



Smoke Signal

Affiliated to Cheltenham Art Council

Leckhampton Local History Society's Newsletter

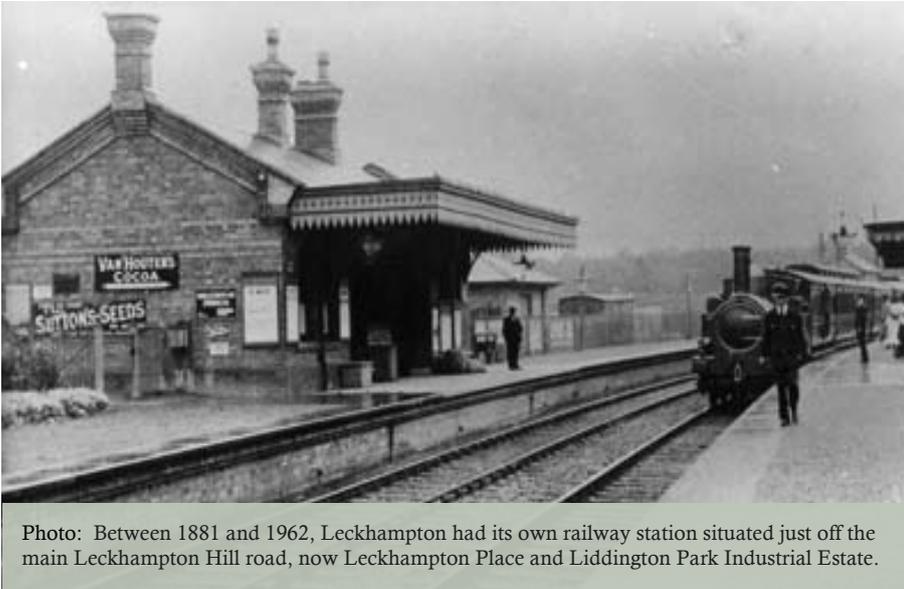


Photo: Between 1881 and 1962, Leckhampton had its own railway station situated just off the main Leckhampton Hill road, now Leckhampton Place and Liddington Park Industrial Estate.

New Beginnings *Welcome!*

Sue Marlow, Chairman

It is a privilege and a pleasure to be writing this article as the new chairman. I arrived in Leckhampton when I was two years old and only left for a few years to train then work as a primary teacher in Derbyshire. I feel I have been part of the history of this area and watched it unfold. When I attended Leckhampton School there were only two infant classes and four junior ones and it does seem strange to visit there again with so many corridors. I am delighted to say that the clock that was in my father's classroom is still ticking!

My other strong childhood memory is the Sunday School Outing. I do remember waiting in line at the railway station in Leckhampton Road to go on the steam train to Weston or to Barry Island. Such excitement! When the train had pulled out my brother and I craned our necks to see if we could spot our grandparents waving a white sheet out of the top floor window as we sped past. Reminders of the railway children!

I attended the Cheltenham Local History Day in July, which was well attended despite the weather! We are so fortunate to have Eric to be able to bring to life how the Leckhampton Court was used in the First World War.

We have devised a varied programme of talks for the coming year and I look forward to meeting you all there and perhaps you can bring a friend!

First World War Commemorations

On Sunday 3 August, the eve of the actual anniversary, the Bishop of Tewkesbury consecrated a memorial in the Lady Chapel of Leckhampton Church to the thirty-five men with Leckhampton connections who died in the First World War and who are named on the Parish War Memorial in Church Road. A Book of Remembrance will contain pen portraits of all the men, and the appropriate page will be opened on the anniversary of each death, when a short service will be held.

On a map nearby are marked the home addresses as recorded at the time of the men's death. Some of the addresses were vague, and the fact that most house names have been replaced by numbers and other buildings have been demolished, has not helped but most of them have been identified with Veronica Biddle's help. Several men are buried in the churchyard or have memorials there, and the positions of the relevant plots are shown on a plan in the book (this work is still in progress, and several pages have still to be completed). In addition three medal-holders with local roots will be included (two VCs and an MC), though their names are not listed on the Parish War Memorial.

Eight of the men came from the Church Road/Hall Road area, including two Thompson brothers, who were the sons of the headmaster of Leckhampton School. Ten came from the Pilley/Old Bath Road/Charlton Lane area, including two brothers and their next-door neighbour. The ages range from 18 to 51. Some were professional soldiers but most were called up or volunteered.



The basic information on the men and their careers has been taken from 'Leaving all that was Dear' by Joseph Devereux and Graham Sacker, with the approval of the authors.

Eric Miller

Local History Day: Cheltenham Life 1914-1919

The Cheltenham LHS put on an ambitious exhibition in St Matthew's Church on Saturday 19 July, illustrating aspects of life in Cheltenham during the war. There were displays of photos, adverts and newspaper reports, and staff from the Local Studies Library dressed up for the occasion beside their exhibits. Themes included the role of women, voluntary work, the contribution of schools, and home life. One whole room was devoted entirely to Geoff and Elaine North's collection of memorabilia of Cheltenham's eight Red Cross hospitals.

The Leckhampton Court hospital was prominent among these, and in addition Steve Blake and Ann-Rachael Harwood from the Museum ('The Wilson') proudly showed their latest acquisition, an autograph book that had belonged to one of the nurses who worked there. The picture was completed by an illustrated talk that I gave about life at the hospital, its patients and those who volunteered to run it.

The climax was an entertaining talk on "The Home Front Consumer" by Robert Opie, Founder of the Museum of Brands, Packaging and Advertising.



Photo: Patients and staff at the Leckhampton Court main door in March 1915 soon after the hospital opened.

Though the displays have been dispersed, the information is not lost, as Neela Mann, the organiser of the exhibition, tells me she intends to compile a book based on the research that went into it.

There will also be another chance to see the display at Christ Church in Malvern Road from 11 to 21 September, as described in the Heritage Open Days programme.

Eric Miller

Dates for your Diary

Friday 12/ Saturday 13 September:

St Peter's Church will be taking part for the first time this September in the Cheltenham Heritage Open Days. The event is co-ordinated nationally by English Heritage to promote an interest in buildings of a cultural, historic or architectural interest.

The Church will be specifically open between 2pm and 4pm on the afternoons of 12th and 13th September. On the Friday there will be a talk at 2.30 about the church and churchyard (for which advance booked at the Tourist Office is recommended – tel 01242 522 878). On the Saturday, the church bell-ringers will be giving demonstrations and allowing visitors to try their hand.

Thursday 18 September:

Graham Gordon, retired teacher and ex-serviceman and from the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum will present on 'Gloucestershire Soldiers & World War I' at 8pm at Church House, Painswick Road, Cheltenham.

Saturday 11 October:

The Gloucestershire Local History Association is holding a Local History Day on 'The Effects of WW1 on Gloucestershire Communities' with displays by various local history groups including ourselves. Admission is free and refreshments will be available. See www.gloshistory.org.uk for further information.

Thursday 16 October:

Dr. Jennifer Tann will be presenting a talk on 'Wool & Water: Gloucestershire Woollen Industry & its Mill'. 8pm at Church House, Painswick Road, Cheltenham.

Thursday 20 November:

LLHS Members Evening. 8pm at Church House, Painswick Road, Cheltenham.

Leckhampton in 1914

Part Two Summer *by Paul McGowan*

In the summer of 1914, the memorial to Edward Wilson of Leckhampton was finally unveiled on Cheltenham's Promenade. The death of Wilson and others two years earlier on their tragic push to be first to the South Pole was seen as representing the finest efforts of Edwardian Britain and the crowds lining Cheltenham's promenade were a fitting tribute to that spirit.

Other highlights of the summer included a visit to Leckhampton Golf Course by the English Golf Champion Harry Vardon accompanied by Ted Ray. Blackhedge Farm & other lots were up for sale and it had proved to be a very good year for honey. An active debate was ongoing locally about just how many new 'cottages' were required in Cheltenham for the increasing population with plans for many to be built south of Leckhampton to make space for agricultural workers, but were these new cottages really required? It all sounds very familiar!



Photo: Ted Ray, two-time major winner, pictured with Harry Vardon, English golf champion. Both visited Leckhampton Golf Course in July 1914.

In *The Chronicle*, the weekly Nature Notes painted an idyllic scene: "The summer calm! How good it is to be able to enjoy the summer heat and stillness, to lie beneath a hedge and listen to the birds; to observe life teaming in hedge, wood and meadow; to realise, however dimly, that behind the outer differences there is an inner relationship that binds together the different forms of life." A summer's calm, before a summer storm.

In national news, the Home Rule Act in Ireland continued to create an extremely unsettled situation. Shots had been fired in Dublin and the annual marches in commemoration of the Battle of the Boyne in Belfast were extremely tense. A conference had been arranged at Buckingham Palace to bring the different political factions to the table but it had ended in failure. The Suffragette Movement had gained strength and there was considerable debate about how to deal with it. The Government sought to deal with the problem of hunger striking

suffragettes with the 1913 Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health) Act, commonly known as the Cat and Mouse Act, which allowed for the early release of prisoners who were so weakened by hunger striking that they were at risk of death. They were to be recalled to prison once their health was recovered, where the process would begin again, an extremely contentious approach.



The culmination of the 1914 Season, the annual Court Ball hosted at Buckingham Palace, was postponed as a consequence of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo, however, for the residents of Leckhampton it must have been a shock when, on the 27th of July, *The Echo* led with the following story:

"Armageddon? Europe bristling with bayonets and the first shots fired in Dublin - these are the terrible facts disclosed this morning. Who can say what will happen in the course of the present week. Serbia arouses Austria; the Austrian minister is recalled from Sarajevo, this is tantamount to a declaration of war! There is talk of Austrians marching South, Russia will be drawn in to support Serbia and this will bring in Kaiser Willhelm's mighty army. How much further the war will spread it is impossible to surmise. Heaven grant our army and navy may not be drawn into it!"

As the week moved on, anxiety spread across Europe and a Cabinet Council meeting was held on the morning of the 29 July chaired by Winston Churchill. The situation continued to deteriorate and on 30 July, *The Echo* reported, "The Prime Minister tells us that the situation is one of 'extreme gravity'. While the British, French and Italians are keen not to be drawn into the escalating situation, it is difficult to foresee how we might localise this war."

By 31 July, the sequence of events leading to war was firmly and irreversibly established. Germany claimed that it had not mobilised its military and four German newspapers stating that mobilisation had begun were suspended. British warships, which had been on manoeuvres in the Caribbean, were ordered back to home waters. The London Stock Exchange closed. Kaiser Willhelm declared a state of war and the Dutch army was mobilised.

For the residents of Church Road, reading about events unfolding across Europe in *The Echo*, as they sat having a beer with friends in The Malvern Inn after a hard day at Leckhampton Quarries, the war must have felt quite distant. They lacked the benefit of historical perspective and the crisp annotation of specific events, precisely linked to a clinical chain reaction that pre-determined war. It must have left them reeling as they thought about a month that had begun with summer calm and birdsong in the hedgerows and was ending with armies marching on every side. But neither they, nor anyone else could imagine how distant a memory that summer idyll would soon become.

Continued in the next edition of Smoke Signal.

Deposits in Gloucestershire Archives

The society has over the years accumulated a considerable archive from various sources, the chief one being the estate of the late Jean Bendall. The society is always ready to receive photographs, documents, letters and other memorabilia, if the owner no longer wants them or doesn't know what to do with them. Alternatively, we can always photocopy or scan an item if the owner doesn't wish to part with it permanently.

The committee felt that the wider public ought to be allowed to see some of the more significant items in our possession by offering them to the Gloucestershire Archives. During the past year I have deposited about sixty items, though not before either photocopying them or scanning them, so that research would still be possible without going to Gloucester. Further, by making a *deposit* rather than making a *donation* we can always withdraw an item if a society member must see an original for the purposes of research. A number of original items still remain in our custody, however, as they are unsuitable for copying.

A catalogue of the archives is available for members to consult in hard copy or electronic format. There is plenty of scope for further research, for example:

Alfred Bendall's Mesopotamia Diary One of the prize items that have been deposited in the Gloucester Archives is a diary kept by Sergeant Alfred Bendall during the last months of the campaign in Mesopotamia (today's Iraq). I have scanned it and hope to put it on the society's website, as soon as copyright permission has been granted.

Highlights from a scrapbook of 19th and early 20th-century local newspaper cuttings.

Old maps of Leckhampton, what they show about the development of the village, what curiosities are marked (e.g. 'watercress beds' – did you know that there used to be some in what is now Burrow's Field?!)

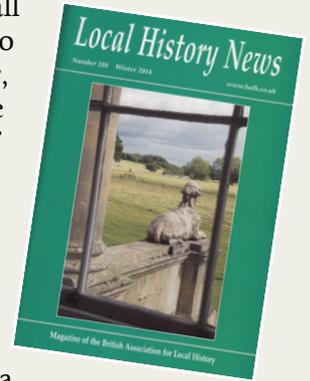
Eric Miller

Obituary

We were very sorry to learn of the death of Derek Thom, aged 86 years, on 11 June. Before illness prevented him from attending meetings, he and Janet were regular and enthusiastic supporters. We offer our sympathy to Janet and family.

Leckhampton Mentioned in the British Association for Local History Magazine

Members will recall that I wrote to members last year, first threatening the society's demise if new committee members didn't come along, but then saying that it had been saved at the eleventh hour with the arrival of a group of keen new members.



The editor of *Local History News*, the magazine of the British Association for Local History (of which our society is a member), picked up on this and invited me to send her an article describing what had happened. This is now in print, under the heading 'End of an Era: not just yet'. The article finishes with a request for other BALH member societies to relate their own experiences, from which we may all learn something.

Eric Miller

Melissa Webb's World War I Museum



This unique and inspired installation has now closed as the lease on the premises has run out.

It had been visited by a number of schools and people from all parts of the globe that were full of praise. Melissa is storing the exhibits and is determined to keep the museum going by one means or another. We watch developments with interest and continue to give her our encouragement.

Inside The Wire

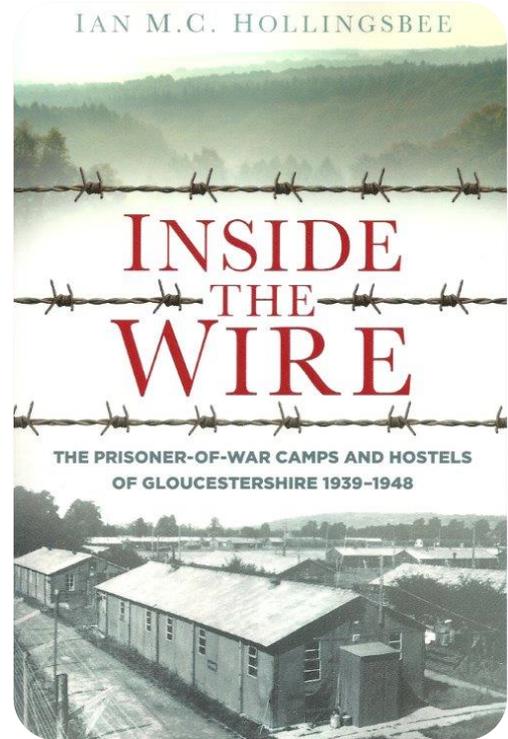
The POW Camps and Hostels of Gloucestershire 1939-1948

Members may recall the talk given last year by Ian Hollingsbee. The History Press has just published his book on the subject and it is a comprehensive and authoritative account. Fourteen pages are devoted to Camp 263 at Leckhampton, and our Society's contribution is acknowledged.

There will be a launch at Alison's Bookshop in Tewkesbury in September (date to be decided).

I can obtain copies for anyone who is interested, at a price of £10 instead of the usual £12.99. Please let me know before 13 September, preferably with payment

Eric Miller



Contact Us

Webmaster, Mike Rigby via website:
www.llhs.org.uk

Editor, Julie Sharpe, via email at:
julieannsharpe@gmail.com

Facebook

Follow us on our new Facebook page by
visiting:
www.facebook.com/leckhamptonhistory

Website

www.llhs.org.uk



Summer Outing

Charlecote Park

In glorious weather on 8 July several of our members joined the Charlton Kings LHS in a drive through the rolling Warwickshire countryside to Charlecote Park. There the mellow brick house provided some cool relief, the great hall and other rooms and furnishings recalling its Elizabethan origins under the Lucy family. In the park itself the deer herd was in evidence – just as it was in Shakespeare's youth when he is alleged to have poached one. Afternoon tea in the shade of some spreading trees completed the occasion, and we thank Edward James and the Charlton Kings LHS for organising it. It is Leckhampton's turn next year, and your committee is already making plans.

Data Protection Act.

Details of members' names and postal and email addresses are stored on a computer file and will be used solely for the distribution and dissemination of Smoke Signal and other information and literature. This information will not be divulged to any outside agency.

Copyright.

Unless stated otherwise, copyright of articles and illustrations remains with the author or artist concerned or with the Editor. The Society does not accept any responsibility for statements and opinions contained in this newsletter, which are those of the author alone, but corrections or additions are invited.