

# THE SYDERSTONIAN

October 2012

Avril recently reminded me that this is the fourteenth Old Syderstonians reunion. Surprising as it may seem, this is indeed the case – two reunions each year since April 2006. I wonder if the committee of Amy Robsart Hall knew what they were letting themselves in for. I am told that it was set up originally with nobody knowing if it would work. It has passed its test with colours flying and in no small measure due to the efforts of the Hall Committee amongst whom I include the late Nellie Allen and the late John Langley. We owe the Hall Committee a great debt of thanks for the welcome they provide for us and the unstinting time and help they give to make these meetings so successful and enjoyable. Grateful thanks to all concerned.

## Obituaries

Sadly quite a number to report during this six-monthly period.

Phyllis van Dam nee Beckett of Ingatestone

Brian Hurn of Docking

Henry Williamson of Syderstone

Bernard Woods (Jennifer's brother) of Swaffham

Joan Cunningham of Syderstone

Eric Simpson of Syderstone

Daisy Smith (John Langley's elder sister)

Alan Mason of Norwich

All these people have lived in the village for a greater or lesser degree of time contributing to its life and work, helping to make it the place it is. Our condolences and sympathy go to their families. R.I.P.

Amy Robsart Hall celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Hall Committee and helpers have successfully launched it into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and whilst it retains much of its original character it has none of the vices of the old building. It is now a modern, welcoming venue which hosts a wide variety of activities and services.

## St Mary's Church

Brian Poulson retired in August. He remains lay reader but will no longer take services at the church.

A very successful Flower Festival was held in August and was well attended and enjoyed and has proved, over the years, to be the church's most popular fund raising event.

A Garden Party and barbecue was held in the grounds of the Old rectory on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and was enjoyed by a good attendance.

To mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee a Jubilee Project is to be made at St Mary's on the west side of the churchyard. An area has been cleared and levelled, flintstones cleared away and the area will be seeded. A lavender hedge will be planted and two seats will be provided to give ease and rest in what will be an attractive area of quiet and peace. Funding is still needed and donations, which can be in memory of a loved one, may be made at the church. A book recording contributions will be kept at the church. Nick Ison is supervising this worthwhile project.

Mr Jerry Taylor, serving parish councillor and former chairman of the parish council married Anita in May. We wish them every happiness for the future and offer them our congratulations.

4<sup>th</sup> November – Service for the departed

5<sup>th</sup> October – Harvest Festival

11<sup>th</sup> November – Remembrance Day Service

## Village Screen Cinema

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> October 7.30pm 'Salmon Fishing in the Yemen'

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> November 7.20pm 'Tortoise in Love'

Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December 7.30pm 'Woman in Black'

£3.50 advance booking. £4.00 on the door. Tickets from 01485 578588 / 01485 578171

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At the end of July a 'Family History Day' was held at Amy Robsart Hall where family archives were available for examination as well as other documents and data which have been accumulated over the past three years. The gathering of suitable material is a continuing process and any item or photographs relating to the village or its residents past or present will be gratefully received. In the case of photographs a short term loan when copying and minor restorative work can be undertaken after which they will be returned to the sender is sufficient. Contact Avril 01485 578588 or Sheila 01485 578171.

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Should anybody have an item for inclusion in the newsletter it will be gratefully received by Ken Edge of 3 Haynes Road, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 2HS (01708 440063)  
Email: [kenneth636@hotmail.com](mailto:kenneth636@hotmail.com)

#### Manor Farm Remembered

Looking back through the harvest times of my childhood, mainly the 1950's, the job seemed to take roughly five weeks according to the weather and to what extent mechanisation prevailed on the farm. Up to the mid '50's many fields were cut by binder and the sheaves or 'shoofs' were then stood upright, six or eight forming a 'shock'. Sometimes they would stand for two or three weeks where further ripening would take place and after that they would be carted and stacked to await threshing or 'troshing'. By the 1950's the horse was a declining force in farmwork but occasionally they would be seen earning their corn by pulling wagons and carts and on one occasion I saw a horse harnessed to the drive shaft of an elevator where the horse went round and round under the elevator to provide the power in lieu of a small 'Lister' engine. This was at Glandford on land farmed by the blind farmer Mr Robert Steadman. Going back to the 1930's the horse was still king and farmers needed a substantial work force to operate their farms.

During this time Walter ('young Cosh') Havers worked as a 'holdye' boy during the summer holidays at Manor Farm, Syderstone farmed at that time by Mr Jack Hipkin for whom my father worked as chauffer/gardener and during busy times like harvest father would have helped out with the farm work. At the October reunion in 2010, 'Cosh' recounted one episode from his time as a 'holdye' boy at Manor Farm which I found interesting and but for a distraction I would have asked him much more about his time there.

W.H. 'I was 'holdye' boy at Manor Farm. Jack Hipkin was the farmer then, your dad was his chauffer and gardener, right?'

K.E. 'Yes, he worked for Jack Hipkin until he retired and moved to Heacham'.

W.H. 'During the harvest your dad would have worked alongside the other blokes on the farm. One year the weather had been so poor that we had to go back to school before harvesting finished. That resulted in Jack Hipkin coming up to the school and saying 'I need these boys to help with the harvest otherwise the harvest will be delayed'.

K.E. 'What happened?'

W.H. 'Oh, we were allowed to go back to the farm and finish the job off'.

K.E. 'Who was the head teacher, Jimmy Brown?'

W.H. 'Oh no, my father had to contend with him, by the time my turn came round it was Tommy Hand'.

K.E. 'Tommy Hand was happy for you to return to the farm then?'

W.H. 'Oh yes, there wasn't any problem about it'.

At about this juncture one or other of us was distracted and the reunion dispersed with me wishing that I had asked a number of other questions. 'Cosh was absent from the two subsequent reunions but in April 2012 he resurfaced and I was able to speak to him again.

K.E. 'I'm glad you've shown up today. I wanted to ask you about your time at Manor Farm'.

W.H. 'Well that's alright. For a minute I thought I must owe you some money'.

K.E. 'Do you recall the time when Jack Hipkin went to the school to ask for your release to continue with the harvesting?'

W.H. 'Oh yes, we went back to the harvest'.

K.E. 'How much were you paid?'

W.H. 'It was three pounds for three weeks'.

K.E. 'How much time did you get away from school to finish the job off?'

W.H. 'Another two weeks'.

K.E. 'Were you paid at the same rate for the extra fortnight?'

W.H. 'Oh yes, we got two pounds for that. I'm sure we did. Not bad money you know, not for that time'.

K.E. 'Were you only 'holdye' boy at Manor Farm?'

W.H. 'No there was Frank Powell, he was my pal'.

K.E. 'Wasn't Frank Powell the chap who was killed on Home Guard manoeuvres during the war?'

W,H. 'Yes, that's right'.

K.E. 'Where did he live?'

W.H. 'In one of the cottages near Lamberts. His older brother Johnny worked at Manor Farm as well'.

K.E. 'Did you work the same horse all the while?'

W.H. 'No, I worked with various horses. There must have been about ten altogether'.

K.E. 'Do you remember their names?'

W.H. 'No, it was a long time ago'.

K.E. 'Were you expected to harness the horses?'

W.H. 'Oh no, we couldn't manage that, you needed a man who knew his business for that. We couldn't have reached to put the horses collar on. You needed the horse to lower his head then you offered up the collar upside down then you had to turn it so it went on properly. You needed to be full grown and have the co-operation of the horse to get the job done'.

K.E. 'Who looked after the horses?'

W.H. 'Ernie Hurn was the horse keeper. He lived in a cottage just past the 'Buck' before you get to 'The Limit'.

K.E. 'I remember him. He kept an allotment in that triangle between Sandy Lane and Rudham Road. There used to be a tall pine tree growing there. The plot was always looked after well'.

W.H. 'I think that ground belonged to Hipkin's. His land was scattered around, you know?'

K.E. 'I can only remember the farm from Bert Saint's time and then all the land belonging to the farm ended by Jack Cunningham's nursery and the common. There was a meadow at the bottom of our garden with a steep sided pit hole where I remember going sledging once or twice'.

W.H. 'The farm was bigger in Hipkin's time. He had land up at Chiplow, you know as well as a field down Creak Road and some more land down Fakenham Road towards Ashside. With horses it often took us a while to get to the job'.

K.E. 'Were all the horses brought back to Manor Farm after a days work?'

W.H. 'Oh yes, they all came back to the farm after work'.

K.E. 'I have a vague memory that there was a cottage at the end of the farmyard on the left. I remember going with father to see Herbert Allen'.

W.H. 'That would be right. He was the stockman. Kept a lovely garden there, cor the stuff he used to grow!'

K.E. 'I know he was a keen gardener. He was a pal of father's along with Edgar Graveling from Barmer and they both went to Norwich City football every fortnight with dad. I remember going with them once and the talk was all about gardens – non stop'.

W.H. 'Well, Edgar looked after the gardens at Barmer for Lady Carruthers and 'Porky' Mason. So he knew his stuff'.

K.E. 'Didn't Jack Hipkin have a milk round in the village?'

W.H. 'I don't know about that. I think he sold milk from the house. You took your can along and Una (Jack's daughter) filled it. She made butter as well you know. They had a room where the separator was kept. She certainly made butter but I'm not sure if they delivered any milk around the village or not. My mother worked in the house cleaning and dusting and such. So did Nancy Daly. The old boy used to have a gun standing in the corner of one room. Just propped in a corner, you know? He told mother on no account to touch it when she was dusting through the room. When she asked why he said that he kept it loaded. That would have been enough for mother she would have given it a wide berth, I'm sure. Once in a while she used to bring some butter home when there was any to spare'.

K.E. @I know my father did his first driving on a Model T Ford. What kind of car was it that Jack Hipkin had?

W.H. 'Oh now you are asking something. I don't know. It was a big black one, that's all I remember.

Peter Pells: 'Was it a Terraplane?'

K.E. 'A Hudson Terraplane?'

P.P. 'I'm not sure but there were probably only three cars in the whole village at that time'.

W.H. 'I was trying to think who was Lady Carruthers chauffeur down at Barmer Hall. One of the Framingham's, I think.

K.E. 'Sid?'

W.H. 'No, it wasn't Sid'.

K.E. 'Reggie?'

W.H. 'No, nor Reggie. I can't think just now'.

K.E. 'They're the only Framingham's I remember. My mum and Ida Skipper who later became my stepmother worked in the laundry at Barmer Hall'.

W.H. 'Is that right. We used to go carol singing at Barmer Hall and were always invited into the kitchen. They brought big jugs of cocoa out to us. Looked after us well, they did. Shame they pulled the hall down later. I never did know why they did that, do you?'

K.E. 'I have only the vaguest memory of Barmer Hall. At that time the building was empty and looked neglected. What happened to Mrs Carruthers?'

W.H. 'She moved and brought a house out Wooton way'.

K.E. 'Looking back over those time did you find them enjoyable?'

W.H. 'Oh yes, they were good days'.

I enjoyed the conversation and found it pleasure to listen to him recalling the various people and events in a spirited and enthusiastic way. I knew little about Mr Jack Hipkin before this and it surprised me to learn how extensive the farm was in those days. Walter referred to Mrs Carruthers of Barmer Hall as Lady Carruthers throughout. I had always heard of her as Mrs Carruthers but I never saw her although she seems to have been a kindly soul and I recall her, through the Rev Foardrinier, giving village children permission to gather snowdrops from Barmer Wood one Mothering Sunday.

I remember Mr Herbert Allen quite clearly. He was probably in his seventies then. Short, stocky, moustached, I never saw him without his cap. He accompanied father to many a Norwich City match and whist drive. Walter recalls seeing him hurtling through the cowshed door head first one day. 'I think some old cow kicked him', he commented. A fine gardener he certainly was and could, no doubt, have been a professional gardener. He took many a prize at Syderstone Flower Show although he was fonder of vegetables growing than flowers.

When I lived in the village I did not know Walter. I certainly knew his father 'Cosh' and his mother 'Flo' Havers. 'Cosh' was to be frequently seen heading in the direction of Syderstone Common accompanied by his two dogs, Gip, a brindle greyhound, and Bob, a stocky black and ten terrier. 'Are you after some rabbits, Cosh?' we kids would cheekily enquire. Cosh would growl back some unintelligible reply which translated would probably amount to 'mind your own business' and further enquiry was discouraged. It wasn't until very recently that I discovered his first name was also Walter.

Ken Edge 5/12

## The Langley Family of Syderstone

I recently received the following email from Bert Arter of Stibbard.

My great grandmother Sarah Langley was born in Houghton in 1798. This is the Houghton which is the location of Houghton Hall. Her great grandmother Martha Hutton married Francis Langley about 1730. Martha is believed to have been born in Syderstone and there were many descendants from this union. Of the recent Langleys of Syderstone all but one came from this family including John W, Vera A and Alec Leonard.

Alexander Langley of Syderstone was not related.

Anybody who has an interest in Bert's research may contact him by email: [bertarter@btinternet.com](mailto:bertarter@btinternet.com)

*NB: This would make Martha Hutton's birth c.1710 which takes us to the time of Queen Anne, the last Stuart Monarch, a big step back into history – Ken Edge.*

## Book Review

### **The Overland Launch by C Walter Hughes**

This is a true story told in fictional form. On Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January, 1899 a storm raged over the whole country. People were killed in Birmingham and Manchester by falling slates and chimney pots. The River Avon was recorded at its highest level. A tented hospital at Bromsgrove temporarily erected to cope with a fever epidemic is swept away. Enormous waves cause flooding at Ilfracombe and Watchet and a church steeple at Reading is blown down. The 'Forest Hall' a three masted full rigged ship floundered in the Bristol Channel and a call for help comes to Lynmouth lifeboat. Huge seas make it impossible to launch at Lynmouth and a decision is taken to launch from Porlock, 13 miles away, And what miles! The one in four and a half Countisbury Hill has to be negotiated with twenty horses rounded up to tow the lifeboat 'Louisa' on its carriage. Then there are narrow roads over Exmoor, walls and gateways have to be demolished to make way for the 34ft long lifeboat and at one point the lane becomes so narrow that the lifeboat has to be detached from the carriage and manually hauled over skids for several hundred yards. It takes several hours to reach Porlock Hill, even steeper in places than Countisbury with the added complication of some sharp bends. There is concern that the chains securing the lifeboat to the trailer will hold on the steep descent. Pans are fitted to lock the carriage wheels and just two horses are in the traces with every available hand used to man the drag ropes. The descent is successfully accomplished and when the pans are taken off at the bottom they are worn bright and sharp as razors and almost too hot to touch.

The huge boat enters Porlock with its retinue to find the stubbornest obstacle yet. A six foot high wall cemented and built to last till Resurrection Day. The demolition gang wake up old Mother Washford in the cottage opposite who berates them for the disturbance they are making. They explain that they have to launch from Porlock to save the lives of the crew of 'Forest Hall'. The old lady has never seen a lifeboat. 'Look out of your window, there she is'. 'Why Lord and Mercy, 'tis Noah's Ark', exclaims the old lady. Even with the demolition of the wall the gap is still too narrow for the lifeboat to pass and negotiations are delicately put in hand with Mother Washford to remove part of the corner of her cottage to facilitate its passage. With some misgivings she agrees and pleads with the lifeboat crew to wait for her so that she can follow them and see the launch. An obstructing tree has to be felled and hauled away and finally after many hours the 'Louisa' is launched and the crew of 'Forest Hall' is rescued. The party from Lynmouth surmounts the obstacles of two massively steep hills, narrow lanes and gateways, foul weather, a wheel parting from the carriage and lanterns continually being blown out to make for the most unusual service in the distinguished history of the lifeboat service.

K.E. 9/12

### Where have all the Barber's Gone?

A few weeks back my daughter wheeled in our toddler grandson, Ollie who looked somehow more grown up and mature than his 21 months would suggest. He had been given his first haircut. Given? Not exactly. 'Where did you take him?' 'We went to a barbers in Romford'. 'There aren't any barbers in Romford unless you mean Don's opposite the bus garage'. 'No, I wouldn't take him to that spit and sawdust place. We went to the town centre'. 'How much did you pay?' 'Nine pounds'. 'Nine pounds! That's bloody extortionate. I was waiting my turn in Don's once when a woman was waiting with a little lad, younger than Ollie, and it took Don about two minutes to cut the little boy's hair while he sat in his mother's lap. She asked Don how much and he said 'No charge. I wouldn't charge for two minutes work'. She gave him a tip but nobody pays nine pounds in Dons otherwise he would have retired years ago'. 'If he charged more he'd be able to spruce the shop up a bit! He likes his customers, the working men of Romford, to feel comfortable'. 'I think hes just tight'. 'No, hes just mindful of what people are able to pay, that's all'.

I remember popping into Dons one Saturday morning and at one end of the shop was a hostess trolley laden with beer and wines and bowls of crisps and nuts. 'Whats all this Don?' 'I'm celebrating 50 years trading in this shop and all my customers are welcome to have a drink with me'. I toasted Don's longevity with a can of lager and another customer raised a glass of white wine to mark a notable achievement. 'How much was a haircut when you started in the business, Don?' 'Half a crown' (12 1/2p). Don said he had to go on a special course to learn the way of coping with the teddy boys hairstyles of the 1950's. it was whilst awaiting my turn in the chair that I heard a well remembered and treasured remark. A man in the chair was receiving Don's attention and was holding forth about himself. What a fine fellow was he. A success in business. He'd just bought a new car and this following a sun kissed foreign holiday at an exclusive tropical location. Don and the rest of us heard him out in silence. Don finished him off, brushed him down, took his money and ushered him off the premises. 'Who's next gents?' The next customer took the chair and with the departure of 'big'ead' the atmosphere among the waiting clients relaxed. 'If I had as much bullshit as that bloke I'd grow the biggest delphiniums in Romford' commented a wag. The rest of us dissolved into laughter. It made my day.

At the time I lived in Syderstone I would knock on the doors of Reggie Allen or Freddie Edge who would oblige by drawing out a hard, straight-backed kitchen chair, drape me with a cloth and would set about the task with a pair of hand clippers. The finished job made you look a bit like a National Service recruit and when I recalled these visits to Freddie's at Ten Cottages to Fred's nephew Roger he said 'Those clippers of his were blunt, he used to yank half of it out'. I didn't remember it that way and anyway what did he expect for a shilling, Teasy Weasy?!

At Fakenham you could take your pick from Gordon Brodie in Bridge Street or Jack Andrews in Oak Street, both competent barbers who always seemed to be busy with the towns working people waiting their turn for hair cutting and shaving and once I witnessed a customer having his hair singed with a lighter taper. More of that later. Shaving was not uncommon in barbers shops in the 1950's. A good lather was worked up with a brush and the barber stropped his cut throat razor and set about his task. You heard a satisfying rasping sound as the beard came off and the customer emerged from the process refreshed and resplendent. As a small boy one would sit on a board placed across the arms of a chair. The barber's armoury was more comprehensive and sophisticated than Fred's or Reggie's basic barbers kits and the job was soon done. 'Anything on it young man?', Gordon or Jack would enquire. 'Yes, please!' The barber would place an open palm under the spout of the black Brylcream dispenser, press the plunger to receive the dollop of white cream, rubbed his palms together and gave your hair a good plastering. A good brushing and combing followed and you left feeling very self conscious. A boy's haircut would have cost around two shillings at that time and a sixpenny tip would have been considered reasonable (121/2p).

I was staying at Aunt Aggie's at Glandford one summer holiday and a visit to the barbers was deemed necessary before I returned home to start school the following week. This necessitated a bus ride into Holt to the premises of Ernie Whiteside near Holt Steam Laundry. My uncle Billy had heard about this plan and offered some cautionary advice. 'I hear you're off to Ernie Whiteside's, my man'. I confirmed that this was indeed so. 'Ah, you'd best sit still in that chair else you know what he'll do?' 'No, what?' 'He'll cut a hole in your ear and put your foot through. That's not all neither. When he's cut your hair and asks if you want anything on it you should say no'. 'But why?' 'Because he'll do this'. He cupped his hands together made as if to spit into them and ruffled my hair and went off chuckling.

This visit was as painless and uneventful as one might suppose. Ernie Whiteside was small, dapper man with oiled hair brushed back and he sported a 1940's film star pencil moustache, thankfully extinct these days. His sharp features put me in mind of Ratty in 'Wind in the Willows' but he was courteous with none of the rough and ready habits Uncle Billy had warned me of.

When I moved to Hornchurch I visited a most satisfactory barber in the local shopping parade. His shop was distinguished by a large collection of shaving mugs, he was pleasant and efficient and if you timed your visit to be after 5pm you seldom had to wait. He retired to his native Ireland a few years ago and I had to search for another barber eschewing anything unisex and establishments with signage saying 'No Appointments Necessary'. Appointments? What would Freddie Edge or Reggie Allen have made of it all.

I eventually found Les. Les operated from a small shop near Emerson Park station and what a shop. The premises belonged to Les and were purchased by him following his demob from the Royal Navy circa 1947. Les said that his friends had considered this a very risky venture and that he was taking an awful chance by expending a few hundred pounds on these business/residential premises. 'I'm the one whos laughing now', he said. The shop was a time warp of early 1950's barbering. Worn brown lino on the floor, almost certainly original along with many other original fittings complete with black Brylcream dispenser. A yellowing cardboard advertisement showed a 1950's cartoon which always made me smile. It depicted a row of army recruits recoiling from a blast from their drill sergeant who is leaning forward, mouth agape expressing himself thus 'GET YOUR 'AIRCUT.... - AND A TRIXIE SHAMPOO!' Very 1950's, the era of National Service and very much in keeping with the rest of the shop. Les displayed a scale of charges which included singeing. I asked him if there was much demand for the service. Les said not these days. I asked him what the benefits of singeing were. Les explained that when hair is cut it is believed to bleed pigment and that the singeing seals the ends of the hair and prevents this enabling the customer to retain his hair colour. So, now you know. Les added that with modern sprays that some men apply to their hair nowadays one had to take care about singeing as many preparations are inflammable. For a while Les worked in tandem with another barber, Dave. Both were traditional in outlook and both efficient. When Les died a few years back it looked as if the locals would lose a valuable service. Les's relations were set on selling the shop and Dave was unable to buy the premises. The situation was saved by the local ironmonger who rented Dave a small brick hut at the rear of his premises into which was moved much of Les's old equipment. Vintage chair and footrest, black Brylcream dispenser although, sadly, the Trixie shampoo advert has disappeared. Dave seems at home in his new but confined quarters and I hope that he continues trading for many years yet because Dave and his like are becoming a scarce commodity.

Ken Edge 9/12

#### My American Cousin - Update

In the April 2011 issue of the 'Old Syderstonian' I wrote an article about my American cousin, Carol Foss, who lives in Port Angeles, Washington. It was through Sheila's research into my family history that I had traced Carol back in 2007. Although we still haven't met one another we are in touch. Carol's planned visit to England last year was cancelled for family reasons and on my recent visit to Canada I had hoped we could meet but it wasn't possible, but Carol sent some lovely pictures of she and her family to my daughter via email. My cousin is very proud of her British ancestry - her great grandfather - Rev Robert Havers was my great-great uncle. We both hope we will meet before we get much older.

Carole Gilham (nee Havers)