

No:83



# Newsletter

# Sherington Historical Society

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**June 2014**

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

# Special dates for your diary

## **Saturday 7th June 2014**

Picnic at Yew Tree Farm (lunchtime) to celebrate the centenary of Diana Morgan's grandparents buying the farm on 24.06.1914. 12 for 12.30 pm. Please bring some food to share.

## **Tuesday 10th June 2014**

Visit to Milton Keynes Museum. 6.45 for 7.00 pm at the Village Hall, or 7.25 pm at the Museum.

## **Saturday 21st June 2014**

Judging of the scarecrow competition.

## **Tuesday 8th July 2014**

Members meeting.

## **Tuesday 12th August 2014**

No meeting.

## **Tuesday 9th September 2014**

Members meeting (preparation for Open Day).

## **Saturday 13th September 2014**

Film show - The Feast by Peter Gardner.

## **Saturday 20th September 2014**

Open Day (WW1). If you have any family stories or artefacts, please get in touch with Mark.

## **Tuesday 14th October 2014**

Talk by Stephen Kennedy about his research into his family.

## **Tuesday 11th November 2014**

Members can Talk (with an emphasis on WW1).

## **Tuesday 9th December 2014**

Christmas party.

## **Tuesday 13th January 2015**

Members meeting.

## **Tuesday 10th February 2015**

Eleanor of Castile and the Eleanor Crosses by Chris Rowe

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

## **News Snippets**

Just to remind those that haven't paid this year that the membership fees are now due. If you're not sure whether you've paid or not for this year, please have a word with Diana.



*Yew Tree Farm 1927*

It's our annual members' picnic on Saturday 7th June (12.00 for 12.30 pm). This year we've been invited to the Morgans at Yew Tree Farm to celebrate the centenary of Diana's grandparents buying the farm on 24th June 1914 (see the picture to the left and on the following page). This year the picnic is at lunchtime on a Saturday and we are hoping for good weather. Please bring a plate of food to share.



*Yew Tree Farm circa September 1919. Emma Jane Middleweek (nee Tillyard) is holding her daughter, Phyllis (Rollinson)*

Our June meeting on Tuesday 10th June is a visit to MK Museum, McConnell Drive, Wolverton, MK12 5EL. If you would like a lift or are happy to give a lift to someone, please meet at the Village Hall at 6.45 pm to leave at 7.00 pm. If you are travelling direct to the Museum, please be in the car park or at the Museum door for 7.25 pm. If you would like to go but haven't yet put your name on the list, please contact Mark.

Our Scarecrow competition will be judged on Saturday 21st June by Dianne Sutton from the Milton Keynes Heritage Association. Please put your scarecrows out by 10.00 am to be a part of the judging. The winner will be announced at approx 4.00 pm on that day in St Lauds.

We'll be showing Peter Gardner's film of the Feast in St Lauds on Saturday 13th September at 8.00 pm, so please put this date in your diaries. Further details to follow.

## Past SHS events

We had a good turnout for the AGM in March. Last year's Committee were voted in again with the exception of Betty who stepped down as Secretary. This post is now vacant. If anyone would like to put themselves forward for the job of Secretary, please see a member of the Committee.

For our April meeting we welcomed Colin Rowe who gave us an illustrated talk on motoring up to the 1930s entitled Going for a Spin. It was a very enjoyable evening and there was a good turnout. Colin brought some of his motoring books for us to look at after his talk.

We had a stall at the annual Mayday event on The Knoll, also a visit from Ann Metcher from Australia who is related to the Joyce family. Her ancestors in Sherington were matmakers and she was delighted to visit the White Hart to sit on the seat with the rush back. Perhaps one of her distant relations wove the rush matting for this seat.

We were sorry to hear of the death of Fred Niebel at the end of February. Fred spent some time at the POW camp in Sherington during the War. Kay met him and she has written an article for this newsletter (see below). We also have an article following on from Kay's from Mike Brown, whose father knew Fred.

### **Friedrich-Wilhelm Niebel**

**Born 9th October 1925 - Died  
27th February 2014**

Fred, as he became know to us at the Sherington Historical Society, was called up in 1943 before he was 18 years old. He was captured near Caen in Normandy on 21st August 1944 and was transported by rail to a POW holding camp somewhere near London. Then later on by rail to Buckingham, marched 8 miles from



the station to a place called 55 German POW Camp Shalstone, which is between Brackley and Silverstone. At Shalstone he was held for about six months, during which time he obtained an army driving licence which allowed him to drive groups of POWs to agricultural jobs. Local farmers and food producers employed POWs to help out on the land. This is how he came to Sherington, driving to the POW camp, which was then situated where Hill View is today.

Fred Niebel came back to visit Sherington in May 2004, where he made contact with Norman Arnold who was Chairman of Sherington Historical Society. I also met Fred on this visit, and I remember going for a lunch together with Norman's wife Anita.

I warmed to Fred as my mother was born in Berlin. My German was very rusty but Fred's English was very good. He talked about old times and was able to give the society some photos and papers which he had kept from days at the camp. He had driven all the way from his home in Wuppertal in his Audi TT and was on a journey to retrace his memories from all those years ago.



Fred drove up north after visiting Sherington to try to find Hubert Brown who had been stationed in the Army at the Shalstone camp. The society later received an email from his son Mike Brown, who told us of the friendship that his father had had with Fred and whose kindness he had never forgotten. It was Mike Brown who emailed the society telling us of the sad passing of Fred Niebel.

I for one was very sad on hearing the news, as I thought him a very brave soldier who made the best out of being captured.

Fred did eventually return home after the War and worked in the family business,. Over the years we sent Christmas cards to each other, and he told me he had two daughters who the Society have sent their condolences to.

R.I.P. Fred Niebel.

*Kay Turrell*

*An article and pictures sent by Mike Brown whose father knew Fred.*

Fred Niebel passed away this year,

When he visited me in 2005 we sat into the night and he told me his story, I don't think he ever wrote it down, which is a loss to the next generations. We can all look at the official records but the things ordinary people lived through often pass on with them. I often think back with questions I would have asked my Father and Grandfather, but now can never be answered.

If my own memory serves me right, this is what Fred told me.

Fred was conscripted into the German Army in 1943 at the age of 18.

He told me, "I didn't want to go, but you know what would have happened to me if I didn't!



*Fred is second from the right*

He was a qualified driver and told me how he had reported for his driving test with 5 litres of petrol from the black market, due to the shortages of fuel in Germany.

As a schoolboy he had done French language at school, but Hitler had noticed the schools doing this and decreed, "the French were the enemies of Germany, so we all started to learn English".

One of his boyhood memories was of the man who was the hairdresser. He had been a POW in the First World War and used to tell the young boys of his experiences as a prisoner. Fred never imagined he would become one too.

After he had done his training he was posted to Normandy in the Fecamp/Saint Valery en Caux area.

There he was the driver of a Kubelwagen, a vehicle about the size of a jeep made by Volkswagen.

When the Allied Invasion started, one thing Fred remembered was the sky was full of aircraft overhead shooting and bombing them, in spite of them having US and RAF markings.

“The silly Germans troops looked up and proudly said they are from Germany”.

In the area he was at they could go down to the beach to collect things from foundered ships, all sorts of things that were not available to them (food and sometimes drink and cigarettes), however the officers noticed and said it was too dangerous and forbid them to do it.

The war progressed and Fred’s unit was moved to nearer the fighting.

As his column moved up to the front they were ordered to pull over and let “the biggest tanks I had ever seen past”. “It was the SS in their black uniforms”. Fred pulled his Kubelwagen nose first into the hedge. As the Panzers rumbled past he heard a very loud crashing noise. And felt something touch the back of jacket He looks round Back half of the kubelwagen was flat to the floor. A tank had run over his vehicle, it was the tank track that had brushed past his jacket. His vehicle was a write off. “I had nothing to drive, I had to ride in the back of an old kitchen truck” he remarked.

Later his unit was in action in a building, outside there were very loud explosions all around. A piece of shrapnel hit the side of the helmet he was wearing. It had left a big dent in it and his ears were ringing, a narrow escape. The Officer in charge told the men to remove the bolts from their weapons and throw them away, then go out with their hands up. They surrendered to Canadian soldiers (one confiscated Fred’s

wristwatch and he never forgave him!). They were sent down to the beach, and kept behind barbed wire. It was cold, and they scooped holes in the sand and got down into them to try and get warm.

They were used as labour to help unload ships. Food was scarce and they were hungry, unloading boxes of prunes they smashed some and ate them. Next they all had the runs.



*Fred is second from the right, and maybe the English soldier with the cat on the left is dad*



The POWs were put in the hold of a ship and put to sea, not knowing where they were going, the only way to look around for clues was to send somebody up to the deck to empty the toilet pail over the side and look around. So they forced themselves to keep filling the pail! Eventually they landed and were sent to a camp near London (maybe Kempton Park?). This was the most frightening time of the war for Fred and his fellow POWs, as the V1 and V2 weapons were landing quite regularly in southern England, and they didn't want to be killed by their own side.

Fred remembered a big English NCO with "very thick glasses". A very cold man, he never spoke except for one word "Fifty". The Germans nicknamed him "Fifty". The only words he ever spoke were "fifty" at assembly when the POWs had to parade and be counted in groups of fifty.

Eventually Fred was sent to Camp 55 where he met my father and they became friends. Fred was a "trusty" driver and drove lorries for the working parties.

He told me this time was the happiest days of his life, and when the War was over he put off returning to Germany as long as he could. Eventually his parents became insistent about him coming home.

My father often spoke of him, one thing he used to say was when he returned from leave and got back to Brackley railway station, he would go outside the station and surprise surprise "Fritz" as Fred was known as then, would be waiting for him in a lorry. He never had to walk back to camp!



Father was eventually demobbed and returned home, and they kept in touch for a few years. I remember a picture arriving from Germany of Dad's friend and on the back Fred had written "fond memories of Camp 55".

Fred returned home to Wuppertal near Christmas in 1947 via Harwich and Hamburg.

He was shocked to see all the war damage in Germany.

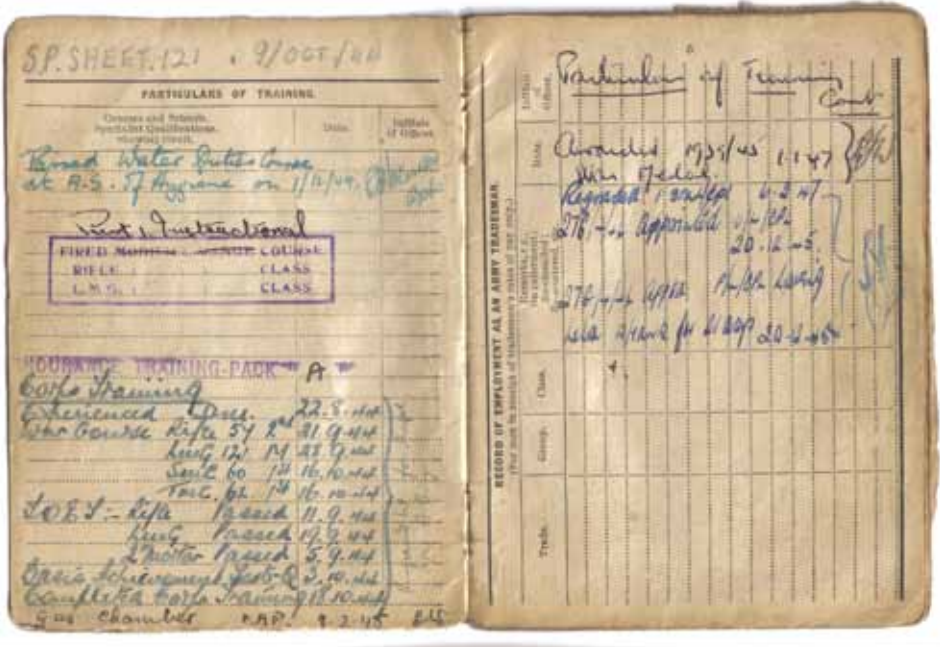
At Wuppertal he was given a lift by a taxi driver from the station, but was dropped off about a kilometre from home so the taxi driver could go ahead and let his mother know he was here so not to give her heart attack.

All his family had survived the War, and the house had very little damage.

He worked for the family business as a travelling rep selling accessories to undertakers (brassware etc).

My father kept the picture he had sent and often spoke of him right up to his death in 1998. When Fred came looking for my dad about 2004 I missed his visit, but managed to trace him through the internet and SHS. I contacted him, he visited me. And later I visited his home in Wuppertal.

A man who made friends everywhere he went, we will miss him.



Above: Pages from Hubert Brown's pay book.

Opposite page - top: The back of the card sent to Hubert (Jimmy) Brown from Fred Niebel referred to in Mike Brown's article. The photo of Fred on page 5 is on the front of the card.

Opposite page - bottom: Fred and lorry at the POW camp, Sherington. Fred is sat on the bumper at the front next to the letter 'J'

Emil Flasche & Sohn

Fachphotographie

Wuppertal - Barmen

Geogr. 1865

*In kind remembrance to the time  
we had together in Camp 55  
Your friend J. R.*





# SHERINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

web: <http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs>

email: [SheringtonHS@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:SheringtonHS@yahoo.co.uk)

## Scarecrow

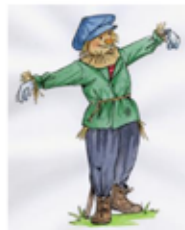


Image by Caroline Leslie

### Competition 2014

Sat. 21st June - Sat. 28th June

Judging will take place on

Saturday **21<sup>st</sup> from 10am**

**Flower Festival Weekend**

**Entries £1 per Scarecrow**

**This year's competition will be judged per household**

**Please register your Scarecrow**

**and get your entry form from**

**Sherington Village Shop**

**Church road** last entry Thursday 19th June

Display your Scarecrow where it can be seen  
attaching the entry form so it can be judged  
Queries phone Mark 216543 or Kay at 23 Carters close

The Judges decision is final