



AMBLECOTE HISTORY

Number 18

The Newsletter of Amblecote History Society

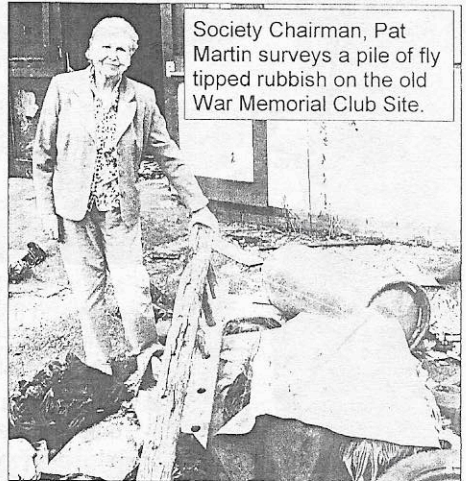
April 2007

WHO? owns the war memorial club.

WHY? is it in such a state.

WHAT? can be done about it.

The target of fly tippers, vandals and arsonists, the old War Memorial Club premises in High Street Amblecote are a disgrace. Can something be done to clear up the mess and save the old bowling green? Turn to Page 2 for more...



Society Chairman, Pat Martin surveys a pile of fly tipped rubbish on the old War Memorial Club Site.

HAND MADE GIFT



Father Paul watches as Keith Brocklehurst and Brian Mason of the Ruskin Arts Centre create a special 'thank you' gift from the Society to mark his retirement as Chairman. More inside...

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AMBLECOTE GREEN MATTERS



Fencing has been torn down between the old bowling green and the War Memorial Athletics Ground—both provided by public subscription and local philanthropists after the First World War.

Who actually owns this ground? What can be done? Could it be returned to sporting use?

As many members will be aware, an arson assault by vandals caused considerable further damage to the old War Memorial Club building in High Street Amblecote. Fortunately the fire was put out before it could spread to neighbouring houses and the adjacent football club buildings, with potential loss of property and possibly even life.

However, this latest incident raises as a matter of urgency the question of just what is going on with this piece of ground; and equally important what can be done with it?

Ownership

The facts of ownership are these. The War Memorial Club was created in 1921 as part of the Stourbridge Borough war memorial effort when the whole of the Athletics Ground (within which the club stands) was purchased by public subscription. In 1926 Stourbridge Borough officially purchased the ground from the War Memorial Trustees and the freehold of the War Memorial Club was given to the club. In 2002 the club itself closed and the land purchased (Land Registry Title Number:

WM620802) by David Lawrence Fabb. David Fabb Holdings, as many will recall, including Servosteel in Old Wharf Road, went into receivership shortly afterwards. Indeed, a note in the Land Registry on-line document makes reference to a Bankruptcy Notice in respect of a pending action.

The Administrators of David Fabb Holdings are Deloitte & Touche of Birmingham, and even the briefest of Internet searches which include the words "David Fabb" and "Deloitte & Touche" will reveal a torrent of litigious controversy that indicates a difficult, complex and controversial process.

Whether or not the land is part of this could probably only be resolved through a solicitor and, frankly, this not the immediate issue for Amblecote residents. Immediately the premises are in a dreadful state, having become a fly-tippers haven and – very worryingly – provided vandals with a 'wedge in the door' onto the wider Athletics Ground area. In countering the 'misunderstood and exuberant' it is important not to let somewhere look like a tip so as not to encourage them to make it worse. Whoever owns the land surely has a responsibility here?

The Bowling Green

Secondly there is the question of the bowling green. This was originally installed in 1924 through donations from Alderman H.E. Palfrey, one time Mayor of Stourbridge, and Major Harcourt Webb of Webb's Seeds. A retaining wall and ironwork railing was provided by Ernest Stevens. The green was used regularly until the closure of the War Memorial Club in 2002. Since then it has become overgrown – although it could be rescued.

Indeed, when the club was put up for sale in 2002, Bernard Mead, Dudley Principle Planning Officer was quoted as saying it "would be looked on as a sporting complex", and that development for any other purpose would involve the "offer of another site in a better location with better sporting facilities".

Now, let's work this out! The bowling green is adjacent to the Stourbridge Athletics Ground, separated only by a wooden fence. Bowlers needs only a green and a shelter – and possibly a shed. To get the War Memorial bowling green back into operation would require some restorative groundwork, an investment in some basic infrastructure and an agreement with the clubs currently renting the Athletics Ground off Dudley Council (Stourbridge FC and Stourbridge CC) to allow access. There is also the matter of maintenance. However, if these could be achieved it would simply re-incorporate the War Memorial bowling green back into the sports complex it originated from in the nineteen twenties.

Issues

Of course there would be issues to be resolved. Who actually owns the ground? How could it be obtained? Where would funding come from? However, the current situation is ultimately intolerable, with that the bowling green in disuse, the club house vandalised, and the entire plot forming a focus for tipping, arson and general highly visible dereliction.

Where do we go from Here?

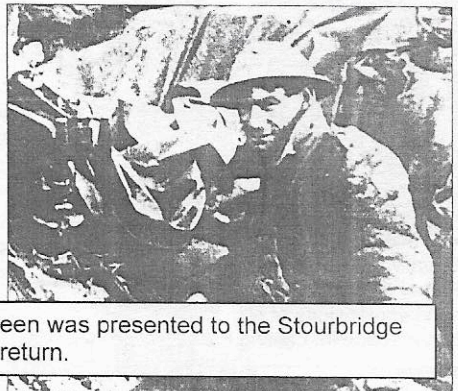
Restoration of the bowling green has been under informal discussion amongst some Amblecote History Society members for a while, and at a previous meeting it was decided to support this if possible. However, the marked recent deterioration of the War Memorial Club has prompted Society Chairman, Councillor Pat Martin, to approach the relevant



Alderman H E Palfrey who, along with Major Harcourt Webb and Ernest Stevens, donated the bowling green to the ex-servicemen of Stourbridge in 1924.

Council departments to see what can be done. No doubt Pat will keep us informed of the outcome at our meetings. In the meanwhile its up to everyone to keep this matter in mind and provide Society support when appropriate.

When all is said and done, Dudley Council is poised to gather a huge amount of Council Tax from the residential development of former industrial sites in Amblecote. The least it could do is attempt to regain and restore this historic and highly visible patch of green. What is a council for if not to take the lead in a situation like this?



The 'Tommies' of 1914-18. The bowling green was presented to the Stourbridge survivors in memory of those who did not return.

End of an Era

By Nick Baker

The phrase 'end of an era' can be something of a cliché. However, the retirement of Father Paul

Tongue as Vicar of Amblecote can only really be described as such. Vicar for 36 years, Father Paul's incumbency is matched only by that of the second Vicar, The Rev. John Simon Boldero, who managed 35 years between 1866 and 1901.

As Vicar he has 'hatched, matched and dispatched' innumerable Amblecote residents. Whilst to his regular congregation he has brought a particular style of worship that is appreciated far and wide. Father Paul was instrumental in setting up Amblecote History Society, and freely offered his time and resources to get the Society up and running when it was first proposed in a letter to local newspapers in 2002. Indeed, the first meeting was initially advertised by a mass leafletting (or leafletting of the mass?) at the annual

Holy Trinity Carol Service on Christmas Eve 2002, and held in Holy Trinity church the following February.

Since then Father Paul has enabled a Society connection with Holy Trinity which, as one of Amblecote's most visible historic buildings, forms a central heritage focus for the area. In addition, as all members will be aware, we hold our meetings in the church hall with the unqualified support of several congregation members and the Churchwardens. This support enabled the Society to run with absolutely minimal overheads for our first couple of years and thus build up a reserve fund with which to carry out future projects. For the first year Father Paul and I managed to run the Society on an entirely informal basis, but in 2004 a small committee was formed with Father Paul as Chairman, myself as Secretary, and Doreen Easthope as Treasurer.

Father Paul has also arranged a number of Society meetings over the years, including a history and tour of Holy Trinity (interrupted I recall by a terrific summer storm – what it is about Amblecote and the weather?), and the commemoration of the

fortieth anniversary of the abolition of Amblecote UDC which was held at the Primary School. Having the Vicar as Chairman has also come in handy on several other commemorative occasions when a few reflective words have been called for, such as the celebration of Corbett hospital held in the grounds after its closure in 2005 and the re-opening of Dennis Hall in 2003. On both these, and other, occasions Father Paul has offered a suitable prayer, as well as



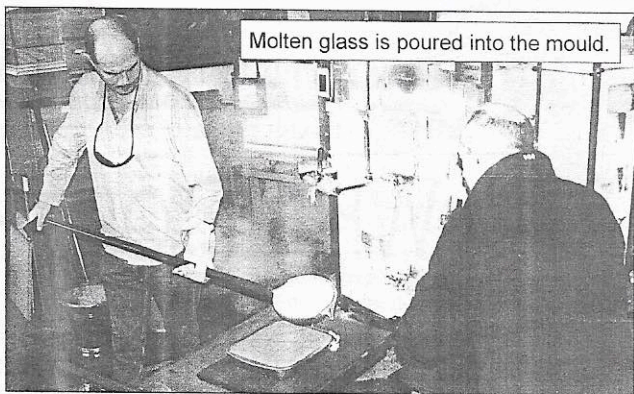
Brian Mason assists Father Paul in creating sand impressions of his hands ready for casting.

a blessing of the cheese and wine. Father Paul was also instrumental in setting up a Rogationtide Walk around the parish boundary which the History Society was pleased to support as a modern revival of an ancient English custom.

The Society has also been incredibly well supported by Father Paul's daughter Clare who, along with Helen Cook, has taken on the role of co-opted Conservation Officer. Clare has worked incredibly hard, oftentimes of necessity behind the scenes, to conserve Amblecote's precious and potentially diminishing wild flora and fauna. The several massive redevelopment projects that seem to have lately overwhelmed Amblecote (old gas works, Corbett re-build, Stourbridge Wharf, etc) have pitched Clare and Helen against some fairly hefty corporate opposition, to say nothing of the Byzantine workings of Dudley MBC. Yet they have stuck at it with considerable positive outcomes. The bat walk organised by Clare in August will be forever remembered by its participants, not only for the bats but the thunder and lightning that accompanied it (there we go.... the weather again!).

During the summer of 2006 both Father Paul and Clare, along with members of the Holy Trinity congregation and the History Society, were heavily involved in events associated with the International Festival of Glass. Organised by the Ruskin Centre the festival ran throughout the August Bank Holiday weekend and Holy Trinity was used as an exhibition venue for glass made by students of Wolverhampton University. The exhibition formed an essential part of the festival programme and drew together aspects of Amblecote's history and heritage, Holy Trinity church, and of course glassmaking and glassmakers past and present.

Father Paul will be greatly missed in Amblecote, not just as the parish priest but as someone widely known and respected throughout the community. Thirty-six years is a long time, and there have been many changes to our area during his tenure here. Industry (and especially the glass industry) has given way to urbanisation; fields have been replaced by flats, and the population risen from four thou-



sand to fourteen thousand. Throughout all this Father Paul has been a constant; highly visible and wholly accessible – a part of the community.

Father Paul is retiring to his native Worcester and, he has made clear, intends to observe a tradition that retired priests maintain only minimal contact with their former parish. This is understandable, any incoming Vicar (although there is actually no sign of one yet) should not be impeded by their predecessor. However, it would be nice to think that the History Society, as an organisation dedicated to the heritage of Amblecote in which we all know Father Paul has an immense interest, could provide a perfectly legitimate continuing point of contact with the area. I would therefore appeal to all members to respect Father Paul's retirement when he attends Society events (as I hope he will) on future occasions. After all, after 36 years as Vicar he is actually is part of Amblecote's heritage!

HANDSOME GIFT

To mark the retirement of Father Paul as Chairman of the Amblecote History Society, arrangement was made with the Ruskin Arts Centre in Wollaston Road to cast Father Paul's hands in glass. This is about as an appropriate gift as there can be for our area with its long glass making tradition. The only problem with this of course, is that it can hardly be kept secret from the recipient, although the spectacle of glass casting certainly makes up for any early warning disappointment! The finished pieces will be presented to Father Paul at the April Meeting.

Many thanks to Janine, Keith and Brian from the Ruskin Centre for arranging the casting.



MIKE PERKINS DISCOVERS YET ANOTHER NAME FOR GASOMETER LANE IN....

A WHIFF OF THE PAST

The continuing saga of what to call the ancient lane that runs from High Street Amblecote to Church Avenue (and formerly to Amblecote Hall) continues. Mike Perkins has found yet another name quoted on a plan as late as 1989. Meanwhile its former name of Collins Lane makes a further appearance in a *Blackcountryman* article from the Spring 2007 edition.

To miss-quote Shakespeare slightly, "A Gasometer Lane by any other name would still smell the same." I remember cycling up and down Gasometer Lane several times a day in the 1950's to get to school in Stourbridge, and in those days it was used by lorries taking coke from the gas works. Coal came into the gas works in bulk by rail along a line from the Goods Yard which passed under Gasometer Lane into the works, but most of the coke was delivered to the individual users by road. It was also sold to the public, and I sometimes went with friends as they fetched coke from the gas works in an old pram for their parents.

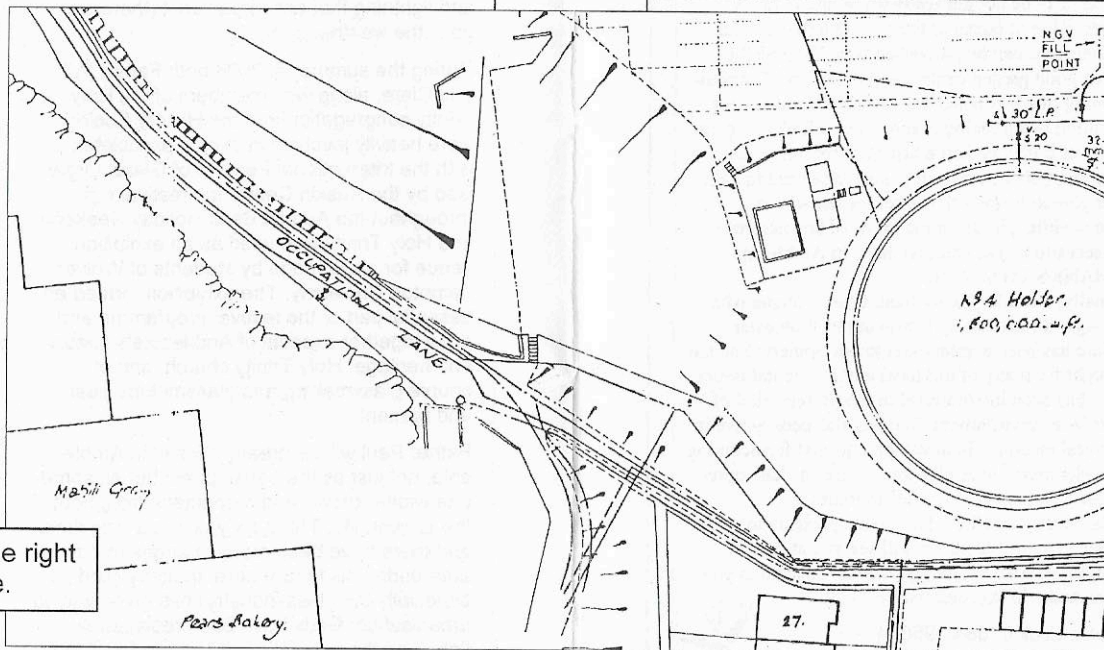
The lane was quite rough in those days, and the lorries, being open topped, lost some of the coke as they bounced up the lane. On the way home from school I often filled my saddle bags with pieces of coke picked up along the lane.

But I suppose it was those lovely smells coming from the gas works that I remember most. You could get to the top of the lane with your head and nose bunged up and, by the time you got to the bottom, you would be quite clear headed thanks to those whiffs of ammonia, tar etc. coming from the gas works.

Prior to the gas works being built, the lane was known as Collins Lane, but general usage gave it the name of Gasometer Lane. A more recent map of the gas works site in Church Avenue, drawn in 1989, shows the lane with the name Occupation Lane.

The No. 4 Gas Holder alongside Gasometer Lane was degassed in September last year, and this was probably the last whiff of an era of gas making in Amblecote which lasted over 100 years. Both sites are now being developed for housing by Bryant Homes.

A fairly recent map of 1989 show the right of way labelled as Occupation Lane.



NATURES CALENDAR

By human rules this year spring has arrived quite early, but in the flora and fauna world things do not change by a calendar date. For instance by mid January the churchyard was looking quite colourfull with Snowdrops and Purple Crocus. The herbaceous plant *Bergenia*, also commonly known as Elephants Ears, put in an early appearance. By the end of February I had one of our first wildflowers in bloom in our garden, the Lesser Celandine. This is because warm air has been circulating the country creating the right environment for early flowering.

A neighbour of mine who was led to believe that her pair of blue tits had started nesting since December was certainly mistaken. Our intelligent little 'blueys' (we all love to watch their acrobatic antics on the bird feeders) will use nest boxes as a roost throughout the year. My pair have used our box throughout the winter; in fact it is known that more than one blue tit will use a nest box as a roost. Indeed, they will use any suitable place as protec-

tion from the cold and predators. A friend of mine has a blue tit roost in the side of the kitchen window. I have seen between six to a dozen fly into this warm little haven for shelter. Amazingly, you can hear them all jostling around for places, obviously trying to get themselves comfortable and warm.

By the calendar, spring begins on March 20th and extends to June 21st, the summer solstice, (the longest day). Yet it makes more sense within the natural world to include the months of February, March, April or May as spring months. I am writing this in the last week in February and already the blue tits and other birds are now pairing up and prospecting for nesting sites. The 'blueys' are very particular about where they raise their young; a hole in the wall or tree can be used but a nest box is a favoured place. They make sure that the entry hole is the correct size, and you can observe this by watching them gingerly poking their heads in and out with a lot of pecking done around the circumference.

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FRANCIS PERKS - TAYLOR OF STOURBRIDGE and 'COLLINGS' LANE

An article in *The Blackcountryman* Vol.40 No.2 by Richard Hugh Perks includes extracts from the diary of an ancestor, Francis Perks, who was a Taylor living at 10 High Street (now Lower High Street) in 1823-24. There are several mentions of "Collings Lane" which, in the light of Perk's eclectic spelling is certainly Collins Lane, a former name for Gasometer Lane and Occupation Lane. Thomas mentions several journeys along the lane, sometimes for no other reason than to admire the view over the fields, on other occasions as a way to Lye on business.



FROM GUNPOWDER PLOTTERS TO RELIGIOUS RIOTERS



CHROMWELL

The Society was delighted to welcome Roy Peacock to its March meeting with a talk on religious dissent in Stourbridge. Roy began by congratulating the Society on its success over the past four years, he having had the honour of

delivering a lecture at its inaugural meeting in February 2003.

Roy's talk ranged far and wide over the subject of religious differences in the Stourbridge area from the early seventeenth to the eighteenth century. Setting these against the wider national situation, Roy made the point that the involvement of Stourbridge in the 'bigger picture' was by no means an insignificant one.

Beginning with the Gunpowder Plot, Roy explained how the politics of the day were driven by James the First's concept of his own divine right to rule, set against the very real threat posed to English state by Spanish sponsored Catholicism. The English midlands, a heartland for Catholic gentry, became the focus of a plot to kill James in 1605; and it was to the midlands that the plotters fled once they were discovered. Largely disowned by local influential Catholics, who had made a point of maintaining a 'status quo' with the Protestant authorities, the chief plotters eventually made their way – probably via Stourbridge and Amblecote – to Holbeach House near Kingswinford, where a shoot out resulted in immediate death for some and ultimately death by hanging, drawing and quartering for the rest.

Roy then moved on to the time of Charles I who "a good father but a bad king", brought about the

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If you are going to provide a box cleanliness is paramount, so it is worth while just checking the box about the end of February for any undesirable leftovers from over wintering birds. The next stage (you need to be really observant) will the pair bonding and courting displays. This often starts with the male bird feeding the female, and this is one way of telling who is who. The female flutters her wings as he brings her food, just as she did when she was a youngster. I suppose in our world it is like our partners bringing us a bunch of flowers (if we're lucky). The next stage is when both birds begin taking nesting material into the box. This is usually moss which acts as a base, followed by layers of softer materials. In our nest box this has included hair from the horses grazing in the Corbett Meadow. The time of laying and hatching is determined by the availability of food, mainly caterpillars living on the leaves of trees. It is these that the young blue tits need to feed on and this is usually occurs in May when the leaf buds burst and the caterpillars have hatched. Then the endless backwards and forwards for both parents begins, feeding up to twelve or more hungry chicks, which carries on from dawn to dusk. If all runs smoothly what a delight it is to see the young family emerge. The usual time for this, if all goes well, is towards the end of May or the beginning of June. With larger the brood the odds are against the survival of all youngsters and many will not make it beyond the first week or so. They in turn become the prey of grey squirrels, sparrow hawks and many other

predators. However, the natural world always knows better and so long as two birds reach maturity the status quo has been maintained.

My experience of having a nest box in my garden and in providing a place for breeding and for shelter during the winter months has been delightful. Boxes can be bought ready made and in many sizes. Blue tit boxes of the correct hole size and dimensions can be purchased from the RSPB or from good garden centres and pet shops. The positioning of a box is extremely important; the best position being facing South West. When this goes to print it may be just a little late for this years nesting, but remember it is also important to help our garden birds with shelter for the winter. Meanwhile, please let me know of any nature observations that you may have in Amblecote.

THANKS TO CLARE

Finally, I would like to thank Clare Tongue who along with her family is moving to Worcester. Clare has been a great asset to our Society. She has fought for many of our local environmental issues and has been instrumental in the preservation of our local environment. She has also been active in several meetings in developments and forthcoming developments in Amblecote where she has represented the Society on wildlife issues.

Clare many thanks, it has been a pleasure to work with you and I hope we will see you at future meetings. Also wishing you every success in your new home in Worcestershire

Helen Cook 01384 395034



English Civil Wars; with a Puritan Parliament pitched against another divinely inspired King. Roy explained how Stourbridge had become something of a focus for Puritans, as illustrated by a grouping of local names in America, where Stourbridge in Massachusetts deep in the heartland of the Puritan colony, attests to religiously inspired emigration from our area. However, not all Puritans emigrated and indeed many of the most successful (at managing both their religion and their business) became extremely successful – including the Stourbridge Ironmasters, the Foleys. The actual ‘hot wars’ of 1642 to 1651 were preceded by a long period of discomfort, with attempts at moderation by both sides often sorely tested by hot-headed activists. Roy noted that the Enville Greys, who owned the Manor of Amblecote, were admonished by the Church of England when the Earl of Stamford’s wife was spotted attending ‘lectures’ (in fact sermons) by Thomas Winall, a well known Puritan firebrand, at Kinver. The war itself brought division to the area which sat, both geographically and intellectually, in the middle of the Parliamentary /Puritan divide – as well as being coveted for its ability to produce the iron goods required for war. The vicar of Oldswinford (which parish included Stourbridge and Amblecote) William Harewell, managed to juggle allegiances until 1648 before being removed by for “not being quite pure enough”.

This gradation of Puritanism was reflected in the rule of Oliver Cromwell who, in running what was in effect a military dictatorship, took care to subdue those of the Puritan ilk who ideology sought to dissolve the rights of property. Taking from the defeated Royalists was one thing; dividing the spoils amongst the Puritan poor quite another! In controlling the country Cromwell established what we would now recognise as zones of occupation, and that of the midlands was commanded by Major General John Berry. Berry obviously had the confidence of Cromwell. He was also a great friend of Thomas Foley the Stourbridge Ironmaster. Through these connections Foley won a great contract to supply iron goods to the Commonwealth Navy. This was perhaps unsurprising since Foley had Puritan leanings; except that previously he has supplied the Royalists!

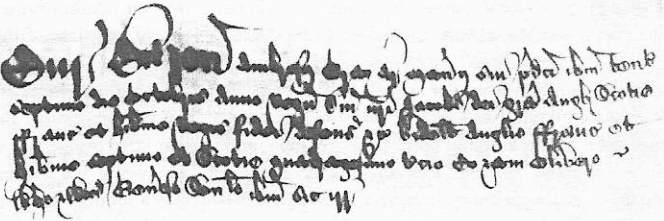
With Cromwell’s death in 1658 the road to Royal restoration began and Charles II was returned

(with constitutional restrictions) to the throne in 1660. The Puritan ideologues, bereft of the firm hand of Cromwell, collapsed in upon themselves, and even those compromises proffered by Charles’ interim administration were squandered in a vortex of petty squabbling and impossibly extreme demands. The Church of England, albeit with a constitutional head, was returned. In this situation lay the origins of ‘dissent’ and Roy pointed out that Stourbridge was an important focus for this.

Essentially the Puritans divided and sub divided into a number of separate sects; Quakers, Baptists and later Methodists to name but three. Stourbridge became important to these people because of restrictions placed on their movements within ‘chartered towns’. Because Stourbridge wasn’t chartered (along with Birmingham and several other midlands locations) dissenters came to settle here. Some flourished, and in particular Ambrose Crowley who made iron at the Royal Forge and who provided secure tenure for the Friends Meeting House (now Stourbridge’s oldest building) in 1688. Also at this time religious upheaval threatened to erupt into a second round of civil war. James II, the brother of Charles, came to the throne; and with a Catholic wife, Catholic sympathies and the ability to father legitimate children, presented a dire threat to the political status quo. There followed the ‘Glorious Revolution’ of 1688 where James was deposed and exiled to be replaced by his Protestant daughter Mary and her strong-arm husband, William of Orange. Throughout this period and later – which saw the development of the Parliamentary system we recognise today – the Foley family were prominent. Richard Foley became a leading member of the House of Commons and during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the Foleys provided no less than five Members of Parliament. A Foley daughter had married Robert Harley, an important supporter of William of Orange, in 1685, and the Foley’s found themselves elevated to the Peerage in 1712 as part of Harley’s political manoeuvrings during his tenure as Prime Minister. However, despite the Foleys ability to juggle both politics and religion, other dissenters in Stourbridge were less fortunate. In 1715 a chapel in Coventry Street (behind the current Nickolls & Perks) was ransacked by a hostile crowd shouting ‘down with the roundheads’!

Manorial Matters

Amblecote



Those who have been to Society meetings over the past few months will know about the collection of

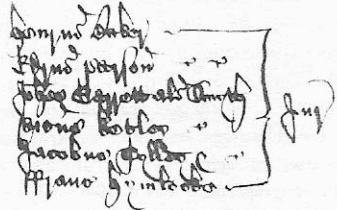
manorial court documents relating to the ancient Manor of Amblecote which are held in the private archive at Enville Hall. The Manor was previously owned by the Grey family, Earls of Stamford and Warrington, having come into their possession in the mid sixteenth century.

The majority are 'Courts Baron', and represent the basic mechanism of manorial administrative from medieval times onwards. Presided over by a Steward appointed by the Lord of the Manor, its chief business was to administer the "customs of the manor", and where necessary levy fines (taxes might be a better concept) on those who strayed from these. The upshot is a fascinating wealth of detail concerning early Amblecote, with interest lying not only in the routine business of the court – although this is fascinating enough – but in references to individuals, families and the local landscape. Each court document contains the names several of tenants, often over several generations, along with field names and issues dealing with farming and early industrial activity.

There are some ninety-eight documents in all, covering a period from at least the early fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century. Indeed the earliest ones so far identified, which date to the 1440s, actually predate the Grey's ownership of the Manor (referring instead to the Stafford family), and must have been transferred to them along with the property a century or so later.

Most of the documents are written in Medieval Latin and a few are in English, however even the latter

A preamble and 'homages' (a list of names) on an Amblecote document from the reign of James I



need translating/transcribing to be of real use to non-medieval scholars. As a trial the Secretary has had half a dozen documents translated by an expert living near Weymouth. Of the many families named Bethul, Colier, Standell, Bokeswych, Bayley, Sedwey, Bayr, White, Knyght, Rokke, Tiget, Hochekees, Greene, Candell, Houson, Hay, Stylon and Addenbroke were amongst those living in Amblecote in the 1400s. Meanwhile fields (almost certainly the original open fields of Amblecote) called the Waterfield and Henbergyeld are mentioned in several documents. In addition there are many references to coal mining. One Thomas Hymlocke was fined 4 shillings for "lodyng more waynes with cooles that he ought" (loading more wagons with coal that he was allowed). Note the wonderful use of dialect in this phrase!

Who knows what the other documents might reveal – perhaps even an early reference to glass making? We know from the 1688 map of Amblecote that glass houses were erected on Grey land by the mid seventeenth century. What is certain is that the documents contain a wealth of local historical and genealogical information unprecedented in the area. There are no equivalent manorial document collections for Stourbridge, Wollaston, Brierley Hill



AN EVENING WITH CARL CHINN

A heavy snowfall which preceded the February 8th meeting provided a picturesque if chilly backdrop to a visit from West Midlands Historian and Broadcaster, Carl Chinn. Despite some traffic disruption earlier in the day Carl very gamely agreed to come along and, despite the inclement weather, over 100 members and guests turned out to hear him speak. Indeed, so large was the turn out that the venue was switched from the Church Hall to Church.

Carl delivered a marvellous talk, presenting an eclectic mixture of history, nostalgia, comedy and comment which nevertheless held to the basic theme that history has to begin at home. Furthermore, that there was more to history than simply 1066 and 1588; but instead the very roots of culture and belonging which, sadly, our modern urban society fails to regard as important.

History, as Carol put it, is about 'talking to your granny and working backwards'; not beginning at the Romans and moving forwards. Our rapidly changing world makes everyone a part of history, and by encouraging children to learn and appreciate the history of their own families, and hence how they themselves have arrived at 'this point', would be to encourage a better appreciation, and respect for, the value of continuity and community.

Using illustrations from his own childhood in inner city Birmingham, Carl wonderfully evoked everyone's recollection of the past by weaving

the theme of the 'local shop' throughout his talk. A collective psyche was certainly stirred by memories of dimly lit, musty smelling, ex-front rooms with examples of politically-incorrect confectionery at two for a penny on single display. Meanwhile the mysteries of the universe were as nothing compared to the unknown and fearful territory known only as "out the back" and from whence the shopkeeper and his wife would, eventually and with much grumbling, issue forth. Carl also decried the diminution of our local dialect and language which, though a combination of educational snobbery and broadcasting bias, is regarded as at best unfashionable and at worst downright socially unacceptable. He told how any use by him on radio of the word 'wench' (as noble a Middle English word as it is possible to find) is followed by complaints by those who consider it an offensive term!

Concentrating (in amongst the visit to the local shop) on the changes brought about by industrialisation upon West Midlands Society, Carl explored the theme of social evolution as brought about by those who challenged the man-master status quo which characterised the early Indus-

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or Wordsley; we are extremely fortunate that Amblecote Manor came into the uninterrupted possession of the Greys and their descendants and that its records have been kept intact ever since. With the kind permission of the Enville Hall Archivist the Secretary has now been able to photograph all of the documents, and would now like to begin the process of translating/transcribing them with aim (with, of course, appropriate permission from Enville) the object of eventually publishing them along with explanatory notes. The cost of this is difficult to estimate, but would probably be around £1,500.

To this end the Secretary approached Geoff Hill to see if his Charitable Trust was prepared to support such a project, and Geoff very kindly sent a cheque for £100 to help start things off. This has been matched by two anonymous donations to a value of £105. With this money the Secretary has asked the expert in Weymouth to begin translating the pre-amble (at a cost of £2.50 per 100 Latin words and £1.50 per hundred English) to as many documents as he can for this amount in order to assess the age and spread of the collection. The pre-amble contains basic information about a particular court, including the date it was held.

The Secretary would like to think that the full translation of these documents could form a Society project. Certainly, bringing this information into the public domain, and hopefully publishing it, would add immeasurably to our knowledge of very early Amblecote as well as contributing to the wider history of Stour-bridge and the surrounding area. It certainly would be a work for 'now and the future'.



(Continued from page 11)

trial Revolution. Great fortunes were made, but there was great poverty also, and only through a tough and uncompromising combination of evangelical belief and political determination did those who abhorred the dehumanising effects of the first machine age make headway against it. John Bright, MP for Birmingham between 1857 and 1889, was a passionate believer in the education and enfranchisement of the working class. A generation earlier Thomas Attwood, born in Halesowen and active in Birmingham, had laid the foundations for Bright's achievements by arguing for reform of the franchise and moderni-

sation of the economy as a means of sustaining prosperity rather than destroying it.

Finally, as a gift to Carl, Brian Mason from the Ruskin Arts Centre had brought along a glass cast of Carl's hands which had been taken a few days earlier during a visit to the Glasshouse College by Carl.

Many thanks to Carl for turning out on such a horrible night and to those who struggled to the Church to hear him. It could have been worse – the following evening travel was impossible! Or, as the lady at the Black Country bus stop once said, "If the Germun's ud drapped snow instead uv bombs theyda wun in a fortnit!"

Committee Changes

The retirement of Father Paul as Vicar of Amblecote has also brought about his retirement as Chairman of the Amblecote History Society. Doreen Easthope has also retired as Treasurer. At the AGM in January Councillor Pat Martin was elected as Chairman and Helen Cook as Treasurer. Nick Baker will continue as Secretary. Father Paul did agree, however, to continue at least until his retirement as liaison with Holy Trinity. Meanwhile Clare Tongue and Helen will continue as co-opted Conservation Officers. It was also agreed to change subscription rates to £5 for an individual (an increase of £2) and £7 for a family (a decrease of £3 for a couple).



MAY 9th

'The Black Country Dialect'

By Ed Conduit

Author of

'The Black Country Dialect

A modern linguistic analysis'

Ed has recently published this first serious analysis of the local dialect and proposes that it is rather more than merely an 'industrial artefact'; but instead a remnant of the early Saxon languages of the Severn Valley. If it has ever annoyed you that Black Country is 'looked down upon' by them what spake proper, then this one's for you!

All at Amblecote Church Hall commencing 7.30pm unless otherwise stated.

June 13th

Mid Summer Walk (Bring Your Brolly)

The Dennis Estate and the Coalbournbrook. From the elegant Villas of Vale Street to the babblings of the Coalbourn Brook. Meet for a 7.15 prompt start on the King William Street Car parks (bottom of King William Street just up the road from the back of Geoff Hill).

July – No Meeting.

August – No Meeting

September 12th - To Be Arranged

October 10th

Ron Moss

Chain making in the Black Country

November 14th - To Be Arranged

December 12th - Christmas Social.

Historic MC for Amblecote Soldier

Private Michelle Norris, 19, from Amblecote has entered the history books as the first female recipient of the Military Cross. She was presented with the medal at Buckingham Palace on March 21st. Michelle's award was for rescuing a comrade under fire in Iraq. The only other Amblecote recipient of this award (that we know of) was Captain D'Arcy Granville St. Clare Roberts who was acknowledged for his part in the capture of Gueudecourt in 1916