

## *THE SYDERSTONIAN*

- October 2011 -

### Village News

Mr Reg. Thompson is the new chairman of the Parish Council, he succeeds Gerry Taylor who remains a councillor. Brian Lloyd succeeds the long serving Irene Woods as Parish Clerk. Parish Council minutes and agendas are online at [www.syderstone.com/parish](http://www.syderstone.com/parish).

### Chiplow Wind Farm

Application for Chiplow Wind Farm was refused by the Borough planning committee. The power company, Eon, has appealed this decision and a Public Enquiry will take place at the Borough Council offices at King's Lynn starting at 10am on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2011 and is scheduled to last eight days. The Inspectors decision is expected by 23<sup>rd</sup> December.

The Jacks Lane wind farm on the left of Creak Road as you leave the village was also refused planning permission by the Borough Council. The power company, RES, have now appealed and are seeking a joint Public Enquiry. If this request is granted then both appeals are likely to be heard together in the New Year.

### Amy Robsart Village Hall

This has been a quiet summer for projects concerning the development of the hall. The possibility of solar power is being investigated but the reality is still some way off.

A full programme of events is still being maintained.

### Village Screen Cinema

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October – 'Hanna'

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November – 'MAO's Last Dancer' (this well received film will not be in the cinemas)

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December – 'Oranges and Sunshine'

Tickets £3.50 advance booking or £4 on the door. All films start at 7.30pm.

Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October – 'A Norfolk Night' 7pm for 7.30pm. Two of Keith Skipper's old Press Gang, Patrick Nearney and Danny Platten present 'a whole load of Norfolk squat'. Tickets and a Ploughmans Supper £7.50.

### Syderstone Parish Church – St Mary's.

The parish is as yet without a Rector but an interviewing process is shortly to take place and it is hoped that an appointment can soon be made.

### Flower Festival

St Mary's Festival of Flowers in August was the best ever and raised a record sum for church funds. The church was bright with colour and attracted visitors from far and wide. The festival provided an excellent show case for both St Mary's and the village. (This is good news. I feel that in some ways this popular event provides some recompense for the loss of the Syderstone and Barmer Flower Show which in it's heyday was also so popular and widely supported – K.E.)

### Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October – Harvest Thanksgiving

6pm followed by supper in the hall.

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> November 6pm Annual Service of Commemoration

An opportunity to remember loved ones who have died.

Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> November at 10.55am

Remembrance Day Service.

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December 6pm

Annual Christingle Service

Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December – Carol Service

It is clear that Rector or not there is a full programme of events at St Mary's which reflects credit on all the lay helpers.

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Since our last meeting in April we have sadly lost Shirley Hill nee Harper. Many of us grew up with Shirley and remember her with affection. Our sympathy is extended to John and his family.

Also Judy Napolitano nee Hurn sadly lost her husband Carlo. Judy is a one hundred per cent supporter of this event and we extend our sympathy for her sad loss.

Early Days

A few short years ago I was staying at May's and we were planning our days activities around the breakfast table one Saturday morning. May was scanning the pages of the 'Eastern Daily' and burst out "Good gracious. I shouldn't mind a pound for every time I powdered his little bum!" I looked at the picture over her shoulder and saw a middle aged man, solid citizen, wearing a tweed hat looking every inch the country gentleman. "Who's he, May?" "That's John Garner of Godwick Hall where I had my first job on leaving school!" "Where is Godwick exactly?" "It's a tiny out of the way place between Whissonsett and Tittlehshall. It only consists of the farm which John Garner's parents ran when I worked there and John was a baby and part of my responsibilities!" The article concerned the proposed development of a historic barn on the farm to host conference facilities.

"I worked from 6am to 10pm as their housemaid and I loved the job although the work was hard. Every mortal thing had to be cleaned and polished. Fire raked out, laid and lit. And all those boots, often caked in mud or cow dung but they had to be shone and polished when farmer went to market. There were all manner of jobs to keep you busy. They liked to see you busy, if you weren't they soon found a job for you. I loved anything to do with the animals and helped to bottle feed an orphan lamb and during harvest time I was given the job of collecting the eggs and feeding the hens. There was no hardship in that, to fill a bucket with corn from the store in the barn and go down to the pasture and feed those hens. It was on one of these occasions that I saw my first fox who was making off with a chicken between his jaws. I let out such a lung splitting scream that he dropped the hen and made good his escape. The hen was still alive but in a poor way and I took it indoors and it was placed in a coop but we found it dead the following morning". "What wages were you paid?" "I got 7 shillings and sixpence (37p) a week which was paid monthly. I paid my mum one shilling (5p) a week for laundering my caps and aprons. There must have been close to a shillings worth of starch in those garments as well". "Was there much of a social life there?" "Not really, sometimes I got the chance to bike home to Toftrees to see my family but time was always short. Sometimes the shepherd's wife and I walked into Whissonsett on a Sunday afternoon to attend a chapel service but social opportunities did not come often and time always seemed to be pressing".

"During 1942, I think it was one of the Garner farm hands called round to say that your dad (Frank Edge) was just down the road as a part of an RAF Crew working a searchlight and would like to see

me. I was given permission to be away from the house for half an hour to go and see him. I remember it being a beautiful moonlit night but did I get a shock when I arrived at the searchlight. Following a skirmish with a German plane the light had been put out by a bullet from the aircraft. Your dad's face was smeared with congealed blood and I thought he had been wounded. It turned out that he had sustained his injuries when on being attacked by the plane he and the other members of the searchlight crew had dived into the roadside ditch to take cover and a bramble bush had caused the scratches".

Father undoubtedly believed in valour embracing a number of fine qualities of which discretion is the better part. We drove to Godwick – one of Norfolk's deserted villages – the next day and found a well marked walk encompassing Whissonsett and Tittleshall and passing the ruined tower of Godwick church. Off the beaten track it certainly is but well worth a visit for anyone who enjoys the quiet beauty of the countryside.

May worked at Godwick for about two years before leaving to work at the Ordnance Depot at Fakenham when her parents were stunned to learn her weekly wages was £1.12 shillings (£1.60p) and she said it gave her a chance to save some money although not much. Here she met her lifelong friend Nan Allen nee Hawes whose family lived at Thursford. They both agree that their days working at Fakenham Depot were the happiest of their long lives.

Nan relates the following tales of her time there. The depot major was informed of some indiscretion or misdemeanour by a driver of the staff. The major heard his informant out and then blurted out, "But he can't do that". "Well", said the informant, "do he do do". The major being unfamiliar with this Norfolk mode of expression looked utterly flummoxed.

Ken Edge.

#### A Lot of Bull

The atmosphere in the country pub was cheerful with the banter of farmers and farm workers. "How's that bull of yours doing, Stan?" Stan had recently sunk a hefty sum into the purchase of a pedigree bull to maintain the reputation of his herd as one of the finest in the district. "Well, at first he was disappointing. We turned him into the field of cows and expected him to take his pick but all he did was chew the grass. He showed no interest in the cows at all. I'd begun to think I'd bought a dud. A very expensive dud! I rang Thomas the vet and told him I was worried. He thought a bit and said he'd heard of some treatment available from Holland but that it would be expensive. I was getting desperate and was prepared to try anything. "Go ahead", I told him. A few days later a parcel from Holland arrived with directions to administer the dose. We dosed him up. The transformation was remarkable. He covered one cow after another. It was a big relief to me, I can tell you!" "Sounds amazing stuff, Stan", said one of his companions, "I wonder what they put in it". Stan mused thoughtfully and said "All I can say is that it's pink", adding "and it tastes of peppermint!" The whole pub dissolved into laughter.

K.E.

#### Book Review – 'Operation Mincemeat' by Ben MacIntyre

This is an account of an extremely cunning plan which came to fruition in April, 1943, when a Spanish fisherman finds a corpse floating in the sea off the coast of Spain. The body is taken ashore and identified as a British soldier, Major William Martin of the Royal Marines. A leather attaché case secured to his belt contains a gold mine of information, top secret Allied plans for the invasion of Sardinia. Documents signed at the highest level by Churchill and Mountbatten but in war things are seldom as they seem. Major William Martin never existed and the body taken into German custody was that of a Welsh tramp Glyndwr Michael.

In order that the thorough Germans are taken in the plan has to be executed down to the finest detail and the book tells of its conception by Ewen Montagu, naval intelligence officer, and Charles Cholmondeley, RAF Officer who between them and with expert advice from Sir Bernard Spilsbury,

the senior Home Office pathologist, Bentley Purchase, the St Pancras Coroner, Admiral John Godfrey, the Director of Naval Intelligence and the co-operation of Glyndwr Michael's family and the involvement of the most senior figures at the Government and Admiralty, the i's are all dotted and the t's are all crossed.

The German is no fool and a sceptical and thorough adversary. Will they buy this deception?

This is a detailed account from start to finish of 'the man who never was'.

Ken Edge.

### Tommy Atkins

The name Tommy Atkins has long been the personification of the British Soldier. It is said that when, in 1843, the Duke of Wellington was asked to think of a name typical of the private soldier, the Duke thought back to his first campaign in the Low Countries. He remembered a group of wounded men lying on the ground. One of them had a sabre slash in his head, a bayonet wound in his chest and a bullet through his lungs. He begged not to be moved but to be left to die in peace. He must have seen Wellington's concern. "It's alright sir", he gasped, "it's all in a days work". "What's your name, soldier?" the Duke asked. "Thomas Atkins, sir". These were his last words.

Ken Edge.

### Was Amy to Blame?

I heard the following story around the time of the last April meeting and whilst the entire truth of it may be a questionable my source gleaned the tale from her mother and grandmother and they were utterly convinced that the story is true. I had not previously heard this tale but others may have and it does bear telling.

During the incumbency of Rev Frederick Moore (Rector of Syderstone 1916-1926) a sum of money had been given to the village for the precise purpose of providing a lasting memorial to Amy Robsart. No doubt suggestions were made and debated upon but many weeks went by and no decision was reached upon what form the memorial should take.

Around this time the Rector had a daughter who was due to get married. One can imagine the excitement and anticipation that this event would have generated. Bridesmaids, cake, flowers, invitations and the hundred and one items large and small to be attended to. There would be dresses to attend to, bride's mother, matron of honour, bridesmaids and that piece de resistance, the bridal gown itself. I have no idea whether this garment was made by a local seamstress or whether it was ordered and made by a posh shop. It's completion and delivery would have occasioned a state of high excitement and it was duly spread out upon a bed to be examined and admired by a privileged few. Overnight the room was closed and the Moore family retired to bed.

The following morning excitement and joy was turned to despair and consternation for when the room was opened the beautiful dress which had been weeks in the making and the object of much professional dedication and skill lay in shreds and tatters.

One can only imagine the sequel. Who could be responsible for such a shameful and spiteful act? A jealous rival? A mischievous cat? A disgruntled servant? Doubtless all these possibilities were explored and discussed and at the end of it all on who do you suppose the finger of suspicion alighted? Why, the unquiet spirit of Amy Robsart. The reason arrived at for this shocking vandalism was that the money held by the parish for the provision of a memorial to that lady had been held too long whilst drawn out discussions and long winded procedures had only resulted in procrastination and stalemate. The rector is said to have grasped the nettle and decreed that the memorial gates at the entrance to the church be commissioned and they stand today as a reminder of Amy Robsart whereas the fact that they were erected as the indirect result of a malicious act is largely forgotten.

Reflections: - Living alongside a ghost may have its inconveniences but conversely the ghost can become a convenient scapegoat. Think of all the things that disappear within a household or are mislaid or cannot be found within the Bermuda Triangle of the house. Could it be the ghost? Some careless act that results in a sloppy piece of work or a decent piece of work being spoiled. Put it down to Amy. All very convenient and no blame apportioned or taken by any household member. Evidently the spirit of Amy was appeased by the erection of the gates and became quiet (and tranquillity was restored within the rectory).

Make of it what you will it is not a bad story but I had not previously heard about it and I would be most interested to know if anybody else has heard a similar story and would like to hear from them. The version I have was verbally passed down within one family, it may have been embellished in the telling but my source tells it how she heard it as a child and sincerely believed in the truth of it.

Since the gates were erected the village has moved on a step when the old village school was designated the Amy Robsart Village Hall of which Syderstone, including the quietened spirit of Amy, may feel rightly proud.

KEN EDGE

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