

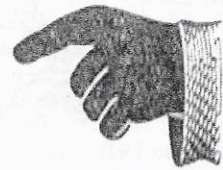
AMBLECOTE HISTORY

Number 11

The Newsletter of Amblecote History Society

May 2005

**General Meeting, June 8th. 7.30 pm in Amblecote Church Hall
and
TO BE ARRANGED**
A Celebration of Corbett Hospital
July 2005 - Further Information Will Be Circulated



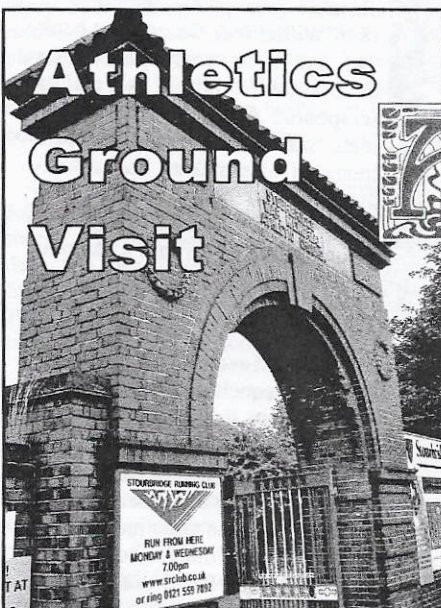
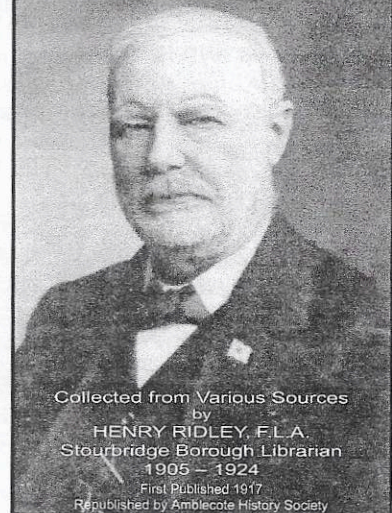
A FEW NOTES ON AMBLECOTE Re-published by the Society

At the AGM in January it was agreed to re-print Henry Ridley's *A Few Notes on Amblecote*, first published in the *County Express* of 1917. Ridley, the first librarian of Stourbridge and a long-standing Amblecote resident, gathered a variety of information from a range of antiquarian texts and old documents for a series of six articles on Amblecote.

The Society has published Ridley's *Notes* in a 32-page booklet form, with a dedication to Stourbridge Library in its centenary year and with a modern introduction and footnotes.

Copies are available at meetings price £2.50 or by post from the Secretary for £3.00 (UK only). Please make cheques out to "Amblecote History Society" and send with a note of the delivery address to Nick Baker, Secretary Amblecote History Society, 23 Brompton Drive, Amblecote, West Midlands DY5 3NZ.

A FEW NOTES ON AMBLECOTE



The Winter Game

A group of around fifty members and guests gathered on Wednesday 20th April for a tour of the Stourbridge War Memorial Athletics Ground, and in particular to celebrate the playing of Association Football by Stourbridge FC who have

been resident there since 1888. Welcoming us were Hugh Clark, President and Secretary of the club and Steve Hyde, Chairman.

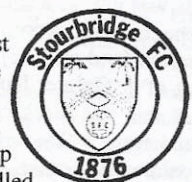
Entrance Arch

The tour began on the outer car park where we appreciated the archway entrance and gates erected by Stourbridge Borough and ceremonially opened by Ernest Stevens, the great Stourbridge philanthropist, on Tuesday the 18th of December 1928. An extract from the *County Express* was read out which described the opening ceremony attended by numerous local dignitaries.

This revealed that Ernest Stevens had already paid for a cricket pavilion which at that time was visible from the archway. The arch was built on land purchased from the Enville estate at a cost of £220. Designed by Geoffrey Ince the Stourbridge Borough Surveyor, it is built of red brick from the Ketley Brick Company of Kingswinford with wrought iron gates by Hill and Smith of Brierley Hill. Sadly the gates are now in a rather poor state, time and the change from horse drawn to diesel dray deliveries having taken their toll.

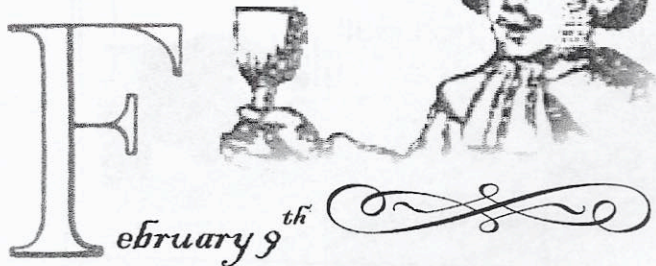
The Ground

Passing the turnstile block, a gift from Ernest Stevens in 1932, the party appreciated the ground itself. This was anciently part of Amblecote's Watery Fields, one of three medieval open fields in the manor. The 1688 estate map shows the area as three enclosed fields called



(Continued on page 6)

Visit to Broadfield House Glass Museum



saw some forty members and guests pay a visit to Broadfield House Glass Museum for the Society's first outing of the year.

Keeper of Glass, Roger Dodsworth welcomed us in the museum's marvellous atrium extension and provided an overview of the institution's origins, collections and work.

History of House

He first outlined the history of Broadfield house itself, which began life in the 18th century as a farmhouse. A barn at the rear of the building still attests to its rural origin. However, by the Regency period it had become a large formal residence with a classic frontage facing (albeit at a distance) the main Stourbridge to Wolverhampton road. During the 19th century it was the residence of a family of iron-masters named Dudley (no relation to the Earl) who specialised in nails and frost cogs (that's 'oss cogs to yo lot from The Lye). It continued as a private house until the Second World War when it was sold to a local industrialist who then subdivided the estate. After the war Staffordshire County Council used it as a hostel for unmarried mothers and their babies, after which it became a Senior Citizen's home.

The Museum

In the late 1970's the relatively new Dudley Metropolitan Borough was looking for a place to locate its two newly acquired glass collections. Broadfield House was available and the building presented itself as an ideal home for these. The long-standing idea of a local glass museum was at last realised. This was not, as Roger pointed out, without controversy. Many locals smarted (and still do) at the whole idea of a 'Greater Dudley' and the idea that the glass collections of Stourbridge and Brierley Hill could form a 'Dudley Glass Collection' did (and still can) cause considerable furore. Roger sees diplomacy as the way forward, recognising that local passions on the subject can still run very deep.

The museum was opened in 1980 and gradually extended its collections, research facilities and reputation to become one of the most important centres for glass history in the world. In 1994 the atrium extension was built, itself an innovative piece of architectural design built entirely, including its supporting structures, of glass. In addition a hot glass studio was built in the old barn, which provides a workshop – subsidised by local industry – for post-graduate students of glass design.

Collections

The museum's core collection centres on British glass from the seventeenth century to the present, although there are works from all ages and all world-locations supporting this. Roger also outlined the importance of temporary exhibitions, with the museum hosting an ever-changing series of special events. During our visit these included three groups of 'collectomania' including glass walking sticks, bottles, and so-called Depression Glass from the 1930's USA. The glassmaker's gallery, usually reserved for contemporary exhibits, was housing a retrospective of Harry Segar whose industrial style forays into laminated glass are both technically and artistically innovative.

Archives and Research

The museum now possesses over 15,000 pieces to which it will add carefully chosen occasional items. Funding is, of course, a problem although the good work of the museum's Friends organisation does much to assist. However, Roger was keen to point out that the museum is still very active indeed in the acquisition of supportive historical material for both display and research purposes. Often, people who worked, or whose relatives once worked, in the glass industry are unaware of the historical importance of the items they possess, and the museum is very keen to encourage locals to bring in potentially important material for assessment. Roger showed us several examples from the museum's archives to illustrate his point, including a 1910 Williams & Co. invoice book that had been 're-cycled' during the Second World War as a child's scrapbook. Also on display was a mere fraction of a massive card index of glassmakers and associated workers donated by a genealogist from the north of England. This awaits transfer into a database – future work for a dedicated volunteer!

Museum Tour

The visit concluded with a tour of the museum itself with Roger accompanying us to provide expert commentary. As usual many members were able to offer their own memories of the glass industry, not least Gladys Tolley whose grandfather, Daniel Hancox blew cameo blanks for Northwood.



Broadfield House Museum, opened in 1980





A MAN OF HIS TIME

Walter James Cartwright
Clerk to Amblecote Urban District Council



Forty-seven members and guests were present in the Church Hall on March 9th to hear John Sanders present the life story of his grandfather, Walter James Cartwright (1873 – 1943), Clerk to Amblecote Urban District Council between 1928 and 1943. Using a variety of illustrations augmented by a detailed and humorous delivery, John brought the life and times of his grandfather into vivid focus, illuminating a vital time in the history of self governing Amblecote.

John began by explaining that his personal recollection of his grandfather was relatively slight, Walter having died in 1943 when John was only eight years old. However, his grandmother Ada survived her husband by many years and it was from her that John had gained a wider insight into his life, augmented by his own research.

Man of His Time

The presentation began with a 1930s picture of Walter, then in his 50's, on the pebble beach at Southsea. Stalwart in tightly laced shoes, waistcoat and tie, Walter relaxed in his deckchair enjoying a pipe, his only concession to informality being lack of a jacket. Nevertheless, as John pointed out, this picture captured the essence of Walter Cartwright and men like him at that time, indeed *men of their time*, solid, dependable, honest and decent. Men who not only dressed correctly even whilst relaxing, but behaved correctly and decorously in their lives and professions.

Walter was born in King William Street, Amblecote on October 13th 1873. His father Samuel was described on his birth certificate as an 'Ironworks Stock Taker' and his mother, the wonderfully named Sarah Shakespeare, was previously a Holt. A copy certificate obtained in 1902 bore Walter's own signature which John feels speaks loudly of his personality. Here was a man at the age of 29, clearly confident in the use of a pen and in himself, the strokes legible and concise, elegant but without unnecessary embellishment.

Walter had two younger sisters Eliza and Mabel and was educated at the National School in Amblecote, although in the 1880s the family moved to an area known as Hulland between Moor Street and North Street in Brockmore, Brierley Hill. In January 1901 Walter married Ada Blanche Husselbee of Fenton Street and John showed a wonderful photograph taken around this time. His grandmother, he said, demonstrated the then highly fashionable "wasp waist"; and "that wasn't the only thing 'waspy' about her!" A serious and confident couple look out from the portrait; with perhaps Ada the slightly more so.

Census Warnings

John then showed extracts from the 1901 census, which was taken shortly after the marriage. This shows Samuel and Sarah with their daughters living in Brockmoor and Walter and Ada living at 35 Albion Street. John used these extracts to issue a warning to anyone using the 1901 census on-line; only by the most diligent searching had he overcome the eccentric transcription that turned Cartwright into Hartwright!

Professional Life

John outlined Walter's early professional life as a clerk, which began with Homfrey, Holberton and Mellor, solicitors, of Brierley Hill. At this time the company was one of the area's foremost legal firms. Alfred Homfrey senior was also an important industrialist and was later joined by his son, also Alfred, who carried the firm into a second generation.

During the last decade of the 19th century local government in England underwent something of a golden age with newly populate and relatively wealthy manufacturing districts clamouring for more political and administrative autonomy. Amblecote was no exception and during the 1880s and 1890s achieved first Parish Council and later Urban District Council status. Indeed the latter (formed in 1895) was the smallest UDC in the country with a mere thousand or so voters return-

ing 9 members. The UDC naturally required legal services and Homfrey, Holberton and Mellor supplied these along with a Clerk to the Council, their Managing Clerk, Mr Rowland Moor. Inevitably Walter worked with Moore on council business and when Moor died in 1928 Walter applied for the vacant post. After an interview at 'the Council Chambers, Platts Crescent' (where were these?), Walter Cartwright was appointed, being welcomed formally at a UDC meeting of the 25th of June.

John was keen to point out that the post of Clerk to the Council was not a full time one. Walter's 'day job' was as Managing Clerk with Homfrey, Holberton and Mellor and the UDC post representing an adjunct to this. Walter's work for the UDC included administering the regular battles with Thomas Webb and Co., perpetually raged over the latter's toxic wastes damaging the former's public drains! Another, not altogether unpleasant, duty was serving the occasional writ on Lady Grey's agent at Enville Hall (the Greys being Lord's of Amblecote Manor) which involved a cycle trip to Enville; carefully timed to coincide with a refreshing pint in The Fox at Stourton on the way home.

John showed several photographs of Walter on UDC outings; one dated July 1930 with a wonderful Midland Red 'chara' in the background.

During this time the firm of Homfrey, Holberton and Mellor was broken up and that of Mellor and Ellis established in Stourbridge, for which Walter continued to work. John showed a picture of Stourbridge High Street from this period with the name 'Mellor and Ellis' visible on a windowpane in offices above Barclays Bank. Indeed, a bricked up doorway in the bank is still visible, once the solicitor's offices entrance. The firm was located here from the mid 1920s to the 1940's, although Mellor eventually left and Ellis moved to Church Street where Walter joined him.

Walter died in 1943 at his home in Vicarage Road, Wollaston. Appropriately enough, Walter's funeral crossed a number local boundaries, with a service at Amblecote and burial in Stourbridge; whilst eulogies in *the County Express* attested to the esteem in which Walter Cartwright, "always worthy of the trust placed in him", had been held.

A Gentleman's Agreement

John revealed through documents, artefact and recalled family conversations a number of additional aspects of Walter's life. Not least were financial documents showing that he had taken a cut in wages from Ellis in 1937 from £5 to £3 per week and that upon his death he left virtually nothing. However, it was later revealed to John that Ellis had continued to support his grandmother; the result of a 'gentleman's agreement' involving no formality or legal document.

During the early part of the Second World War, John had lived with his grandparents in Wollaston and it is from this period that his own memories of Walter are drawn. He recalls being told by Walter of his time as a special constable (in which role he continued until his death) during the Great War. Asking what happened during the Zeppelin raid on the Black Country of January 1916, Walter told him that he "Heard it and hid in the entry of number 66!" Other recollections are of walking to the lido at the Stewponney, visiting the UDC offices in High Street Amblecote and rowing on the canal from Wordsley to Prestwood.

Finally, John showed photographs of two superb cheroot holders, both of multi-coloured Stourbridge glass, and engraved 'W Cartwright'. He also brought along a wonderful glass loving cup engraved 'W J C 1916' with a 1915 sixpence in its hollow stem.

Sadly, John revealed, he was unable to expand further on any of these pieces knowing only from his family that they had been specially made for his grandfather – though why and by whom is a mystery. "Too late, of course," John concluded, "I wish I had asked more questions!"

AMBLECOTE HALL



A highly successful meeting was held at the Church Hall on Wednesday 13th of April attended by over 80 members and guests to examine the history of Amblecote Hall and its surroundings.

Wide ranging pre-publicity in all the local newspapers prompted a number of individuals both locally and from as far away as Hertfordshire and Wales to get in touch and offer to assist with memories and/or documents.

A presentation was made using material gathered by Nick Baker, Father Paul and Mike Perkins divided into Maps, Photographs, Archives and Documents, and Memories. It was stressed that this was not a 'history of the Hall', or even an attempt at one; but instead a simple laying before the meeting of material gathered so far in an attempt to spur further discussion about this important and now lost area of Amblecote.

Interest in the Hall was stimulated last June when Borough Archaeologist John Hemmingway had shown us copies of manorial maps dating back to 1688. These clearly showed the Hall and surrounding buildings, and suggested through field shapes and names that a settlement in this area certainly dated to Saxon times and possible even much earlier. As we all know, the land beneath and around the Hall, which stood at the top of Vicarage Road, was utterly changed by open-cast mining in the 1960's and 70's, completely altering the topography and destroying any archaeology that might have remained.

Therefore, it was felt incumbent upon us as a local history society to do all we could to record the history of Amblecote Hall and especially through the recollections of those who knew it when it was still standing.

In fact, the area around the Hall contained several properties now completely destroyed, most notably Amblecote House (a Victorian building on the opposite side of the lane to the Hall) and Amblecote Hall Farm (otherwise known in modern times as Dunford's Farm), which stood behind it. All these were included in the discussion as they, like the Hall, have also utterly disappeared.

Maps

Nick and Mike had prepared extracts from over twenty maps which showed the area at the top of Vicarage Road (previously Amblecote Lane) with the buildings highlighted. These began with the 1688 map and ended with the latest Dudley MBC planning map showing the modern Lakeside and Amblecote Bank housing estates. All except the most modern of these showed a distinct triangular area at the top of the lane, around which buildings, including the hall, are clustered. This suggests a nascent 'village centre' which, for whatever reason, failed to fully develop. On various maps of differing detail dating from 1688, c1750, 1775, c1820, 1834, 1839, 1866, 1875, 1882, 1885, 1898, c1900, 1903, 1906, 1920, 1938, 1965, 1975, 1980 and 2002 we were able to trace the ebb and flow of several buildings across the landscape. Of immense interest was an overlay of one of the highly detailed Victorian Ordnance Survey maps with the most modern MBC survey. This not only shows Amblecote Hall to have been situated on what is now Woodcombe Close, but that a lane (Withymoor Lane) which once formed the northern side of the 'triangle' still exists in the form of a right of way (though not as the original ground of course) through the modern housing estate; being visible straight ahead from the traffic island that divides Hillfields Road and Kirkstone Way.



Photographs

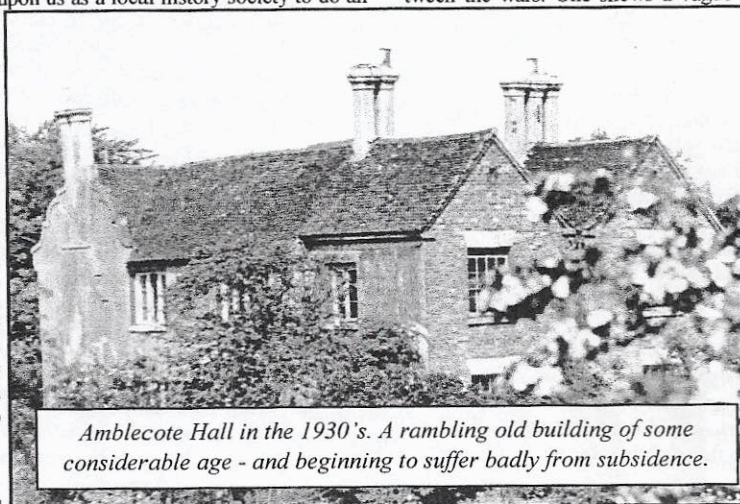
A number of photographs had been gathered showing both Amblecote Hall and the surrounding farmland. The former had mostly been provided by members of the Gittins family who lived at the Hall from the mid 1920's until its demolition in 1952. These show an old rambling wonderfully eccentric large brick built two story house with distinct

gables and chimneys; though obviously in something of a perilous structural condition. One marvellous picture shows the Stourbridge Baptist's fete being held on the lawn of the house, whilst other show extensive stabling under a covering of deep snow. In support of the Gittins' family photographs were several discovered in local newspapers from the time of demolition in January 1952. These illustrate the dreadful instability of the house as clay mining took its toll and the Gittins' were re-housed. A photograph and cutting from the *Express and Star* of April 9th 1969 records the final demise of the land upon which the Hall once stood, as an enquiry at Dudley Council House gave permission for the road between the railway bridge and the Birch Tree to be removed and mined.

A second set of photographs recalled the wider landscape around the Hall. Society Secretary Nick Baker showed two photographs of his great-grandfather Henry Davies on a horse drawn mowing machine which, according to family tradition, were taken on Dunford's Farm sometime between the wars. One shows a vague landscape in the background which



The Hall and Farm in 1839



Amblecote Hall in the 1930's. A rambling old building of some considerable age - and beginning to suffer badly from subsidence.

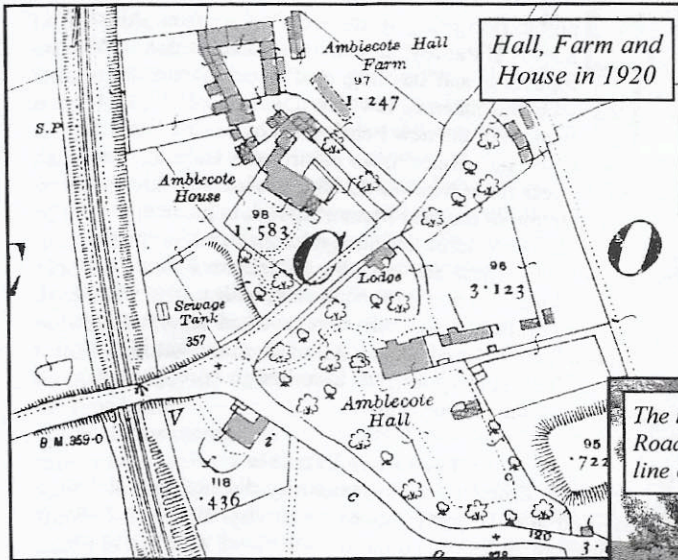
thanks to the inspiration of Mike Perkins can be identified as Bret-tell Lane, thus making the field in which it was taken one of those to the north of Vicarage Road. Further photographs from Nick's archives show views of Amblecote from the high ground of Wollaston where his family lived in the 60's and 70's. These illustrate how this area of Amblecote changed from rural to mining to urban during this period and leaving no doubt that very little, if anything, remains of the original ground. Finally, a very important photograph supplied by Albert and Barbara Banner shows Amblecote Hall Farm from the railway embankment. Taken in 1966 on the very day before the buildings were

demolished the picture shows a number of very old barns standing only yards from a deep pit in which bulldozers and diggers are at work.

Unfortunately a set of photographs discovered in the Stafford County Archives from a 1933 survey of Amblecote were unavailable - Nick was still awaiting a response from Dudley Council (since received) about copyright issues.

Then and Now

In support of the maps and vintage photographs a number of views were shown juxtaposing the overlaid old and new maps with modern photographic views. These, in that the modern housing can be identified exactly, give a sense of just how much the area has been changed by the mining and housing developments. Interestingly, not all the old topography has disappeared. Three modern bungalows stand on ground to the right of the railway bridge occupying an area on which an older building stood until relatively recently. In addition (as previously mentioned) the right of way between modern houses at the division of Hillfield Road and Kirkstone is an exact reflection of the Withymoor Lane shown on all the old maps. However, the modern photographs show without doubt that there is nothing left physically or even archaeologically of Amblecote Hall, House or Farm.



Hall, Farm and House in 1920

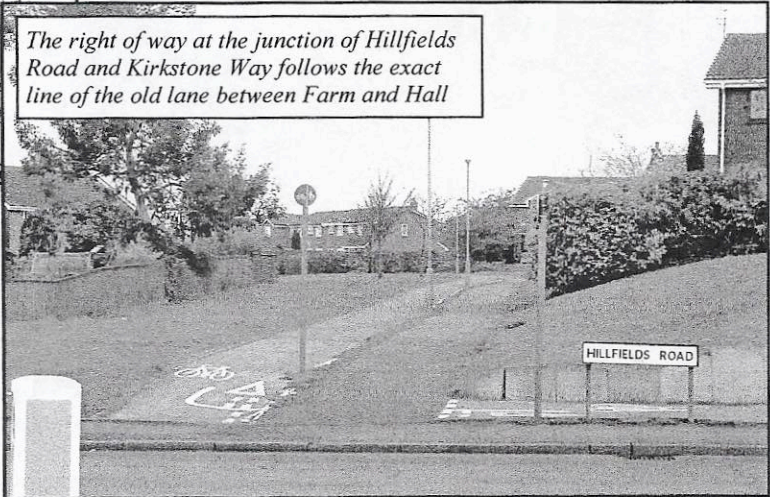
a spectacular encounter with two ancient lady tramps unexpectedly met 'face to face' in an old farm building!

Of such stuff is local history made and, over the next few weeks, we will be contacting all those who have indicated a willingness to provide further information about the Hall, House and Farm.

What Next?

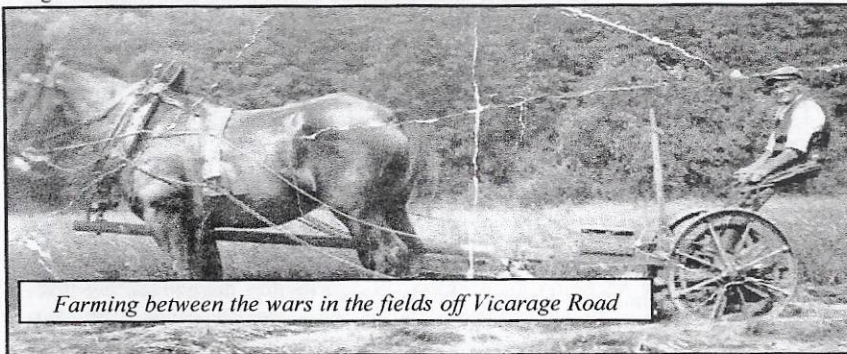
It is clear from the researches carried out so far that a great deal of material still exists concerning the Hall area which, although utterly removed from the landscape, still survives in documents, photographs and memories. Once this has been collated the obvious conclusion would be to publish – perhaps as a Society booklet?

The right of way at the junction of Hillfields Road and Kirkstone Way follows the exact line of the old lane between Farm and Hall

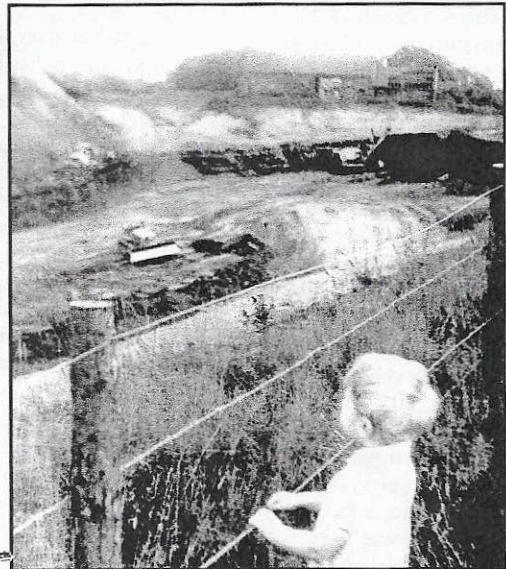


Archives and Documents

An impressive array of documentary evidence amassed by Mike Perkins was presented in which Mike had attempted to show the occupancy of the Hall and surrounding area from the earliest times. The medieval descent of the manor of Amblecote via the Stafford family showed several individuals between the mid thirteenth and early fourteenth century as having either probably or definitely having been born or died at Amblecote. These include Cecily de la Warr who was born at Amblecote in 1255 (and whose marriage to William de Stafford brought the manor to that family) and their son William who died at Amblecote in 1320 and his daughter Emma who was born there about 1295. There is no



Farming between the wars in the fields off Vicarage Road

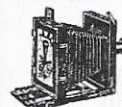


This important photograph taken by Society member Albert Banner in 1966 (his son is in the foreground) from the railway embankment, shows Amblecote Hall Farm the day before demolition. Bulldozers and diggers are already at work removing coal and clay and creating the giant spoil heap that was a feature of Amblecote for many years.

direct evidence to say these events took place at the Hall or any previous building; though it is highly likely they did. Mike had then diligently transcribed the census returns for 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901. These show who was living in the Hall and surrounding buildings (including those of Amblecote Lane/ Vicarage Road). For the Hall this includes George King in 1841, William Watkins in 1861, John Hall in 1871 and William Corbett in 1881, 1891 and 1901. Finally some extracts from the *County Express* extracted by Nick (when he was looking for something else!) from the 1920's revealed that Charles Jones was the tenant in 1921, a Mr. A Harris in 1924 and that the Gittins' were living there by 1929. These extracts also revealed details of road widening by the Hall in 1924 and the perennial problem of the drains in 1929 (a visitor to the meeting who previously worked for the water board pointed out that subsidence in the area was always a problem in this respect).

Memories

Finally a number of comments from individuals who had already contacted the Society were displayed. The value of these was immediately apparent. Although maps, pictures and documents are of inestimably importance, it is these recollections that really put flesh on the bones of history. Mrs Judith Mackie, the daughter of Dorothy Gittins, recalled the impressive front door which led to a stone porch with stone seats, which in turn led to an impressive stone flagged hall with a great many stuffed animal heads. Mr Tony Price on the other hand, recalled playing in the area when a child; including



PHOTOGRAPHS

Do you have any old photographs of Amblecote? Even 'family snaps' can reveal historical important details.

Athletics Ground Visit



with the cricket club (the trustees and club committee being largely the same). One man, Alderman H E Palfrey, at some considerable risk to his reputation and standing, challenged the moves and the issue was taken to law. Eventually, in 1927, under the auspices of the new Public Health Act, the Borough purchased the ground from the trustees and negotiated

(Continued from page 1)

Gibbons Piece. The athletics ground precisely follows the border of these fields reflecting the well-established fact that ancient boundaries are often retained in modern landscapes. Sport was established in the area in the mid 19th century, the flat, open, well drained fields and their proximity to Stourbridge providing a natural gathering place. There is a possibility that bull

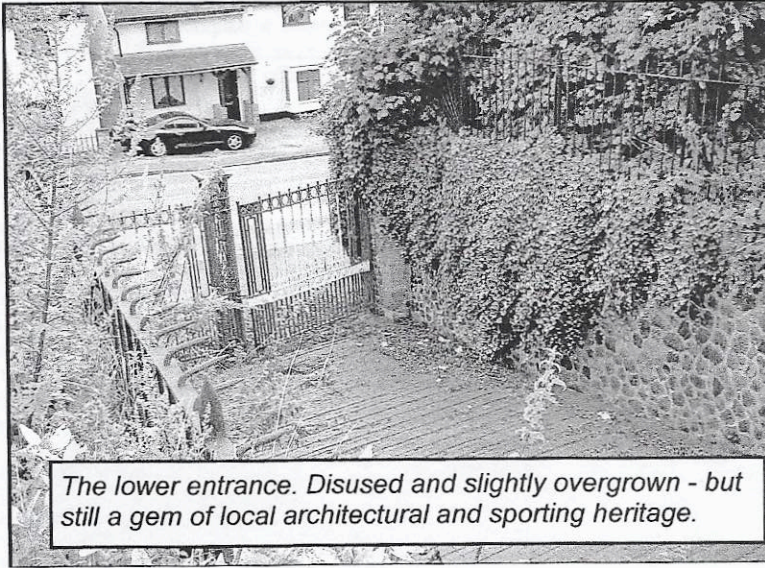
a transparent 35-year lease with all the clubs involved, ultimately transferring ownership of the War Memorial Club to its members. The settling of the lease issue encouraged considerable development at the ground. Ernest Stevens, the millionaire hollow-ware manufacturer and a cricket enthusiast built a new cricket pavilion whilst the football club invested almost all its funds in new covered stands. All of these remain in place today, albeit slightly altered. Stourbridge borough meanwhile built the memorial arch.

The Lower Entrance

However, Ernest Stevens' generosity did not stop at the pavilion and the party moved on to view the 'lower entrance' which Stevens built in 1929 along with the external High Street wall.

The lower entrance, which is now disused, had been kindly opened by Hugh and Steve to enable the Society to take a closer look at what can only be described as a gem of local historic architecture. To set the scene a further extract from the *County Express* was read out describing the opening of the entrance on Saturday 16th of November 1929. The ceremony was carried out by non-other than Alderman H E Palfrey who was serving a term as Mayor of Stourbridge. The extract included a detailed description of the appearance of the entrance which revealed that not only is everything original, but that the superb craftsmanship and materials used – all local – mean that everything is still, despite being a little overgrown in places, in superb condition.

The entrance, which was designed by A Long, architect, of West Bromwich, comprises a sloped cutting through the bank that rises from the Holloway. It is lined with 'cinder block' walls (hard stone-like furnace waste used throughout the Black Country) built by C A Horton of Brierley Hill. There is a superb pavement of Staffordshire blue bricks set on their sides in alternately raised rows to give a good grip underfoot (laid by T W Edwards of Audnam). At each edge the bricks are set flat to make drainage gullies, but nowhere amongst the thousands used is there - seventy-four years on - a single loose one (which means we couldn't see who made them!). At the bottom of the slope, immediately off the pub-

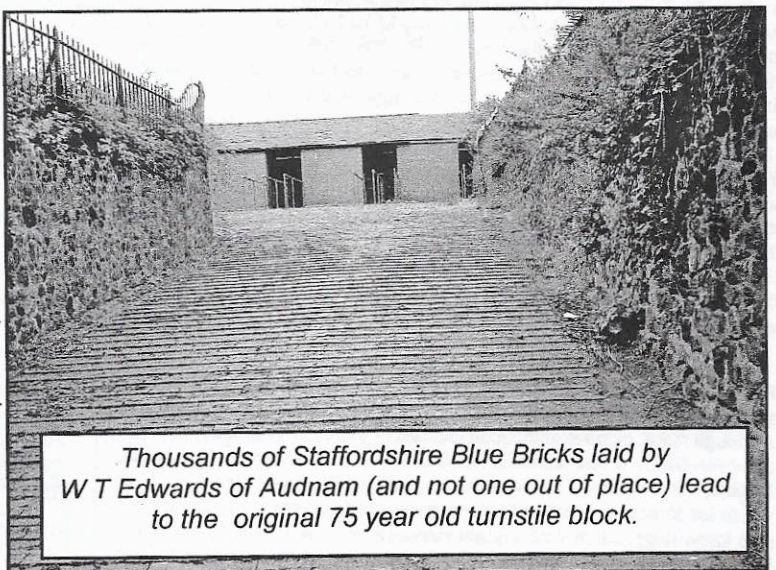


The lower entrance. Disused and slightly overgrown - but still a gem of local architectural and sporting heritage.

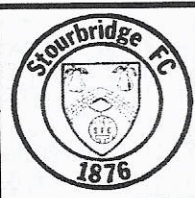
baiting was carried out here in the early 19th century. However, by the late century the more genteel pastime of cricket had been established. This was greatly encouraged by the Earl of Stamford and Warrington who, as a great cricket enthusiast and Lord of Amblecote Manor, allowed the sport to be played here at a peppercorn rent. Other sports followed, probably as a result of the same people playing all of them, with tennis, football and athletics being formally established. Stourbridge Football club, which had its origins in Wollaston as early as 1876, came here in 1888. It was noted that such a pedigree places Stourbridge amongst the oldest surviving English clubs, with their move to Amblecote coinciding with the formation of the Football League (though without them in it!). The development of county cricket in Worcestershire during the early 20th century saw a need for outlying county grounds, and Stourbridge became established as such in 1905, with a game against Leicestershire in May of that year. Of course the Stourbridge ground was actually in Staffordshire, a fact that merely adds to the lexicon of the Summer Game's eccentricities! Sadly, the last county match was played in 1981.

The Trust Crisis

The development of the ground as we see it today took place in the 1920's when Lady Catherine Grey of Enville decided to sell the land as a result of the financial downturn following the Great War. In a complex series of events Stourbridge Borough eventually purchased the ground as part of a grandiose (and very expensive) war memorial scheme, placing it under the administration of trustees. Within an enclave of the ground the War Memorial Club for ex-servicemen was established (this still exists adjacent to the main road though is now closed). However, in 1925 something of a crisis occurred when the trustees attempted to negotiate an exclusive 35-year lease



Thousands of Staffordshire Blue Bricks laid by W T Edwards of Audnam (and not one out of place) lead to the original 75 year old turnstile block.



Athletics Ground Visit

lic footpath, are a set of decorative wrought iron gates in top-class condition (by Hill and Smith of Brierley Hill) set in cinder and stone pillars. These match those of the archway entrance but have an additional central wrought iron column and are wholly undamaged. On each side of the walkway, on top of the walls, are the original wrought iron railings and at the top of the slope is a six entrance turnstile block, its styles and mechanisms still as they were in 1929. To one side of the block is a wrought iron exit gate, again matching the other decorative work and again undamaged in any way. The only deterioration in the entire complex is on the roof of the turnstile block which, having lost some tiles, is leaking – though nothing the sturdy stiles beneath them can't take for the time being!



Wrought ironwork by Hill and Smith of Brierley Hill is to be found throughout the ground and adjacent High Street Wall — this must be preserved!

Need for Caution

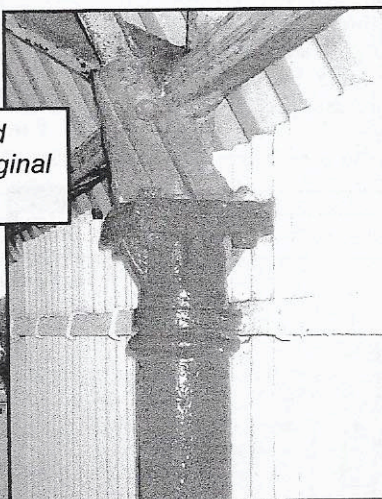
As word of warning, a discussion took place regarding the status of the properties surrounding the entrance. Adjacent on the 'uphill' side is the disused – and anonymously owned - War Memorial Club, its once carefully tended bowling green (paid for by Alderman Palfrey and Major Harcourt Webb of Webbs Seeds in 1924) now going to ruin. Downhill is Jones & Attwoods works, scheduled for redevelopment in a year or so's time. It doesn't take a genius to work out that access to the Jones and Attwood site, and perhaps even the entire Stour-Canal corridor could be made via the A491 at this point - if enough demolition were made to open out the road to make it viable for traffic (albeit in permanently gridlock). Councillor Colin Banks, present on the walk, was able to assure us that the previous recreational use of the War Memorial Club, to say nothing of the already overbearing pressures of residential development in Amblecote would make such a move difficult. However, vigilance is nonetheless required.

The Stands

The party then made its way to the football stands where, with darkness falling, the Stourbridge FC youth team could be seen training under floodlights. After an ultimately disappointing season for the senior team (despite a magnificent run in the FA Vase) the youngsters had been left to bring home this year's Stourbridge silverware by winning the Midlands Youth Team Cup the previous week.

The stands are composed of several parts, with a main stand running along the length of the

The Stands were begun in 1927, and although re-roofed still have their original framework sturdy and intact.



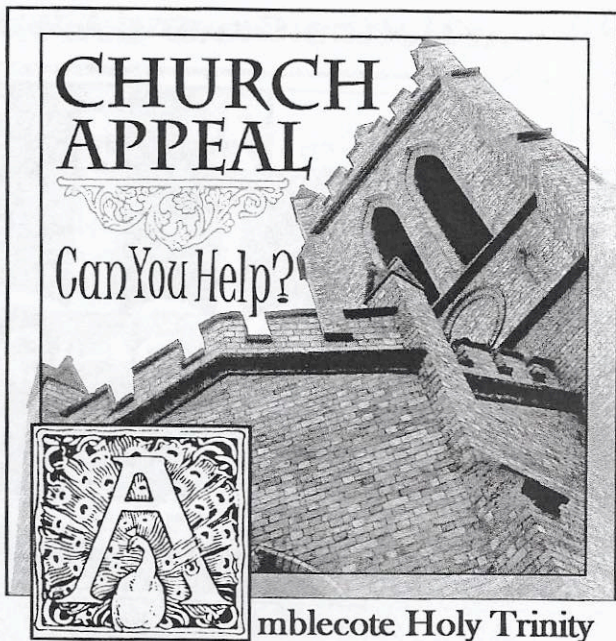
pitch comprised of two end terraces and a central seating area. This central area was the first to be built, in 1927, after the 35-year lease was negotiated. A Councillor Johnson provided for all the steel haulage and members were interested to see this all remained in top class order, with some interesting and possibly bespoke castings supporting the roof structure. A second stand, which has over the years given the far end of the ground its popular appellation of 'The Shed End', was also built at this time and although about to be re-roofed is still in excellent basic structural condition. The outside tour concluded by taking in the (rapidly darkening) view over the Stour valley afforded from the relatively high ground of the stadium. Also of interest were the vertical sand cliffs that define the edges of the ground, remnants of the very extensive sand-pits that once characterised the area. Indeed, had the Borough not purchased it in 1925 it is certain that the fate of the cricket and football pitches would have been sand extraction followed by industrial development.

The Clubhouse and an Unexpected Find

Finally the party retired to the Football Club clubhouse where, along with a welcome drink from the bar, we were able to view the collection of framed historic photographs and memorabilia. Alongside pictures of teams past and present were cutting of the 'Glassboys' greatest moment in the Welsh Cup final of 1974 when they gamely went down 2-0 on aggregate. One unexpected find was a framed 19th century newspaper which advertised the club as meeting in the Rising Sun pub – mentioned by Kieron McMahon at our meeting in October last year – one of the 'lost pubs' of Amblecote that once stood on land now occupied by the car park of the modern Royal Oak.

Many thanks to Hugh Clark and Steve Hyde of Stourbridge FC for hosting our visit which was enjoyed by all. We hope to celebrate the Summer Game sometime with a return visit to view the cricking heritage of the ground.





mblecote Holy Trinity

is preparing an application for consideration by English Heritage for listed building status. The church is expected to have a strong case both architecturally and because of its vital links with the area's industrial heritage.

Claire Tongue, organiser of the bid, is appealing for facts relating to the church which may be used in the compilation of a dossier in support of the application. Anyone who has, or has knowledge of, documents or information that might help illuminate any aspect of the building's history is urged to get in touch with her.

In order to be successful a listing bid must contain more than a simple description of the church. The building must also be placed in an historic context, describing its

wider significance across time, landscape and community. In the case of Amblecote, this links strongly with the industrial and social heritage of our area.

So far an examination of published sources supported by primary material in the original Churchwardens Book has resulted in an outline history of the building. However, there are many gaps, and Clair would be pleased to receive expert comment on any aspect of its construction, plans, architectural style and context, or the lives and careers of those involved.

The Church was begun in 1839 and opened in 1842. It was built on land donated by the Earl of Stamford (of Enville Hall) who also gave money for construction and upkeep. Built of local firebricks in an 'Early English Style' the architect was one Samuel Hemming (or Hemming) and the builder Griffiths (possibly Joshua Griffiths of Oldwinford).

The main contributor besides the Earl of Stamford was James Foster, proprietor of the nearby Bradley's Ironworks. The bricks were donated 'at cost' by the firm of Joseph and William King, the latter being the famous 'King Billy' of Amblecote Hall. Others associated with the church in its early days include the firm of Foster and Orme, Rowland Price, William Martin, Francis Rufford, William Blow Collis, John Amery (there is an impressive interior memorial to his daughter), The Rt. Hon. R. H. Clive, Joseph Pitman and R. Rufford.

Claire would be pleased to hear from anyone with a knowledge of links that can be made with these and other individuals associated with the church, commemorated within it or buried within its churchyard, who were key local, national or international figures within Amblecote's 'triple trades' of glass, clay and iron; or indeed anyone associated with any other notable event or endeavour.

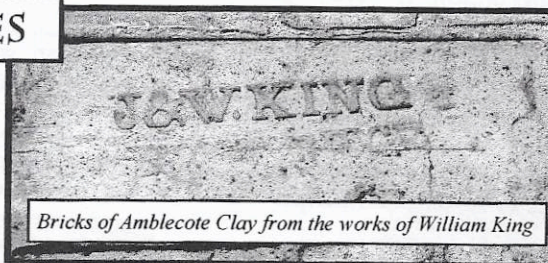
Claire Tongue, Amblecote Vicarage,
The Holloway, Amblecote.
Tel: 01384 394057

CHURCH OF THE TRIPLE TRADES

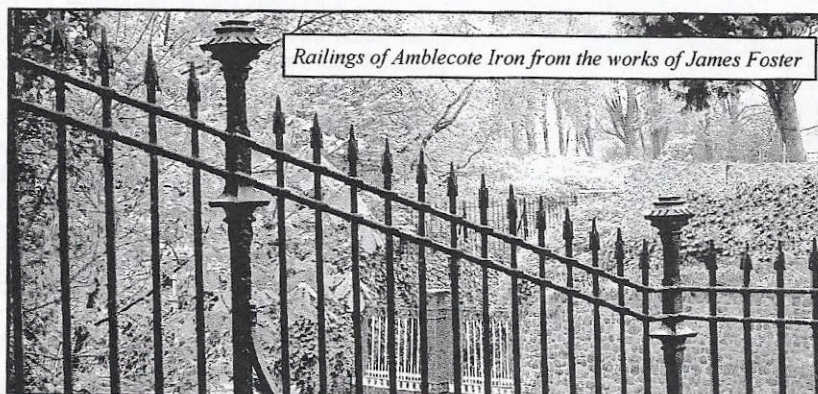
Holy Trinity is rare amongst Victorian church buildings in that its associations with local industry, both physically and symbolically, are unequivocally part of its fabric. Many nineteenth century churches were built by industrialists, many by industrial methods, yet few embraced so fully and openly the physical output of those industries in their construction. Indeed, as the Victorian era wore on

the fashion was to ignore, or at least cover over, connections with the industrial process, a trend that led to the neo-gothic nostalgia of Ruskin and desperate attempts by the *nouveaux-riches* to purchase pseudo-aristocratic respectability.

Not so at Amblecote. Its bricks are of Am-



Bricks of Amblecote Clay from the works of William King



Railings of Amblecote Iron from the works of James Foster

blecote fireclay from the pits of William King - the same clay that provided furnace lining for everything from glass-pots to steam ships. Defining its church yard are cast iron railings from James Foster's Ironworks - from of the same furnaces that produced the parts of the *Stourbridge Lion*. Buried within its precinct are numerous individuals associated with the great Stourbridge trade in glass - from masters such as the Webbs to master craftsmen like Zinke and Friesch. Even that most prosaic of old Stourbridge establishments - the now vanished gas works - had a part to play in the church's history; it being from the outset lit by town-gas when others had but oil lamps.

