

CARLTON & CHELLINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 16, No 3

NEWSLETTER

September 2018

Chairman's Letter

It is with sadness that I report the sudden death of Michael Dalton, whose wife Joyce continues as an active member of the Society. On behalf of you all, I would like to extend our sympathy to Joyce and to her family.

Our silver anniversary dinner was attended by forty members and guests – a good turn-out, given that our present membership has now fallen to the mid-sixties. While acknowledging the hard work and creative energy contributed by our committee we should also thank those other members who came along during the afternoon to help set out and decorate the tables, along with the large number who stayed behind after the event to make short work of the washing-up and to clear away the tables and chairs. It was, altogether, a most successful and enjoyable ‘community’ evening.

During recent weeks, Historic England has been taking advantage of the exceptionally hot, dry weather to send up reconnaissance aircraft to hunt for outlines of long-forgotten monuments, buildings and burial chambers, which normally lie hidden beneath vegetation. A local example, which was described in coverage by the BBC and national press, reveals two Neolithic ‘cursus’ monuments on farm land between Newton Blossomville and Clifton Reynes. These are one of the oldest monument types in the country and believed to have been used in processions during ancient rituals. It is now evident that part of the complex had lain hidden beneath an earthen bank known as a headland, part of an ancient ‘ridge and furrow’ field system resulting from extensive ploughing in medieval times.

Finally, I would like to pass on congratulations on your behalf to committee member Louise Heathcote and her husband Tony who celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary on August 16, the day of the Society's anniversary dinner.

Mike Meade

EDITOR'S NOTES:

1. Inside you will find a list of the Society's remaining talks for September - November 2018, plus a taster of our 2019 schedule.
2. Also distributed with this newsletter is the latest newsletter from Bedfordshire Archives (or details for downloading it from the internet).

Mike Pratt

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COMMITTEE NEWS

Mike Meade, our present Chairman, consented to take on the position for a maximum of two years when he was elected in May 2017. His agreed term of office will come to an end at our AGM in May 2019, and we are seeking a replacement.

THE COMMITTEE WOULD BE DELIGHTED TO HEAR FROM ANY MEMBER OF THE SOCIETY WILLING TO STAND FOR ELECTION AS CHAIRMAN OF OUR SOCIETY FROM MAY 2019.

The duties of the Chairman are not very onerous — they include chairing meetings of the Committee, which occur about six times annually, writing a short contribution to our quarterly newsletters, and general coordination of the Society's activities.

Officers of the Society: Chairman, Mike Meade, 5 The Moor, Carlton, Bedford MK43 7JR, (01234) 720070; Vice-chair, Myriam Ritchie, (01234) 721119; Secretary, David Chadwick, 1 Meadway, Harrold, Bedford MK43 7DP, (01234) 721497, E-mail CCHSsec@gmail.com; Treasurer, June Wood, 4 Pavendam Road, Carlton MK43 7LS, (01234) 720689. **Committee members:** Louise Heathcote, Pam Hider, Lloyd Lugsden, Judy Meade, Mike Pratt (Newsletter Editor), Winifred Pratt.

REMAINING PROGRAM FOR 2018

Unless otherwise stated, talks are held on THURSDAY evenings in CARLTON VILLAGE HALL

Doors open at 7.30 pm for 8.00 pm start.

ADMISSION: Members £2, Visitors £4.

Tea or coffee & biscuits between 7.30 and 8.00 pm.

Thursday September 20th

A talk by **George Carmichael** about the **Great War**, entitled 'The Warrior Returns'.

Thursday October 18th

A talk by **Alan Reed**: 'Richard Shuttleworth and the History of the Site'.

Thursday November 15th

A talk by **Kate Bostock** on 'William Cowper and his Hares'.

Our talk for February 2019 will be by **Roy Smart**, on the life of **Amy Johnson** the pioneer English aviatrix. In March we will have **Ken Shrimpton** of Felmersham on "The Diary of a Gravedigger". For April we are planning a coach trip to the Bury St Edmunds area.

UPDATES ON SOME CARLTON CHARACTERS

In this newsletter I present additional information which has recently come to light concerning characters from Carlton and Chellington whom I have written about in previous newsletters.

More on Charles Stewart

In my newsletter of June 2014 I gave an account of what I knew of the life of Charles Harold Stewart, the benefactor who in his will left the present Carlton playing field for the use of the children of the village. During his time in Carlton he was an instructor in electrical trades at the Carlton Training School, and although I knew where Charles had been at school I did not then know where he received his subsequent technical education or training. However, I have now discovered some correspondence at The National Archives (TNA) in Kew which makes this clear.

In July 1918 Charles was living in Harlesden, London NW10. Since April 1915 he had been working as an apprentice engineer for Clément Talbot Ltd., automotive engineers (later Sunbeam Talbot), whose factory and administrative centre were in Barlby Road, Ladbroke Grove, North Kensington. In 1918 he was occupied as a centre lathe turner there, making components for Rolls Royce aero engines needed for the war effort. In July 1918 Charles was approaching his 20th birthday. He had apparently been called up for military service some time previously, but his company had gained temporary exemption for him because he was engaged on important war work. It seems that the limit of this arrangement had been reached; the company had done all it could for him, and he now sought to obtain further exemption on other grounds. These details all emerged from the correspondence I mentioned above.

Communication between Charles and the Middlesex Appeals Tribunal of the Ministry of National Service, over the period 24th June to 19th September 1918, was bedevilled by the fact that the Ministry frequently sent their letters to him at the wrong address. He had submitted his appeal for exemption in June — his grounds were that his father was dead, his elder brother and only sibling was killed in July 1916 at the Battle of the Somme, and his mother was incapacitated. She had worked so hard to fund his education that she had suffered a "paralytic seizure" and had to go into hospital. She was now recovering with an elderly great-uncle of Charles' who had an imbecile daughter, and Charles' income from his work was her only means of support.

His application was considered no less than three times. On the first occasion (10th July), the tribunal decided it did not have jurisdiction to make a decision

on the appeal; they made a note on the application form, however — “Father *not* dead”. The appeal was then reinstated, and was heard again on 21st August. This time it was refused. However, for unknown reasons it was reinstated once again, and heard on 11th September. This time Charles was granted further temporary exemption from military service, for 6 months, on condition he carried on working at his present job. The reason cited was “Regulation 16 (d) — Serious Hardship”. This must have been a great relief to Charles at the time, though in fact the Great War only lasted a few weeks more before the Armistice was signed and the danger of his call-up receded.

Although this correspondence explains how Charles received his technical training, it leaves a mystery regarding his father. He was absent from the Stewart household at the time of the 1911 census, and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, in the information it provides about Charles’ deceased brother Kenneth, describes his father as “the late Alexander Petrie Stewart”. The characterization of him as deceased must have been provided by Charles’ mother — but on the other hand the Middlesex Appeals Tribunal, in its consideration of Charles’ application for exemption, seems to have concluded that he was *not* dead, and one of their other communications had mentioned his “presumed death”, implying that there was no proof either way. I suspect that he had just disappeared, and there is a variety of possible explanations for that.

Another aspect of Charles’ life that needs investigation is his employment after he finished his apprenticeship. It is known that his mother Marianne came to live in Carlton some time after 1918 (she is listed in electoral registers from 1930 onwards, living in the High Street), and it seems likely that Charles came with her. He never married as far as is known, and was living with her until her death in November 1941. Details of his employment at the Training School would be very helpful in fleshing out his life; I understand that these probably exist, but they are not easy to access.

Recently I was surprised to discover that Charles’ mother, and later Charles himself, were briefly owners of the house in Carlton High Street where Winifred and I now live. She purchased it for £390 at an auction held in February 1941, from the “Personal Representative of the late Mr J.J. Short”. Mr John James Short, the previous owner, had died in 1933, but his widow Emma had subsequently lived on in the house for several years until her own death in 1940. The sale was finalized in March 1941. It is not clear whether Marianne Stewart ever lived in her new house, however; she died in November of the same year. The executor of her will was Charles Alfred Gaze, who then lived at *Stonehaven* in the Marsh, and in April 1942 he assented to the transfer of ownership to Marianne’s son Charles. In May 1943 Charles then sold the house for £300 to Jack Rangeley, a Bedford

architect. The latter made some improvements to the property, and was able to sell it on in August of the same year for no less than £460!



The frontage of the former Clément-Talbot motor company building in Ladbroke Grove, where Charles Stewart served his apprenticeship. It still exists, under the name of Ladbroke Hall.

More on Charles Gaze

Charles Gaze was mentioned in the last section of this newsletter, but he also featured in several of my previous ones — in September 2009 and December 2011 I noted that he was a Parish Councillor during the 1930s, and in June 2013 I said that he was the Food Officer in the Carlton and Chellington Invasion Committee in the run-up to World War II. During his later professional life he was the financial administrator for one of several building companies in Harrold run by members of the Clayson clan, and Marianne Stewart presumably made him the executor of her will because of his financial expertise.

Charles Albert Gaze was born on 9th December 1875 in Hammersmith, London. He was the third of six children. His parents were Alfred Henry Gaze (1848 - 1935), who originated in Southampton, and Winnifred Gaze, née Wilson (1849 - 1912), who was born in the City of London. Charles’ father Alfred was a “Tourist Agent”, and the family lived in Kensington for a good many years, at 59 Bassett Road, where they employed two servants, a cook and a housemaid. Early in the 20th Century, however, Alfred and Winnifred emigrated to Australia.

In the 1901 census Charles Gaze, then aged 25, was still living with his parents in Kensington, and his occupation was given as “Builder’s Assistant”. The following year, he married Annie May Vivian Stevenson in Paddington, London.

In September 1917 Charles Gaze signed up for service in the 1914 - 1918 war. He was aged 41 at the time, and he joined the Royal Naval Air Service, the forerunner of the Fleet Air Arm. He was assigned to a

shore-based unit, HMS President II at Crystal Palace. This establishment dealt with naval financial accounts. When Charles joined the Navy they recorded his date and place of birth (given above), his height (5 feet 8¾ inches), hair colour (brown), eye colour (blue) and complexion (fresh). They also noted that his previous employment had been as Managing Director of a building company. His service in the Navy was short; he was discharged before the end of 1917 so that he could take up a civil service job as an accountant with the Department of Explosives, which he did in January 1918.

Charles next appears in the record, with his wife, in 1919. They appear on the passenger list of the P&O ship "Beltana", on which they travelled from London to Melbourne, Australia. His occupation was given on the list as "Accountant", and hers as "Wife". They had no children with them, and I have found no indication that they ever had any. They were probably going to Australia to visit Charles' father — his mother Winnifred had died in Melbourne in 1912, but his father survived until 1935. However, they may also have been contemplating settling there.

Regardless of why they travelled to Australia, they were back in England by 1920, and living in Carlton. His address in the Electoral Register of that year was given just as "Carlton" but certainly within a few years he and his wife were occupying *Stonehaven* in the Marsh (the house where Alec and Joan Keron later lived for many years). In March 1928, Charles Gaze stood for election to the Carlton Parish Council, but was not elected. However, he stood again in 1931, and this time was successful; he was re-elected in 1934 and 1937. Charles Gaze died in 1954, but I have not been able to find a death record for his wife, who suffered from mental problems towards the end of her life. Neither of them seems to be buried in Carlton.

More on Captain Humphreys

Captain Charles Humphrey Humphreys was another man who served on the Parish Council in the 1930s, and whom I have mentioned in previous newsletters. Like Charles Gaze he was also active in the Carlton and Chellington Invasion Committee, of which he was Chairman from its formation in 1941 until his death in 1943. Meetings during this time were held at his home, The Grange in The Marsh.

Captain Humphreys proved difficult to track down in some respects — I have not been able to find any record that definitely refers to him prior to World War I. Since he was born in 1883, that leaves some 31 years of his life unaccounted for! It is possible that he was born and brought up overseas. However, there are some sparse Army records showing that he joined the Army soon after the outbreak of World War I, was quickly promoted to 2nd Lieutenant, and that by the time of the

Armistice he held the rank of Captain. He served in the Royal Engineers, initially in the 1st East Anglian Field Company, and later in the 1st Bridging Battalion, which specialized in the rapid erection of temporary bridges over obstacles of various kinds. His last posting seems to have been in a bridge-building training unit at Christchurch (then in Hampshire, now Dorset). When he was demobilized his home address was given as "Wayside Cottage", Carlton, Sharnbrook, Beds., which I believe to have been the house in The Causeway at the bottom of the track leading up to New Barns Farm.

In the 1939 Register (compiled for the issuing of Identity Cards, to organize food rationing, etc.), Charles gave his employment as "Manager, Motor Garage". He was also not only an Army Reserve Officer but a Special Constable. His business premises, which he owned, were (at least in the 1920s) at 23 St Mary's Street in Bedford, which at that time would have been on the A6, the main road through the town.

Charles' membership of Carlton and Chellington Parish Council has already been mentioned. He was elected in 1927 (possibly earlier, but the relevant records have been lost) and in 1931. He did not stand in 1934, but his wife did — she was Mary Rhoda Humphreys, who became the first ever female member of our Parish Council. Neither of them stood for election in 1937.

I have been able to find a good deal more about the early life of Charles's wife than about his own. She was born in 1876 in Brixton, Surrey, but spent her childhood in Dunstable, where her father, Frank Ellard Percival, was a Straw Hat Maker. Mary Rhoda was the eldest of several children of Frank and his wife Marian. Mary Rhoda married in 1900; she was living in Bloomsbury, London, at the time, and that is where the marriage took place, at the church of St George. Her bridegroom was Arthur Staddon, a bookseller, of Luton. She was 23 years old, and he was 34. The ceremony was performed by the Vicar of Christ Church, Luton. The 1901 and 1911 censuses find Arthur and Mary Rhoda living in or near Luton; he gave his occupation variously as Stationer (1901) and Printer and Bookseller (1911). They employed a living-in general servant, but had no children.

Then, in 1914, this couple divorced. Divorce was unusual at that time, and the details of this one are strange to say the least. Arthur Stadden alleged adultery by his wife. However, she counter-claimed that the marriage should be declared null and void in any case; it had never been consummated by reason of the incapacity or lack of inclination of her husband. She further said that her husband had encouraged her infidelity by his frequent absences from home and his encouraging her to spend time alone with a male friend of his. She did not go as far as actually admitting

adultery, even though in 1913 she became pregnant and was delivered of a still-born child which, if her marriage had indeed not been consummated, could hardly have been her husband's. The Divorce Court required Arthur Stadden to undergo a medical examination by two specialists to demonstrate that he suffered from no such incapacity as alleged by his wife. In the end the court granted him the divorce he sought; the decree became final on 29 September 1915.

During the period of the divorce proceedings Mary Rhoda had been living in Thorpeness, Suffolk. Early in 1916 she remarried, in the same region of Suffolk, and her bridegroom this time was Charles Humphrey Humphreys, who was then still serving in the Army.

As mentioned earlier, Charles and Mary Rhoda moved to live in Carlton soon after the end of World War I. In 1920 a son was born to them, Percival Humphrey Humphreys — he was their only child, which is not surprising, as Mary Rhoda was now 44 years old. She died in 1942, shortly before her 66th birthday. Her husband died the following year, and they have a shared grave in the churchyard at St Mary's, Carlton. She consistently shaved a few years off her age in her later years, and the inscription on the memorial is a case in point; her date of birth is given as 11th September 1879, when in fact she was born in 1876.

Charles died in a hospital in London in 1943; his estate was valued for probate at more than £14,000, no mean sum in those days.

As for the son, Percival Humphrey Humphreys (who was reportedly known as "John" Humphreys), I can find little information. There is an indication that he served in the armed forces during World War II, and in 1946 he was married, in Carlton, to Iris Foster. In the marriage register his occupation is given as "Engineer", and his wife's place of residence given as "Glenmore" on the corner of The Marsh and the High Street. In fact Iris is said to have been a younger sister of Violet Foster, also of "Glenmore", who married our late member Stan Smith in 1956.

More on Henry Cleaver Lay

Henry Lay was also involved with the Parish Council before World War II. He was a member in 1927 (prior to which records have been lost), and was re-elected in 1928, 1931 and 1934. He took on the role of Chairman in 1931 and retained it until 1940.

He was born in 1886 in Lavendon, where his father was a builder. In the 1901 census Henry described himself as a "Builder in Stone", and in 1911 he was self-employed as a "Builder and Contractor". By this time he had left home and was lodging with a family by the name of Knight in Bozeat, the head of which was his uncle, Charles Knight. By coincidence, Charles'

daughter Mary Ann Knight was also present in the household, aged 24; she later wrote the slightly fictionalized memoir about her childhood called *Knighton Grange*, which was edited by our Chairman and published by our Society a few years ago.

In April 1915 Henry was married, in Harrold Congregational Church — his bride was Eleanor Marie Rootham. Her father Joseph Rootham was a prominent member of the Chapel, who served as Sunday School Superintendent from 1891 to 1924. Later, in September 1915, Henry joined the Northamptonshire Regiment to fight in World War I. He and his wife were then living in Northampton. He served in England initially, but early in 1917 he was shipped out to Egypt, where he spent more than 2½ years. On his demobilization in November 1919 he gave his address as The Green, Harrold, where his wife and young son had moved to be closer to her parents in his absence.

After the War Henry turned to farming, and rented Victoria Farm in Carlton from its owners, the Fairey family. He remained there until about 1937, by which time four further children had been born, and then moved to live in Odell, where he engaged in dairy farming at Village Farm. He was heavily involved with the Harrold Congregational Church, where he served for many years as a Deacon. He died in 1973, and his eldest son, Alan Cleaver Lay, born in 1916, lived at "Summerfields" in Carlton High Street and carried on a family tradition by being a long-term Parish Councillor.



Henry Lay and his wife Eleanor

More on Herbert Denison

I wrote about the history of Carlton Rectory in June 2012, and mentioned that Herbert Bouchier Wiggins Denison was rector during the period 1914 - 1923. He had been presented to the living by his uncle, William Henry Denison, who was himself rector from 1876 to

1909 and actually owned the advowson for the parish of Carlton and Chellington. Recently I have been in touch with a relative of the Denisons who has given me some further information about the family.

Herbert was born in 1885 to William Henry's sister and only surviving sibling; his name was originally Herbert Bouchier Wiggins. William Henry was concerned that the surname Denison should not die out from his branch of the family, and persuaded his nephew, possibly by promising him the living of Carlton and Chellington if he did so, to tack "Denison" onto the names he already had. This Herbert did, at the time of his marriage in 1910, when he was a curate in the north of England.

I already knew that Herbert had studied at Brasenose College, Oxford, but I now know also that he subsequently prepared for ordination at Bishop Jacob Hostel, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Herbert and his wife Dorothy ensured that the name of Denison was indeed perpetuated by having three children. First came two sons, John Law Denison (1911 - 2006) followed by William Blethyn Denison (1913 - 2010), both born before Herbert arrived in Carlton. The third child was a daughter, Dorothy Joan Denison (1916 - 2011), always known as "Joan", who was born while Herbert was Rector of Carlton. Herbert's wife Dorothy was very frail-looking and (reportedly) softly-spoken, but the three children took after their father and were remarkably robust in appearance; all lived well into their nineties.



**The Denison family at Bexhill, in about 1930:
John, William, Dorothy, Herbert and Joan.**

John Law Denison achieved great distinction in his lifetime. After leaving school he attended the Royal School of Music — he was a gifted player of the French horn. He was then articled to a solicitor, but soon gave up the law. In 1934 he became a professional musician. He played with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic and several other orchestras. During World War II he served as an officer in the Somerset Light Infantry. After the War, in 1946, he became Assistant Director of Music for the British Council. Then in 1948 he took up the position of Music Director of the Arts Council, before moving in 1965 to become General Manager of the Royal Festival Hall and finally Director of the South Bank Centre until his retirement in 1976. Even after that he took on a wide variety of voluntary responsibilities in the world of music. It is good to reflect that a man of such obvious talent should have passed some of his formative years in Carlton.

John's brother William became a surveyor, and his sister Joan married Richard Gutteridge, a clergyman who had been her father's curate. As for their parents, after Herbert left Carlton in 1923 he went first to Christ Church, Luton, then to Keymer (now in West Sussex) and his final incumbency was as rector of Bexhill (East Sussex). He and his brother were both excellent croquet players, who won many national tournaments. Herbert died in 1966, aged about 81. His wife was about two years older than he was, and she survived him by five years. Their children must have inherited their genes for longevity from her side of the family!

More on Walter Wolfenden Kenny

The Rev. Kenny was Rector of Carlton and Chellington for four years, from 1909 to 1913, filling the gap between William Henry Denison and his nephew Herbert. I gave a brief account of him in my newsletter of June 2012. I mentioned there that he married in 1891, in Shrewsbury. His wife Esther bore him just one child, a son, James Wolfenden Kenny, born in 1899. Esther Kenny died in 1906, and her husband remarried at about the time he came to Carlton, to a local widow. The 1911 census recorded the Rev. Kenny and his second wife living in Carlton Rectory with young James, who was aged 11, and two living-in servants.

I recently learned that James Wolfenden Kenny became a professional soldier. He trained at Sandhurst, passing out in 1918. He saw brief service in World War I, and played a distinguished role during World War II, rising to the rank of Brigadier. He served in the Middle East, and then in 1945 was made Chief (Army) Administration Officer for Northern Ireland. He was awarded a CBE in the 1948 New Year Honours List. Like John Denison, before making his mark in the world he had spent some of his early years in Carlton.

Mike Pratt