



# Smoke Signal



Affiliated to Cheltenham Arts Council

Leckhampton Local History Society's Newsletter



## Service Not Self

*Kenneth Ward and his mother, Mrs Grace Ward*

In her article about the centenary of the RAF in *Smoke Signal* No 84 Mary Oliver mentioned Group-Captain Kenneth Ward. The name rang a bell with me, as Kenneth Eric Ward figured in an episode of the BBC TV series *Heir Hunters*, broadcast in 2012, in which I was involved. These programmes were a sort of detective hunt to track down inheritors of 'orphan assets', which in this case were the proceeds of the sale of the former Dunalley School in Cheltenham after it had closed in 1999. The school had been built on land donated by the grocer and baker John Crew, who died in 1872. John Crew had six children, five of whom left descendants, and Kenneth Ward (1896 – 1964) was a great-grandson. Altogether over twenty living beneficiaries were identified and each received a share of the £126,000 estate.

The relevance to Leckhampton is that the programme concentrated on Kenneth's mother Mrs Grace Ward, a granddaughter of John Crew. Her father, William Hall, was a greengrocer and market gardener, and the family home was Treelands in Leckhampton Road. (The house was demolished in the 1970s and the surrounding vegetable plots and orchards were built over as the Treelands Drive estate.) Grace Ward had distinguished herself during the First World War when she was in charge of the Red Cross Hospital at Leckhampton Court, and for the programme I was interviewed about her career against the backdrop of the Court.

*continued on next page*

## Dates for your Diary

**Wednesday 16 January, 7.30pm Glebe Cottages:**  
Film Night

**Saturday 16 February, The Wilson Museum:**  
Cheltenham's WW1 memorial painting (see back page)

**Wednesday 20 February, 7.30pm Glebe Cottages:**  
Members' Evening

**Wednesday 20 March, 7.30pm Glebe Cottages:** Eric  
Miller – Cheltenham's Slave Owners

*Continued from front page*

Among all the tributes to Grace Ward in the souvenir book that was produced after the hospital had closed I find it amazing that there was no mention of the fact that her husband Lieutenant Charles Ward (father of Kenneth), who had been serving in India, had died on board a hospital ship in the Red Sea. This occurred on 15 December 1918, and four days later Grace Ward was invested with the MBE at Buckingham Palace, possibly still unaware of his death.

Documents in the Society's archive tell us more about Grace Ward's service to the community. There is a copy of a letter which she wrote individually to each of the men and women who had worked at the hospital, thanking them for their part in their 'mutual work'. Later she was the Manager of the Leckhampton Parish Hall and the archive holds a certificate issued in January 1922 licensing her to use the hall for the public performance of stage plays. The play was the pantomime "Rumpelstiltskin": look out for an article about these entertainments in the next issue of *Smoke Signal*.

Grace Ward died in 1951 and is buried in the large family plot in Leckhampton churchyard, where her son Kenneth and her parents also lie. The simple white marble cross that commemorates Grace bears the fitting inscription "SERVICE NOT SELF".

*Eric Miller, Co-ordinator of Research*



Photo: Mrs Grace Ward MBE, Commandant of the Red Cross Hospital at Leckhampton Court

Photo front page: Red Cross Hospital senior nursing staff, December 1918 with Mrs Grace Ward centre, front row

## Chairman's Message

Writing this in November, I cannot believe I am buying Christmas presents, have received a card already and delivered two.

Amy's talk in September was so interesting about gates and hedges. I now appreciate more of the countryside and look carefully as I stroll along. As I sat in Charlton Kings church for a concert in November, I remembered Don Sherwell's October talk about the history of the church and what its people had been through. It was very thought provoking when listening to the lovely music how many men lost their lives in the two wars by reading the names inscribed on a tablet on the wall. I was glad the society remembered our men in Leckhampton who gave their lives for us at the November meeting. We were lucky to have Peter Donovan to talk about Bomber Harris and his amazing career.



Photo: Dr Edward Jenner's House at Berkeley where Society arranged a visit last year. Learn more about Dr Jenner at our December talk.

Come along to our Christmas meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> December. Visiting Edward Jenner's House I learned a little of his amazing life and it is certainly worth a visit. Christmas Fare will be served at the meeting!

In the New Year, we are having a Film Night, a treat is in store! Over the Christmas break do look in your lofts and cellars for something to bring for our members' evening in February and do make sure you have read about our planned trip to The Wilson (see last page). Contact me if you would like to attend.

I wish you all a Happy Time with family and friends. Merry Christmas!

*Sue Marlow, Chairman*



# Leckhampton Benchmarks

*have you seen them?*

Have you seen either of the marks illustrated in these two photos? You must have passed one or other of them every week. The one inscribed into the brick is on the Pilley Bridge, the pillar nearest the little lane which runs alongside the old railway track. It is a Bench Mark.

Bench marks were fixed points used to calculate a height above mean sea level measured at Newlyn. Some date back to the 1830s and there were over 500,000 created but this is reducing as roads change and buildings are demolished. There were around 12 in the Leckhampton area, on railway bridges, public buildings, churches and private houses but some, such as the one on Naunton Park School, have disappeared. There is one on the old Malvern Inn, now a private house, bottom left hand corner.

I am still searching for other benchmarks in the Leckhampton area. There was once one on each of the bridges in Leckhampton Road and Moorend Park Road, but I could not see them, they may be under the ivy. There was one in Mead Road, possibly on a brick wall which has now been replaced with a wooden fence. There is supposed to be one on a house in Leckhampton Road and another in Church Road.

The horizontal mark was used to support a bench for a levelling stave to rest on, hence the name Bench Mark. This ensured that a stave could be accurately repositioned in the future. The last one was created 25 years ago. They have been superseded by GPS. Why the height above mean sea level was needed I do not know, perhaps someone can tell me. People collect sightings of bench marks, the collector with the highest recorded number has less than 15,000. He has a long way to go!

The second photo is of the railway bridge in Leckhampton Road. This records the particular railway line, and the distance from a datum point in miles and chains.



In this case it is the Banbury Cheltenham Line and the distance, measured from Paddington is 106 miles and 12 chains. Do you remember those? 1 chain is 22 yards, cricketers will know it as the distance between the stumps. The bridge in Moorend Park Road has a measurement of 106 miles and 28 chains on it.

*Mary Oliver*



## Obituary

Cyril Richardson died on 18<sup>th</sup> September in his 98<sup>th</sup> year, a loyal supporter of the Society. He contributed a poignant note to Smoke Signal No. 80, explaining how he came to be given his first name. He also featured in Issue No. 83, where Mary Paterson recalled his mother's help to her family while Cyril was on active service with the RAF in India.

# The Plaque Unveiling

*30<sup>th</sup> September 2018 – a personal note*

At last we did it! The Wheatsheaf plaque has finally been unveiled and is there for all to see, remembering those who fought for our right to roam freely on our Leckhampton Hill.

Coming out of the door of the pub I was amazed to see so many people who had gathered to see this event. I had to retreat to pay for my roast meal then return to join about fifty people on the cloudy (not rainy thankfully) Sunday afternoon. After my short welcome Neela Mann, our local historian, spoke about Walter Ballinger, the leader, and about his love of the hill expressed in what he wrote at the front in The First World War. With a flurry the plaque was unveiled, with a barrage of clicks of cameras. The committee posed by it, photographing us for posterity! Many people remarked that they were pleased it had been erected; it meant so much to the locals. I met the owner of the present-day firm of Dale Forty, who told of numerous pianos being removed from The Ladies' College on the strict orders of Miss Beale, the then headmistress. This act showed her objection to Mr Henry Dale's closing the hill, denying the people of Cheltenham to roam freely.

The proceedings were followed by tea and amazing cake given by Ronnie, the publican of The Wheatsheaf. Folk who attended remarked how well the event went and of course that lovely cake! Do go and have a look, take refreshment and give thanks to The Stalwarts.

*Sue Marlow, Chairman*



Photo: Neela Mann unveiling the new plaque on the Wheatsheaf commemorating the Stalwarts of the Leckhampton Hill riots.



Admission Free

First Group 10.30am

Second group 11.15am

To book a place ring Sue Marlow Chairman  
01242 581661 or mention at a meeting

Meet at the entrance to The Wilson ten  
minutes before the lecture. Places are limited

## Return of Cheltenham's WW1 Memorial Painting

*Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019.*

In partnership with The Wilson and as part of the "Cheltenham Remembers" project with Heritage Lottery funding, Neela Mann has organised the return of Cheltenham's official WW1 memorial painting and has put on an exhibition on the people in the painting and events surrounding the story. This exhibition contains photos and memorabilia never previously seen and is part of The Wilson's larger exhibition "At Last the Fighting is Over". The painting portrays five Cheltenham men, one of whom died in 1916 - Lt Cyril Winterbotham, poet, barrister and soldier - and the exhibition includes extracts from letters to his mother. Neela's 30-minute talk on the painting and the remarkable men gives a glimpse of Cheltenham in WW1. There is a free booklet of the story to take away with you.

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