

## The Syderstonian

During the Flower Festival Sheila put on display the Syderstone archive which occupied two sections of the hall. It contains data and photographs from people like yourselves. Sheila believes that many more photographs are still out there and they could provide a valuable insight into life in the past in the village.

Once the people are gone who can recognise these villages, much information is lost also. So please hunt out any photos that you may have and load them to the Hall Committee who will copy them and return the originals. When Ted Hurn came to visit us two years ago he brought along a photo of Staff and pupils at Fakenham Grammar School and we had an entertaining time putting names to faces of sixty plus years ago. If you have any data or photos please let the Hall Committee know.

### St. Mary's Church

Friday 18 October - **Harvest Service & Supper** – from 6.00 pm in St.Mary's Church and afterwards in the Amy Robsart Hall.

Tickets £6.50 - last reservations by 9 October please. We hope you can attend this joyful celebration.

Saturday 23 November – **Christmas Bazaar** - 10.30 am – 2.00 pm in the Amy Robsart Hall.

Free entrance to include a special hamper raffle ticket for all those supporting the event!

Coffee morning and home-made soup lunch.

Festive stalls /Raffle / Cakes & Produce / And Lots More!

Friday 20 December – **Carol Service & Turning on the Church Christmas lights** – 6.00 pm in St. Mary's Church.

A traditional carol service followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

Tuesday 24 December – **First Mass of Christmas** – 10.00 pm in St. Mary's Church

### North Creake Aerodrome

Although only three miles or so from Syderstone I was a while learning about the existence of the aerodrome at North Creake. My father and I were driving home in the twilight when I noticed a number of squat black buildings over to the right. 'What's that over there?' 'That's the old aerodrome at North Creake.' 'But there aren't any planes there,' 'Oh no, its nothing like Sculthorpe or West Raynham or even Little Snoring where there is a small flying club. North Creake has served its purpose and although farmers use the buildings for storage that's the limits of its use today.' 'Was it important during the war?' 'Oh yes.' 'It doesn't much look much to look at. A bit sinister even.' 'No its time has gone and its military value along with it.'

*Following the recent D-day commemorations I have just read an article in the 'Best of British' magazine by Nigel Morter in which he describes the pivotal part by the R.A.F at North Creake on D-Day and during the many months preceding it.*

It was clear many months before June 1944 that an invasion of France must take place and RAF North Creake were busily engaged in diversionary tactics so although Germany were expecting an invasion they had no idea where it would come from. The historian, AJP Taylor observed that operation Overlord, unlike many similar operations, was meticulously prepared. Southern England was turned into a colossal military camp and Eisenhower was heard to quip, "Only the great number of barrage balloons floating constantly in British skies kept this island from sinking under the waves."

Since 1943 the German High Command was bombarded with misinformation regarding invasion landing sites but by Spring 1944 it was impossible to hide the military build up. The Allies attempted to convince the Germans of alternative directions of invasion with the expansion east of dummy bases in England and further dummy bases in Scotland and Northern Ireland. These would maintain considerable wireless traffic in the hope that this would be taken seriously by German intelligence, obscuring the true route of invasion.

A stumbling block for the Allies were 92 German early warning radar stations situated along the European coast. The Germans were well placed to gain significant notice of approaching sea or air forces thus indicating the direction of attack. Following a period of targeted bombing only 18 of the 92 radar stations were left serviceable and some of the 18 had been left deliberately unharmed in order to pick up and report diversion fleets. The phantom fleets code named Glimmer and Taxable had the capability through the use of various devices both in the air and at sea to produce substantial feint on German early warning radar that resembled invasion fleets. These feints gave the impression of a large scale invasion at Pas De Calais and play a crucial role on D-Day.

RAF 100 Group was formed on 23rd November 1943, and undertook special duties in the role of bomber support. Their tactics were collectively known as radio countermeasures (RCM) that were mainly concerned with challenging enemy radar. This work was top secret and was only beginning to become known in the mid 1970s. On D-Day the work of 100 Group can be divided into three areas, enemy communication jamming, airborne interceptions (the locating and tracking of enemy aircraft movement through the use of special equipment on the aircraft) and a Mandrel screen.

By 1944, Mandrel systems had developed into a potent barrage jamming weapon and with the formation of RAF 100 Group its potential could be realised. Aimed at German long range early warning radar it was operated by an additional eighth member of the bomber crew (Generally RAF bomber crews were seven strong) called the special operator. The special operator swept long range frequencies listening for enemy signals. When these were detected he turned into the same frequency as the enemy signal and turned the equipment

to transmit, this causing a jamming signal to be emitted. When this equipment was used in conjunction further sets on other aircraft it effectively produced a screen of interference that the German radar could not penetrate hence "Mandrel screen."

To maximise its efficiency the aircraft needed to fly accurately in a very coordinated manner. There could be no gap in the Mandrel coverage. The aircraft chosen was the Stirling Heavy bomber being particularly suited to the role because of its size and manoeuvrability. A flying technique was developed that would enhance Mandrels performance, called the Racecourse pattern. It demanded extremely high levels of piloting and navigation skills. The Racecourse was a circuit around a Gee navigational fox (Gee was a medium range navigational aid) and two aircraft adopted this pattern around each jamming centre flying sides of the Racecourse that were 10 miles in length with the aircraft doing a 180 degree turn at each end to preserve the patterns integrity.

The complete 28-5 mile Racecourse had to take exactly 10 minutes if the aircraft were to remain in the correct position in relation to another. This was an incredibly difficult task even with the use of navigational aid particularly as radio silence had to be observed. RAF 199 Squadron was allocated to undertake this role as part of the RAF 100 Group. After 1st May, 199 Squadron began to arrive at North Creake having held back from operations until D-Day to maintain mandrels secrecy. On 5th June 1944, 19 aircraft took off from North Creake in order to fly a Mandrel screen from Littlehampton to Portland Bill. This involved 16 aircraft (three held in reserve) of 199 Squadron and four B-TT aircraft of the USAAF 803rd Squadron divided between 12 jamming centres, therefore 12 Racecourse patterns.

The Mandrel screen jammed radar to obscure the invasion forces approaches to Normandy, essentially hiding it from the view of German radar operations and delaying their ability to predict the directions in which the invasion force was heading thereby buying time before the Germans were alerted to the actual beaches being attacked. In order that the Mandrel Screen did not obscure the diversionary force approaching Par De Calais it was set so as to allow the German radar to see through the screen at a point where the decoy could be viewing while concealing the true invasion force.

One unforeseen problem was that once the Mandrel equipment was turned on it obscured Gee the navigational aid. At this point the navigators had to navigate by dead reckoning (at night over the sea, this involves astro navigation, or finding the route 'by the stars'). In spite of this the screen proved incredibly successful and all aircraft returned safely to England although some were forced to leave early due to critical fuel levels.

It is difficult to determine exactly how effective all these deception measures were on D-Day. Arthur 'Bomber' Harris commented after the war that the work carried out by the 100 Group was one of paramount importance in connection with the invasion forces. Some significant measure has to be placed in the fact that Hitler did not seriously deviate from the invasion location of Pas De Calais until July, 1944.

An analysis after the war estimated that the work of this group saved up to 1,000 bombers within bomber command. It is fitting to recall this valuable work on the 75th anniversary of D-Day.

*Source: 'Best of British' magazine issue - June 2019.*

The article 'Jamming to Perfection' is written in by Nigel Morter who owns the control tower at North Creake and is run as an art deco BOB. They are fundraising to erect a memorial that celebrate those who served and commemorates who were lost from North Creake during its operational life. To learn more go to [www.controltowerstays.com/history](http://www.controltowerstays.com/history) or visit the Just Giving page at [www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/timetoremember](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/timetoremember). I am most grateful to Nigel Morter for permission to reproduce his article. *Ken Edge.*

### **All's well, that ends well**

Napoleon listened patiently to a senior accomplice extolling the virtues of general for consideration as to placement on Napoleon's personal staff. The man was brave, indefatigable, loyal and a tactician of the highest ability. Would not Napoleon consider these attributes and promote this paragon on to his personal staff? This was not to be any rubber stamp endorsement. He paced up and down. He rubbed his chin and turned to address his accomplice. 'All those qualities you mention, your man has all of these?' 'Yes sir, in abundance.' 'You say he is a fine general?' 'Without doubt one of our country's finest.' 'All this may be as you say, one of our finest generals, but tell me is he a lucky general?'

The quality of being lucky is not to be under-estimated. To have Lady Luck on your side is of inestimable value. I have been thankful for it, When I used to visit my cousin May we always went to Glandford and tended two family graves in the churchyard. To facilitate this we took a well used spade. Its blade was shiny with use and its two corners had been worn over many years. Its handle was smooth with much handling and it bore its makers name 'Spear and Jackson'. It had belonged to May's dad, Jack Wymer, who had spent his working life as a professional gardener.

Firstly, for the Francis family at Toftrees and later for Dr. Chappel at Highfield Rd, Fakenham and finally for the matriarch of the Aldiss family at Fakenham. Uncle Jack referred to her as 'Old lady Aldiss.' All of this usage plus the lending of his allotment at Hempton. His work was also his hobby. On this particular occasion May had tidied the tops of the graves and arranged the flowers while I edged around the graves with the spade giving the effect of a sharp, tidy finish. We were tidying up as the six o'clock Carillon of St. Martins church was playing the hymn tune of the day and we departed for Snoring as light began to fade.

'Put the spade in the coal hole Ken, don't bother about putting it in the shed now.' Problem. There was no sign of the spade. I reported its loss to May, 'Don't worry, I've got another.' I

couldn't believe she wasn't gutted about my losing the much cherished tool. I was all for returning to Glandford to search for it. 'Oh no you don't, tomorrow will be soon enough. If it is in the churchyard nobody will be poking about there in the dark.' I knew this spade meant more to her than she was letting on and I felt unbelievably bad about it.

The following morning I set off to search for it. As I drew up outside Glandford church there was the spade reposing against the iron railings. What a sigh of relief, breathed. It had been undisturbed since the previous day and was again ready for service. 'I'm so glad to have this back, I should've hated to lose it after it had been in the family all those years.' I handed it back to May. 'I wonder how many acres it has turned over in its time?' 'I do know this, Aldiss would have used father for all the rough work. They may have dibbled in the odd plant of dribbled some water over. Some seedlings but father was the real gardener.'

Many years back our son Terry was living at home and worked at sundry jobs until he joined the army. During this time he paid his dues in the form of a fifty pound note. Doubtless calculated to impress we did not see many of these and I'm sure that Terry was also a comparative stranger to this high end form of currency. As the family treasurer I took charge of this money. On one occasion I remember receiving the payment otherwise could not trace it. I did not want to mention it to Terry as I knew for certain that he paid the money in the usual way. I must have put it somewhere safe, but where? I looked in every likely place but to no avail.

Every now and again I would look in a hitherto unsearched location but always without success. As time elapsed the search petered out and the incident to all intents and purposes was forgotten. One morning I received a phone call from the librarian at Chadwell Heath. 'Mr. Edge have you lost an item of property lately?' What an unusual question for the librarian to ask. I racked my brains. I couldn't think of anything but wait a minute, what about Terry's housekeeping money that went astray. 'There was a fifty pound note tendered by my son for his housekeeping. I can't think of anything else at all.' 'That's it. We have it here, please collect it as soon as you can.' It transpired that after I returned the book it was replaced on the shelves where for some weeks it remained until a lady borrowed it. When she got down to reading it she got to find the money and being honest, good Samaritan that she was she informed the library and returned the money.

A search of their records traced me as the previous borrower. Lucky or what, I should say so! I write a letter of thanks to the good Samaritan and enclosed fifteen pounds for her to spend as she wished. I pressed five pounds on the library staff who had handled the matter so well. They were reluctant but eventually agreed that it should swell the coffers of the tea club so that all the staff would benefit from the reward. So don't underestimate the benefits of being lucky, it is extremely valuable, certainly Napoleon thought so.

Footnote - When in Cromer May and I would visit the late Ted Liddell at his bookshop in New St. Ted had all at one stage of his career been head teacher at Little Snoring School and

had taken on 'Bookworms' as his retirement interest. He had once confided that on closing the shop he would separate notes from coin and place that money between the pages of a book at random. Anybody looking for money would have searched up to 3,000 books to trace anything. He considered the money safe. I hope his memory was better than mine!  
*Ken Edge.*

### **Countryfile 4th August 2019**

This programme is regularly screened at 7pm on BBC1 every Sunday and is full of interest and it features projects all over the country. I paid particular attention to the above programme as it featured Norfolk. It turned out to be better than that because it featured projects in familiar North Norfolk. The first featured Pensthorpe Wildfowl Park near Fakenham. The staff had embarked on a programme of breeding corncrakes. Many years back corncrakes were apparently common enough but as the old rough and ready farming methods diminished giving way to more tidy and manicured practices the corncrakes natural habitat was lost and the luckless bird along with it.

The corncrake lays around five clutches of eggs a season each clutch amounting up to ten eggs or so. It is possible to hatch a good number of chicks from several pairs. The chicks are born a dark brown colour and need to be spoon fed for the first month, a very labour intensive task. The human feeder has to wear a long, dark glove or stock and 'the disguise' is completed with a dark coloured spoon and to all intents and purposes the human feeder is recognised by the corncrake as another corncrake - very flattering.

The corncrake migrates to Africa and the Congo is strongly favoured for its winter quarters. Twenty two farmers along the Wensum Valley are working to produce suitable habitats for those birds. Stretches of long grass where the corncrakes can hide and nest close to the proximity of a pond or water is what is needed and local farmers have done their bit to provide this. The mature corncrake is a long necked speckled bird notable for its curious call, a kind of tinny sounding rasp a bit like opening a squeaky, hinged tin lid - very distinctive, unmistakable. The project is in its infancy but being well managed and supported it looks destined to succeed.

At an animal rescue centre near Cromer a project is up and running to breed red squirrels. The staff running this project have been carefully selected because breeding these creatures is notoriously tricky. The operation requires so much care that any diversion from tried and tested methods ensure that failure will follow. However the painstaking work of the conservationists have ensured the three new red squirrels have reached maturity and are ready to be released. Unlike the corncrakes they cannot be released in Norfolk owing to the presence of grey squirrels which carry a pox which is deadly to the red squirrel but has no effect on the greys. Grey squirrels are deadly rivals to the much rarer red - they are larger, heavier and the reds are no match for them. In view of this the three reds due for release will find a new home in a forested area in North Wales where the grey is absent. The three

reds were a lively bunch and have been called with names beginning the letter 'I'. So Ignatius, Indiana, and the third whose name I forget were made ready with items of monitoring equipment strapped to their small bodies.

They were much admired by the programme presenter, Marguerita Taylor who said these were the first red squirrels she had ever seen. I am a good bit older than Marguerita and I have only seen two in the wild. On the first occasion was as a child walking with my father on the north side of Coxford Wood. There was a rustling in the branches above us and a reddish blur as the squirrel leapt from the branch of one tree to another. It happened in seconds and I was barely aware of what happened. My Dad enlightened me. 'Boy, that was a squirrel we just saw!' I had to wait many years before my second sighting which was on the Isle of Wight on a quiet forested road when the squirrel crossed unconcernedly just ahead of the car. I related the incident to Mr Young on whose farm we were staying, He told me that one regularly came to his bird table between half past five and six in the morning. Being in holiday mood we were never early enough to share his sighting and I look forward to seeing my third red squirrel sometime in the future.

An artist was present at the Cromer location studying the movement of various animals and a number of models which looked pretty much life size were on display. She had crafted these from crochet work which she had described as 'Crochet-dermy'. A feather and hide free form of taxidermy. A very life like deer was being closely investigated by a number of llamas. Apparently she took over two years to crochet three leaping lions which formed an impressive display at the London Olympics. Magnificent as they were the red squirrels and corncrakes stole the show. *Ken Edge.*

Footnote - Young squirrels are called 'Kittens'.