER 30

Lillington Local History Society

Regular monthly meetings take place at the Lillington Free Church, Cubbington Road, at 4.30 pm on the first Friday of each month.

Contact us by

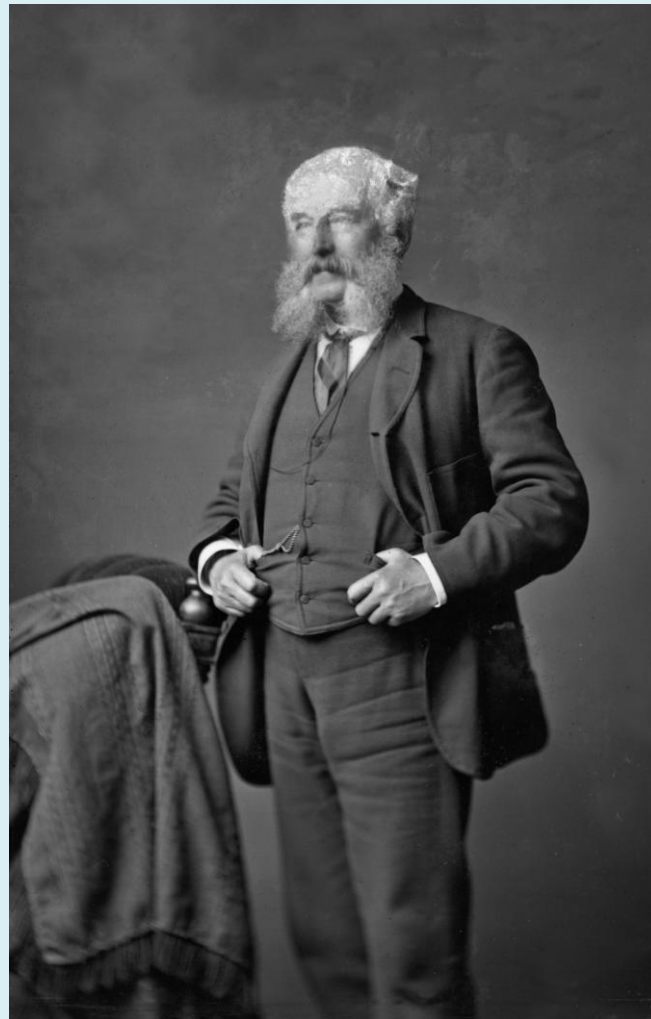
-Coming to one of the Society's monthly meetings,
-or by referring any queries about the society, contributions, photographs or reminiscences to Graham Cooper – telephone 01926 426942

WHY NOT VISIT

the Lillington Local History Society Website

The website address is:

www.lillingtonhistory.org



Colonel John Machen, a Lillington resident, surgeon and generous local benefactor, commemorated in the Machen Ward in Warwick Hospital.

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A CUPBOARD FULL OF BOOKS : LILLINGTON'S FIRST LIBRARIES



The history of Lillington's libraries spans over 100 years and began under the auspices of a group of men who formed a Men's Club in 1897. At first they met in the Lillington school playground, but were later allowed to move into the School Room. It seems they were keen to lend books amongst themselves and so must have had a 'thirst for knowledge'!

At the start of the 1920s Mr Thomas Pratt, builder and Councillor, agreed to support the Men's Club by donating a plot of land and a building on Lime Avenue, where the Lillington Club still stands.. It was possibly a 'dry' Club as Mr Pratt was a fervent Methodist, although a full licence was granted on 30th July 1930. It was reported as 'a great improvement on the old schoolroom'. It was scheduled to be opened by Lady Waller on Saturday September 30th 1922, however a family bereavement prevented this and Mrs R.O. Milne took her place. The members had already begun to realise their dream as the Courier reported that 'a good library had been instituted'. A December 8th report announced: **LILLINGTON LIBRARY: A PROGRESSIVE SCHEME.** *'When the project for erecting the new Club premises and Hall was first conceived, it was thought a library would be a popular adjunct. The proposition was carried further last June when the Club had the opportunity of securing a number of books for a nominal price'.*

Once the Mens' Club had moved out of the school room, it was decided to convert it into a Parish Room and during the alterations 200 books were found in a locked cupboard! Perhaps these were those very books? Many more books were donated to form the basis of a lending library. Book donation was a very common occurrence at that time.

The Leamington Library Committee offered the help of the Librarian, Mr W Ewart Owen, who arranged for one hundred books (60 fiction and 40 non-fiction) to be sent 'in proper packing cases' to the Club every two months. These would be under the care of the Club Librarian, Mr Sydney Berry. Borrowers had to be residents of Lillington and had to make application to Mr Berry for a reader ticket. Residents who already held a Library ticket could use it at the Club library but could only borrow one book at a time. However, Club tickets could also be used at the Main Library, on Avenue Road.

Sydney Berry agreed to open the Club library within a few days, once he had classified the books they already had. From then on, it is assiduously noted how many books were being borrowed and whether loans were increasing or decreasing. In April 1923 the number issued was 50, but when it fell to 39 during May, a headline in the Courier asked **IS LILLINGTON LITERARY?** The question was prompted by statement from Mr Owen but, as was pointed out to him, the scheme had only begun in January 1923 so there were no annual comparisons for 'volumes issued'. By 2nd October 1925 the number of volumes issued, over the previous year, had climbed to 840 and the opening hours were increased from Fridays only, to Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 6pm-8pm.

Six months later, unbeknown to the Club, Borough Librarian Mr Owen wrote to the Borough Highways Committee to ask if they would consider granting 'exclusive use of the Lillington



Board Room and a small room adjoining on the right hand side of the building' on the corner of Pound Lane and Cubbington Rd, which had originally been built to hold meetings of the Board of Health. It was to be an experiment for one year with a view to 'improving Public Library facilities for Lillington at a nominal rent of £10 per annum to include Rates. The Highways Committee granted the request, subject to the room being available for

use by the Council for 'elections and other purposes'.

Alderman Gilbey saw this proposal as the 'beginnings of a Branch Library at Lillington' and the **expenditure of more money**. He noted that, with the exception of three or four other towns, Leamington was the highest rated town for Library purposes and asked for the withdrawal of the proposal. Committee Chairman Councillor Southey answered 'There was no intention of adding to the expenditure'. All they needed was a book depot which could be run by members of the permanent Library staff. Councillor Warner Simpson said that while there was no suggestion of making a Branch Library at Lillington and to reject the clause would be 'economy at the wrong end'. Sir John Keir responded that 'When we see such a large expenditure on matter, surely we can spare a little for the mind!' As Councillor Davis pointed out it would 'only be a transference of funds from one department to another' and thus the Report was adopted.

To the shock and horror of Club members, the following Public Notice was published on 17th September 1926!

**EXTENSION OF LIBRARY FACILITIES FOR LILLINGTON RESIDENTS
COMMENCING FRIDAY OCTOBER 1ST**

The Lillington Board Room Cubbington Rd will be open every Friday evening as a Public Library Book Delivery Station from 6pm-8pm for the convenience of Lillington Residents. Books on various subjects will be available for inspection and for borrowing for home reading. Membership tickets may be obtained at the Board Room within the stated times or from the Central Library, Avenue Rd, Leamington Spa. W. Ewart Owen.

How had this come about? Had the ladies of Lillington complained that they and their children were unable to borrow books from the Men's' Club? Was it 'sour grapes' that not all the books had been 'appreciated'? Could the fact that Mr Berry, Club librarian, had died earlier in the year be the reason? Did Mr Owen resent the fact that volunteers were running the system and not qualified Librarians? Whatever the reason, it is strange that it all ended so abruptly for the Club. At the Men's' Club Committee meeting on 18th October it was noted that the library had been quite a success, though many volumes had never been issued as they did not meet 'the requirements of the community'. They had been informed that their supply of books from the Central Library would be discontinued after 29th September 1926. They 'desired' to put on record that the Committee had done 'all in its power' to issue books to residents. As the Club still had a stock of over 400 books, the committee decided to continue with the Club library and proposed to add to the stock from time to time.

Dearne and Will Jackson

CROSS IN HAND

I recently visited the Postal Museum in London on an organised visit, which included a Blue Badge guided tour of the sections of the Museum of London associated with the development of the postal service. Our Guide explained that the postal delivery system with which we are familiar has its origins back in the 14th century. Only educated families and Royalty exchanged letters across the country using messengers and carriers, who may have been illiterate. They only recognised their whereabouts by way of inn signs and crossroads. The Guide made a comment to which I will return later.

I returned home to consult my copy of "Masters of the Post" – *the authorised history of The Royal Mail*. This tome chronicles the history of the postal system in this country. It explains how a system of safe and popular roads across England and Wales developed in the Elizabethan era, were known as Post Roads. One such ran between London and Holyhead passing locally through Daventry to Coventry. A map identifies post stations in both of these towns. By 1677 a map of a much-expanded road system shows on the Chester Road the previously mentioned towns with post stations, with the addition of Warwick as a 'by-post' for horse and foot carriers. The formalized legal postal system had been established. However, individuals successfully attempted to avoid using the state system, and private carriers were still commonplace. Drivers and guards on stage coaches were not averse to running a letter service on the side.

The network for distributing mail beyond the Post Roads was inadequate, to say the least, missing a good many large and growing towns. In order to redress this, 'by-posts' were established enabling letters to be carried by post boys between towns on the same Post Road, with 'cross posts' being carried between towns on different Post Roads. A 1756 map of 'The Great Roads and Principal Cross Roads' shows that Coventry and Stratford-upon-Avon had a daily postal service from London with the exception of Sundays. Eventually and much later, the formal state run postal service was established and private enterprise rendered illegal.

The Blue Badge Guide referred to the literacy of the messengers and carriers (post boys) and how they overcame this. He suggested that they would meet at cross roads and inns to hand over their 'cross posts' post. Could this be the origin of 'Cross in Hand'? A publication 'Quaint Signs of Olde Inns' by G.J.Monson – Fitzjohn offers an alternative origin whereby murderers could escape summary justice by taking a cross in their hand; in a similar manner to those felons claiming sanctuary within a church. This brought safety from the Mob until he could be given a fair trial. Cross in Hand is a street in the village of Brockhampton in Herefordshire, claiming to be unique in Great Britain, possibly named after a local pub. A recent search suggests that no pubs exist now in the village, let alone one of that name.

The Leamington Spa Courier for 3rd March 1911 lists entries for the 'Spa Maiden Steeplechase' held over the Campion Hill course, when Mr. E.B.Forwood enters his horse 'Cross -in- Hand'. Many will know that in Cooper's 'The History of Lillington' he mentions the 'Cross – in – Hand' with a footnote as to it being an *inn which stood near the Midlands Oak, where Warwick Road joins Lillington Road*, a statement disputed by some. Was this the location where posts were handed over, was it the cross road or indeed the long lost inn? I fear we shall never know, unless you know better? *Peter Coulls*

JUST SOME OF MY MEMORIES OF BLACKDOWN SCHOOL

I started at Blackdown in September 1960.

The first years were all housed in Terrapins, although we had to carry our bags from room to room inside the school as we went to our lessons carrying all our books in our satchels. Our form tutor was Mrs Bourne, quite a hip young thing, although she did wear the black gown, as most of the teachers did when I first began there. Mr Ainsworth was headmaster and the first day he lined us all up and inspected the first years uniforms. The uniform was predominantly brown and yellow. Brown skirt, the tie was brown with yellow stripe, grey trousers for the boys, brown blazer, cream shirt or blouse even brown knickers for the girls, brown jumpers for the girls, even a brown gabardine mackintosh.



The boys were known by surname only, the girls were addressed by their first names. Boys were caned or hit with a pump, girls were usually given lines. There was one science teacher, name now forgotten, who would throw chalk at the boys if they misbehaved. We did most lessons together except the boys did metal work or gardening, whilst the girls did sewing or domestic science. Our first lesson we learnt how to make a cup of coffee, I'd been making my mum one for years! In games we were separated as well, the boys did football or long distance running, we did hockey, or tennis. I hated hockey. The teacher would be bundled up in a track suit and scarf, while we would be allowed to wear our jumper over our PE kit, yellow T shirt and brown shorts. I always ended up with blue legs from the cold. I loved it when it rained we then had country dancing with the boys, we had such fun on those days.

Everyone walked or rode a bike to school, only a few who lived a goodly distance away came by bus, and the very odd one by car. School dinners were 5/- a week and were lovely, cooked on the premises, I loved them. Liver and onions, with mash and veg, sausage and mash with gravy, lovely stodgy pudding with custard, sometimes pink. Stews and I think we had dumplings too. We had 3 servers to a table, so of course they had the pick of the meals. In the last year I became head server, as it was tradition that the head server who was leaving would nominate the new head server. We were given a small bottle of milk with a straw each day, I hated it, and never had it, warm in the summer and freezing in winter, to this day I'm not fond of it. It stood outside in large crates either getting warmer and warmer or colder and colder.

I left in July 1964 as my mum said I had to go to work, they needed the money. No arguments you did as you were told. She said write to Lockheed and ask to be an office junior, which I duly did. So I had an interview and after leaving school, at 15 in July. By August I was working as an office junior at Lockheed Automotive Products, Borg and Beck Department.

Barbara Blackwell

ANNE PALMER: *she must have known it was born alive*

Up until 1971 the Assize Courts system had operated in England for hundreds of years, and judges from Westminster travelled the country to try serious criminal cases. Working on Circuits, they took it in turns to visit every county town. Warwick was their last stop on the Midland Circuit. Local Justices of the Peace would commit anyone charged with a serious criminal offence to the Assizes. The Assize judges had the task of “gaol delivery” which meant they had to deal with any case in their area where a defendant was in custody.



On Wednesday, 21 March 1839, an Inquest held in Leamington heard evidence that on Tuesday morning 19 March a new-born female child was found lying dead in a barn in a field adjoining the road to Lillington, near the spot where it branches off from the Leamington Road.

Suspicion fell upon Anne Palmer, a 19 year old girl from Bicester, lately in the domestic service of Mrs. Fall of Cubbington. The Coroner’s jury returned a verdict of wilful murder and committed her to the next Assizes. She appeared before Mr. Justice Bosanquet on 30 March, facing an indictment for murder of her female child at Lillington. She pleaded not guilty to the murder, but guilty to the alternative of “feloniously concealing the birth of her child.”

While in custody Ann Palmer made a voluntary confession that she was the mother of the child, which she said had been born alive and that she had placed it in the barn where it was found. She appeared satisfied after having made this confession, but remained in a most agonised state of mind.

Two very respected persons gave evidence of her good character. Then Mr. Justice Bosanquet had to pass sentence and remarked: “...but she was liable to great punishment...and her seducer had to reflect that he had brought her to that state – first of misfortune and finally degradation. I have read the depositions and so had the learned counsel on both sides. She ought to have borne up to her afflictions and nourished her child with the affection of a mother....she must have known it was born alive”. He sentenced her to two years in the House of Correction with Hard Labour.

Hard Labour for women would likely have meant working in the kitchen or separating flax or pounding hemp; whilst for the men it would have been breaking rocks or being set on the treadmill. Ann Palmer’s sentence was the maximum for the offence to which she pleaded guilty. The first House of Correction had been in the City of London in Bridewell Palace, a former Palace of Henry VIII, and created under the Tudor “Poor Laws” to deal with “the shiftless unemployed”. Soon local Justices used it to deal with strumpets and vagabonds and insubordinate wives. Later all courts used it for custodial sentences. The name “The Bridewell” quickly caught on and became a familiar feature throughout the country and was often also used for police stations.

The Warwick House of Correction stood on the corner of Saltisford Rock, [now Theatre Street] and Bridewell Lane, [now Barrack Street]; literally just around the corner from the Assizes in Northgate Street. It was built when the original had been burned down along with the Gaol in the Great Fire in 1694. It was eventually shut down in 1860 - so Ann Palmer would have been an inmate. It was later a pub and demolished in the 1970’s. A Methodist Church is now on the site.

Larry Connor *Image: Our Warwickshire*

Look Closely...

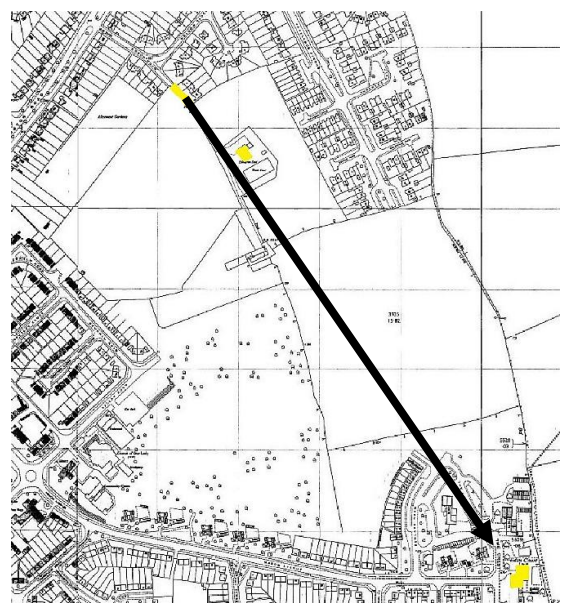
Chris Rhodes recently visited Mrs Pauline Ward to talk to her about the Schools project he is compiling for a talk next October, and saw some interesting Lillington images which she has, including this one, which Mrs Ward kindly allowed me to re-photograph. What is the big house in the centre? As a clue, Mrs Ward has lived in Epsom Road since the 1950's.



This is the Stud Farm and the lane is Epsom Road, with the field on the right where Mrs Ward remembers Derby-winner *April the Fifth* grazing in his retirement. But look closer under the tree opposite the house. *Image : Mrs Ward/Richard Taulbut*

The grey square block is Eden Court under construction, which dates the picture to mid-1960. County approval was given in May 1959, and Eden Court was officially opened by Mrs Beryl Hobson, wife of John Hobson MP, on 17th November, 1960.

This map from the early 1960's shows how Epsom Road aligns to Eden Court and the Stud Farm (highlighted).



Mrs Ward also remembers Sydney & Katherine McGregor at the Stud Farm and their daughter Julia.

RICHARD TAULBUT

THE PRISONER OF WAR CAMP IN CLOISTER CROFTS

We have had a query from a reader:

"I am trying to sort out dates for the camp - and who was there. In the article about the camp (March 2014) it mentions one person's memory of US troops: "*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.*"



US troops in the UK would date it after 1942. There is no record of the camp being an American Transit Camp for shipping Prisoners of War to the States.

The camp is not listed in the English Heritage report for 1945, and it is not in the 1945 list that was supplied to the International Red Cross. So presumably it either closed, or was re-numbered, which happened for a variety of reasons, but there is no record of this that I can find. There are memories of Italian POWS - but, were there any German POWS at the camp?



Is anyone able to help? We know about the Italian prisoners who lived there, and constructed part of the current Gresham Avenue. But Americans?

LILLINGTON PAYS ITS DUES: WROTH SILVER

Dawn on November 11th 2019. Thanks to Peter Coulls, Lillington continues to be in good standing with the Duke of Buccleuch as he pays Lillington's dues as a village within the Knightlow Hundred.

Lillington Local History Society Website



The website address is: www.lillingtonhistory.org

This Newsletter is published by the Lillington Local History Society, c/o Lillington Free Church, Cubbington Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 7AL All references prefixed CR refer to documents held in the County Record Office, Warwick. The views expressed in the Newsletter are personal to the contributors and are not necessarily the views of the Society.