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# Smoke Signal

Affiliated to Cheltenham Art Council

Leckhampton Local History Society's Newsletter



The Leckhampton Ladies' Miniature Rifle Club, formed in 1909. Part of the rifle range can be seen to the right of the picture (*Chronicle and Graphic*, 6/2/1909; also reproduced on p113 of *Leckhampton in Old Photographs*.)

## Dates for your Diary

### Thursday 15 January: Edward Wilson

Much anticipated presentation by David Elder on Edward A. Wilson's life in Cheltenham (*see page 2*).

### Thursday 19 February: Members' Evening

Come along to hear about an array of interesting topics. If you would like to talk about something of interest then please do let us know.

### Thursday 19 March: Sandford Parks Lido

Julie Sargent will talk about the 1930s boom in lidos and the success of Sandford Parks Lido.

### Thursday 16 April: Ullenwood Court

Michael Cuttell will educate us on Ullenwood Court's use as a US Military Hospital.

## Leckhampton Rifle Range and the Working Men's Club

By Eric Miller

In one of his recent 'Nostalgia' articles in the *Echo* Robin Brooks reproduced a photo of the Leckhampton Rifle Club in 1914 and asked if anyone knew where their rifle range was. A former member of the club from the 1950s has replied that it used a range belonging to the Cheltenham College Cadets on the corner of Bath Road and Sandford Road, now the Pavilion Housing Complex, and competed with other teams in a Gloucestershire League.

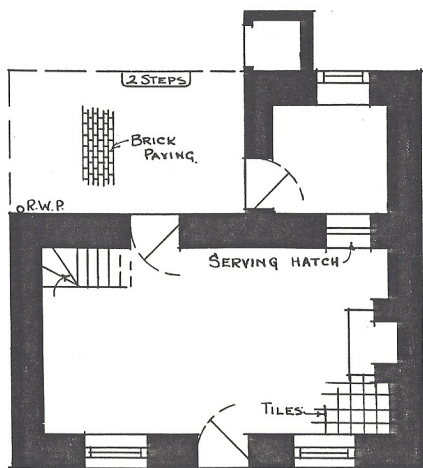
However, there was another rifle range in Leckhampton, long established and situated behind the house in Church Road known today as 'Old Farthings'. It was used by the Leckhampton Ladies' Miniature Rifle Club, formed in 1909 and Mrs Elwes of the Court and her sister Miss Hargreaves were among the committee of the club. (Would anyone like to find out more about this club? There was also a Cheltenham Ladies' Rifle Club; did the two groups compete against each other?)

*Continued on next page*



## (Continued from front page)

The original 18<sup>th</sup>-century cottage was among those auctioned in the great sale of 1894. In its grounds then were a laundry and stable, a cart shed and piggeries, and it is likely that one of these outbuildings was adapted when the property was acquired in the early 1900s as a place of recreation for the workers on the Leckhampton Court estate. This 'Club Cottage' was also rented out to other organisations, which could take advantage of the billiard room as well as the shooting range. This was used by the Home Guard during the war. The cottage was later modernised and is now a private house, whose name 'Old Farthings' was inspired by the discovery of a number of old coins under the floorboards at the time of its restoration.



Plan of  
Leckhampton  
Working  
Men's Club in  
1909, prior to  
the addition of  
a billiard room  
(Gloucestershire  
Archives  
D/2970 1/93)



'Club Cottage'  
as it was in  
1975, shortly  
before its  
restoration and  
enlargement  
(photo taken  
by the late  
Bruce Stait)

One of our members, Pam Corbett, grew up in the cottage and is able to explain how at least some of the coins came to be there. Her father, John Powell, had a milk round and, in the days when a pint of milk used to cost fourpence farthing ( $4\frac{1}{4}d$  = about 2 new pence), he would sometimes give her a few odd farthings from change to play with, and she lost some through gaps in the floorboards! In addition, the present owner, Norman Pride, recounts that some of the coins that he found were smooth on one side, and these would probably have been used in games of shove-ha'penny by members of the Working Men's Club.

## Dr. Edward A. Wilson *'his life in Cheltenham'*

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2015  
Speaker – David Elder

Don't miss this illustrated talk which will cover the life of Dr. Edward Wilson (1872-1912), Cheltenham's Antarctic explorer, focusing mainly on his early years and education in Cheltenham, and some of his favourite haunts in and around the town to which he constantly returned throughout his life.

It will also include some of the references to local landmarks and places that he made in his Antarctic diaries for his family back home in Cheltenham.



Photo: Wilson (left) at the South Pole, 18 January 1912

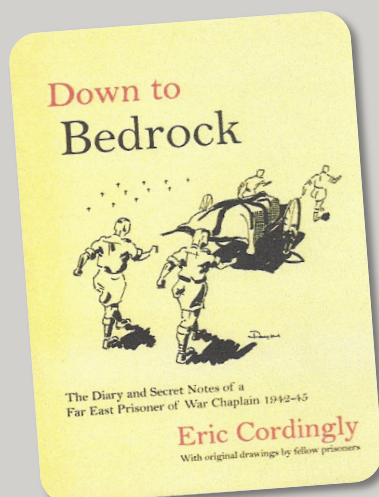
# Chairman's Message

*By Sue Marlow*

I am so lucky! I have a lovely view from my house of Leckhampton Hill and everyday it is different. I realised what the hill meant to me when I was looking for my second house - could I see the hill?

The trees contribute so much to the changing scene. It seems quite unreal when the hill is out of view - is it really there? This sparks off memories of my childhood - could I really walk all the way up the steep tramway path all those years ago? My brother and I enjoyed exploring what we call "The Roman Remains". One time I remember being told not to come down the eroded steps at a Brownie event (or was it Guides?). What did I do? You guessed! I did come down that way but slipped and I ended up burning my arm in boiling water, which was being tended by other girls at the bottom. I was more upset that I could not swim in the gala later that week!

I have looked again at Everard Caudle and Derek Brown's book *In the Shadow of the Hill* which recalls memories dog walking, falling over, enjoying the wonderful flora and fauna of the hill and of course the Devil's Chimney. I have just read the poem for the first time *The Hill by M.B.* found on the back cover. Although it does not state who M.B is, his poem sums up for me the seasons and the great part the hill plays to all of us living here.



## December's Talk 'Down to Bedrock'

On 18<sup>th</sup> December, Louise Reynolds, will give an unmissable talk about her father, Eric Cordingly's, incredible life as documented in the absorbing book 'Down to Bedrock'.

Rector of Leckhampton, Eric Cordingly, suffered the privations of the notorious camp at Changi and then worked on the construction of the Burma Railway.

Thank you all for supporting the Society for the last few meetings. I have learnt such a lot, from the First World War, Woollen Mills and letters written to the King of Siam. At the moment I am reading *Down to Bedrock by Eric Cordingly* in preparation for the December Meeting. I am amazed at how much the men accomplished whilst being prisoners of war. I am yet to read about the next camp where Eric was moved to and the conditions the men lived in. The committee is busy planning our annual outing for the summer with Charlton Kings Branch so more of the information will be in our next issue. I look forward to meeting you all at our meeting in January 15<sup>th</sup> when David Elder will talk on Edward Wilson - His Life in Cheltenham.

I wish all members a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## The Hill by M.B. (*This is how it begins*)

Psalms of David No 121  
 'I will lift up my eyes unto the hills:  
 But where shall I find help?'

We lift our eyes to Leckhampton Hill  
 With all the joy it gives,  
 At every season of the year,  
 It lightens up our eyes.



# Leckhampton in 1914

## Part Three *Winter* by Paul McGowan

In the winter of 1914 Leckhampton was a village in a country at war. Back in the summer, expectations were that the war would be over by Christmas. No one could have predicted what was to unfold. The conflict appeared to have no limit and to be raging out of control. This war was unlike any other that had preceded it. This was a world war.

Locally, 'Voluntary Aided Hospitals' were opening across Cheltenham including at Leckhampton Court, which opened in February 1915. Refugees from Belgium started arriving in Cheltenham in large numbers. Many were housed with local families and a concert was held to raise monies to support them.

Recruitment drives were in full swing across the country and in September there was a two-week recruitment drive for 'England's New Army'. For those who were able, a succession of reservists and regiments stood up and were either billeted locally or were stationed elsewhere across the south. By November two thousand men of the first 'New Army' were billeted with families in Cheltenham and the 5th Gloucestershire's were waiting tensely at Chelmsford for orders. For those not serving, the Oriental Café in Cheltenham offered the opportunity to send Christmas boxes to soldiers at the front.

*"to keep fit the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment dug a new water main trench from College Road to Leckhampton"*

Cheltenham's press was now largely empty of anything other than reports of the war and its impact on the local people. Back in the summer, headlines were dominated by reports of the suffragette movement and the Home Rule Act with local papers also focusing on sports, nature and gardening. The papers invariably now opened with a Roll of Honour and concentrated on war efforts, such as the 10th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment digging a new water main trench from College Road to Leckhampton to keep fit.

Even the few elements of normal life that did make it into the local press couldn't escape the affect of war: the local rugby football derby between Cheltenham and Gloucester was played between two 'scratch' teams (presumably due to the regular players volunteering) -



Members of the 10th Battalion the Gloucestershire Regiment pose for a photograph during training at Leckhampton Hill in early 1915. Original picture published with kind permission of Jimmy James.

it was described as being played with "none of the old time excitement"; Dame Clara Butt held a 'Grand Patriotic' concert at the Town Hall; and advertisements in the paper were now for pistols and rifles rather than lawn mowers.

As the winter progressed, the reports of battles intensified. British successes in battles were emphasised in the newspapers as opposed to the minimal gains actually made: '150,000 German losses in the Battle for Poland'; 'Germans repulsed from Ypres'; 'a German submarine damaged'; 'a raid by British airmen on German positions in France'. It is likely that Leckhampton residents had yet to discover the extent of British casualties and the problems that our troops were encountering. They would, however, have been well aware of the cost of war. The week beginning 5<sup>th</sup> December listed the names of 30 dead across the region, 12<sup>th</sup> December listed 15, 19<sup>th</sup> December listed 12 and 7 were listed on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Leckhampton didn't escape early fatalities. E.J. Thompson and S.B. Thompson (sons of the headmaster at Leckhampton Primary School) were killed in Belgium in October 1914, both in the area around Ypres.

How must the local folk of Leckhampton felt in winter 1914? Local stores encouraged Leckhampton residents to get on with their Christmas shopping with slogans such as: "Don't let the Kaiser spoil your Christmas!" "Get a Case of Cheltenham Ales in for Christmas" and "Be sure to remember the kiddies!".

A year that started with bird song in the green lanes of Leckhampton was ending with fighting on a scale never seen before. The Echo's weather report warned of 'a winter of the old-fashioned kind with very sharp nights frosts'. For Leckhampton's residents, at home and overseas, it would certainly be a long and a hard one.

# First World War Commemoration

*Continued*



*Photo right:  
Harold Lacey,  
Leckhampton  
Primary School  
teacher who  
was killed April  
1918.*



The Book of Remembrance in Leckhampton church has now been completed and the 38 pen pictures have attracted much interest both among visitors there and at the Local History Day held at the Grammar School in October.

The commemoration of the brothers E J and S B Thompson, who died within a few hours and a few miles of each other, has already taken place. They were professional soldiers, one having already fought with distinction in the Boer War. Two more brothers, Arthur and Harold Summers, were killed later, and also their neighbour from Pilley Cottages, Frederick Murphy. A teacher at the Primary School, Harold Lacey, volunteered in August 1914 and remained in service until he was killed in April 1918. On the other hand, some were killed only a few days after arriving in France, while others died from the effects of their wounds after the war was over.

Not all deaths were the result of enemy action: one man was killed when his horse slipped on ice in northern Italy, another was piloting an aircraft on a test flight over Wiltshire when it broke up in mid air, two men died of illness in this country, never having seen active service, and one died on board a hospital ship on the Red Sea, returning from India.

Awards for bravery were granted to five men: the Military Medal to Wilfred Barrett and Alfred Enoch; the Distinguished Service Order, Military Cross and bar to James Dearden; and the Victoria Cross to Douglas Reynolds and Anketell Moutray Read. (A plaque on the Beaumont Hotel in Shurdington Road mentions the last of these.) The book also reproduces two examples of so-called 'dead man's pennies' – 5-inch diameter bronze medallions portraying Britannia and the name of the dead soldier, issued to the next-of-kin.

The church is always open and you are encouraged to visit it and read there some details of the men's backgrounds, their courage and their tragic deaths. Failing that, the same information including the illustrations is to be found on the internet; see [www.stpeters-leckhampton.org.uk](http://www.stpeters-leckhampton.org.uk) (under 'About Us') or [leckhamptonlhs.weebly.com](http://leckhamptonlhs.weebly.com) (under 'Local History').

*Eric Miller*

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[www.facebook.com/leckhamptonhistory](http://www.facebook.com/leckhamptonhistory)

**Website** - [www.llhs.org.uk](http://www.llhs.org.uk)

## Archive News

Rick Kedge, a former member of LLHS, would like to offer his archives to the members of the Society.

If you would like to contact him about this offer please call 01242 870023 or email [kedgerick@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:kedgerick@hotmail.co.uk)

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