
Lillington Local History Society



Our seventh on-line newsletter: May 2021



Members of the St. George's Boys' Club planting trees near the Midland Oak in the late 1950s or 1960s.

The Round Oak Special School can be seen in the background to the lower image.

Does anyone recall the event and who was involved?

Images from the Allan Jennings collection



GROWING UP IN LILLINGTON- TINA ROWE REMEMBERS

I was born in Breton Lodge nursing home in Holly Walk in 1953, and lived in Valley Road until I was four when we moved to 20 Grange Road. I grew up there with my older brother, Michael, and younger brother, Tony, but moved to Somerset when I was 19 to start work as a journalist.



Everything at Lillington is so close to my heart. It was a wonderful place to grow up, and in such an optimistic era. Lillington Junior School was exceptional, with terrific teachers, such as Miss Luggar and Mrs Enoch, and its much-loved head, Mr Saunders. Mr Newton ran a science club, and Mr Pawley read us David Copperfield, bringing fearsome Mr Murdstone almost too-vividly to life.

Best of all, the countryside was close at hand. My love of butterflies and moths began in the forest of docks and thistles and rosebay willowherb that grew on "the dumps", the rough land on the right at the far end of Valley Road. Close by was the gorgeous modern library, all light and glass and wonderful books. We could find great crested newts in the little pond in the fields beyond, and perhaps spot a "woolly bear" garden tiger caterpillar crossing our path as we walked home clutching our library books. A huge book on The Prado, Madrid is etched in my mind - we could not resist those horrible but fascinating Hieronymus Bosch paintings. We wandered far and wide. Michael mapped the ponds at The Cliffs (the old brick works), we found toads down by the river where Newbold Comyn Country Park now is, collected badger's and fox's skulls at the sett on the hill beyond Red House Farm, and discovered crayfish where the Leam runs shallowly over stones opposite Offchurch Bury.

On summer evenings we enticed moths to a lamp at an upstairs window, and at dusk I waited in the garden for that snuffling, crashing sound in the hedge that meant a hedgehog was on its rounds. Northumberland Road was the place to collect conkers, and interesting boletus fungi - like the one Big Ears used for a house. One afternoon Michael and I brought home hundreds of conkers - some of which Mike had had to put down his trousers - we were wearing wellington boots so none escaped at the bottom. We left them in a pile and several sprouted. Several years later Dad gave one to St Mary Magdalene Church.

My uncle, Eddie Blackwell (married to my mother's sister), owned Lime Garage whose offices were based in one of the Manor Farm barns. My father worked at Wickman's machine tool company at Banner Lane, Coventry, and when we were young, he travelled to and from work by BSA Bantam motorbike. At that time the route was through Kenilworth and the state of the ford could be a worry, especially in winter, as it could flood quite seriously.

Though I have not lived in Lillington since July 1972, I often visit when staying with friends in Warwick. Sometime in the early 80s I think, when I saw workmen demolishing a part of the Lillington Infants' School site during its conversion to houses, I begged two of the old bricks to take back to Somerset.

One change that I feel is for the worse is the loss of the low brick pillars which used to be on either side of the Grange Road entrance to the Junior School. Each carried a shield with the County Council coat of arms. This was not affectation but information, and as they mellowed with age were a kinder style than the severe sharp metal fence and gates of today.

Tina Rowe

LILLINGTON SYLLABUB

When I first started to look for information about local foods and recipes, imagine my surprise when one of the first recipes I found was very local: Lillington Syllabub!

Now, William and I have our own bit of history regarding syllabub. In the early 70s, just after we had moved into our first house in Coventry, and, feeling that we had finally attained real 'Adulthood', we decided to invite some friends over for dinner. As neither of us had ever eaten syllabub of any description, why we chose to make this one for our first attempt at entertaining remains a mystery! What I do remember is that we had spent a long time sitting on the kitchen floor with a fork trying to get the cream to whip up, not having anything but the most basic kitchen equipment. Finally came the moment to serve it to our guests, one of whom asked us in all innocence, after all our efforts in the afternoon, if it was 'Instant Whip', a well-known quick-fix pudding in the 70s. We have never served a syllabub to anyone since!

During the 16th Century 'Whipt Sillibub' Extraordinary was popular in England. The earliest ones were made by milking a cow straight into a bowl containing ale or homemade cider. This then stood until a curd formed on top; the result had to be partly eaten and partly drunk. By the 17th Century wine replaced ale and cream replaced milk. In the 18th Century the amount of cream was increased, and the wine reduced so that the result was of a thick consistency, but very light. It was then termed an 'Everlasting Syllabub' though it only kept in a cool larder for a day or two.

For Lillington Syllabub the peel and juice of one lemon was steeped in a wineglass of white wine overnight. Next day the peel was removed, the wine poured into a bowl and ½ a pint of lightly sweetened thick cream was gradually stirred in. The resulting mixture was whipped for 20 mins. until thick and then poured into crystal glasses. It was served the following day.



An old Staffordshire recipe used in Warwickshire tells us to pour a pint of warm milk from a large teapot into a bowl containing a pint of cider, 12oz (300g) sugar, a small amount of brandy, ½ a teaspoon of ground nutmeg and serve!

Another 19th Century recipe instructs us to mix a quart (2 pints) of thick cream with one pound of fine sugar (which would have had to be crushed and ground!). To that was added 1½ pints of raisin wine plus the grated rind and juice of 3 lemons. The mixture was beaten, in

one direction, for a ½ hour, then sieved through muslin overnight in a cool place. The next day it was ready to serve in individual glasses and, in a cool place, was said to keep for up to 10 days!

Having discovered that these recipes were even more time-consuming than our early efforts in the 20th Century, I can understand why Angel Delight and Instant Whip became so popular. I'm sure that the Lillington Syllabub, served in crystal glasses, would only have been known to the wealthy!

Dearne Jackson

Bing image of Stephen Hales syllabub machine

MR MARKHAM'S GARDENING DIARIES 1952 – 2001



The first few weeks of lockdown due to Covid-19 resulted in a threefold increase in enquiries to the RHS website for advice on growing vegetables in containers. It seems interest in growing your own produce has not been greater since the “Dig for Victory” years of the Second World War, and the immediate post war years.

My dad Ron, mum Millie, and brother Rob moved into a new house in Valley Road in 1952, just before I was born. Dad immediately set about getting the front and back gardens in order. At this time, he started to record all his gardening activities in a Gardening Diary which he maintained without a break, up until he died in October 2001. The two main drivers for him initially investing so much time and effort on gardening would have been availability – though not rationed after the war there were still shortages of some fruit and vegetables, and economic.

On 8th March 1953, a half allotment plot had been secured on the sit at the rear of Buckley Road. Soon a full plot was obtained, and a lifetime's dedication to my Dad's allotment was underway. Even with the allotment, the rear garden at Valley Road was predominantly used for vegetable growing for several years. My brother and I had to wait too long for a decent sized lawn with a swing to play on!

The diaries are essentially working documents, recording the following, as necessary:

- Expenses – including the cost of seeds, chemicals, manure, bean and pea sticks, gardening implements etc. The sources of the items are also recorded.
- Plants grown – the vegetables, fruit, and flowers grown, the variety, number of rows, date sown, date of germination, thinning, first harvesting date, and comments on crop quality and quantity.
- Lay-out – plans showing the planting areas of the various crops, as necessary.

The weather was also recorded in detail and its effects on growing conditions, with numerous reports cut out from the local newspapers. For example, May 1964 was the warmest May since 1848, and January 1997 was the driest since 1779. He also reported that in early January 1963, snow was lying up to a depth of 2 feet on parts of the allotment.

When I was little, I spent endless hours at the allotment helping dad. I well remember one occasion when the runner beans needed watering, running to the water tank with empty watering cans, and struggling back to him with the full ones. In the early years he used to buy manure from Mr. Bubb's Farm at the bottom of the Campion Hills near Newbold Common. The farmhouse still stands amongst the newer houses of Fernhill Drive.

Dad always grew a wide variety of vegetables, though over the years the garden pea fell victim to the frozen variety! Fruit growing was limited in the early years and was never undertaken on a large scale. Flowers grown in large numbers included chrysanthemums, wallflowers for transplanting in our house gardens, and gladioli, which were a particular interest, with numerous varieties being grown and supplied to family and friends.

There used to be an annual Leamington gardening competition, which I think was held to encourage council house tenants to make good use of their gardens. I am not sure if the town was split into different areas, but between 1959-1962 Dad finished 2nd, 1st, 2nd, and 1st.

When we moved to Lime Avenue in the mid-1960s, all vegetable growing was restricted to the allotment. The year before he retired Dad obtained a second allotment plot on 10th March 1985. The combined annual rental was £15. He maintained both plots for several years.

1959 GARDEN SEASON.

VEG.	VARIETY	ROWS	SOWN	GERM.	NOTES
SHALLOTS	OWN SEED	4	26-3-59	12-4-59	APP. SOOT. 10/5. LOOKING WELL. 24/5
PARSNIP	DORIE INTERM.	2 1/2	26-3-59	17-4-59	GERM. GOOD 1 st TH. 24/5
SALSIFY	DORIE'S GIANT	3	26-3-59	12-4-59	" " F. TH. 18/5. FINAL TH. 24/5
ONION SETTS	DORIE'S GIANT	5	26-3-59	12-4-59	LOOKING WELL. 22-5-59 TURNING IN
ONION SEED.	RYDER'S CHAMPION	2 1/2	29-3-59	25-4-59	PATCHY GERM APP. ADEPT. 10/5
"	" NH. SPANISH	2 1/2	29-3-59	25-4-59	" " " " " " " "
PEAS	DORIE'S ONWARD	1	27-3-59	13-4-59	GERM. GOOD. STUCK 23/4 FLOWERS 28/5
"	DORIE'S ONWARD	1	5-4-59	17-4-59	" " " " " " " "
"	BASKETFILLER	1	20-4-59	1-5-59	" " " " " " " "
"	RYDER'S ONWARD	1	10-5-59	18-5-59	" " " " " " " "
"	RYDER'S ONWARD	1	11-6-59	19-6-59	WATERED TRENCH. GERM. GOOD. 28/5
LETTUCE	RYDER'S CHAMPION	1	26-3-59	7-4-59	F. TH. 24/5 APP. CHALK. 28/5 CUT. 6/6/59
"	DORIE'S WONDER	1	5-4-59	18-4-59	F. TH. 24/5. FINAL TH. 7/6 CUT. 25/6/59
"	GIANT BUTTERHEAD	1	21-4-59	1-5-59	F. TH. 18/5 FINAL TH. 7/6 CUT. 28/6/59
"	GREAT LAKES	1	13-5-59	25-5-59	BROWER GERM DUE TO DRY SPELL. F. TH. 3/6
"	GIANT BUTTERHEAD	1	13-5-59	25-5-59	" " " " " " " "
"	RYDER'S CHAMPION	1	9-6-59	26-6-59	VERY SLOW GERM. PATCHY. FAILED
"	CHAMPION - W. WONDER	1	20-6-59	26-6-59	PATCHY GERM. FAILED
"	GIANT BUTTERHEAD	1	28-6-59	28-6-59	FAILED
"	DORIE'S WONDER	1	14-7-59	21-7-59	21-7/59. FINAL TH. 18/8
POTATO'S	ARRAN PILOT	2	2-4-59	23-4-59	STALL DOING 22/6. V. SMALL SIZE
"	ECLIPSE	2	19-4-59	10-5-59	FAIR. FIN.
"	PARADE	10	10-5-59	10-5-59	VERY SLOW COMING THRU. NOT A COUPLE
"	"	10	10-5-59	10-5-59	" " " " " " " "
CARROTS	DORIE'S EARLY NANTES	3	28-4-59	16-12-5-59	F. TH. 18/5. GROWTH 7/6
BEETROOT	DORIE'S DETROIT	2	28-4-59	10-5-59	F. TH. 18/5 FINAL TH. 31/5
R. BEANS	YARDSTICK	1	10-5-59	19-5-59	BEST GERM I'VE HAD. WATERED 22/4/59
"	OWN SEED	1	10-6-59	19-6-59	GOOD GERM. WATERED 22/4/59
Cauliflower	VEITCH'S AUTUMN GIANT	2	23-5-59	23-9-59	NITRO-CHALK (WATERED IN)
CABBAGE	WINNING START	3	23-5-59	23-9-59	" Cut 2 4 1/2 lbs firm heads
P. SPROUTS	MIXED	5	25-5-59	"	" " 1 st PICKING 3/12/59
"	CAMPBELL'S	4	1-6-59	"	" " " " " "
W. CAULIFLOWER	DORIE'S GIANT	1	8-6-59	8-6-59	" " " " " "
WINNING START	"	3	21-6-59	21-6-59	" " " " " "
SALAD	"	1+1+1	24-6-59	27-6-59	" " " " " "
"	"	4+2	24-6-59	27-6-59	" " " " " "

In addition to recording his gardening activities, Dad also noted what he considered significant family events over this almost 50-year period in a succinct format. Thus, I know that my brother made his first cup of tea on 15th March 1958, and that the birth of our daughter in 1985 rates no larger an entry than the delivery of a load of manure from Titterton's Farm on 6th October 1997.

MAY DAY AT LILLINGTON SCHOOL

This evocative photograph is almost certainly of May Day celebrations at Lillington School around 1900-1910.

Folklorists say the arrival of summer has been celebrated with processions and dances since



time immemorial, with young men and women leading the way in the old days. By late Victorian times the roles had devolved to school children in ceremonies which, though picturesque, had, according to folk expert Christina Hole, become: "slightly artificial."

In the old days the day was often called Garland Day, and in her book, *A Dictionary of Folk Customs* (Paladin 1976) Hole tells how young people carried garlands of

fresh flowers and green leaves from door to door, calling for a donation of food, drink, or even money. The large hooped garland was a popular motif. School versions were probably simpler, without the appeal for gifts. Any memories of these processions at Lillington or elsewhere would be welcome.

In the photograph the little girl at the front looks to be the May Queen. In the old days the chosen young woman was more often called the Lady of the May. Art critic John Ruskin popularised the change to Queen when the ceremony was introduced at Whitelands College in Chelsea in 1881. This college trained teachers for the Anglican national schools and probably helped spread the celebration in schools. Miss Catherine Cutter, Lillington's Principal Teacher, in dark dress at the back of the picture, was a certified teacher but untrained according to research by Claire Walsh. Claire found that the first Lillington graduate from any training college was Ada Gibbs who arrived in 1906. *Tina Rowe*

In the Centre of England

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