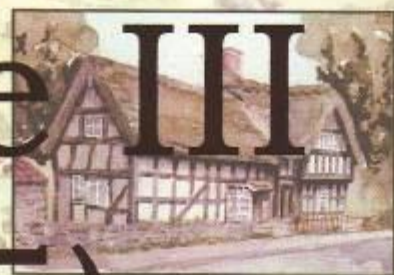


Living History

Yarpole Group Parish
2000



Volume III
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Living History.

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2005.

The new storage cupboards in St. Leonard's Church:



During the past ten years there has been increasing concern regarding the lack of storage at St. Leonard's Church. Over the years, the vestry has been compromised by its use for storage purposes for which it was never designed and the need to provide appropriate accommodation for a full set of vestments, designed and fabricated by a group within the community, highlighted the shortfall. After due discussion it was agreed that additional storage cupboards should be created against the west wall; design criteria were drawn up; Michael Bartosch, the church architect, was commissioned; the requisite faculty was obtained; quotations sought and the contract awarded to Richard Barnes, 'Creative Oak', 'Byrons', Monkland, in the Autumn of 2004. Richard completed the work to a very high standard and installed it in the church during the summer and autumn of 2005. The work has been carried out in European yellow pine which has been toned to match the vestry door and polished with natural beeswax. An opportunity was taken to have library shelving fitted which gives a very flexible arrangement for the provision of internal shelving.

Cost of the work was £5,262 plus approximately £800 for the adjustable shelving.

Research Note: As part of some research into the roads through the Parish before the Turnpikes, a 300 year old Estate Map of Bircher Hall has come to light and is raising considerable interest, (enquires to Ian on 788):

We hope to bring you more on that in a future definitive Article.

Nature Jottings: The 'white blackbird' that frequents the upper end of Green Lane in Yarpole, is still active and is believed to be about six years old; and in the same area the lesser spotted woodpecker has been seen.

Wild mushrooms were picked and eaten up to 14th November.

The berries have all gone and the worst of the winter has still to come.

Chairman's Report – Yarpole Living History - Oct. 2005

Overview of last year – completion of Monumental Inscription project of St. Leonard's churchyard. The final version and index were presented to the Herefordshire Family History Society, who will be issuing them on CD, and the P.C.C. Their presentation copy is now available in the church for visitors.

The Parish Chest was re-indexed and passed to the Parish Clerk. All the historical items have now been deposited at the Hereford Record Office.

Newsletter – another brilliant year for the editor (Ian) & secretary (Ron). So many people speak to me about the quality of production & the interesting pieces.

Membership – we now have 33 paid up members. The introduction of subscriptions only lost us very few parishioners.

Water Extraction from the brook – after an application from Mr. Price, many months & several letters from the Environment Agency, we finally received a satisfactory response from them. The extraction will be allowed with conditions.

Oral History – this project has progressed. Only at the Harvest Supper was I offered an interview completed by a non-member! Thanks to Rhianon for her efforts.

Fete stall – thanks to Graham, Ian, Rhianon & John Turrell for their efforts – better weather this year!

Finally thanks to Graham, our photo librarian, and Audrey, our indefatigable Treasurer.

Each of the two attached Articles continues a Series:

(1) That of 'Oral Histories', and (2) Commemorating those from the Parish, who died in the two World Wars and whose names are recorded on the War Memorials.

Copyright: To ensure that we conform to copyright conventions, members and Friends are reminded that these *Living History* Articles and Newsletters may only be reproduced, by photocopying or 'scan and print', for the sole purpose of personal research.

The SUBSCRIPTIONS for 2006 will remain at £5 per year for local members (plus any donation you wish to make), or £12 per year for country members.

The subscription which falls due on 1st January 2006, should be sent or given to John Gunson, Victoria Meadow, Green Lane, Yarpole. Cheques should be made payable to "LIVING HISTORY GROUP".

We hope you wish to carry on receiving our Newsletters, and thank you for your interest and support.



The Community Shop
dressed for its
first Christmas



**Hoping you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
we leave you with the Date of the Next Meeting:-
Tuesday 21st February 2006.**

James Julian Brooks, Private

10th Battalion. King's Shropshire Light Infantry

The following was published in the LEOMINSTER NEWS in 1918. It is available to be read in Leominster Folk Museum, where they have a scrapbook of First World War cuttings.

An Old Luctonian Killed

Mr. & Mrs. Brooks of Brook House, Bircher, have received official information that their second son Pte. J.J. BROOKS, KSLI, was killed in action in France on August 3rd. He joined the Shropshires when 19 years of age and in 1916 was sent out to Egypt with the Shropshire Yeomanry, where he had seen much active service. This year he was removed to France and was expected home on leave. Pte. Brooks was well known in the district, being an old Lucton School boy. The following letters have been received from his battalion:-



"Dear Mr. Brooks - I am sorry to say that your son was shot through the head yesterday morning. He was carried down to the dressing station and died about an hour afterwards. He was buried yesterday near a farm close by ----- . I am very sorry to loose (sic) him as he was a good, keen boy and one of my best Lewis gunners. With much sympathy for your great loss, I am yours sincerely, J. Marshall, Captain, KSLI"

"Dear Mrs. Brookes, - I must ask you to forgive me for not having written to you before, but we have only just come out of the line. I cannot tell you how sorry I am for you in the loss of your son, Pte. J. Brooks. He was in my platoon, and no officer could wish for a better soldier. I have only recently joined this battalion, and do not know many of the men, but usually gets to know the best and the worst first, and your son was undoubtedly (sic) amongst the best of men of my platoon. He was hit in the centre of the forehead by a bullet from a hostile machine gun while doing trench sentry duty. The wound was a bad one, for the bullet never came out of his brain. He was bandaged by our stretcher bearers and taken to headquarters. I never thought he would live to get this far, but my hopes revived when I heard that they had got him to a motor ambulance. However the shock was too great and he died before they could perform the necessary operations. His comrades lament the loss of a staunch friend, and we his officers, have lost a good soldier, a brave man, and one who always put duty first. Once more let me convey to you my deepest sympathies and also the relations and mourning friends of my brave soldier. Believe me, sincerely yours, R. Guy Shackles, 2nd Lieut., KSLI"



In Loving Memory of
Pte. James Julyan Brooks,

K.S.L.I. (late of Strathgairn Veterans)

Killed in action in France, August 3rd, 1918.

AGED 22 YEARS

The commemorative
scroll plaque in
St. Leonard's Church



Initial research by John Gunson with a view to compiling a fuller account of the life of J.J. Brooks in a future Article (December 2005).

Interview with Barbara Griffiths:

Barbara was born in Abertillery 87 years ago and had four brothers – Humphrey Bowen, John Basil, David Beaumont and Christopher Aubrey Bernard. Her mother's maiden name was Mary Bowen.

Barbara was looking at a variety of photographs of people and events in Yarpole and recognised her best friend Violet Griffiths (nee Chamberlain) who married the head teacher at the school after his first wife died. Barbara had been a bridesmaid at their wedding and made the bouquets for the bridesmaids. (Her own uncle coincidentally married her friend's sister.)

The head teacher she remembered most was W.E. Griffiths (who was from Wales, as was his first wife) but she also remembers a Mr. Webb who lived in the old rectory at "Coggate." She had loved school, and been good enough to pass the first exam to go to the Grammar school, but for some unexplained reason had not got a place at the second round, despite the head teacher trying to find out the reasons from Hereford. What annoyed her was that another pupil who had not been good at his work "the biggest dunce" had been given a place at Lucton, she suspected because his father was one of the governors.

She remembered the head teacher's first wife training them to sing and dance making the costumes and putting on "three night concerts."

There were two rooms in the school, at that time, and two porches where they hung their coats and bags which held their lunches of sandwiches and a bottle of cold tea. These had to be eaten outside. The quickest way to school was past the fish pools but her father had told them not to go that way in case they fell into the pools. Her older brother would go that way and be home quickly but the rest of them would take much longer the safe way!

She enjoyed school, but her mother would keep her off to do cleaning (which she was fanatic about) or to look after her youngest brother, even keeping her off the day before she left school.

The head's wife had gone to get her a leaving present from Leominster and the other pupils gave her flowers which she pressed and she still has the petals.



Her father used to breed and break his own ponies and she told the story of how when she was only three she was in the bottom of the trap being driven across the Common when the pony shied and kicked out hitting her back which resulted in her spine twisting. She had to do exercises to correct this, but these did not work, (partly because she felt her mother did not let her spend enough time on them as it stopped her working), so she was put in a plaster cast from the age of 14 to about 30 to try to correct it.

Living on the Common at Stocking Barn Farm her father and oldest brother were able to "cut fern and cock it up to dry" then sell it to Jackie Hinton who had the store at the bottom of Broad Street in Leominster. She also remembered that there were trees lining Broad Street and Etnam Street where the horses were tied up while people did their shopping. Bikes were also lent against these trees and left while you shopped with no risk of theft. It was about a 20 minute bike ride to Leominster. They also sold bunches of watercress which grew in the stream that ran through their orchard.

Her mother had told her how she used to go hop picking and what a good day out it was, but she had never gone herself. When it came to sheep dipping they would drive the sheep across the Common to Barkers where they would "stank up a brook" to make a pool and dip them under with a long handled broom.

When she was about 8 or 10 years old, she was playing on the common when there was a bad thunderstorm which caused a 'whirlwind' which fetched the straw roof off their cider mill and took it into a neighbours field. Her mother called them all in by the front room door which was very unusual as it was not normally opened.

Another early recollection resulted from discussion about which cottage used to be the nurses cottage. She remembered a 'Nurse Doran' living in the first one, who rode a bike and had a dog which followed her around. On one visit to her home the dog knocked over the ferret cages which were on stands. She was not very popular as the ferrets provided much needed fresh meat by catching rabbits.

Her first job on leaving school was to look after the head teacher's daughter Tess, which she enjoyed. She also worked as a housekeeper in Leominster for 20 years for a cider maker named Harry Yeomans, whose niece seemed to be fond of male company to the extent she would take them up to her room, which at that time was shocking to Barbara.

Her parents were not keen on her working away from home but just after she had left the job in Leominster the Nanny at Croft Castle had come and asked her to housekeep for Lord Croft whose wife had died. She had only been there a week when the Nanny was taken ill so she was doing both jobs including the cooking. She loved her time there, especially when there were visitors. The vegetables served then would all be from the garden including broad beans every one of which she had to peel and serve with butter. When she laid the tables she would not put flowers in the centre of the table in case there were insects in them, so she always put a bowl of fruit instead.

Another job which she had to do was to take the Croft children, Charlotte and Bernard, up to London when they went to school, or to parties, which she described as hectic. She related how Charlotte's daughter Jenny recently got married in Charlotte's mother's (Lady Croft) wedding dress which had been altered and which Barbara had saved for Charlotte. After nine happy years at Croft she lived at home on Bircher Common and nursed both her father and mother.

She developed an antagonism to the "Brummagems" who would park on the common although it was not allowed. She had gone shopping one time and came back to find her gate left open so the animals could get in off the common, her potatoes dug up and peas, beans and fruit missing which she attributed to the "Brummagems".

Barbara's family were Methodists and were involved in running the chapel on Bircher. It was originally run by Mr. Richards and his wife but then her mother took it over until she died when Barbara ran it until there were too few people coming to carry on and it had to be sold. She remembered how she would attend Sunday School at 11 o'clock at Bircher, then go to the chapel at Orleton Common and back to Bircher for a service at night. She would sing solos at these services and also at Yarpole, Shobdon and Leominster. She thought Yarpole Chapel closed in the 1960s.

One of the photos showed Barbara on the Carnival float in 1933. She was carnival queen that year and was crowned by Mrs. Kevill Davis. She was seated on a chair in the back of a lorry. she described the old parish hall as being right out onto the road so she could step on to the lorry. The route started at the old parish hall, went through Yarpole then ended up at Highwood, where the present Lord Croft lived when he was a boy. Her uncle had worked at Highwood.



Bill Richards appeared on one of the photos. He used to keep the Post Office, as had his parents before him. He married Annie Leeke, who came to the chapel on Bircher, and had a son who is still alive.

Interviewed by Graham Brookes, transcribed and edited by Rhianon Turrell. (December 2005)