

No: 102



# Sherington Historical Society

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# Newsletter



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**April 2019**

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[www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs](http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs)

# Special dates for your diary

## 9th April

Members Meeting. Please come for a low key evening archiving and chat.

## 14th May

Ben Line's Letters by Robert Pipes. Robert has offered to talk to us about Ben Line and read extracts from Ben's letters.

## 11th June

Out and about at Piddington. Our annual outing this year is out at the Roman Villa at Piddington. We need to be there for 7.00 pm and it will cost £5.00 each. More details nearer the time.

## 22nd-23rd June

Open Gardens / Scarecrows. We are running the scarecrow competition this weekend.

## 9th July

Members Meeting / July Jolly. Please come for a low key evening archiving and chat, or it may be a July get together.

## August - no meeting

## 10th September

Members Meeting. Please come for a low key evening archiving and chat.

## **September - Open Day**

There is nothing planned for this year currently.

## **9th October**

The History of Olney. Tom Jones from Olney's Cowper and Newton Museum is coming to talk to us about the history of Olney.

## **12th November**

Members Can Talk. A chance where we can talk about something we care about. Please contact any member of the Committee to let us know what you want to talk about.

## **10th December**

Christmas Party. Games, wine and nibbles. Bring a nibble to share and need there be any more said.

## **14th January**

Members Meeting. Please come for a low key evening archiving and chat.

## **Mid-January**

January Jolly. More details nearer the time.

## **11th February**

Magic Lantern Show. Kevin Varty will be coming to show his lantern show entitled *St Dustan and the Cenotaph*, more details nearer the time.

## 11th March

AGM. Time to review the year and appoint the Committee for the next.

Our Tuesday monthly meetings start at 8.00 pm unless otherwise stated.



### **Mark's Musings (A ramble from the chair)**

Spring has truly sprung and we have now gone back into British Summer Time, although not feeling much like summer as I write this with it being cold and overcast and us having snow in the last few days.

The AGM went as smoothly as I'd hoped, and we now have all of the positions filled, with Kay as Vice Chair, Liz as Treasurer, Diana as Secretary, and now Betty is back on as a Committee member. It has a familiar feeling to it, but with some of the jobs moved around.

I am looking forward in kicking off the new programme which starts this month with a members meeting, where we'll try and continue filling the folders with outstanding filing, but this time I wonder if we maybe start splitting out some of the folders as a few are getting very full.

In May we have a talk by Robert Pipes who will read extracts from Ben Line's letters from World War 2. That should be quite interesting and should give us an insight into some of the people who lived in the old village. One of his letters is reproduced in this newsletter, so a taster for you for May. Hope to see you then.

*Mark Vale*

## **News Snippets**

On 22-23 June this year the Friends of St Laud's are organising the Flower Festival and the Open Gardens. The Historical Society will be organising the Scarecrow Competition once again to co-incide with this event, with the judging planned for

the same weekend. It will be our tenth time running the Scarecrow Competition. Mark did suggest the last time we organised the event in 2016 that perhaps we should run a themed event the next time. Thoughts or ideas please. Entry forms will be available from the village shop nearer the time. Further information from Mark on 01908 216543.

We had an email from Matheiu Lecul in France who is planning a celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Liberation of France. He is doing historical research on Trooper Edward Thomas John Gardiner of the Royal Armoured Corps who died aged 22 on 1 September 1944 near the Somme. His parents were John Thomas Gardiner and Kate Florence Gardiner of Sherington. Philip has looked into this and checked with Yvonne who spoke to the Bell family. The Bells didn't come to Sherington until the '60s and didn't recognise any of the names. So we've drawn a blank here unless anyone else can throw some light on it. I've replied to Matheiu.

Kay has kindly printed out some more of our notelets for sale as we'd practically run out of them and she's also printed some more single cards with the Photographic Competition photos. So we'll have these on sale shortly, and hopefully on the stall we'll be sharing with St Laud's at the Mayday event on The Knoll on 6 May.

We announced the winners of the 2018 Photographic Competitions at the AGM in March. The results are printed at the back of this newsletter. Congratulations go to David Carter, an SHS member, who won the Wild Sherington competition with his Fieldfare which is shown on the front cover, and to Peter Soul who won the Sherington: Sights and Seasons with his photo of The Tunnel in The Ridings.

*Liz Revell*

## **Extract from Ben Line's letters**

*Robert Pipes is coming along to our meeting in May to read some extracts from Ben Line's letters. Robert has spent many hours transcribing the letters and has kindly allowed Sherington Historical Society to use extracts from his transcription along with Ben's photos. Ben Line (1913-1996) lived in Sherington all his life except for his time spent in the war. He was called up in 1941 and wrote to his mother regularly, with his aim appearing to be to provide his Mum with a complete picture of his life away from home. Here is one of his letters.*

## 4th August 1941

Not much to report this week as it hasn't been so exciting. I've had a letter from Jennings and he's at Crowborough. In writing, he says they have plenty of bullshit and also mentions that there is no 'crumper' – Will can tell you what that means. Can't think what has come over him. I never heard him use those terms here. At the moment they're sleeping without 'biscuits' so he says he has to turn over every half hour to let the blood circulate round his backside. Dear has written too and more cheerful this time. Williams – that accountant chap who I got friendly with on church parade – and Whiffen, both from 64(R), have landed at Dear's camp during the week. He says he's more settled and is driving a 15cwt Chevrolet lorry. By his tone, I think he's enjoying that part of the business. Wham has been moved fifteen miles out to guard an aerodrome for a month. He's driving a 30cwt Bedford.



Just the same old Dear. A room-mate of his had a false alarm weekend leave and by the to-do, took it for granted that the chap was having the baby. He reckons he must have calculated wrong. Finished off by asking how my valentine was.

Done well this week for letters. Had seven in two days. One from Francie, Jennings, Alma, Dear, Hope, Kathy and Auntie Bud. Kathy writes to say that she's had no news from her Ian and she's going to Ilfracombe for her holiday with Dorothy Clarke. Also she's had her interview and is put down for munition work anywhere within fifty miles. Whatever will her mother do? Says she's been talking to you. Oh missus! Poor Hope, she tells me to go careful with the girls and to remember the ones I've left at home. Hopes I soon come back as I don't know what it is like when I'm away and winds up by saying 'absence makes the heart grow fonder' and she's sure it's right. Look what you've let me in for! Auntie Bud says she's coming to see you on Sun so by the time you get this she'll be there. Give her my love and tell her I'll write when she gets back. Trust she will have nice weather and a pleasant stay with you. My only and biggest wish would be to come while she is with you. Give her her gee-gee cup. Leave is very uncertain all the time and the invasion scare is always lurking in the background.

I've got on quite well with our squad during the week – they seem very decent chaps. We've had an addition during the week and his name is Shand. I never mention

his name but what I think of Shanny. They're most of them broke by Tuesday or Wednesday. The CO – Lt Col Spencer – and Maj Joyce came round on Friday to take a view of things. I was taking the class when they arrived but I kept plodding on and thought to myself I probably know more what I'm talking about than they do. The CO said, "Why have you got one more in your class than the others corporal?" so I stood to attention and said, "I don't know sir, but Cpl Judd may be able to tell you," whereupon I unearthed Judd for his Lordship's benefit. Did a bit of 'manual' on Wednesday. Three of us went down to the tank park to take a two-pounder out of a Matilda tank. It took over an hour to get round the red tape but eventually we got to work and we sweat. When I next tell the squad that the two-pounder weighs 200cwt 2qrs 7lbs, I shall feel very sure of the fact. It wasn't the weight altogether, but the confined space.

Andrews has soon had things come home to him. I think I told you how he backed out of helping Ronnie Alcock, well Ronnie got off OK. This week Andrews went up on a charge for smoking near a tank and got three days Jankers. Poor beggar, he knows it too, but we all find a quiet satisfaction in seeing it come home to him so soon. Those debts are never paid in coin. Charlie Grey was the only one from our bungalow to be on church parade so we've had quite a nice morning together. Ronnie and I have had one of our old original sparring bouts and wiped the floor with our twisting and twirling carcasses. He's as ticklish as I am so we're a good pair.

Tomorrow is a holiday. Lt Tree told us on Pay Parade that Monday would be observed as a Sunday but there would be no church 'fatigue'. There was a big laugh went up. I just asked Ernie if there was anything of note during the week and he said, "Yes, we haven't been on a charge." It was becoming quite a weekly stunt with him and Tommy.



I went to the pictures with them last night and saw Anna Neagle in No No Nanette after which we supped in our room, Tommy having a tin of sardines and I got some bread and butter at the Salvation Army hut. His wife had sent some home-made scones so we ate and were filled. I've nearly finished My Lady of Shadows and it is very nice. The tale is mostly about the Castle Morton district and Lundy Island so that has made it all the more interesting.

Went to North Camp yesterday afternoon to get an RGH badge for Dear. Met Mr Thompson and his wife

and several folk I knew – it seems so nice to be greeted in friendly fashion so far from my little circle. Saw a wedding missus. It wor pretty and though they were strangers to me I found pleasure in having a ‘decko’. I went into a shop and got talking to the lady, who I’d seen at chapel (I thought). Found out it was her sister and double. She invited me to go upstairs and see her sister and mother, who is 87 but as I’d got to get back for 4.30pm tea I excused myself then, but she said I could call in and see them if I felt lonely any time. She herself is in the region of 60 so don’t jump.

It is rumoured that we’re reverting to normal working hours in about three weeks so I don’t know what will happen then. Ernie is taking me in hand because I have a mannerism. I say sort of so and so. Sort of something else. He says, “You either do or you don’t, there is no ‘sort of’ in it.” Lays the law down – in joke of course – and says things are coming to something when an Irishman has to teach an Englishman to speak English. Causes quite a bit of fun. Tommy and I don’t let him forget he’s Irish and tell him that Irish people sleep with the pigs and chickens etc etc. When these wars start he instantly refers to that awful place called Sherington and Weary and Cockeye. I don’t think he’ll have a grain of vanity left by the time we part. Quoted what I could remember of The Lost Child to him Thursday night and said the description fitted admirably, much to Tommy’s amusement.



*April 1941 64 (Left) Troop C Squadron*

*Standing: Dear 2nd from left, Andrews 4th from left, Alcock 6th from left  
Seated: Jennings 5th from left, Wham far right with Ben next to him*



Had a cold sweat on Saturday morning. Hurrying to get on parade, I got my pull-through jammed in my rifle and had to take it to the armourers. Thinking I should be staggged because I hadn't got it for drill I sat tight in my breeches but nothing was said. I was able to get it back in time for rifle inspection so that was OK. Fools for luck.

Monday morn I was sorry you didn't get the news first hand but as you see, I have to get letters off when and where I can. The girls seem to be quite a willing (?) band. It would do them the world of good to get to it. To see the girls here doing their bit makes one glad. They're a fine lot taking them as a whole. Ran into Violet as I came from chapel last night and she bleated out, "Good night corporal!" the huzzy, I put her straight in the dining hall this morning and she apologized, so all is forgiven.

Tell Will a former pal of Tommy's had a similar experience as Mr Lawrence but overcame the situation by dobbing a red hot fag end on the other chaps hand. That's technique! I read the extracts from your letter – dealing with Will's accomplishments as a midwife and the killing of the pig for the boys' visit to Sherington – to the boys and they were highly delighted.

Freddie Walters also raised a laugh. Ernie said, "What a b\*\*\*\*y place this Sherington must be." At the moment Ernie lies like a corpse on my bed and Tommy is on Ernie's bed and is prompting me and says, "Don't forget to kill that pig." I'll bet Lizzie Smith is seeing life in her quiet corner these days. Eh what a to-do. Ernie sent his socks to the laundry and they only just reach the top of his boots now. He does look a guy, wandering about in his little ankle socks. Blimey, my Alf has got to be like Charlie Lake then (careful). What a choir! Hardly angel voices though. Poor Alfie Coverley, it is to be hoped that he doesn't fall like his predecessor. Mmmm Ah! Beauty of Bath, a few would be nice and I don't think they would fall on stony ground. If it isn't troubling you too much I should like a few nice ones to take to my little Violet Roberts, the girl with the broken leg. The way you put Mrs Farrar's lovelies in ever rising tones tickled me. Didn't notice anything special after the peas but I told Tommy what you said and he said, "Your old lady is a lively old tart, I know."

Thank Will very much for the stamps and also for writing. My eyes sparkled when I saw the letter in the post office window. Being Bank Holiday we're not at work so we collected letters from the post office. They arrange them in the window and we have a look and then tap the window. Charlie and Ronnie went with me and said, "Look Ben! There are two for you," almost as pleased as I was. We share our troubles and joys. It is two years today since Tommy's little girl died and if my memory is right it

is your wedding anniversary so many happy returns of the day. May the next one be in more pleasant and prosperous times. Tell Will I understand his difficulties in not having much time to write. I'd have understood if he hadn't written at all, but as he did it was very nice. Also tell him that I shall put him on a charge for sleeping at his post. Reverting to gels doing their bit, Annie Sharp is in the WAAF's so despite the fact that we laughed about her she's doing her bit.

Went to chapel on my own again last night. Charlie was doing Ronnie's PAD duty for him so couldn't come. Met with the usual welcome and the parson's daughter Kathy was – you know. Usual songs and recitations and so passed another pleasant Sunday night. I was invaded from both sides by the aunt and niece and as I had a tune book I shared it with the aunt and dug the niece in the ribs because she wasn't singing. Walked down to the YMCA with them after and had just left them when I met Ernie and Tommy. They had a lady acquaintance about to join them so I just had a chat and passed on. When they came in they'd had a nice chat and a laugh with her and Tommy's Lancashire talk evidently amused her because she kept laughing so he asked her if she'd got a crumb in her pants and whether it tickled her. What an expression.

Blossom has deserted. Told Dear in my letter, thought he'd be grieved. Tommy has told me a lot about life in Lancs and also heard him talking to another Lancashire chap. They have a different notion of life to us – lots of Mrs Robinson's and Entwistle ways come into their makeup. They certainly know how to enjoy themselves. Ernie is blowing me up for not having shaved etc and as he is taking us in hand and is bringing us up, he feels it his duty. He told Paggy that he was an Aboriginal and it was hopeless to try to train him. He reckons I ought to be an author as I write pages of most convincing lies etc etc etc. Seeing that I'm in good hands, rest assured that my welfare is guarded. That will be a load off your mind. I'm now told I must go to dinner so with an effort I draw this edition to a close. Remaining under this guardianship I say goodbye with all my love to you all. Ben.

## **2018 Photographic Competitions**

The results were announced at the 2019 AGM of the winners of last year's Photographic Competitions. This time we decided to ask David McKay to choose a shortlist as previously, but then to have the public vote for the winners. Voting was via the Sherington Facebook Community and Historical Society groups (we received no votes on either group), emails from the contributors (not much interest

here) and voting slips with the display boards at the AGM evening and then in St Laud's (much more interest from both of these). The results are shown below.

## **Sherington: Sights and Seasons**

The votes were as follows:

The tunnel by Peter Soul, the winner with 12 votes

Flypast by Stephen Kennedy, second with 11 votes

Snowdrop walk by Peter Soul and Farm track by Anna Kennedy, joint third with 8 votes

Sunset over graveyard by Stephen Kennedy, 5 votes

Colour vision 2 by Peter Soul, 5 votes

The last sunset of winter 2018 by Andy Ramsden, 3 votes

Autumn by Peter Soul, 3 votes

Looking over where the new houses will be by Michael Nokes, 1 vote

New housing development gets under way by Stephen Kennedy, 1 vote



*The Tunnel by Peter Soul*

## **Wild Sherington**

The votes were as follows:

Fieldfare by David Carter, the winner with 21 votes

Fox by Emily Leslie, second with 14 votes

Great spotted woodpecker teaching youngster by Steve Slater, third with 11 votes

Moorhen's nest by Will Bush, 6 votes

Comma butterfly by Stephen Kennedy, 3 votes

Male Sparrowhawk by David Carter, 2 votes

Fungi by Stephen Kennedy, 1 vote

Common spotted orchid by Peter Soul, 0 votes

Wheatear by Will Bush, 0 votes

Mallard by Peter Soul, 0 votes

Robert Pipes  
reads extracts from

# **Ben Line's WW2 Letters**



**Tuesday 14 May 2019**

7.45 pm for 8.00 pm

**Sherington Village Hall**

Refreshments available  
Raffle

Entry: £2.00/£3.00 for members/non-members

Web: [www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs](http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs)

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