



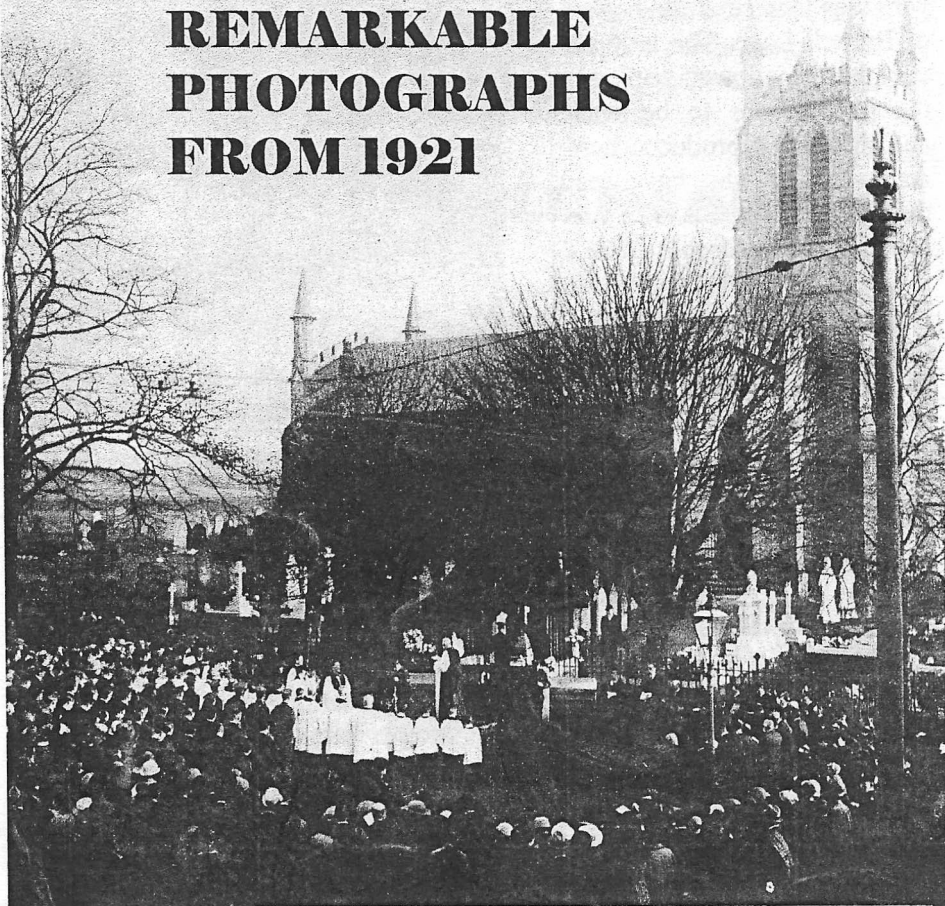
# AMBLECOTE HISTORY

Number 22

The Newsletter of Amblecote History Society

December 2008

## REMARKABLE PHOTOGRAPHS FROM 1921



The Bishop of Worcester dedicates the Amblecote lych gate on Sunday November 6th 1921.

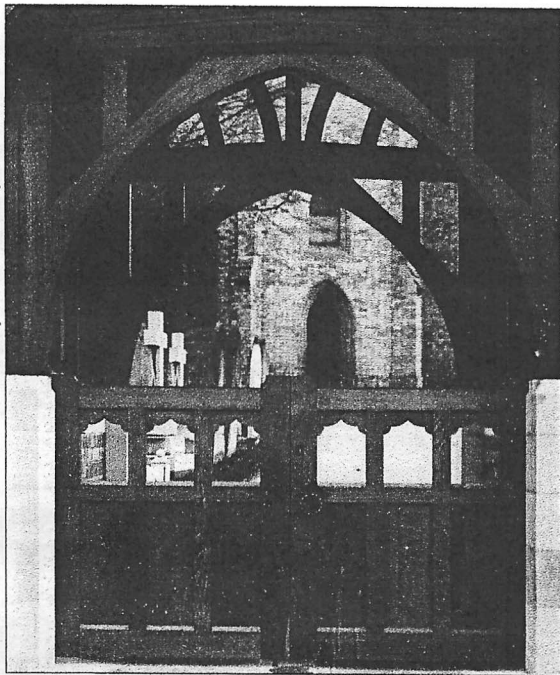


hough a case of some considerable ‘fortuitous synchronicity’ the story in the last newsletter of Amblecote’s Father Crabbe on the Western Front in 1918, is continued in this one by the discovery of some remarkable photographs.

Via *The Black Country Bugle* a number of remarkable pictures have come to light which belong to a lady in Wall Heath who is related to the late Horace Guest, proprietor of John Guest the Builder whose yard was located at the bottom of Brettell Lane. The lady has very kindly allowed copies of the photographs to be made and they are reproduced here. As members who have read the Society Booklet *War Memorials of Amblecote Part 1* (published in 2006) will recall, Horace Guest was commissioned by Amblecote Urban District Council in 1921 to construct the war memorial Lych Gate at Holy Trinity church. The gate cost £375, but at the time of construction

only £300 had been raised and Horace, an ex-soldier himself, built the gate with the amount of £75 still outstanding (it is not known if he was ever paid).

Two of the recently discovered photographs show the dedication ceremony at the Lych gate. One of these is reproduced here, along with an enlarged detail, together with a description of the event taken from the Society booklet. It is hoped, should the Society be able to continue to operate meetings in 2009, to hold a meeting to specifically look at these pictures, and several others, which contain wealth of detail of the lych gate, the dedication ceremony an



The photographs reveal many interesting details, including these now lost oak gates.

details of this corner of Vicarage Road in 1921.

The gate was completed by the end of October and a dedication ceremony was organised for Sunday November 6th, the day we would now call Remembrance Sunday and, coincidentally, the first year of the British Legion Poppy Appeal.

The ceremony began with a procession from the Coalbourn Schools which, as the meeting place of Amblecote UDC, represented civic Amblecote. Consisting of a guard of honour from the 7th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, a large number of ex-servicemen, members of the UDC, council officials,

scouts, guides and schoolchildren, it progressed along High Street Amblecote to the Church.

At the Church the soldiers and ex-servicemen stood facing the lych gate, relatives of the fallen on the left and others to the right in a semicircle. Behind them on the corner of High Street and Vicarage Road gathered a large crowd. Four sentries from the Worcesters stood with reversed arms at each corner of the gate. On the memorial itself, and tied to the surrounding railings, were flowers placed by relatives.

The Bishop of Worcester, Reverend Crabbe and the choir came out of the Church from the west door and took up position at the front of the gate. Sentences from the burial service were read by the vicar and prayers offered. Then, from an improvised platform, J H Mees, Chairman of the Amblecote

Horace Guest prepares to open the gates. An honour granted, not least, because he was still owed £75!



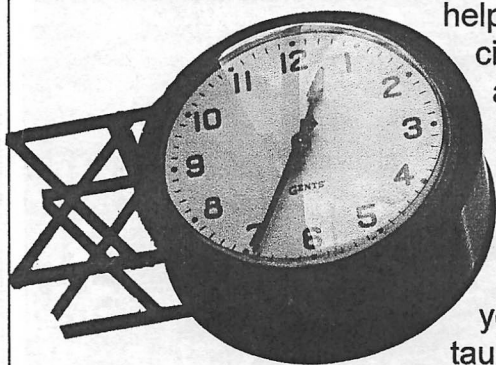
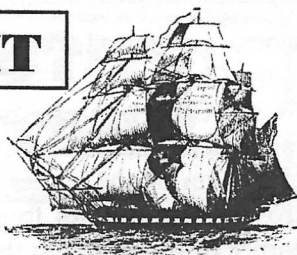
War Memorial Committee, made an address. In it he stressed the fact that although the idea for the gate had been the vicar's, its planning and execution had been entirely cross denominational and, given that all inhabitants of the Parish had the right of burial within the parish churchyard, it was entirely appropriate as both a religious and civic memorial. In this Mees, as a staunch Wesleyan, spoke with genuine feeling.

He concluded by saying "Might the lych gate, as they frequently passed by it and through it, be a continual reminder of an ideal for which they should always be striving, namely, that one day all their divisions might cease".

The Bishop then dedicated the gate, and Horace Guest, of John Guest & Sons opened it and led the procession into the church

# IMPLACABLE SPIRIT

Indomitable Society Member John Sanders, whose grandfather Walter Cartwright was Clerk to the Urban District Council in the 1920s, has been waging a campaign to bring the plaque commemorating the erection of the UDC clock on the former Fish Inn 'back into the light'.



The clock, the renovation of which played an important role in helping form Amblecote History Society back in 2001, was, following a public subscription, placed on the pub by the UDC in 1951 to commemorate the Festival of Britain. A plaque to compliment the clock was also fixed on the building. Sometime last year the Ruby Cantonese Restaurant, which now occupies the former Fish, placed a large advertising board over the plaque hiding it from view. Following a difficult start, during which the Dudley MBC bureaucratic machine predictably denied any responsibly, John has at last secured some movement via our local elected representatives by which, hopefully, Victory will be obtained and the plaque once again and quite rightly, take precedence over the Ruby's early-bird two for one offer.

**AMBLECOTE URBAN DISTRICT**  
**THE ABOVE CLOCK WAS PROVIDED BY**  
**PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTION TO COMMEMORATE**  
**THE FESTIVAL OF BRITAIN**  
**1961**

Left: The plaque photographed in 2006 before The Ruby Cantonese Restaurant covered it up with an advertising board.

## LAST VESTAGE OF JOHN CORBETT

The summer walk of the Society revealed an important, and possible last surviving, detail of the old Corbett Hospital's link with John Corbett himself. It was noticed by members during our June walk around Amblecote.

Whilst the road leading up to the (now demolished) main hospital site is named John Corbett Way and a piece of modern commemorative artwork by MBC Artist, Steve Field, is fixed to the new building; there remains one important original detail which recalls Corbett's gift to the town.

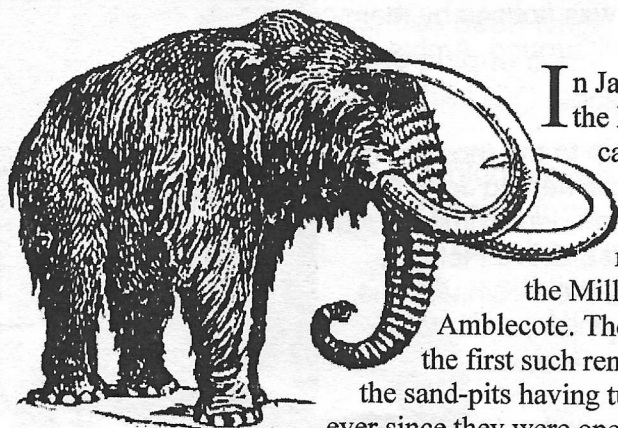


This is incorporated in the lodge building which still stands adjacent to the old hospital gates on High Street Amblecote. This quite magnificent structure, which is now the only piece of the old hospital left standing, includes a relief of John Corbett's arms of a raven surmounted by an elephant and castle. There used to be a similar plaque above the door of the main hospital, but this seems to have been lost.

Sadly the lodge is in a desperate state of disrepair and it is only a matter of time before neglect and johnny-vandal bring about its demise. It belongs to Dudley Hospital Trust whose record in maintaining even relatively small items of historic interest is, at best, patchy. The lodge is, in fact, a locally listed building in Dudley MBC's Historic Building Register. However this can mean little when it comes to a lightning demolition.



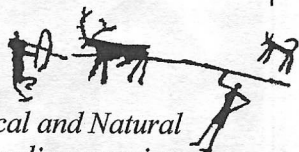
# WHEN MAMMOTHS ROAMED THE STOUR



In January 1917 a meeting of the Birmingham Philosophical and Natural History Society discussed a number of pre-historic mammal bones found in the Mill Meadow Sandpit at Amblecote. These were by no means the first such remains found in the area, the sand-pits having turned up similar objects ever since they were opened. A description of the meeting was printed in the *County Express* of January 27<sup>th</sup> 1917, and is reproduced below. Unfortunately the whereabouts of the bones, along with others displayed at one time in Stourbridge Library, is now unknown, but their recovery from the sandstone deposits of the early river Stour backs up the theory that the Stour Valley was once a migration route for pre-historic mammals and that, quite likely, the first human inhabitants were drawn here by their presence. There must inevitably be further remains still within the thick sandstone of the area north of the Stour, although whether modern re-developers would be as sympathetic to their discovery and recovery as the owners of the sand deposits ninety years ago is a moot point.

## *Mammalian Remains The Important Find at Amblecote*

*At the last weeks meeting of the Birmingham Philosophical and Natural History Society Professor W. Bolton described the mammalian remains found in the Mill Meadow Sandpit, Amblecote and which had been described by experts at the British Museum to comprise the following: portions of a molar of *elephas primogenicus* (mammoth), interior portion of jugul arch and second right metacarpal of rhinoceros, canine of hippopotamus, teeth of bison, centrum of dorsal vertebrae of bison, centrum of dorsal vertebrae of a large deer, teeth and phalange of a horse. The method of occurrence of the prehistoric remains was fully described, and it was shown*



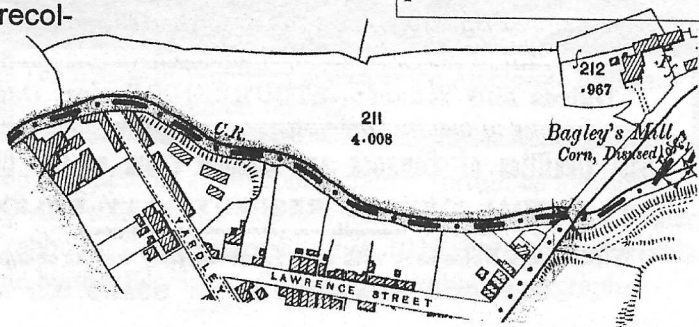
that large quantities of the materials in which they were embedded might have come from the higher regions of the Stour, but associated with them is an Arenig glacial boulder, which must have come from the Arenig mountains of Wales.

Professor Boulton's paper will in due course be published in the proceedings of the Society. At the meeting Mr. John Humphries of Birmingham presided and the discussion was opened by Mr. W. Wickham King of Stourbridge. Mr King paid tribute to the keenness and interest Mr. T.C.Clavey had taken in looking for the bones in the course of the performance of his duties whilst getting sand, and also of the very kind way in which Mr. G. Gould, the lessee of the pit, had facilitated the search.

## WHERE WAS MILL MEADOW?

Exactly where was the Mill Meadow sand-pit in which the prehistoric remains were found and, possible, more could be discovered? The area to the west of Bagley's Mill, where the Stour is crossed by Bagley's Street / Road was certainly known as Mill Meadow on 18<sup>th</sup> century maps, and although the 1901 Ordnance Survey show no sand workings that doesn't mean there were non there in 1917. Unusually for Amblecote this land has not been developed and forms part of a green corridor running along the north bank of the Stour with a pathway maintained by Dudley MBC and a bank of dense woodland rising out of the valley. It seems unlikely that there was a second Mill Meadow in the area, although with several mills, several meadows and several sand pits this possibility should not be dismissed. Although the Society has walked this path on more that one occasion we have never ventured into the wood where, perhaps, mammoths and rhinos still roam? If anyone has any recollection of sand workings in this area, or of another Mill Meadow, we would be delighted to hear.

The area adjacent Bagley's Road, known as Mill Meadow from at least the 18th Century, (1901 OS below) seems the most likely place for the sand-pit.



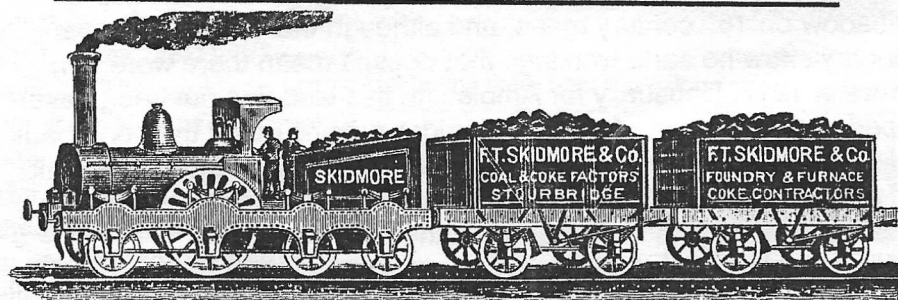
## AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on January 14<sup>th</sup> 2009 at Amblecote Church Hall, commencing 7.30PM.

### Jack Haden Talk

Society Member, **James Morgan** will be making a presentation on February 11<sup>th</sup> 2009 at Amblecote Church Hall, commencing 7.30pm about **Jack Haden**, the Stourbridge Journalist and Historian, who died a couple of years ago. James purchased a number of Jack's papers when these were auctioned and, like many people with an interest in Stourbridge, shares a fascination for this man whose relative contributions to the town's history were both vital and sometimes controversial.

Please note that this talk will go ahead whatever the outcome of the discussions at the December meeting and at the AGM. Any events beyond February will, of course, depend on sufficient volunteers being found to man the hall.



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