

THE SYDERSTONIAN

October 2014

St Mary's Church – Village News

25th October – Working party meets for autumn clear up. Regular working parties take part in keeping the churchyard tidy under the watchful eye of Barry Wells in order that the church always has a 'cared for' look.

8th November - Christmas Fair in the Amy Robsart Hall.

30th November – Band Concert. Fakenham Town Band plays at Wicken Green.

At the time of writing the church which is 900 years old is under considerable pressure. Repairs are needed to the south wall, the bell tower, the East gable and the north side of the roof. The total cost of repairs is in the region of £34,000. Various funding organisations have been approached but funding is hard to obtain. Any contributions from members of the public will be gratefully received.

On the plus side the Open Gardens event raised £1,137 – the most successful ever.

The Flower Festival held in August raised £1,179. Clearly the village is doing its best to help itself but there is a mountain to climb.

Amy Robsart Hall

Syderstone now has a post office again on Wednesdays and Fridays. A team from Wells post office have taken up the task vacated by the retiring postmaster and mistress from Bircham.

A First World War display will be on view at the Old Syderstonians reunion on 4th October. It made its debut at the Family History Day in August and Sheila Riches has pulled out all the stops to make it as interesting and comprehensive as possible.

Much fund raising has resulted in securing £1,800 to buy a defibrillator which will be kept in the hall and a number of people will be trained in its use. In view of the fact that an ambulance can take the best part of an hour to arrive, the equipment could be vital. Two quiz nights and a number of musical events involving Malcolm MacArthur and his band 'Calamity' did much to make this possible. Malcolm plays the guitar and is the band's vocalist – more in the style of Eric Clapton than Burl Ives, I understand. The depth of talent under the roofs of Syderstone is truly impressive.

'Lynn Arms'

The Lynn Arms has recently been taken on by new licensees Flo and Martin who are making the provision of live music a priority.

Village Screen Cinema

18th October 7.30pm 'In Secret' based on Zola's novel starring Sharon Stone, Elizabeth Olsen.

15th November 7.30pm 'Belle' inspired by the true story of Dido Elizabeth Belle the illegitimate, mixed race daughter of an admiral in the British Navy. Charts the problems caused by her colour in 18th century English society.

13th December 7.30pm 'Tammy' – Toni Collette, Dan Ackroyd, Kathy Bates. Sacked from her job, split from her husband Tammy takes to the road with her 'hair raising' grandma in search of adventure.

Obituary Brendan Fulham of Lakenheath (husband of Margaret) passed away in June. I only met Brendan on a handful of occasions and wish I had known him better. We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Margaret and her family.

Many thanks to past and present contributors to this newsletter. Any correspondence to Ken Edge, 3 Haynes Road, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 2HS or e-mail kenneth636@hotmail.com.

K.E.

Family History Day

I take my hat off to Sheila Riches for the substantial amount of work that she put into the display with the emphasis of Syderstone's involvement in the First World War. The research into this was considerable and will, I understand, be ongoing for a long time in the future. Eighty men from the village joined to oppose the Kaiser. Twelve did not come back. My father, Frank Edge went to Norwich at the age of 15 and signed up for the Norfolk regiment. He was tracked down by the family after a few weeks when it was shown that he was under age he was discharged. He must have rejoined later because I have his set of miniature medals which as well as three medals from World War II, there are two from World War I, 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' but lacking the 1914 star. My uncle, Maurice George West, is recorded on the Barmer War Memorial where his parents Robert and Rachel West were living at the time his ship HMS Defence was blown up at the Battle of Jutland on 31st May 1916. He was 15 ½ years old. His name is also recorded on the Erpingham War Memorial from which village my grandparents moved to Barmer. I was told that Granny Rachel's hair turned white overnight on receiving the news of his death. On 2nd August the Eastern Daily Press published a list of villages and towns along with the names of those that were killed. Even tiny villages like Bagthorpe, Barmer, Toftrees, Shereford and Quarles lost men – few places were untouched by loss. At the head of the list on the Swardston memorial was the name of Edith Louise Cavell – a Norfolk heroine if ever there was one. World War I was a life changing experience for all of those upon which it laid its ghastly hand. Most of the survivors said little or nothing about their experiences and lived alone with their nightmares. Many suffered from debilitating wounds, shell shock and the effects of breathing mustard gas. And what of those families who lost sons, fathers, husbands and brothers. Left to pick up the pieces of their lives as best they could. I never heard my father or any of my uncles speak of their experiences during the war. Maybe they did so among their contemporaries but otherwise not. It was like they wanted to lock the door against those ghastly experiences but never forgetting their fallen comrades.

Of the contingent of eighty who left Syderstone to enlist in the forces to fight against the Kaiser, twelve men lost their lives. At the time I lived in the village five of their surnames had died out in the village. All are commemorated on the Syderstone War Memorial.

Reginald Osbourne Allen – MM buried Contay British Cemetery, France

Arthur William Ayres – buried St Mary's Church, Syderstone

William Bennett – remembered Soissons Memorial, France (no known grave)

Oscar Duffield Bowman – buried Etretat Churchyard Extension, France

Thomas William Collison – buried Guards Cemetery, Windy Corner, France

Alfred Alec Arnold Cubitt – remembered Loos Memorial – no known grave

William Arthur Elsiegood – buried Elouges Communal Cemetery, Belgium (trench graves, position of each body not known, headstones present)

George S Greeves – remembered Helles Memorial Gallipoli (no known grave)

Harry Lawrence Hunter – buried Baghdad (North Gate) Cemetery, Iraq

Alfred Robert Langley – buried Boulogne Eastern Cemetery, France

Fred (Zachariah) Benjamin Langley – remembered Basra Memorial, Iraq (no known grave)

Reginald Mussett – remembered Helles Memorial, Gallipoli (no known grave)

*O Valiant hearts who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict and through battle's flame
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved – Sir John Stanhope Arkwright*

K.E. 9/14

The Unknown Warrior

The Rev. David Railton, a chaplain at the front is believed to have had the idea of honouring the unidentified dead of the Great War. In 1916 he noticed a grave in a garden in Armentieres which was marked with a rough cross bearing the words 'An Unknown British Soldier'. After the war in 1920 he suggested that Britain honour its unknown war dead officially and approached Dean Ryle, the Dean Westminster, with his idea. Dean Ryle was enthusiastic and the idea found favour at the highest level.

It was extremely important that the identity of the soldier should never be known. There were many nameless graves in France and Belgium and from four different areas a body was exhumed and brought to St. Pol. Brigadier General L.J. Wyatt, director of the War Graves Commission in Flanders, chose one of them at midnight 8-9th November. 'The body was placed in a coffin made of oak from Hampton Court. The coffin was at once sealed down and the remaining bodies were buried at St. Pol. In the morning the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Free Church chaplains held a short service and at noon began its journey to Westminster Abbey. It rested for the night at Boulogne, and the next day, 10th November, it made a procession through the streets and after a speech by Marshal Foch the coffin was put on board the destroyer HMS Verdun and reached Dover at 3.30pm. The journey by train ended at Victoria Station at 8.33pm. The body remained on the train until 10am on Armistice Day when it was borne with a great escort by a circuitous route to the Cenotaph where King George V placed a wreath on the coffin. At 11am the nation observed the Two Minutes Silence and the body was taken to Westminster Abbey, the King and other dignitaries following on foot. The Unknown Warrior was interred at the west end of the nave, the grave contains soil from France and is covered by a slab of black Belgian marble. Inscribed upon the marble are these words from the Bible –

'They buried him among the kings because he had done good towards God and towards his house'. 2 Chronicles 24:16

Within the first week 1 ¼ million people filed past the Unknown Warrior to pay their respects to all the unidentified war dead. It is now one of the most visited war graves in the world and is the only part of the Abbey floor that is never walked on.

A Shaggy Dog Story

'Ah Fred, just the man. I've got a job for you after you've had your grub, 23 Rosemary Gardens, theft of a bike'. Fred nodded in acknowledgement of Sergeant Grimes request and in due course made his way to the venue. Rosemary Gardens had some years ago been part of a nice neighbourhood

but the years had taken their toll and most of the houses wore a tired air verging on the seedy. No.23 was well ahead of its neighbours in this respect and was positively worn out. The front gate clung to its post by one hinge and the front garden beyond the crumbling boundary wall grew in wild abandon. The householder had long ago given up the attempt at exerting any control over the rampaging vegetation. Grass grew in great tussocky clumps partially concealing a child's dolls pram, a couple of ancient car batteries, a worn out twin tub washing machine and who knew what else. A search of this lot might reveal Lord Lucan, mused Fred. Fred reached the shabby front door and was joined by a very large, very hairy, mud encrusted German Shepherd dog. Fred removed the faded navy blue beret from the flapless letter box and called out, 'Police, anybody at home'. His call was answered by a middle aged man in a greasy t-shirt, ditto trousers and flip flops. The hairy dog barged straight in and headed for the kitchen where it noisily tucked into a bowl of cat food on the kitchen floor. The household cat had taken refuge on top of the cooker and appeared to be standing, back arched, hair a bristle, on stilts. The householder led the way into the lounge and Fred sat down in a sagging armchair opposite the lady of the house whose midriff bulged over a pair of too tight jeans. Make up might have helped her plain appearance but it would have taken some time and trouble and these two seemed unwilling to spend either the one or the other. Fred declined the offer of a cup of tea and opened his notebook to record details of the stolen bike. The large shaggy dog made an entrance tracking down the leftovers on the two plates on the floor of what remained of the take away pizza suppers. Well pleased with himself he heartily belched and settled down to a good scratch. Nose down, sniffing noisily the dog moved around the room in search of other comestibles. There were none. He moved over towards the rickety coffee table where the TV reposed. Cocking a casual leg he peed copiously against the table leg. Three pairs of eyes engaged each other but nobody said a word. Fred hastily gathered the remaining details he needed and rose to his feet to make his exit with some relief. 'Goodnight, said Fred, we'll keep you posted if we came up with anything'. 'Just a minute mate, don't forget your dog', called out the householder. 'My dog?' said Fred, 'No, he's not my dog, I thought he was your dog'.

Ken Edge 8/14

Humour in Court

The advocate, late F.E. Smith sat down following his address to the jury. The judge commented 'I have listened to your exposition, Mr Smith, and find myself none the wiser'. F.E. Smith rose and bowed, 'Possibly not wiser, my lord, but certainly much better informed'.

Hello and how are you?'

As I was walking into town
I met someone I knew
I stopped and asked politely
Hello and how are you?
Oh dear, she had so much to tell
She hardly paused for breath
Arthritic hip and failing sight
Burst pipes and sudden death
Noisy neighbours, barking dogs
Their garden overgrown
She'd burned a saucepan, had a fall
And lost her front door key
The cat had fleas, the budgie died
The car failed MOT
Her husband had just lost his job
And really was depressed

I'm sorry, there's no time she said
To tell you all the rest
And then she smiled, she took my hand
It's good to talk, she said
I feel so much better for our chat
It's really cleared my head
She walked away and left me there
To ponder what I'd heard
And suddenly realised, I hadn't said a word.

Jean Spindler.

I knew two people to whom I never asked 'How are you?' This in order to avoid the unleashing of a catalogue of woes. I made do with a simple 'Hello'. Both are now dead so perhaps they weren't 'crying wolf' after all.

Ken Edge 8/14

Recipe for Longevity

There is nothing for enervating about Yarmouth. The air is clean and vigorous and Dickens himself said of the place: "If you bear a grudge against any particular insurance office, purchase from it a heavy life annuity, go and live at Great Yarmouth and draw your dividend till they ask you in despair whether your name is Old Parr or Methuselah" – (from 'A Fortnight in the East Coast by Gordon Cropper, 1951).