

'The Syderstonian'

September 2017

October 2017

St. Mary's Church

Friday 20th October - 6 pm Harvest Festival Service. 7pm Harvest supper at Amy Robsart Hall. Bring own drinks and glasses. Tickets £5 per adult. Accompanied under 12's free. Tickets from Dizzy Goff (01485 578527) by 12th October.

Sunday 12 November - Remembrance service 10.50 am at the war memorial.

Sunday 25th November - 10.30 am until 2pm - Amy Robsart Hall with coffee and light lunches.

Friday 15th December - 6 pm - Carol Service.

Sunday 24th December - 10.30 pm - First Mass Christmas.

Amy Robsart Hall - heating

At the time of writing the finishing touches to the heating system are being applied and will be fully operational before the reunion.

Cinema -

The next project will be to upgrade the cinema equipment. This will cost around £5,000, Any contributions will be gratefully received.

Family History -

Sheila has now completed her First World War project and managed to provide antecedents for all but two of the ninety or so villagers from Syderstone who fought in that conflict. She has sent them to her contact at the Imperial War Museum who is uploading them on to their website and this will be completed in approximately four months. It has taken Sheila four years to complete her research into the very worthwhile project, well done Sheila.

High Fliers

The connection between flying and the Royal Family goes back to the earliest days of aviation. It was in 1909 on a visit to Paris that King Edward VII met the Wright Flyer brothers and watched them demonstrate the Wright Flyer aeroplane. The first Royal Family member to fly was Edward, Prince of Wales, in 1917. The flight was on a Royal Aircraft Factory RE8 which was a British World War I biplanes reconnaissance and bomber aircraft.

He flew again with pilot Major William Barker V.C in Italy in 1918. Barker had flown with one arm in a sling but when King George V heard about this he banned his son from flying. Prince Albert (later King George VI) transferred to the RAF in 1919 and became the first Royal to gain his RAF wings after a course of flying Avro 504's. The Prince of Wales resumed his flying during the 1920's and bought a

De Havilland Gipsy Moth G-AALG in 1929. He had this painted in the red and blue of the Brigade of Guards which has been the colour scheme of various royal aircraft ever since.

Edward Hedley 'Mouse' Fielden a serving flight lieutenant became his personal pilot and looked after the prince's aircraft. Over the next few years the POW bought a number of light aircraft including a Rapide G-ADDD. In 1936 this was designated the one and only aircraft of The King's Flight the world's first head of state aircraft unit. Following the death of King George V in 1936 the prince became King Edward VIII. In order to attend the Accession Council in London the next day 'Mouse' Fielden flew him to Hendon from Bircham Newton and this was the first time a British Monarch had taken to air.

The poet John Betjeman captured this final 'putting to death of the Victorian age' in his poem 'Death of King George V'. 'Old men who never cheated, never doubted, communicated monthly, sit and stare. At the new suburb stretched beyond the runway. Where a young man lands hatless from the air.' His hatless arrival was seen as a shocking departure from his father's rigorous standards.

Ken Edge (Source 'Daily Mail' April 2017).

May Allen 1921-2017

May was born on 15th April, 1921 at her grandparents' cottage at Barmer. Her birth took place during a snowstorm and her father, Jack Wymer, who had biked over from the family home at Toftrees, was stranded and had to stay the night. May said that when the tale was related among the family she was made to feel that the snow was her fault. She grew up in Toftrees and went to school at Queens Road, Fakenham.

She was the eldest of three children and was followed by brother Don and sister Doris. Her dad, Jack Wymer, worked as a gardener/handyman for the Francis family at Toftrees and later for Doctor Chappell at Fakenham and finally for the Aldis family at Fakenham Heath. May got her love of gardening from her dad and inherited a spade from him which, I believe, still survives. Over its many years of service it must have turned over hundreds of acres. Her mum, Jessie, shared a love of gardening with them and from her May took her practical ways, good humour and good sense.

May's first job was at Godwick Hall near Tittleshall as a domestic servant for the Garner family. The pay was poor, and the working hours long but she enjoyed the work especially feeding the hens and gathering the eggs. The outbreak of war brought another job opportunity and she took up employment at the Ordnance Depot at Fakenham. Her pay was improved and she said later she was actually able to save some money - 'just a little'. In due course she bought a bike from 'Bones' the cycle shop in Fakenham - whilst at the depot she met Nan and they became firm friends and remained so until May's death.

At the end of the war May married Sid Allen and they made their home at 1, The Hill, Little Snoring. Facilities were basic and I will add May's own account of her early life there. May worked as school dinner lady, and cleaner at Little Snoring school and survived close on ten head teachers before she retired. In retirement she was invited back to speak to the children and tell them what a cleaners' life was like in the 'dark ages'. She was amused when a little boy asked 'What's a Tilley lamp, miss?' Well time moves on, but she would maintain the need for 'elbow grease' never runs out.

In the 1950's May, Sid and Robert moved to 3, Oakland's, Little Snoring a modern 3 bedroom house and this was her home until the early 1980's. During the 1960's Sid was hit by a stroke which greatly affected his mobility and May nursed and cared for him until his death in 1971. Around 1983, or '84 May was offered the tenancy of 1, Bell Close a two bedroom bungalow with a manageable garden. She was given the keys and invited to look around.

The previous tenant was an elderly, single man who had let the domestic duties side of things slip a bit. 'Well, what do you think?' said the council man. 'I like it but by Jove there's a deal of cleaning up to do'. 'You needn't worry about that. The council will clean, paint and decorate before you move in. What do you say?' 'I can't wait.' Said May. This was the beginning of a happy home for more than thirty years. The garden was a challenge. Old Jack had let the garden go to pigs and whistles. 'There were thistles grown waist high and that old mares tail with those great long roots that took some digging out. I filled bags and bags of that old stuff but I conquered it.'

The end result was such a patch of colour - roses, clematis, sunflowers and annuals of many sorts along with tulips providing year rounds colour with much stock being grown from cuttings and seeds. Many of her plants were cuttings and gifts from friends and neighbours. 'That's one from old Mrs. Cully at Oaklands, that tall golden rod from Ted Bacon, that pretty geranium was a cutting I pinched from the park at Liandudno.' She truly had green fingers and the pretty garden was testimony to it. She enjoyed more than thirty years at Bell Close and loved it dearly. Needlework and embroidery were interests also.

A number of the colourful hassocks in Little Snoring church are her work. She also finished off some which had been begun by others which they did not have the staying power to complete. Any commitment she undertook she carried out the very best of her ability and that was a very high standard indeed. She took pleasure in simple everyday things, plants, flowers, birdsong, the bounty of nature, seeing her grandchildren thrive and grown up and take satisfaction from doing a task well. She shunned anything ostentatious or 'over the top'.

On her 90th birthday she had a phone call from Tracey, her oldest grandchild who has lived many years in Michigan, USA. Tracey offered congratulations and following a warm conversation put her daughter Leonie on to speak. 'Nanny Allen you've reached a fantastic age. What are you going to do to celebrate?' A pause followed before May answered in typically understated style, 'It's a nice day Leonie, I might put in a couple of 'rows of peas'. During her nineties her mobility decreased as did her sight and hearing, after gamely struggling to keep her home and garden going she reluctantly went into permanent care at Westfields Care Home at Swaffham.

She found it a heartbreaking transition but the blow was softened by a friendship she developed with Doris Martin who was herself in care. Doris remained a staunch friend of May's until her passing on the 17th of March. At May's funeral service at St. Andrews Church Little Snoring the little church was full. Sadly, Tracey, from Michigan could not be present but she was there in a very strong way. Her brother Sean had produced a recording of her voice, an unmistakable Norfolk voice paying tribute to her Nan who she loved and would perpetuate May's memory among her children and their children so that her memory would live on down the years.

At the end of the service as the congregation filed out I saw two of May's friends one her very oldest friend, Nan. Nan, making very steady progress on her walking frame with her niece, Jane, on hand,

had been May's friend since the early days of the war. Now 96 years old she still lives in her bungalow at Hellesdon and has the support of Jane and her carers. We relived the outings we had with May and recalled the many interesting places Nan had taken us to. The interesting little cafes we had discovered and the picnics eaten.

May's other friend was more of a recent standing - Doris. Doris was on the arm of her carer from Westfields Home and had been a friend of May's during her stay at the home. She had cheered and chivvied her and at times revived her low spirits. Doris came with us to the crematorium and we were able to thank her for all that she had done for May. 'Oh I didn't do anything much,' said Doris. 'Doris, we told her,' 'You made a tremendous difference. More than you'll ever know.' Friendship is a powerful force for good.

I will close this tribute by letting May have the final words. These words were written by May for 'Snooze 'n' Views' the magazine of Great and Little Snoring.

'Memories of Life in Little Snoring'

58 years ago, nearing the end of 39-45 War, I was living in the cottage featured on the cover of 'Snooze 'n' Views' last issue which brought back some happy memories. No electricity piped water in those days. Oil lamps and water drawn up by bucket from a well in the yard was the order of the day. The water was so clear and really cold (no taste of chloride). We were able to have fresh milk straight from the hand milked cows of Mr. and Mrs. Ramm, who lived at the farm next door. New laid eggs and the odd honey comb from the hives of the bees kept in their front garden. Airmen used to march past on Sunday mornings to attend the church services, this part of the road being on a one way system.

The children leaving the village school at 11 years used to have a cycle to Fakenham, no buses ferried them back and forth in those days but they were allowed ten shillings (50p) for wear and tear of tyres for the year. After the war ended, butcher, baker, grocer, fish man and coal man called regularly on their appointed days, we were never short of supplies. Then, of course was the bus service run by Jimmy Bunn of Walsingham. Wells, Sheringham, Cromer were regular destinations not forgetting the packed buses in the evening to Fakenham cinema.

Several years passed before we connected to electricity and then only allowed three lights and one plug. Ten pounds was paid for a pole to carry the wires across the road to the house, what joy to the owner of an electric cooker, no more lighting a fire for the wall oven to heat up for the weekly baking to take place. Times were tough but we were happy and content.

May Allen.

Many thanks for those memories, May, and for so many kindnesses, favours, good advice, and good cheer shown unstintingly over a long lifetime. You embodied all that is best in the Norfolk character. Quite simply 'The salt of the earth.' R.I.P.

Ken Edge.

Feedback

Most times this newsletter goes out without any response so it is all the more rewarding when a reader responds with his/her own view of events and which increases your knowledge of the subject in question. A fortnight after the last issue was printed the phone rang one Sunday afternoon. The voice at the other end spoke to me for the first time since we were teenagers. 'Kenny?' 'Yes, hello who's this?'. 'George Green, I read your article about 'The Limit' on the website and just had to get in touch.' There followed a half hour conversation of some intensity. George confirmed that the occupier of The Limit prior to their moving in was indeed Mrs. Bowles who lived there with her husband.

George said that his dad Jim, paid him half a crown (12 1/2 p) for each car that he valeted. This was certainly money well spent for all the cars were large ones. We talked about George joining the RAF as a boy entrant. Jim would no doubt have encouraged this as a retired RAF Warrant Officer with more than twenty years service. The only other person to have joined as a boy entrant was my cousin Roger (EDGE) and I asked him if he had been in touch with Roger whose interests were very strongly linked with aircraft. I was able to put him in touch with Roger with whom he would have much to reminisce over. During Jim Green's second career running a taxi service he must have covered thousands of incident free miles.

I was surprised then when he said that Jim had overturned the Jag on the Lynn straight and had been lucky to get out with minor damage to himself. He explained that the car had been stuck in overdrive and Jim's efforts to cancel it were unavailing. George now lives near Dedham in the attractive Constable country. He had a recent health scare involving a stay in hospital but happily has recovered and is back home with his family. I do hope that he might come and see us Old Sysderstonians before too long.

Ken Edge.

Urban Foxes

The young fox gazed at me steadily and seemed as much at ease in the garden as I was myself after more than thirty years. So cool, so unruffled. This changed on the approach of Henry our dog barking and business like as a sergeant major. The young fox, discomposed, scuttled away behind the garage. He was not our first foxy visitor and will not be the last although I do not see as many as formerly. My cousin May lived all her long life in rural Norfolk and said she had rarely seen a fox. Her closest encounter with one was at Godwick during her first job as maid of all work.

She had fed the hens and was searching for eggs when she caught sight of a fox carrying off a hen in its mouth. She bellowed at the fox, who taken by surprise, dropped the hen and scurried off. The hen lay limp and May scooped it up and took it indoors where it was bedded in a box and placed it near the fire and it appeared to rally. It's revival did not last and it was found dead in the morning. Her only other sightings were both few and at a distance.

I had not been living long at Haynes Road when the phone rang in the early hours. My next door neighbour was ringing to say she could hear movements at the front of the house on the gravel. I promised to investigate and lay the phone down. I cautiously opened the front door and was struck by a heavy, pungent musky smell and two fox cubs scooted away down the drive and disappeared into the furthest reaches of the garden. I returned to the phone to report my findings to Elsie.

Thereafter I slept undisturbed. Elsie's gardener, Alf reported to her evidence of foxes at the far end of the garden.

She phoned the council who were not interested but referred her to an animal group. Yes, they could help by trapping the foxes and transporting them to a more suitable environment. A humane solution but at a cost of £60 per animal far more than a pensioners resources would stretch to. Eventually a solution was provided. It was suggested that rags liberally soaked in Jeyes fluid be pushed with a long stick into the furthest recesses of the foxes rest area. This was done and the foxes vanished. Of course, this solution is not permanent. They have returned off and on, one engaged in drinking out of the fishpond and doing no harm. We let him be and he returned a number of times. One hard winter I found the body of one behind a trellis in the garden, he was stiff as a board and the ground was so frost bound I could not bury him. I had to double wrap him on plastic bags and take him to the council tip for incineration. I think the population is not as high as formerly but Jeyes fluid or not they are here to stay whether we liked them or not.

Thank you all for reading, Ken Edge.

Many thanks to all who have provided information and feedback for the newsletter. Any items for inclusion in the newsletter to Ken Edge (01708 440063). 3 Haynes Rd, Hornchurch, RM11 2HS. Email Kenneth636@hotmail.com