

# THE SYDERSTONIAN

Issue No. 4 – October 2009

## Village News

A grant application has been made and, if successful, will provide lighting for the renovated playing field footpath. Minimal lighting is planned so as not to intrude on residents living beside the footpath.

## Mr Leslie Kemp

Mr Leslie Kemp, a former chairman of Syderstone Parish Council, died in August. His military funeral was held at St Mary's Church.

## Mr George Black

Mr George Black, husband of Kate, died suddenly in early September.

To Mr Kemp's family and to Kate and George's family we send our sympathy and condolences.

## Amy Robsart Hall

On this front things get better and better. Congratulations to all the hard working members of the Hall Committee who were presented with the Eastern Daily Press and Norfolk Rural Community Council – 'Pride in Norfolk best Community Building Award' at the County Hall, Norwich on 10<sup>th</sup> September. So many people are involved in the many functions that take place in the hall and for its smooth running. It is a community venture in the fullest sense of the term. Well done – everybody.

The award comprises a plaque along with the valuable prestige this brings. Roddy MacLeod, the hall project manager, is pressing forward plans for the provision of two portacabin type buildings which will form an 'L' shape at the rear of the hall at the west end. These will provide much needed storage space for bulky equipment and allow a small space for village archives and memorabilia.

New crockery has been provided and the window lintels have been installed since the last newsletter.

When one thinks of how the hall has been developed since it ceased to function as the village school and then lay dormant for seven years I think, when we see it now and the wide range of activities that it now plays host to, a minor miracle has been achieved.

## St Mary's Church

### Art Exhibition

This took place in May and brought in a good number of visitors with about seventy pictures on view.

### Open Gardens

During June, the best month of an indifferent summer, many gardens in the village were open to visitors and strawberry and cream teas were eaten in the hall. A good attendance helped provide funds for St Mary's.

### Flower Festival

Held in August has been described as 'the best ever'. Visitors came from many parts of Norfolk and holidaymakers from the area and visitors from Dubai and Scotland all helped this become a very successful event. It meant much hard work behind the scenes involving many villagers but worth it for the funds it raised for St Mary's.

### Amy Robsart

Amy Robsart is remembered annually at St Mary's on 8<sup>th</sup> September. It commemorates the day she dies in 1560 at Cumnor Hall, Oxfordshire. The church holds a Book of Remembrance and all the people therein recorded are remembered on the day they died.

### Church Choir

The church has had an all ladies choir since about 1990 and although numbers fluctuate they provide a valuable asset to the music of the church.

### Hearing Amplification

This project is under way and will provide a boost in sound for the hard of hearing.

### South Wall

No work has yet begun on the south wall which needs re-rendering. The work is very specialised and the number of approved contractors are limited. The cost is likely to be considerable but fund raising is a relentless activity at St. Mary's.

### Churchyard

I don't ever remember seeing the churchyard unkempt or neglected. Today the churchyard owes its neat appearance to a regular band of volunteers who turn up every fourth Saturday and set to and tidy up.

August saw the passing of two long term Syderstone residents.

### Nellie Allen

Nellie died aged 91 at West Suffolk Hospital on 9<sup>th</sup> August. For many years Nellie was one of Syderstone's best known figures being active in Royal British Legion, Mothers Union, St Mary's Church and many activities in the Amy Robsart Hall. Her last years were handicapped by poor health and mobility problems but with the help of her family and close friends she maintained a keen interest in Syderstone and its social life. She had a determination not to give in to her health setbacks and her independent attitude ensured that she lived life to the full. Her relative memory and long term knowledge of the village made her a mine of information on matters relating to Syderstone. She was a regular and popular figure at these O.S. reunions and will be greatly missed. Our sympathy is extended to Margaret and Brian and all of Nellie's family and friends.

### Colin Allen

With the exception of Colin's 14 years service in the Royal Navy where he attained the rank of Petty Officer, he lived all his 72 years in Syderstone. Colin was essentially a practical man, a doer rather than a talker – a problem solver. Colin acquired a multiplicity of hands on skills during his lifetime ranging from mechanics, electrical work, woodwork and sign writing to mention just some. Following his discharge from the Royal Navy, he spent the rest of his working life in the building trade. It was during this period he met Mary and they enjoyed 30 years of happy marriage. He hated to be beaten by a problem and I doubt he seldom was. He had an inner strength which served him well during the final stages of his long illness which he bore with great dignity and

without complaint in spite of the many restrictions it imposed upon him. He died peacefully at Cranmer House, Fakenham on 16<sup>th</sup> August. To Mary, his wife and devoted nurse, and his friends, we extend our condolences.

### The Silver Pheasant

On Saturday 31st January 1953 just after 6.0pm the East coast was hit by catastrophic floods, the waters were 2 metres higher than normal and accompanied by very strong north-westerly winds at well over 100 miles an hour the sea defences were overcome. Norfolk was particularly badly hit, more than 80 persons were to lose their lives. One particularly harrowing tale was of a gentleman who tried to escape his home when the walls collapsed, he had tied his newborn child to his back but unfortunately it was swept away, his other two children died of exposure and his wife was rescued but died in hospital afterwards. Many people spent the night on rooftops in bitterly cold weather. Sixteen American servicemen that were billeted between Heacham and Hunstanton were drowned.

The 47th Bombardment Wing stationed at R.A.F. Sculthorpe rushed to help the people of the area who were in deep distress and give assistance where possible. Two of the servicemen helping in the rescue were awarded the George Medal for their bravery, they were Freeman Kilpatrick and Reis Leming. Reis at the time was a 22 year old stationed at Sculthorpe, struggling through the bitterly cold sea water he pulled a rubber dinghy along and rescued in total 27 souls. Returning 50 years later he spoke of the time, he said he was so cold that he thought he wouldn't survive. Totally exhausted after many hours he finally collapsed suffering from severe hypothermia on coming round he heard someone say "cut off his legs", for years he had nightmares about this and only on his return to Norfolk he found that the nurse who was attending to him meant the legs to his survival suit so that they could massage his legs. 9 days later he received the George medal one of the quickest ever recipients of the award he was also the first American to receive one in peacetime. There were five George medals awarded besides the 2 mentioned, 2 Lincolnshire policemen and a Great Yarmouth fireman also received them.

The Queen was staying at Sandringham at the time and the next day she paid a visit to Hunstanton .

Her Majesty the Queen presented two George Medals, two Commendations for bravery and an OBE. Later on the people of Norwich contributed towards a silver pheasant which was presented to the base Commander(Colonel David M Jones) in recognition of services rendered by the Wing. In May 1954 Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, Sir Edmond Bacon made the presentation in front of 15,000 people.

The 47th Bombardment Wing was inactivated in June 1962 and the pheasant was offered to the Governors of the 2nd Air Division Memorial Trust who gratefully accepted it for display in the memorial room of the Norwich Central Library. Unfortunately it was lost in the fire of the Central Library in August 1994. A replica was made and is at present displayed in the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library.

I remember as a young boy going along to the open days on the Base at Sculthorpe and seeing the pheasant on display guarded by two U.S.A.F. Policemen . The Americans were very proud of it. My Mother worked for an American family in the married quarters and during holidays I used to go with her. One day none other than Reis Leming called at the house whilst I was there and I remember being totally in awe of him.

I wish to thank Libby Morgan Trust Librarian of the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library who very kindly sent me the information on the Silver Pheasant. The rest of the information was taken from the BBC records of the time.

If anyone is in the area of Norwich and would like to visit the Library, opening hours 9.0am 5.0pm Monday to Saturday.

Address: Libby Morgan, Trust Librarian, 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Memorial Library, The Forum, Millennium Plain, Norwich, NR2 IAW.

Tel: 01603 774 747

Fax: 01603 774 749

Website: [www.2ndair.org.uk](http://www.2ndair.org.uk)

ROGER EDGE.

At the time of the 1953 floods, my Aunt Aggie, Uncle Ernie and Granddad West were living at Mill Cottages, Glandford. Two miles inland from Cley-next-the-Sea and a literal stones throw from the ford over the River Glaven.

On this Saturday evening, their next door neighbour, Leslie Page, had biked into Cley for an evening pint at the 'Three Swallows'. During the evening, word got to the pub that the sea had breached the sea wall and was pouring into the village. Les hastened back to Glandford on his bike to give warning, then went to the buildings at the end of his garden where the Mill Farm animals were housed. The farm complement at this time was four heavy horses, (two chestnuts, Beauty and Blossom, a grey – Captain, and a white – Mike), two cows (a Friesian – Bessie and a red poll – Molly) and a scavenging nanny-goat, Nancy. At various times there were sundry white pigs and some fowls. Les turned out all the stabled animals into the adjoining meadow. This vital task performed he turned back towards the cottages but before he could reach there the surging flood water was up to his chest.

In Aunt Aggie's cottage all the occupants had gained the first floor, Aunt Aggie having had to abandon her wheelchair on the ground floor and hitch her way upstairs on her bottom, her sole leg providing the motive power. The surging water had forced open the front door, which was hardly ever used in the ordinary way, and was wreaking havoc downstairs.

When the tide went out, the water dramatically subsided but what devastation it had brought. It flooded these two cottages to a depth of just over three feet, the cupboard under the stairs was solid with mud and silt. The well in the back garden which supplied the cottage's fresh water was polluted by salt water. The espalier 'Conference' pear tree and the 'Beauty of Bath' apple tree were notable casualties.

As soon as practicable, my Aunt Jessie came over from Hempton, lit a fire under the wash house copper and a long, laborious clean up operation began, lasting several days. These two cottages and Steadman's farmhouse along the mill road were the only residential premises to suffer in this village. The water came up almost to the ground floor ceiling in the farmhouse, the home of the blind farmer, Mr Steadman, and his wife. Gradually, affairs returned to normal. A tide line remained on the pink-distempored wall for several more weeks when Aunt Jessie's neighbour, Ted Cooke, from Hempton came over and redecorated. Mains water was installed in place of the well. Nothing fancy, mark you, a single stand pipe in a corner of the kitchen – cold only – no sink. Oh, and Aunt Aggie's bread board was recovered a mile upstream on the banks of the Glaven at Bayfield.

Ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances.

Ken Edge.

## Book Review

### Captain Oates – Soldier and Explorer by Sue Limb and Patrick Cordingley

It would have been as a member of Polly's class that I first made the acquaintance of Captain Lawrence Edward Grace Oates (Inniskilling Dragoons) and the other heroic members of Captain Scott's ill fated Polar Expedition. The story did not end happily unlike that of Hans Brinker the Dutch boy who plugged the leaking dam with his finger, thus saving his town or that of Grace Darling, the lighthouse keeper's daughter, who rowed a boat out on the stormy seas to save the crew of the 'Forfarshire'.

The fact that Scott's Expedition ended so tragically with such individual suffering and self sacrifice makes it such an inspirational story. The authors, Sue Limb and Patrick Cordingley, tells us about Oates' background and reveals much about the man who was one of the quieter, laconic members of the polar party. Oates came from a well to do background and his parents held the Manor of Overhall in the parish of Gestingthorpe in North Essex. Oates' main love was that of horses and of hunting and his value to Scott was as an equine expert as Scott had decided that horses would provide the transport to reach their target of the South Pole. In the event this was to prove a costly error, compounded by Scott's decision to retain Oates' services on board ship when they would have been better employed during the purchase of the horses. As it was the horses bought fell well short of being up to the arduous undertaking and one in particular, Christopher, had a malicious, spiteful streak that only Oates was capable of handling at all.

Whilst waiting for favourable weather to enable the polar party to strike out for the Pole, Scott liked to keep all members of his team busily occupied. To this end he arranged a series of lectures to be given by members of his party which contained experts on meteorology, physics, geology, zoology to name but some. Oates turned out to be a capable and popular lecturer on 'horse management'. He liked to finish on a light note and related the following anecdote. He was a guest at a formal dinner party and the guests had begun to eat when in burst a young woman upon the party in a froth of agitation and embarrassment. Apologising profusely to her hostess for her lateness, saying 'It was all the fault of the cab horse. He wouldn't get on at all'. 'Never mind, my dear' sympathised her hostess, 'I expect he was a jibber'. 'Oh no', put in the young lady, all knowing, 'He was a bugger. I heard the cabbie say so several times'.

We are all familiar with the tragic ending of the story where having attained their goal of reaching the South Pole albeit several days after the Norwegian, Roald Amundsen, they are beset by massive misfortunes and difficulties. The horses had long perished during the outward journey and all the sledges had to be man-hauled. Petty Officer Edgar ('Taff') Evans collapsed and died on the return trip. The weather became ferocious and they were forced to make camp some distance from their store of supplies. The unrelenting blizzards made further progress impossible and the badly weakened, frostbitten, starving members of Captain Scott's party – Dr Wilson, Captain Oates and 'Birdie' Bowers became effectively doomed. Oates was the worst hit of the four surviving members and was so crippled with frostbite that he could barely use his hands at all. On the 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1912, his 32<sup>nd</sup> birthday, Oates walked to his death rather than be a burden to his companions that they might have the greater chance of survival. 'A very gallant gentleman'.

Last May, I visited St Mary's church, Gestingthorpe, where the brass plaque to Oates' memory is burnished and impressive as it was in the time his sorrowing mother personally cared for it. The Oates family were great benefactors of this church and have left an indelible mark on it. We were on the point of leaving when an illuminated verse caught my eye:

'If ought thou hast aught to give or lend  
This ancient parish church befriend,  
If poor, but still in spirit willing,  
Out with thy purse and give a shilling,  
But if its debt shown be profound,  
Think of thy God and give a pound,  
Look not for record to be given,  
But trust for thy reward in Heaven'.

I imagine this verse has charmed many a donation from a visitor.

The book is fascinating – a well written, well rounded account of an old fashioned English hero. It makes you proud to be English.

K.E.

### The Allen Family

During my time of residence in the village, the Allen family were a significant force. Added to the many EDGE's and HURN's the combined force of these three families must have accounted for more than half the total of the village population. Then add on the DAYKIN's, HAVERS, PELLs and HARPER's and there was not much room for the others.

ALAN MASON writes from Norwich: -

I write as a descendant of the Allen family of Syderstone and although I have never lived in the village, I have attended some previous reunions and have become very interested in following up my family history. You may be interested in the enclosed extract from the Will of Margaret NICHOLSON nee ALLEN who died on 19<sup>th</sup> February 1884 at the age of 95. She was the first born child of Robert ALLEN (Senior) of Syderstone and Martha nee HOWARD of Dunton. The will is an interesting social history record and although Margaret may have lived well in Norwich as the wife of a butcher at times when other 'ALLEN's' may have been in distressing circumstances financially, her estate at the time of her death could hardly be describe as well off. In the 1861 Census she was a widow, income pensioner Patriotic Fund.

WILL: - I, Margaret Nicholson at my decease wishes that my younger brother, Osborn ALLEN to take possession of all I have in goods and money, if any is left after paying the expenses of my funeral. My clothes I wish to give to my executors and equally divided and distributed amongst all my family. SIGNED – Margaret NICHOLSON.

Probate granted the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1884.

The ALLEN family have lived in Syderstone for the past three centuries. A monumental stone is to be seen in Syderstone churchyard to commemorate her parents – Robert and Martha – who lived to the ripe old ages of ninety or thereabouts.

Alan Mason.

NB: The Preliminary enquiries indicate the Patriotic Fund in question was instituted by Lloyds of London c 1802 to provide help to those who have suffered from war. The fund exists to this day and its records are held at the Guildhall Library, City of London. There is insufficient time available for further research at present but this should be possible before April, 2010.

K.E.

This issue seems to be concerned mainly about heroes. The content of the newsletter is influenced by 1. Village Events and 2. The items sent to me by readers and 3. The whims and fancies of myself according to what I have read or seen or heard that interests me personally and which I include hoping that my item may interest yourselves.

Heroes then, we have covered, briefly, the brave actions of the George Medal winners during the 1953 floods and Captain Oates of Scott's polar party, On a significantly more modest scale, I append the deed of PC 702.

#### Knight of the Road

It was winter. Dusk was coming on along with lowering clouds over Will's mothers which indicated imminent snow. PC 702 climbed into his patrol car having refreshed himself with two mugs of canteen tea. As he drove out on patrol the first snowflakes began to fall. At first in a desultory way and as momentum increased – steadily, and by the time two miles had been covered the full, flutter of goose feathery flakes As he approached the dual carriageway, PC 702 had on his dipped headlights and the car heater and wipers were working at full kick. A couple of miles further on 702's attention was drawn to a helmeted, snow clad figure vainly trying to kick a solo motor bike into life. 702 activated the blue lamp and pulled up behind the biker. The biker, muffled up to the ears, explained that all had been going well when the bike became overwhelmed by the snowfall and pattered to a halt. Now PC 702 was a resourceful chap and had had some experience of two wheelers and took over the kick starter. Three kicks and nothing happened. 'It's this wretched weather' said 702, 'I think this cold has affected the carburettor'. Some hot or warm water would do the trick but outside the car everything was intensely cold and hot water was the last thing available. As I said earlier, PC 702 was a resourceful chap and not easily deterred by the odd little setback. By this time his two mugs of tea began to stir uncomfortably within him. Unzipping his fly he directed a copious stream of what goes naturally over the machine's carburettor. 'Give it a go now', said 702 to the solo rider. Two kicks on the starter and the machine pattered into life and cheery waves exchanged, the motor cyclist rode off.

Beyond the immediate relief of having recycled his two mugs of tea to such good purpose and the satisfying afterglow of a service successfully rendered the incident fell away into the recesses of memory. He had cause to recall the incident some two weeks later when Sergeant Snatch accosted him at booking on time. 'Ah 702, the guv'nor wants to see you on his office. See him now before you do anything else'. PC 702 knocked on the door and was bade 'Come in' by the impressive Superintendent Jakes. 'John, I've had a letter about you from a distressed motorcyclist regarding a service you rendered. Here, read it'. John took the letter which, written in a clear, neat hand began 'Dear Chief Constable' and described the incident and the valuable service given by PC 702 during the appalling weather. PC 702 was praised in glowing terms and the letter ended thus 'Please pass on my grateful thanks to PC 702. He can be rightly proud of himself. Yours sincerely, Elaine P. Robinson (Miss).

John blushing returned the letter to 'The Guv'nor'. 'Well done, lad' said Jakes, 'Would that all our problems be solved as easily. And within budget. Close the door on your way out'.

Ken Edge.

Many thanks to all the contributors to this newsletter. When the next one is published I plan to send as many as possible by e-mail as I will not then have access to my current printing facility. I understand that not everybody has this facility and that it will be necessary to print some copies for handing out but these, of necessity, will be limited. If anybody feels moved to contribute to the next newsletter please send any material to me, Ken EDGE, 3 Haynes Road, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 2HS (01708 440063) or e-mail kenneth636@hotmail.com.

Best wishes

Ken.