

THE SYDERSTONIAN

- April 2013 -

The original date for this reunion was changed to 20th April for the good reason that Marion, one of the indefatigable helpers on these dates and without whose help the reunions would not function is to be married to Adrian Riley. We offer them congratulations and wish them, every happiness for the future.

Sadly we report the passing of Cynthia Howard – nee Harwood – and Mrs Eileen Burge. Muriel Kidd – nee Chadleigh has gone to live in care following a stroke. Jack Negus's wife died a few weeks ago and Jack's brother Sid tells me that Jack is being cared for in a home at Hunstanton. The last three mentioned were keen supporters of the reunions and will be much missed. We extend our sympathy and condolences to their families and friends.

Amy Robsart Hall

Solar panels have been installed on the roof and it has been calculated that since January savings of around £70 has been made on fuel costs. The outlay was £10,000 investment would yield the meagre sum of £4 a year which the committee decided would be put to better use in the long term by the installation of solar panels. Over the eight years these reunions have taken place the hall has come on in leaps and bounds but not at the expense of it's essential character.

St Mary's Church

The following events are being planned for summer and autumn.

26 th April	(Amy Robsart Hall) 7.30pm Bangers and Mash Supper and Beetle Drive
30 th June	Open Gardens Event
13 th July	Summer Barbecue at Liz Ronald's garden – Wicken Green
10 th -14 th Aug	Flower Festival with 'Songs of Praise' in church on Sunday evening
11 th Sept	Patronal Festival with church picnic at Barrow Common
4 th Oct	Harvest Festival and Harvest Supper
26 th -30 th Oct	Art Exhibition with preview on 25 th Oct
NB: The Open Gardens Event and Art Exhibition will take place provided sufficient gardens can be opened and sufficient exhibits can be provided. The Diamond Jubilee Garden will be completed in a week or two. The project was hampered by unfavourable autumn and spring weather but several days fine weather will put the stamp on much hard work and see this worthwhile project completed.	

Mill Lane

During my sixteen years residency in the village I gave little thought to the names of the roads therein or how they came by those names. After all, most were obvious. Fakenham Road, Barmer Road, Rudham Road although a number of villagers still held to

Hall Lane, the old name for Creake Road and there was that mysterious location referred to by even fewer villagers as the 'Blue Doors'. This was the farmyard entrance to Manor Farm although any blue doors had long been replaced by a five barred gate which remained permanently open. Drove Lane, opposite the pit, has now been renamed Burnham Green Lane by modernists and is used now by horse riders, dog walkers and agricultural traffic and I travelled my first short, wobbly distance on a bike there.

My thoughts were turned to Mill Lane as a result of an e-mail I received last December from Doreen Hendley who lives in USA. She said that her great great grandfather, Robert Secker Leverett, was a miller/baker in Syderstone according to White's directory of 1836 and 1845. Robert's father, Charles, was a blacksmith in the village and he and his wife Mary nee Secker and two children are buried in the churchyard. Doreen has traced her family back to the late 18th – early 19th century. She asked if I could provide any other details. All these facts about the Leverett family were news to me and I had never heard of the family but I knew to whom I could refer her for further help and I directed her e-mail to Sheila Riches. I knew help would be forthcoming from this quarter and right I was. Robert Secker Leverett was born in 1807 – two years after the Battle of Trafalgar and moved from Syderstone to King's Lynn between 1851 and 1861. He died in King's Lynn district in 1869. The windmill survived him by one year blowing down in 1870.

The mill is shown on Bryants 1826 map of Norfolk on land, farmed in the 1950's by Charlie Greeves or Charlie Licker as he was sometimes known. Charlie farmed a small acreage bordered by Manor Farm and Mill Lane and ending at the sand pit which later was to become a commercial enterprise – the mushroom factory. I don't ever remember seeing Charlie in the village. He was a small man who would walk over to the playing field on a summer Saturday to watch some Syderstone cricket which was of a good standard in the 1950's. Polly Parrott would rally her class for periodic nature rambles along Mill Lane and would lead on with the class following two a breast. Past the school house where Mr Riches lived and parked his Lanchester car. Past the school garden where we toiled under Jimmy Goult's supervision growing such diverse crops as peas, carrots, nasturtiums and candytuft.

Beyond the council houses lay a small clutch of older cottages then a tall, dense holly hedge shielding Charlie Greeves's and Jock McBurney's places. Jock McBurney was a competent repairer of watches which he did as a sideline. After that the hedgerows bordering Charlie's place on the right and 'Nimshie' Pell's on the left. Under Polly's supervision we gathered specimens for the classroom nature table. Cow parsley, dog roses, plantains and anything else we could lay our hands on culminating in acorns from under the oak tree which grew on Nimshie's side bordering the common. This was as far as the ramble went and we turned back to the school bearing our finds. Old jam jars were charged with water and the drooping vegetation was revived and we were tasked by Polly to identify what we had collected and write appropriate labels.

By the 1950's no local bakery existed in the village and bread was supplied by T.R. Wagg of Docking whose diminutive roundsman, Sid, delivered from door to door carrying his wares in a large wicker basket.

I do not know exactly where in the village that Charles Leverett carried on his trade as blacksmith and it may be mere coincidence that Charlie Greeves's place now carries the name 'Anvil Farm'. I had not previously heard it referred to thus. During my time it was always known as Charlie Greeves's place or Charlie Licker's place, that is if we referred to it at all. Some time ago, I received details of a sponsored walk from a fund raising group and 'Anvil Farm' was mentioned as a reference point. I was mystified and sought clarification from a current Syderstonian who described its location and it could only have been Charlie's old place. I do not know if it's current owner has resurrected

an older name but possibly Charles Leverett did once carry on his business there way back in the late 1700's – early 1800's – we can only speculate.

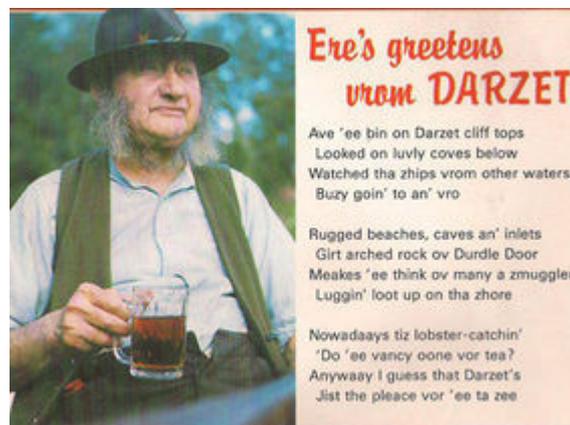
Ken Edge

Send us a Card – Don't Forget

Many a schooldays summer holiday began with this valediction from well wishing relatives. In due course a postcard would wend its way to them carrying a brief summary of the weather in Skegness, hopes of the recipients well being and concluding with loving wishes. At that time I almost certainly regarded this custom as something of a bind not realising how much these postcards were valued. Over the years my Aunt Jessie and cousin Doris compiled two albums full of postcards from holiday making friends and relatives interspersed with family photographs. On my return I would see them and enquire if the card had arrived and bring them a stick of rock which would be chopped up with a heavy kitchen knife and put into the toffee tin. "Yes, the card was lovely thanks. Dorrie has put it in the album". They liked views as opposed to comic postcards although over the years they received a fair selection of each.

These annual holidays during my schooldays provided my introduction into the world of postcards. I would scan the various postcard stands, comic ones first chuckling over the jokes although in my early years the humour was sometimes lost on me. I enjoyed the colourful illustrations of the fat, rosy faced women and the skinny, lugubrious, hen pecked men. The views, where the sun always shone, interested me much less. Every seaside town displayed cards showing off its floral gardens, bandstands and quota of happy holidaymakers strolling along the promenade. One would be carefully selected and dispatched to my favourite relatives. It is a custom which continues to the present.

A newspaper article last summer caught my attention. The main part depicted a rustic gent wearing a hat garnished with fishing flies, open neck collarless shirt, unbuttoned waistcoat, waistband of his trousers unlatched at the top button, beer glass in hand taking his ease. His open face framed by Dundreary whiskers is looking steadily out of the postcard. The picture is accompanied by three four-line verses extolling the virtues of Dorset, Devon, Somerset or Cornwall, the verses being in the vernacular. The article blew the gaff concerning Jack the rustic gent. From which of these western counties did Jack hail? Well, none of them actually. Jack came from the village of Steep in Hampshire and sometime in the early 1960s was sitting outside his local 'The Harrow' enjoying his pint when he was accosted by some young whippersnapper with a camera. "Hold the glass up a bit, Jack", said the lad, "have a drink". "Ill have an 'arf", said Jack. That turned out to be the sum total of any direct receipts that Jack ever received from his debut as a photographers model.



It was about a year later that the postcards started to arrive. "Saw old Jack at Torquay". "Came to Penzance to get away from him". "He followed me to Weston Super Mare". "Couldn't shake him off even in Lyme Regis" were typical comments by Jack's holidaymaking friends and neighbours. In a short time Jack had become a celebrity. His family were curious. "When did this happen, Jack?" Jack was puzzled. "Dunno", he said. "Ah, hold on a minute. Last year there was this chap with a camera". The family tried to trace the photographer but he had moved to some funny place called London. The family phoned the postcard company. "Yes, isn't he a splendid old character". "But will he be getting any money?" "Money? Oh no. We paid the photographer, if that's what you mean?" "No, no we didn't mean that. Will Uncle Jack be paid?" The answer was a polite but firm "no". 'The Harrow' regulars were aghast. What an injustice. But in law the publishers were correct. They had paid for the copyright and it seems that nobody "owns" their own visage. Jack had to settle for this. Here he was, a postcard superstar, his image being sent to homes all over Britain and he was not a penny the richer for all his fame. In time, he learned to flaunt his image and accepted drinks from strangers and lifts into town from well meaning neighbours eager to help with his shopping and to claim kinship with their local celebrity.

Jack died many years ago having enjoyed a wonderful old age. Recently his nephew phoned the postcard company. "Is Jack still doing the rounds?" "Oh yes, ten thousand last year. He's been going for forty years now". Not bad value from a half pint of beer.

Whilst on holiday with friends some time back my pal said "You do seem to manage to guide us to some lovely places". Well, perhaps. The study of local postcards often pays off. No town wishing to promote itself wants to flaunt images of the local abattoir or hot water bottle factory or wind farm so the images you see are the best of architectural, horticultural or scenic interest so take a long look, open the map and take a trip. The best things are often free. I'm sure Jack would have agreed.

Ken Edge

Mrs Eileen Burge

It was around 2008 or 2009 when Eileen first attended the Old Syderstonian Reunions and fifty years or so had passed since I had seen her last and when she approached me and sought me out I had no idea who she was. She was bright as a button and lively and animated and after a few hints we got on even terms. "I read your book Kenny, thanks for the mention but 'Glenwood' was the bungalow next door". "I enjoyed it and you certainly seem to have remembered a lot about your time here. Didn't you live down Rudham Road?" "That's right, number one". "I thought so, I remember your mum". "I wish I remember her more clearly myself. I was three when she died". "Well, what can I say, she was a real lady". After that spontaneous and unsolicited remark she could do no wrong and we always spoke at every meeting and the following conversational snatches are taken from our subsequent meetings.

At our first meeting she produce some photos. One was of a young Robert taking part in the fancy dress competition during the 1953 Coronation celebrations. He was dressed as the Queens jockey and looked the part and at six or seven years old he was not that many inches behind Sir Gordon Richards. The other photo was of Arthur Farrant, landlord of 'The Buck' standing outside the premises. "That's Arthur Farrant isn't it?" "Thomas Farrant who kept the Buck, you'll remember him". Eileen always referred to Mr Farrant as Thomas although I never heard him referred to as Thomas, it was always Arthur. He walked aided by a stick and had a heavy limp and I sometimes saw him crossing the street to check on his chickens that he kept on a small piece of land bordering Freddie Ringer's field which bordered the street on the north side. He owned a Morris Oxford, maroon I believe it was. I can't say that I knew him well but he was a principal figure in the village at that time. He died in the late 1950's, a year or two

before I left the village. "I lived at the Buck, Kenny, did you know that?" "No, I didn't. Were you born there?" "No, I was born at New Malden in Surrey and my mother and I came to live at the 'Buck' when I was three. After Thomas Farrant got married we moved to the bungalow at Barmer Road". "You attended the village school then?" "Yes, I did". "Who was on the teaching staff at that time?" "The head teacher was Mr Hand and there was Miss Parrott and the infant teacher was Miss Clamp". "Polly seems to have been on the staff since forever and I've heard some of the older folks talk about Tommy Hand but Miss Clamp is a new name on me". Eileen chuckled. "You do know her Kenny. That was her name before she became Mrs Baxter. Jim Baxter was an AA man at that time and he lodged with the Clamp's. I'm sure that I'm right". "Did you enjoy school?" "It wasn't so bad but I was always in trouble for talking too much". Hardly the sort of crime that would mark you out as a felon of the deepest dye but no doubt there were consequences. "Jack Negus says that he took you out to the pictures once, is that right?" "Yes, he did so, that's right". "Where did you go to, was it Fakenham?" "Yes, I think it was". "What film was on?" "Goodness, I've no idea. He only took me the one time. It didn't become a habit". "Going back to the Buck didn't you and Bill take it over in the 1960's?" "Yes, we ran it up to the time we moved to Rhodesia". "So, in a way you followed in the footsteps of Mr Farrant?" "Yes, we did it for a while before we left the village".

Following her 90th birthday, Eileen produced some photos of some very plush surroundings. "Wherever is this?" "Well, I've been so lucky. My family paid for me to stay at the Ritz Hotel at Piccadilly, it was really lovely". "It looks absolutely luxurious. Did you have tea there? Its known worldwide for it's teas?" "yes, it was a wonderful experience. I shall never forget it".

One of the last things Eileen said to me at our last meeting was this "I do enjoy coming to these gatherings. I've lived in so many places in my time but I shall always think of Syderstone as my home".

I was saddened to learn that Eileen had died just before Christmas last year following a fall at home. She will be missed by many.

Ken Edge

Book Review

'Out of the Woods but not Over the Hill' – Gervase Phinn

"What are you reading, Ken?" The enquiry was from my old guv'nor Mr Alan Miles. "Its James Herriott, Mr Miles". "Splendid, splendid. Have you ever read Gervase Phinn?" I confess I hadn't. I was told that if I liked James Herriott then I would like Gervase Phinn who wrote about his experiences as a school inspector in rural North Yorkshire and his books contained a colourful and memorable cast of characters, some Love interest in the form of the lovely Miss Christine Bentley, head of a primary school in the catchment area and a 'villain' in the form of Mrs Brenda Savage the magisterial secretary of the Chief Education Officer. Add to this the humorous and self-opinionated inspectors with children adding the unexpected, the tales are rivals to those of James Herriott. Well, James Herriott is the author I would take to a desert island and I was unconvinced by these claims. Having read them I am prepared to admit that they run James Herriott close and that is high praise. Don't let the author's odd name put you off. He is a thoroughgoing down to earth Yorkshireman whose unpretentious family came from the equally unpretentious environs of Rotherham in South Yorkshire. All of his writings are strongly recommended.

Ken Edge

Syderstone Post Mill

Whites directory of 1854 records William Dawe as corn miller and again in 1864 and 1868 although the two latter entries are spelt Daw. The bakery business seems to have become a separate entity elsewhere. On 30th March 1971, Harry Apling wrote that he had been contacted by Basil Allen of Mill Lane to say that Basil's wife's father's mother was a Daw. Her brother Robert was four years old when the mill blew down in 1870.

Ken Edge

Milestone Birthdays

There are quite a few of us 'Old Syderstonians' who, like me, are reaching a milestone birthday this year.

A decade ago, I don't suppose any of us could foresee that we would be meeting up again at a village reunion.

Goodness, what changes we have seen! Best wishes to all of you.

Carole Gilham (nee Havers)

Any entries for inclusion in the next newsletter to Ken Edge, 3 Haynes Road, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 2HS. Email: kenneth636@hotmail.com.

The newsletter is now included on the Sydestersone website www.syderstone.com