

# Living History.

NEWSLETTER June 2009.

## **Nature Notes**

Early sightings:

Swallows were seen in Lady Meadow on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April; two song thrushes were seen in Green Lane Crescent, Yarpole on the 20<sup>th</sup> April; blackbird fledglings were seen on 19<sup>th</sup> April and the cuckoo was heard in Bircher in early April.

Does anyone have a good, clear, recent photograph of the white blackbird which has been seen often in the parish?

Look out for the Common Blue Sowthistle in June/July (see accompanying article).

## **Parish Boards**



A new parish notice board has been erected near The Old Stores in Yarpole.

Meanwhile Colin and Janet Knight have moved the flower planter from by the Yarpole village sign to underneath the information board at the end of Nibletts Lane.



## **Yarpole Village Fete**

The Living History Group will, as usual, have a significant presence at the annual fete. However, this year the stand will be bigger and better with plenty of interesting

photographs and other exhibits for visitors to look at. Members of the group will be on hand to talk to visitors and encourage them to take part in our work.

## **Articles**

The following articles accompany this edition of the *Newsletter*:

*Cicerbita macrophylla: The Common Blue Sowthistle* by Ian Mortimer

*War Memorials: William Albert Somerset Kevill-Davies* by Ian Mortimer

*Millicent Godding's Memories: Part 2* Interviewed by Pat Bloomer and Sue Harrison, transcribed and edited by Rhianon Turrell and Ian Mortimer

Also included is the Contents list for Volume 6 (2008) of the Living History articles and Newsletters

## **Correction**

In the March 2009 edition of the *Newsletter* the interviewers for accompanying article *Millicent Godding's Memories* were wrongly listed as Pat Bloomer and Hazel Whitworth. This should have read Pat Bloomer and Sue Harrison. We apologise for the error.

## **Yarpole Community Building Project**

The Living History Group acts as the archivist for the St Leonards Community Building Project and is recording progress on a daily basis. A photographic display of building progress can be seen in the bell tower.

## **2009 Subscriptions**

**Subscriptions are now overdue for payment. It was agreed at the February Committee Meeting that there would need to be a slight increase in subscriptions to cover increased costs in producing the newsletter, the accompanying articles and the hire of the village hall meeting room. Subscriptions will be £6.50 for 2009. Country member's subscriptions remain unchanged at £12. Please send your payments to the Hon. Secretary - Ron Shaw at 3, Green Lane Crescent, Yarpole, Leominster HR6 0BQ or leave it at Yarpole Village Shop for his attention.**

## **Copyright**

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## **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is the AGM and will be held in the Committee room of the Village Hall on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2009 at 7.30pm.

## Parish Nature

## *Living History*

### Cicerbita macrophylla:

When this particular wild flower was first spotted in the verge up by the Old Rectory, it was not immediately recognised; so a search of the available reference books was made; the only match that could be found was *Cicerbita alpina*, the Alpine Blue-sowthistle, which is very rare in this part of the world; indeed it is protected under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

The County's Biological Records Centre was consulted and they confirmed (from the photographs overleaf) that it was in fact *Cicerbita macrophylla*, the 'Common Blue-sowthistle' which, although not protected under the 1981 Act, is sufficiently uncommon that it is categorised a 'Priority Species' and its locations are registered.

There are four species of *Cicerbita* recorded in Britain; these are the native Alpine Blue-sowthistle (*C. alpina*) and the introduced (from Eastern Europe) Pontic Blue-sowthistle (*C. bourgaei*), Common Blue-sowthistle (*C. macrophylla*) and Hairless Blue-sowthistle (*C. plumieri*).

The Common Blue-sowthistle is a herbaceous perennial plant with strong rhizomes - easily recognised by its large, spade-shaped, prickly-edged, closely packed, ground-carpeting leaves; flowering from July till September, the pale-violet-blue flowers are carried on tall stems. Our specimen seems to prefer damp shaded conditions; and since, as we understand, cattle and sheep find the leaves something of a delicacy, other colonies in the Parish will not be found in fields, but on road-side verges.



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The above photograph shows how effective *C. macrophylla* is as a ground cover when left to its own devices.

This photograph illustrates the flower in various stages.



This photograph of the leaf is approximately two thirds of the actual size.



Compiled by Ian Mortimer (2009)

Living History June 2009

## WILLIAM ALBERT SOMERSET KEVILL-DAVIES

Lieutenant 9th (Queen's Royal) Lancers

who died on Saturday 15 May 1915 . Age 38.

Cemetery: BAILLEUL COMMUNAL CEMETERY EXTENSION (NORD) Nord, France

Son of William Trevelyan Kevill-Davies of Croft Castle; husband of Dorothy (nee Lacon); William Albert Somerset Herbert Kevill-Davies, known as 'Herbert', was born in 1877, schooled at Haileybury, followed in the footsteps of his father who had served with the 17<sup>th</sup> Lancers, by taking a Commission with the 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars and served in the South African Campaign (1900). awarded Queen's Medal 4 clasps and was Mentioned in Dispatches.

In the First World War he was attached to the 9<sup>th</sup> Queen's Royal Lancers which was part of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division of the B.E.F.

The cavalry did not engage in any lancer charges after 1914 and thereafter, having 'lost their horses', went into the trenches to fight as infantry. However the cavalry officers would have continued to lead from the front and suffered greatly as a consequence for they would have been very conspicuous to the enemy by their uniform; as the war went on the officers dressed as 'other ranks' to avoid being so conspicuous.



His name is recorded on the Canterbury Cathedral's Roll of honour to the 9th Lancers, and the two regiments, in which he served, the 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars and the 9<sup>th</sup> Queen's Royal Lancers, are represented by their respective crests in the East Window of Croft Church.



He was killed on the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1915, the first day of the Battle of Festubert.



**The battle of Festubert**, 15-27 May 1915, was the second British contribution to the second battle of Artois, the major Allied spring offensive of 1915. The first British attack, at Aubers Ridge (9-10 May), was a disaster. The BEF suffered 11,000 casualties without achieving anything.

The French attack on 9 May had achieved a dramatic success, capturing part of Vimy Ridge, but the Germans reversed this with a counter-attack. General Joffre called on the British to mount another attack to prevent the Germans moving troops to the French front. Sir John French agreed to this.

The attack would be made to the south west of Neuve Chapelle, the scene of the failure of 9 May. As at Neuve Chapelle, the 1st Army under General Douglas Haig would launch a two pronged assault on the German lines. The gap between the prongs would be rather narrow, effectively leaving a German strong point in the middle of the British attack. Festubert marked a significant step on the journey from the search for a breakthrough to the war of attrition, aware that the Germans were expecting an attack, Haig set limited objectives for the advance, and made it clear that the main purpose of the battle was to grind down the Germans. The attack was preceded by a 60 hour artillery bombardment in which over 100,000 shells were fired, but large parts of the German lines survived intact.

The attack went in early on 15 May. It was more successful than at Aubers Ridge, with some British units reaching and capturing the German front line. Over the first few days of the battle, the British were able to capture more segments of the German front lines, but on 17 May the Germans pulled back to their second line, 1,300 yards behind the original front line.

After a series of failed attacks on 18 May the British rested and replaced some units in the front line. An attack by two Canadian Brigades on 24 May failed to achieve any success, and on the following day all further attacks were cancelled to save ammunition. The battle ended with a series of unsuccessful German counter-attacks, aimed at recapturing their original front lines. The fighting was not as deadly as at Aubers Ridge. Over the thirteen days of the battle, the British suffered 16,000 casualties, most during the first four days of the battle. The British advanced up to 1,300 yards, but in most cases this only took them to the new German lines. The French attack in Artois continued into June, and also turned into a battle of attrition, but again without achieving any significant successes.



Key:  
Green lines indicate the German trenches.  
Cross-hatching indicates areas bombarded by British artillery prior to the assault.  
Scale: 1cm = 100metres.

Researched by Ian Mortimer (2009) (Acknowledgements to J. Rickard)

## Millicent Godding's Memories Part 2



### Early memories of farming

Their farm was called Lyners, but they spell it Liners now. Monica Thomas lives there who bought it off her mum and dad. She used to teach in Hereford.

There was no regular pocket money. They had to do jobs outside but not for money. When they were going to mow a field on the farm, and it had

been spread with manure they had to go and pick out stones as the muck had been scooped up from the farmyard which was on the rocks so stones were scooped up with it. They put the stones in tumips so their dad could pick them up later to put them in a gateway.

**Lugging hay using a gambol. Millicent is standing on the load and sister Beryl is leading the horse**



They grew some potatoes which were dug out with a mooter, a v-shaped tool which went down the middle of the row and parted it, then they scratched them out with their fingers.

They would have to pull up mangols and swedes, cut off the top and cover up with leaves until they could be collected. Sometimes they had to do jobs before they went out when they were older.



“No water was laid on to the farmhouse. Tanks collected as much soft water as possible from the house and barn roofs. This was used to do the washing of clothes and red quarry tiles in the living room and kitchen as well as drink for the animals in sheds.

Our drinking water had to be carried in buckets from a spring near the farm below us. My sister and I had to fetch a bucket full quite often. Dad carried two full buckets on a yoke. In very dry weather he would put a barrel on the gambol and fill that up and let the horse pull it back up to the house.”

## Cutting hay with a mowing machine and two horses



“There are more machines now; we used to do all ours with 2 cart horses. We walked back and forth sowing seeds for beet, swedes, turnips and mangolds, leading the horses with your good heavy shoes on, your feet would be sore by night.”



They had to fetch the cows in regularly and tie them up. Their dad used to milk them and sold some milk from the house to 3 or 4 people who came with cans, which you were allowed to then. Their Mum used to make butter and they stood there and churned it sometimes. The skim milk went to the pigs. They had 2 or 3 a year. Their mother would take her butter to Ludlow and would sell it in the market below the town hall. People would bring butter, poultry, eggs, spare vegetables, bunches of primroses at 6d a bunch. You paid for your stall; a man came round and collected the money. At Christmas their mother would dress a lot more poultry, they'd be ordered ahead. The kitchen would be stripped to do the feathering of about forty birds.

The biggest changes she notices are the loss of farms and buildings converted into homes. There were a lot more people farming.

She remembers Philips Acre farm with George Thomas, then Edie Everall was the last farmer there.

The bigger farms have swallowed up the small ones and more bits of land are going for horses, with less animals because small farms are not paying.



## Housing

When they were first married she and her husband continued to live with her parents until they were offered a council house which was 7 James Close. They heard on January 16<sup>th</sup> from a cousin's husband who was on the council that they had got it and they moved in on January 31<sup>st</sup> 1953. All their children were born while they were living there, David, Alan, Jean and Ian and they lived there for about 13 years until they came here. (Bicton House)

She describes what their present home was like



**Bicton House then and now**

“This house was terrible when we came, it had a very shallow sink with a hole in the wall where the water went out, the pantry and utility area had an earth floor, with some slabs and some bricks on end.” They had a bathroom and toilet put in upstairs in what was a box room and her husband converted the outside toilet into a dog kennel. The house hadn't been lived in for some years before they moved in.

It was a farm but it was divided up, this house and the orchard were all they could afford at the time.

Mr. Chambers from Russell Baldwin and Bright helped them with the bidding at the auction. It went up by £100 at one time and he said he thought that would frighten the others off “It frightened us as it was more than we had agreed to borrow!” It cost £4,700. She tells how they had to go back to the bank manager but he said “Good when we went over the amount agreed. He would give them a short term loan. Do you know anyone has any money invested that might be coming out that can lend it to you after that? As it happened Mum and Dad had and the bank manager knew but couldn't tell us. They lent the rest and we paid them back”

“The ceiling was just the bedroom floor boards it hadn't got anything covering them. If you dropped a tie it would come through to the kitchen.

There was a furnace in corner for boiling clothes, an open range with an oven on one side and big bar for the kettle and in the other corner was the bread oven. We had both taken out.

At home Mum used to sterilise feathers from the ducks and chickens to make pillows in the bread oven. She never used it for making bread.

Our sitting room had a great big kitchen range which heated water in a boiler on one side and the fire in the middle also heated an oven. We had it taken out we wanted a fireplace.”

A plaque outside says 1835 or 53 so she presumes that was when it was built.

Where Carol Nightingale lives was a farmhouse and the rest was farm buildings. They used to sell milk. It was taken to a stand at the crossroads with several other farmers’ milk to go to Cadburys. Bill Talbot used to drive one tanker.”

“We grew lots of vegetables up at the council house but don’t do so well here. There’s frost early and late here. The cold seems to come down the valley. We tried roses they wouldn’t grow.

We do grow runner beans, carrots, parsnips, beetroot, early potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, some out and some in the greenhouse. We preserve some frozen, dig parsnips when we want them and store carrots in sacks covered in old sacks in the garage, apples are stacked in tomato boxes in the pantry in single layers, but I use a lot straight off to make chutney from windfalls.”

### Entertainment and Social Life

“I met my husband through Young Farmers; there were dances at Orleton every Saturday and Whist drives weekly. Another girl & I did the refreshments as we didn’t like whist. The family would walk down there with a torch. I was a founder member of Orleton Young Farmers. One time we had a big whist drive with the W.I. and we walked from home with all the draw tickets in a pillow case in the snow.”

“There was a choral society in Orleton for many years. At one time we played tennis at Orleton vicarage when the Vicar was a Welshman and had a smashing choir. The next vicar put stepping stones across the lawn and spoiled the court.”

“Orleton W.I. is 70 and my mum (her name was Morris) and auntie were founder members along with several other relations. When we moved down here I still went back and still do. I was treasurer for 24 years.

There were lots of classes at Young Farmers & W.I. making baskets, sewing. W.I. has changed, for one thing we’re older and can’t get younger people to come, they’re far too busy. Too much business comes through, but we have a lot of fun.”

Interviewed by Pat Bloomer and Sue Harrison

Transcribed and edited by Rhianon Turrell and Ian Mortimer