

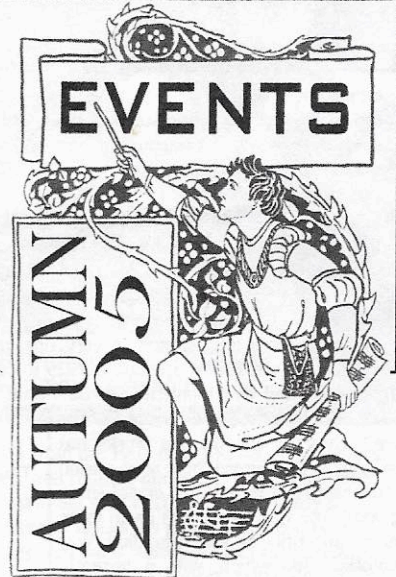
AMBLECOTE HISTORY

Number 12

The Newsletter of Amblecote History Society

August 2005

September 14th - British Military Medals, Reg Cook.
October 12th - Then & Now - A Photographic Tour of Amblecote in 1933 and 2005.
November 9th - The Flight of Charles II from the Battle of Worcester (via Amblecote) The Pendrill Connection, Reg Pendrill.
December 14th - Christmas Social - Bring a Bottle.
All at Amblecote Church Hall 7.30pm



HOLLOW-AWARE

**Preserving the Holloway;
History First Please!**

The June meeting of the Society, attended by some fifty members and guests, attention was focused on the Holloway and potential developments that might be harmful to the heritage environment.

Society interest and concern in this area has been heightened over the past couple of years as a result of factory closures and demolitions in Old Wharf Road and Canal Street (see *Wharf Walk*). This creates the potential for huge residential developments and – worryingly – the possibility of major heritage losses along the Holloway to create vehicle access from the A491. The meeting began with a discussion about a piece in the

Express and Star in which Society concerns over possible Holloway developments had been voiced. Councillor Les Jones (Pedmore & Stourbridge East), Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, responded to suggestions that the Holloway might be under threat by saying there were no plans for development and, if there were, they would go to public consultation; stating *“I am not prepared to close doors like that, I do not think it is of any use. It is a bit pre-emptive to assume things are going to happen.”*

The meeting agreed that Councillor Jones’ was right that pre-emption is indeed the ability to assume things may happen, but wrong in assuming the Society’s abilities to presume were not of “any use”.

As the residents of Amblecote know only too well, waiting for ‘public consultation’ is akin to waiting for the bulldozers, and the meeting proceeded to discuss the Holloway on the presumption that if we are thinking something then so, in all probability, are the developers!

The object of the meeting however was not to ‘close doors’ but simply raise an awareness of the Holloway area in order that when development does arrive there is a full public knowledge of its heritage inclusions, and that these are treated sympathetically. This meeting was simply a first co-ordinated step, setting out what exists in the Holloway and why it should be treated with respect.

The meeting was delighted to welcome a number of guests including Hugh Clarke, President, and Steve Hyde, Chairman, of Stourbridge Football Club who, of course, have an important interest in the Holloway via the War Memorial Athletics Ground; and also Derek Brookes who presented the Society with a gift of a *History of Jones & Attwood* produced by the firm in 1998.

Jones & Attwood

After discussing the ancient origins of the road, which has been a feature of the area since pre-historic times, a slide presentation was made showing its major inclusions. These begin properly with the Jones & Attwood building which, as most people now know, is coming to the end of its business life. Built in 1893 its classic red brick exterior with glazed details of pinnacles and round and oval windows is a major signature inclusion on the road out of Stourbridge. It would be a tragedy to lose this. Beyond Jones and Attwood is a sandstone cliff forming the corner of the plateau on which the War Memorial Athletics Ground stands.

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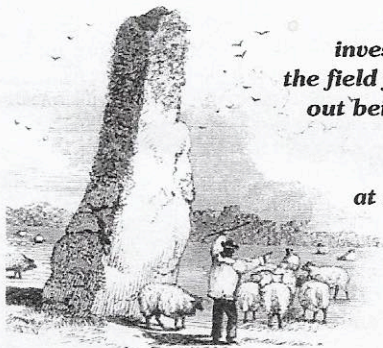


HARLA'S STONE?

Amblecote Echo of the Ancient Past?

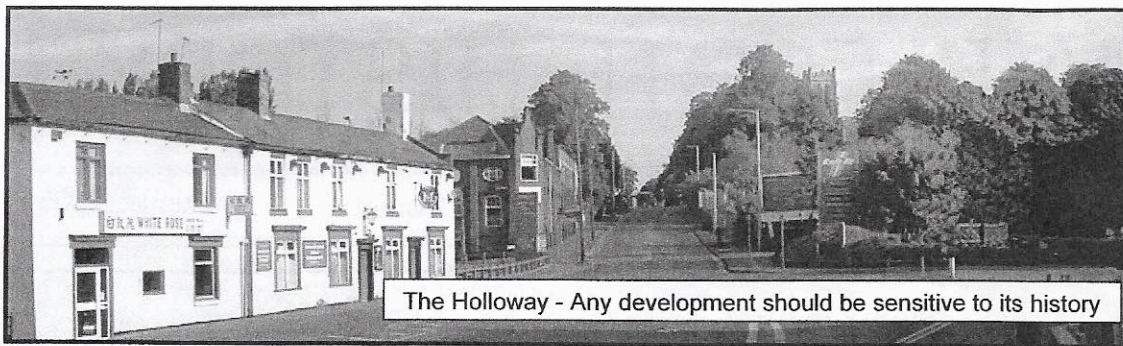
“One cannot investigate leys in the field for long without being convinced that the way was planted at intervals with stones....”

The Old Straight Track
Alfred Watkins



John Hemingway’s recent talk to the Society revealed the possibility that the area adjacent the junction of Wollaston Road and Amblecote High Street – now the location of the Glasshouse College and Ruskin Centre – may once have been the site of an ancient boundary or standing stone.

(Continued on page 2)



The Holloway - Any development should be sensitive to its history

architectural balance on the lower area.

Dangers of Development

Following this visual 'tour' of the Holloway the possible dangers of development were discussed. By far the most sinister is the thought that access to

(Continued from page 1)

On top of the cliff is a little stand of trees which occupies the south east corner of the ground – a miniature urban wood that provides both welcome greenery (the last significant trees before Wordsley in fact) as well as a wildlife habitat.

The Athletics Ground

Further up the road on the same side is the Football Club lower entrance. This architectural gem has been discussed at length in previous newsletters. With its wrought iron gates by Hill and Smith, blue brick paved walkway and original early 20th century turnstiles this *must* be preserved. The entrance penetrates a long stretch of very fine cinder wall paid for by the local philanthropist Ernest Stevens in 1929 to complete the War Memorial Athletics Ground development. Steven's built the wall in order to (his

words) "beautify the gas works end of the town". Even though the gas works has now gone it was agreed there is no reason to 'debeautify' the area by demolishing the wall! The wall terminates (with more ornate ironwork) at the redundant War Memorial Club which, with a currently undefined owner, is falling into disrepair. Whilst the club building has little to recommend it, the adjacent bowling green opened in 1924 certainly has. In use until a couple of years ago it seems ridiculous that this sporting facility has been lost – especially as it backs onto the Athletics Ground. Beyond the club are two modern houses and Amblecote Villa, the latter an important feature of the crossroads. Beyond this, at Holloway End, is the War Memorial Archway. This area, although council property, is maintained by the Football Club within their limited resources. However, there is no doubt that both the arch and its immediate surroundings could do with a council sponsored facelift; block paved perhaps, like those recently upgraded areas of central Dudley! Whilst demolition of the arch is unthinkable the point was made that almost all the south side of the Holloway from the arch to Jones & Attwoods was part of the Stourbridge War Memorial scheme of 1919 to 1929 and remains a civic memorial to the fallen of the Great War despite that civic authority having passed from Stourbridge to Dudley.

Holy Trinity Church

On the East side of the Holloway stands Holy Trinity Church which is currently preparing a bid for English Heritage listing. Obviously the church is not under threat but its presence is the central element in an integrated landscape that, in conjunction with the Holloway's other inclusions, makes this area of Amblecote architecturally, historically and ecologically important. The church combines elements of local industrial history via its cast iron railings and fire-brick construction with a social context and a unique open space – the churchyard. As 'residential infilling' takes place on even the most marginal urban land, churchyards such as that at Amblecote are becoming vital 'green lungs' and wildlife sanctuaries. It was noted that the churchyard, where an area is deliberately left un-mowed to encourage wildlife, is linked via the stand of trees on the Athletics Ground opposite to a contiguous corridor of greenery that runs around the ground towards the canal and river. Disruption to one element in this chain causes disruption to all – another reason for preserving every precious scrap of greenery in built-up Amblecote.

The Cottages

In front of the church are the familiar cottages built against the cliff face below the churchyard. Although the only locally listed structure in the entire Holloway and although pleasingly renovated in recent times, an unfortunate use of modern bricks for a wall has somewhat upset the

the Old Wharf Road area, as well as improved access to the old gas works site, could be effected by taking a swath of land off the north side of the Holloway.

Beginning at the War Memorial Club a cutting could be made that would slice through the club itself, the bowling green, the War Memorial Athletics Ground bottom entrance, the stand of trees and Jones and Attwoods. By the time this had widened out at the Stour bridge itself, there might even be room for an island or some other major re-development of the ring road to accommodate traffic.

How then are we to counter this possible threat? A map was shown illustrating existing conservation areas and listed buildings. The first includes Lower High Street and the second the Canal area. However, the only buildings listed in the Holloway are the cottages. It was put to the meeting that perhaps the Holloway could be designated a conservation area and/or that its several additional historical buildings could, at the very least, be locally listed?

Public Awareness

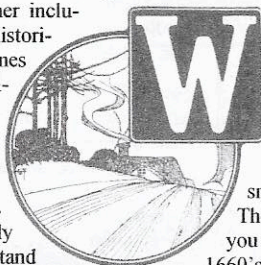
In conclusion it was decided that the best way forward was to raise public awareness of the importance of the history and green space contained within the Holloway via a publication. This could be produced in booklet format (along the lines of our recent Ridley publication) and offered for Society and public sale. By this means the histories of J&A, the Athletics Ground, the church and the cottages would gain a higher profile and offer a ready made

counter to any unforeseen and undesirable development manoeuvrings. **Sympathetic development can deliver benefits, indeed it may even save old buildings. However, the simple fact is that so much redundant land in the Stour valley now makes the area a prime target for residential building and it is vital that we as a history society anticipate any negative effects on our heritage long before the bulldozers appear.**

The Old Gas Works
The old gas works site was discussed at the meeting, with the news from Councillor Banks that planning permission to build 127 flats on the site had been turned down. **However, notice has since been received that the developers Taylor Woodrow are to appeal and that there will be a Public Inquiry. Written objections must be submitted by September 6th! Further information from Mr Agha, Directorate of the Urban Environment on 01384 816879. Ref: APP/C4615/A/05/1185678.**

....and the smoke went up the chimney just the same

In our December issue a question was posed concerning an extra chimney on 'Woodcroft' in High Street. Mike Perkins thinks he may have the answer.



When man first harnessed fire he was probably living in caves, and, huddled around the fire place, he got pretty smoke dried. When man moved out of the caves it didn't take long for a bright spark to make a hole in the roof. This let out the smoke, but also let heat out and rain in. As dwellings became more substantial, the fireplace moved from the centre of the room to a wall, and eventually the chimney was invented. This let the smoke out, kept the warmth in, and stopped the rain getting in. The number of chimneys showed the outside world how many fires you had in your 'house', and probably reflected your wealth. In the 1660's a 'Hearth Tax' was introduced to tap into this wealth, and many fireplaces were bricked up to save money. To maintain status, the chimneys were retained, and so you have the situation of more chimneys than fireplaces.

This persisted to the 1950's. All the houses in Church Avenue, Corbett Crescent and Churchill Drive have more chimneys (and flues) than actual fireplaces. This 'snobbery' appeared in other areas; in the early 1900's ocean going liners were built with dummy funnels to make them more impressive. The *Titanic* had four funnels to fit its size and status, but the rearmost was a dummy. If you watch any of the *Titanic* films and see smoke coming out of all four funnels, you can tell your friends that Hollywood got it wrong!



Old Wharf Walk



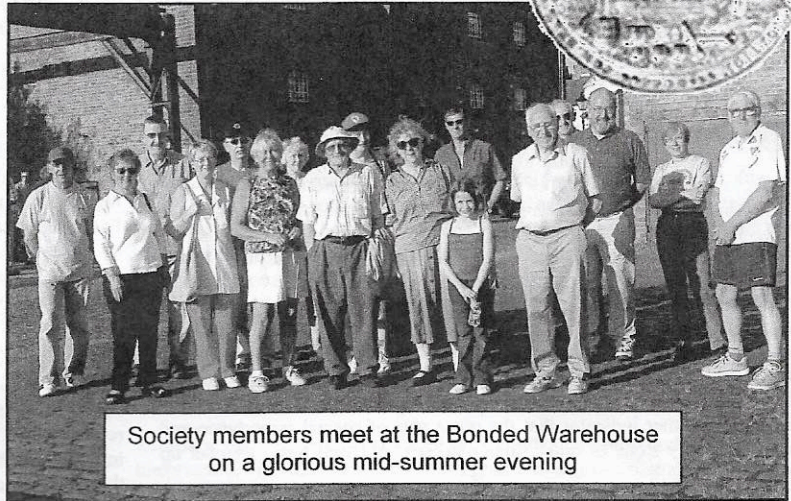
Wednesday 22nd of June saw thirty members and guests undertake one of the Society's less conventional 'history walks' in the area adjacent to the old Stourbridge Wharf.

The walk, undertaken in beautiful midsummer evening sunshine and Mediterranean style temperatures, revealed a number of remarkable historical survivals as well as the great potential for development in this area that we, as a history society, must ensure is appropriate and sympathetic.

Meeting by the Bonded Warehouse in Canal Street the party first of all appreciated, with Graham and Jose Wyles - prominent members of the Stourbridge Canal Navigation Trust - as our guides, the exterior of this fine old building. Graham pointed out the different inclusions and brick types that revealed the warehouse's several historical phases. He also noted that during renovations a buried ramp had been discovered that led towards the Stour; a strong indication that Yarrington's Navigation of the 1650's had once extensively imposed on the area. Andrew Yarrington, it will be remembered, carried out one of the first water transport improvement schemes in England and the canal arm, built some 120 years later, must have utilised at least some of his original excavations. Modern evidence increasingly indicates that Yarrington's work was much more significant than previously thought.

After appreciated the rest of the historical buildings in Canal Street the group briefly walked along the High Street before entering Old Wharf Road. A copy of the 1903 OS map (always useful as a link between old and modern Amblecote) revealed that Jones and Attwoods works already occupied a considerable stretch of road on the northern side and that sand quarries occupied much of the rest. Indeed a quick glance at the whole of the existing landscape between the old gas works site and the end of Old Wharf Road reveal that vast, incredibly vast, quantities of sand have been removed. Further up the road, at the end of Jones & Attwoods, it is possible to walk right up to a sheer sandstone cliff - some 50 or so feet in height - cut precisely into an external corner so as to allow the Stourbridge War Memorial Athletics ground to perch on its top. It was noted that only the purchase of the ground by Stourbridge Borough in the 20's saved this too from sand extraction. Most of the sand was used for building as, somewhat ironically, it was unsuitable for either glass making or foundry work. The 1903 map showed that the cliff was considerably closer to the road in those days, whilst a little double corner in the face revealed the 'ghost' of an old field boundary - once several yards overhead - which marked the start of a new excavation point.

On the opposite side of the road the land slopes gently towards the canal and the group took its first opportunity to appreciate the vistas opened up by the large number of demolitions in the area. It is now possible to walk down to the canal basin edge in many places and understand the area as the wharf it was originally designed to be. The 1903 map revealed several buildings, including a run of limekilns, long since demolished themselves but which, with new development inevitable, may well reveal themselves archaeologically if given the chance.



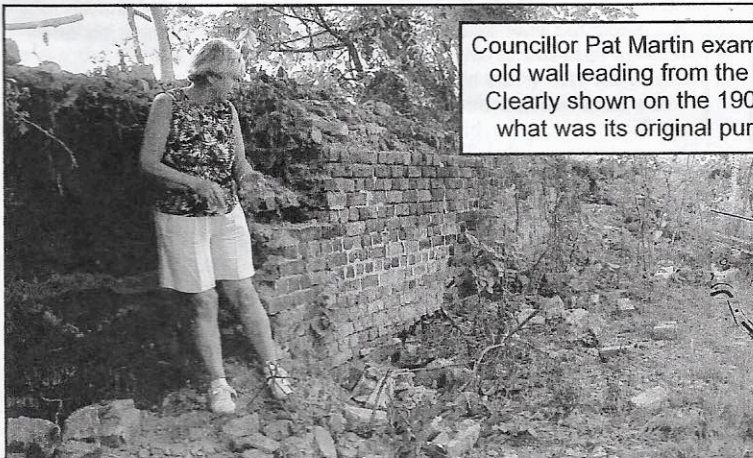
Society members meet at the Bonded Warehouse on a glorious mid-summer evening

One feature that was identifiable from the 1903 map - although something of a mystery - is a stretch of old wall running almost at right angles from the canal and, in 1903, almost up to the sand cliff. Almost certainly a boundary wall composed of Victorian bricks, its western side had been back-filled with soil causing, now that the factories on both sides have been demolished, a general collapse. This feature's continued existence can probably be measured in months at most.

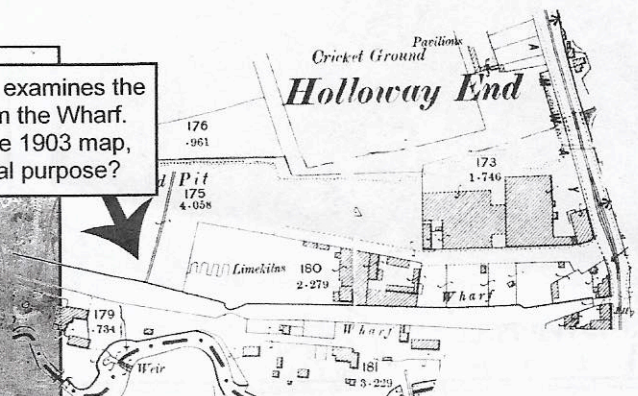
Graham Wyles provided a wonderful commentary on the area, revealing that several old military style buildings were used during WW2 for bomb assembly. The munitions were then despatched by canal, lorry and rail. Stourbridge, considered a quiet area and never a major target for the Luftwaffe, was thus cunningly used as a distribution centre for the ordnance that ultimately helped defeated the Nazis.

Further down Old Wharf Road everyone in the party was left puzzling at a factory frontage which included two magnificent cast stone panels. One pronounces the premises 'Suttons Holloware Co.' and the other was once a doorway sign for 'Employees'. No-one in the party (and this is very unusual for a Society walk) had any idea about the company or the factory which seems to be built partly of reclaimed material. Can anyone reading this newsletter help?

At the top of the road another surprise was in store. Here a vast swath of demolition has opened up a huge area of open land. With more to come as further redundant factories succumb, the development potential for the area is at once apparent. Not only could hundreds of residential dwellings be constructed here but also the proximity of the restored canal would add a 'des-res' factor that will make developers fall into a profit induced lather! Once again concern was expressed amongst members about access to the A491 and the dangers such potential building profits may pose to the historical inclusions of the Holloway.



Councillor Pat Martin examines the old wall leading from the Wharf. Clearly shown on the 1903 map, what was its original purpose?



Standing at the very top of Old Wharf Road was a remarkable survival of this general destruction. A pair of large steel gates,
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AMBLECOTE

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LANDSCAPE



Borough Archaeologist John Hemingway paid a return visit to the Society on the 11th of May 2005 with a special talk entitled 'The Eighteenth Century Landscape of Amblecote'. Using a copy of an estate map of 1769 from the Enville Estate collection, John revealed the results of some extensive research into eighteenth century Amblecote that, in turn, offer links both backwards and forwards in time.

As with the map of 1688, which John discussed during his last visit, the 1769 version offered a glimpse of the deep past. The area now occupied by the Glasshouse College and Ruskin Centre was marked 'Harlastone'. This name survives to this day in the form of Harlastone House, the mansion adjacent to the old Webb Corbett works. However, John suggested the origins of the place name lay in the two elements 'harla' and 'stone', the latter being distinct from the 'ton' of, say, neighbouring 'Wollaston'. Thus there is a hint that the name derives from 'Harla' (a personal name) and 'stone' meaning a significant, perhaps even a standing, stone. The location of Harlastone – on a road junction adjacent to ford across the Coalbournbrook – is another indicator that the place was of special importance and that a boundary stone or other stone marker could well have been set up here.

John went on to match a plethora of places on the map with research he has carried out into the former owners and occupants of the land. In doing so he revealed a range of individuals high and low who made their living from the soil, manufactories and minerals of Amblecote during the eighteenth century.

This was, he pointed out, a largely rural landscape even at this time. There was industry of course, but in Amblecote this was largely concerned with glass manufacture and associated mining. Iron working, although important from an historical perspective, was subsidiary to glass and it wasn't until the nineteenth century that metal industries came to assume real importance in Amblecote.

With this in mind John described a peculiarity of the Amblecote estate (remembering of course that the map showed the holdings of the Grey's of Enville, the Lords of the Manor), in that much of the property was dispersed amongst several tenants and sub-tenants who owned non-contiguous tracts of land. The effect was that most of those farming in Amblecote would have had to move labour, animals and goods from one area to another, and across each other's land, to manage their farms. This is unusual, suggesting to John that the enclosure of Amblecote's former medieval common land (Hanbury field, Little Field and Watery Field) came relatively early in comparison to other enclosures in Staffordshire where a more typical landscape consists of several fields worked from a central farm building.

John's researches also revealed who was 'up' in Amblecote in the eighteenth century and amongst them are some individuals of considerable note.

The Hill's, Ironmasters and to a lesser extent Glassmasters, were resident at the new Dennis Hall and busy building a huge modern iron business in the valleys of South Wales.

At Holloway End (about where the entrance to the War Memorial Athletics Ground now stands) was Who House (another ancient name survival meaning a promontory) home of James Kier, master of an adjacent glasshouse. Kier was a vital figure of the Industrial Revolution, and a principle member of the famous Lunar Society along with Mathew Boulton, James Watt, Erasmus Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood to name but a few. At Amblecote, Kier experimented with crystallography, made scientific and industrial glassware and produced glazes for Wedgwood, before moving on to manage Boulton and Watt's Soho Works. Later he built a great alkali manufactory in Tipton where the first industrial production of soap was initiated.

Meanwhile the newly built Hill House (later Corbett Hospital) was the residence of Thomas Rogers who during this period was busy consolidating land holdings in the area. Rogers became immensely rich, so much so that John speculated whether all his wealth was, in fact, obtained from glass.

John carefully worked his way around the map using a computerised display that highlighted each piece of land in turn. The Platts estate was owned by Lord Foley, and hence fell outside the Enville sphere. However John has discovered that for most of the 18th century it was leased by several generations of Tyzacks, Lorrainer glassmakers who built works and houses there.

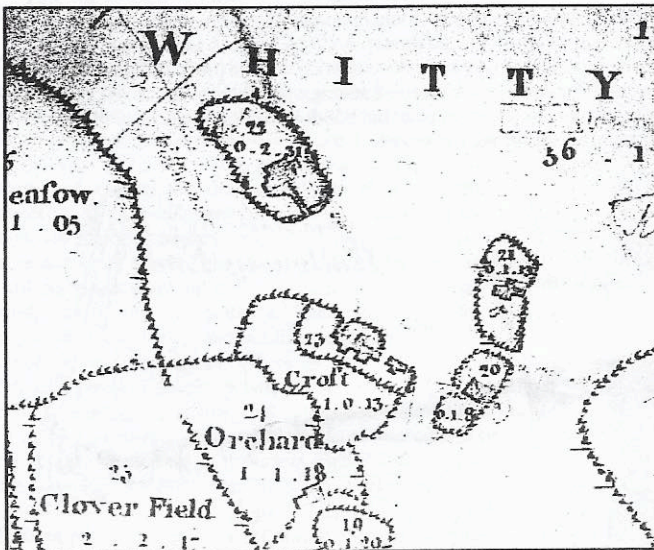
Adjacent to the Platts and opposite where the Little Pig now stands, was an inn known as the Royal Oak and later as the Green Dragon [*Interestingly Kieron McMahon, who spoke at our November 05 meeting on Amblecote pubs, mentioned the Royal Oak as Amblecote's oldest license, but assumed it was on the site of the current Royal Oak. John's research points to a different location.*]

At Coalbourn John noted that many changes must have taken place over the years. The road would originally have forded the Coalbournbrook and would have been much wider than it later became. A ford, John pointed out, inevitable widens a road as vehicles constantly try to find firm ground at the edges. The fact that the later road actually narrowed at this point (and has had to be constantly widened in recent times), points to some considerable changes over the years in both width and height of the highway [*A map of about 1820 was recently discovered in the Worcester Record Office which shows The Fish in the middle of the road, thus backing up John's theory, whilst old photographs of the Little Pig show it standing well below road level.*]. Clearly a study of the history of The Fish has much to offer.

Further along the High Street, John noted the house and property of Grey Jeavon, an educated man whose signature frequently appears on legal documents for Amblecote. The house is located where Sankey House now (just about) stands awaiting its fate, and John noted that he has a watching brief on the property to see if demolition might reveal archaeological signs of earlier inhabitants.

Taking us onto the 'highlands' of Amblecote, John reiterated his lost village theory described in his last talk, with the triangular shaped grounds of Amblecote hall once forming a village green; all of course now lost as a result of open-cast mining. John also repeated his belief that the original Amblecote Hall would have been to the north of the green (where Dunford's Farm stood), something that is continually reinforced by small but significant pieces of archive evidence. Mike Perkins for example, revealed he has discovered that Thomas Raybould who is shown on the map as holding the land to the north of the 'new' hall was buried in Old Swinford and described as 'of Amblecote Hall'. Meanwhile Amblecote Hall – as it was known until the 1950s – was at this time owned by John Hancox.

Moving onto Withymoor (or Whitty Moor), he noted a number of small enclosures belonging to several named individuals including Thomas Scudimore, James Plant and George Shaw. These are 'miners tenements', probably for



Isolated settlements on 'Whitty Moor' indicate mining activity



coal extraction and represent the opening stages of the long modern mineral exploitation of the moor, which culminated in the vast open cast mines of the thirty years ago. Also on the moor was an enclosure belonging to Thomas Rogers (of The Hill) which was a glassworks formerly belonging to the Tyzacks. As John ruefully remarked, "this would have been an interesting place for archaeology, if a great pit hadn't taken it all away!"

John now talked about Amblecote Bank, the steep area that drops away south from the main Amblecote ridge towards the river Stour. This shows a complex of settlements and lanes, which represent a major area of interest to Amblecote historians. As John put it "something was going on here" with a plethora of little 'island' enclosures and a road system so confused as to suggest that it had, at some earlier period, been something else entirely. Tenants in the area included William Brooks, James Woodhall, Edward Bowls, Richard Williams and Peter Hill. This last is, it seems, remembered in the name 'Peters Hill' now applied to a large area around the modern school of that name; whereas in the eighteenth century and earlier the wider area was known as Light Hills, a name now utterly lost. John suggested one explanation for at least some of this small grouping of enclosures was that they lay hard against Pensnett Chase and may have originally have been the dwellings of those employed on it as foresters. Indeed, it may have been from here that the poaching raids by Amblecote folk on Lord Dudley's deer that crop up in medieval documents were launched!

At the level of the Stour itself the situation is again a complex one, with the river even then hard at work in the service of local agriculture and industry. A mill belonging to Robert Richards on the map was formerly known as Lye Mill and later became Bagley's Mill and it still known as such today, even though Dudley Bagley (an important individual into whom John is carrying out research) only held it for a relatively short time. Of particular interest is the division of the river into a number of 'leets', man made - or at least modified - water channels used to redirect and 'work' the flow. Much historical work remains to be done on these [our annual boundary walk reveals that much of this relatively undeveloped area may still hold archaeological clues] not least because the river represents the ancient boundary between Amblecote and Old Swinford and may reveal clues regarding Saxon or even pre-Saxon occupation.

As John examined the area of the map showing the Stour valley the complexity of holdings continues. 'Stuart's Piece', formerly 'Steward's Piece' was held by Thomas Thompson who was a potter. John wondered if clues to his occupation, in the form of 'wasters' - failed firings, might still exist in or on the ground in the area? Members vigilance was requested!

Arriving at the Town Mills the close relationship between Amblecote and Stourbridge became apparent. The Mills themselves started out as corn mills, later became slitting mills (used for splitting iron into more

(Continued from page 3)

OLD WHARF WALK

with their posts still intact, marked the entrance to a now lost factory. Whilst clearly functional they were nevertheless far from utilitarian with a semi-circular design crossing the main verticals.

Although there was some debate as to whether the gates had been manufactured by 'hot or cold punching' all present were agreed that such elegant industrial survivals should find a better local use rather than go for scrap or disappear as 'tat'. The problem is where to start?

Returning to the High Street the party paused to appreciate the dry dock that now stands at the end of the canal arm. A tunnel under the road once linked the canal to a basin within the now lost GWR goods yard. It was noted somewhat ironically that had the basin survived, modern developers would undoubtedly have been clamouring to build ultra-smart apartments with moorings at an additional cost!

Speaking of 'Moorings' most of those present managed to get past the pub of that name (temptingly adjacent to the Chinese take-away) to re-enter Canal Street and the final leg of the walk. It had been intended to go as far as the Coalbourn bridge, but with the Old Wharf Road tour having taken much longer than expected, it was decided to walk as far as the bend in the canal that marked the end of Old Wharf Road and then double back. Again Graham and Josie's knowledge of the canal arm was invaluable as they indicated various historical and conservation inclusions, as well as pointing out the difficult but ultimately triumphant preservation of the canal, something that at one point would have seemed at best unlikely.

This concluded this year's 'midsummer' walk; a combination of glorious weather, good and knowledgeable company, and Amblecote's particular and peculiar history having merged to make even a trip around a partly demolished industrial estate utterly compelling!

Above all, the walk signalled to those present just how important the land off Old Wharf Road and Canal Street will be to developers; and how vital it is that Amblecote History Society remain watchful guardians of any attempt to compromise our vital heritage to their considerable profits.

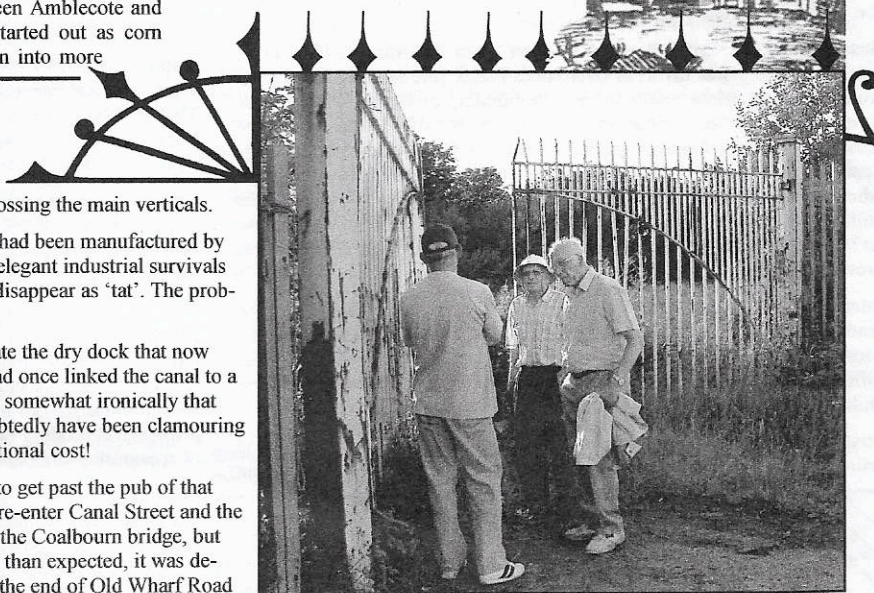
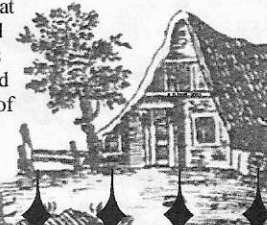
useful bars) and finally tanneries (people still recall Turney's works). As John put it "you name it, it happened here", and various individuals of both Amblecote and Stourbridge importance held properties in the area. These included the Scott's, well-known Stourbridge clothiers, and the Shirt's whose bakery business continued into living memory. Also of importance in this area were prime meadows (now largely lost to sand quarrying), their value illustrated by their ownership being in the hands of Hancox of Amblecote Hall and Rogers of the Hill.



Arriving at the Holloway area, John asked us to consider the slope from the Stour Bridge to the church as one part of a double holloway, the other arising at Coalbournbrook. Over the centuries a track would have been carved out of the underlying sandstone by innumerable vehicles travelling this road, and occasionally widened by civic effort. Holloway End therefore, now the site of the modern Holloway (containing the Vicarage) and the area around it would have represented the 'summit' of the two tracks. Here was the Holloway End Glassworks which in the period of the map belonged to Thomas Rogers. However, John talked at length about its subsequent owner, James Kier, whose importance in the history of the Industrial Revolution and as a prominent member of the Lunar Society should not be underestimated.

Returning to the river John mentioned another famous, and sometimes understated, individual. Andrew Yarrington was an ex-Parliamentary Army Officer who, in the period after the Civil War, carried out a scheme to make the River Stour navigable from the Severn to Stourbridge. How successful he was has long been a matter of debate but this map and others, along with archaeological evidence, increasingly shows that 'Yarringtons Navigation' was a major engineering work that should be celebrated worldwide as an industrial first.

Iron making was also carried out in the valley, and John discussed the Royal Forge which Yarrington was required to consider when managing water for his scheme. Various owners from the seventeenth century included Ambrose Crowley, the Homphrays, Addenbrooks and eventually in 1800 John Bradley. In the 1770s The Stourbridge Canal Arm was constructed following, so John believes, much of the course of the Yarrington's old navigation (and destroying evidence of it as it did so). However, the result was a huge wharf area that turned Stourbridge into an important inland port. In the early 19th century Bradley's came into the hands of John Foster and hence the modern, truly industrialised, era of Amblecote History began.



WALL MONUMENTS AT AMBLECOTE HOLY TRINITY

Recent events have coincided to bring together information relating to not one, but two, of Holy Trinity's internal monuments both belonging to the earlier period of the church. Indeed, the first involves the earliest monument of all, that to Anna Eleanora Amery who died in 1844, and the second that to Lyndon John Grier who died in 1857. Both commemorate relatively young people, Anna Amery was 16 and Lyndon Grier 19, and both had strong Holy Trinity connections through their parents. The Amery's were significant donors to the Church in its early days, and Lyndon was second son of the first Vicar, John Grier. Both individuals are buried elsewhere.

Anna Eleanora Amery

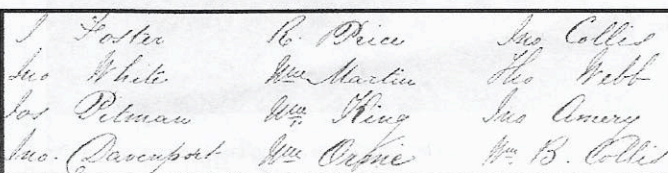
Anna Eleanora Amery was the daughter of John and Anna Dorothea (nee Foster) and interest in the monument was initiated by an enquiry to the Secretary from a descendant, Susan Walker. The Amery monument is listed on the Holy Trinity website, but without details, and Susan enquired whether it might be possible to find the gravestone (if not too overgrown) and photograph the wording (if not too eroded)? It was with great pleasure therefore that we were able to send pictures (obtained with the help of a stepladder) of a wonderful marble monument high on the west wall of the church. The monument records Anna as daughter of John Amery, and the fact that she is actually buried at Chelsea.

In addition, a search of the old Churchwarden's book revealed that John and Anna Dorothea played a highly significant role in the early history of the church. John, a barrister, was a member of the original building committee formed at the Talbot Hotel on February 20th 1839. John and Anna Dorothea made significant individual donations to the church building fund (Anna also organised a subscription) and the Organ fund a few years later.

Susan kindly supplied further information about the Amery's. She notes that John Amery was involved with James Foster (the famous Stourbridge Ironmaster and prime mover behind the building of Holy Trinity) in the formation of the Stourbridge and Kidderminster Bank. Foster, it will be recalled, famously founded the bank after the Old Bank at Stourbridge upset him by calling in his overdraft, which he promptly paid off using a wheelbarrow full of cash, and then closed his account! Susan wonders (she still has to prove it) whether Anna Dorothea was a relative of James Foster? The Amery's lived at Park House in Stourbridge which, it seems, was previously owned by Foster.

Interestingly, although John Amery was (fairly obviously) Church of England, his wife was a Moravian, being the daughter of the Bishop of the Moravian Church at Ockbrook in Derbyshire. However, this religious difference seems to have been a mere nuance to the Amery's who had their children christened in the CofE as well as noted in Moravian records.

Susan has discovered that John Amery left Park House in about 1862 and retired to Eckington in Worcestershire. He served as a Churchwarden there



Extract from the Church Wardens Book showing the original building committee of 1839. John Amery's name is alongside that of Foster, Collis et. al.

until his death in 1874. John Amery was clearly an important county figure, serving as a Magistrate and as Deputy Lieutenant for both Worcestershire and Staffordshire.

On the wider family front Susan has discovered that Anna Dorothea 'came with' a generous marriage settlement, thus providing John with substantial capital, and that the Fosters had large plantation holdings in Jamaica. An uncle of Anna was Benjamin Henry la Trobe (1764-1820) who found fame in America as a proponent of classic architecture (including that of the Capitol in Washington) and was a friend of Thomas Jefferson.

Susan is now busy finding out why the young Anna Eleanora died in London, and will keep the Society informed of any developments.

Lyndon John Grier

Lyndon Grier was the second son of John William Grier the first vicar of Amblecote. He was born in 1837 and was about five when his father was appointed. In common with many younger sons of the Victorian middle class Lyndon joined the army, and it was whilst on active service in India in 1857 that, at the age of 19, he met his death.

Attention was focused on his monument via the kind gift to the Society by Brian Otter from Pennsylvania of a copy of the *Illustrated London News* of October 9th 1858, which contains an illustrated article about the monument.

Although only 19 Lyndon Grier had been an officer in the infantry for two years, and had spent much of that time abroad in the Crimea and India. This was the period when the so-called 'great peace', which followed the Napoleonic wars, was disintegrating and Britain found itself fighting, in rapid succession, imperial rivals in Russia and imperial dissidents in India.

Grier would have joined his regiment in the Crimea, the 34th (Cumberland) Foot, at the end of the campaign there, arriving probably sometime in December 1855 by which time the British and French, hindered by their Turkish allies, were gaining the upper hand. Two months later an armistice was declared.

However, peace in the Crimea did not mean a cessation of hostilities for Lyndon Grier who was despatched in mid 1857 to India as part of a massive British army sent to regain control of the rebellious northern areas in what became known as the Indian Mutiny (or First Indian War of Independence depending on sensibilities). The initial British actions consisted of recapturing strategic towns and cities and, in particular, reaching a beleaguered garrison at Lucknow.

The action at Cawnpore in which Lyndon Grier died occurred at a crucial point during the battles of 1857. In July the city, at a vital crossing of the Ganges, had briefly fallen into rebel hands and the garrison and British civilians massacred in what was, even by the standards of place and times, an appalling manner. Having negotiated an honourable withdrawal with the local Indian Prince, the Nana Sahib, boats containing the British were fired upon and survivors, including women and children, sabred to death by cavalry in the shallows. The few remaining British were rounded up and the men summarily killed, whilst women and children were imprisoned in a



Monument to Anna Eleanora Amery on the west wall of Holy Trinity. Her parents were significant church benefactors.

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house. A few days later, when a relieving army under Brigadier Henry Havelock arrived, Nana Sahib appears to have panicked and had his remaining prisoners killed. Unable to persuade rebel sepoy to shoot or bayonet them – this was too much even for them – he brought in several butchers from the town who literally hacked the women and children to death, throwing the body parts down a well.

The Cawnpore Massacre, which indelibly entered the British Victorian psyche, contained all the elements required to ‘turn’ a national train of thought. Several facts and myths combined. Firstly the butchery was real, secondly the relieving British forces encountered the scene only hours after it had occurred thus viewing its full horror, and thirdly the 1850’s was a time when the idea of the special protection of women and children was gaining great currency in Britain itself. Add to this the class driven arrogance, inherent racism and ultimately superior military capability that sustained British imperial power and the results were explosive. “Cawnpore” became the battle cry of the British forces whose campaign of suppression became, overnight, one of revenge.

Ensign Grier would have been well aware of the events of Cawnpore as he moved ‘up-country’ with the 34th Foot. Newly arriving troops were given a tour of the house and well, which were deliberately left uncleaned.

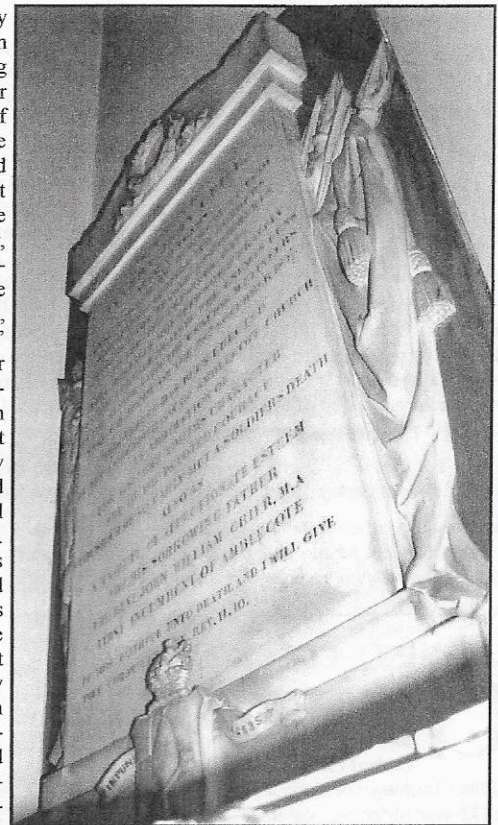
On the military front the relief of Lucknow, fifty miles from Cawnpore, became a priority; the British secure in the knowledge that its fall would mean a further massacre. Unfortunately re-enforcements were inevitably slow in arriving (it took the 34th sixty-eight days by sea from Portsmouth to Calcutta and even this was considered “a speed scarcely ever surpassed”). Thus the commanders on the ground had the difficult task of deciding when they could afford to detach a force large enough to relieve Lucknow, yet leave sufficient troops at Cawnpore to ensure its own survival. One attempt resulted in a detachment reaching Lucknow – at great cost in lives – but leaving them too trapped.

Finally in November 1857 a strong column set out and battled its way to Lucknow and back over a period of several days, evacuating the garrison and dependents to Cawnpore. The watching rebels, under the generalship of Tantia Topi, leader of an efficient (“drilled if not disciplined”) army from Gwalior, took the opportunity to attack Cawnpore, and it was during its defence that Lyndon Grier was killed. Defence – especially in the British Army – often, of course, means attack, and the commander at Cawnpore, Major General Charles Windham decided to meet the forces of Tantia Topi outside the city’s defences. Topi out-thought, if not exactly outmanoeuvred, the British by sending a decoy force of around 3,000 men and

six guns to meet the 1,300 British with 12 guns. Two to one were odds the British could cope with, and they did, but when Topi’s main force of 20,000 appeared the British had no option but to hastily beat retreat.

Falling back in some disarray on Cawnpore a defensive line was organised in front of the town. The 34th were placed on the left with five companies of riflemen and elements of the 82nd foot on the right. They were horrifically exposed, as well

as hopelessly outnumbered, with Topi able to bring cannon to bear from the cover of jungle a mere three or four hundred yards away. Next morning, on the 27th of November, Topi began a bombardment and the British troops, after ‘taking it’ Waterloo style for five hours, eventually fell back on an entrenchment (originally built by the massacred garrison) as a final line of defence. Lyndon Grier’s last night would have been spent, as described by one officer present amongst a “motley assemblage of men and beasts, baggage, luggage and ten thousand non-descript encumbrances, rivalling the chaos before the fiat of creation went forth.”



The Grier Monument. Hidden behind the organ since the alterations of 1900.

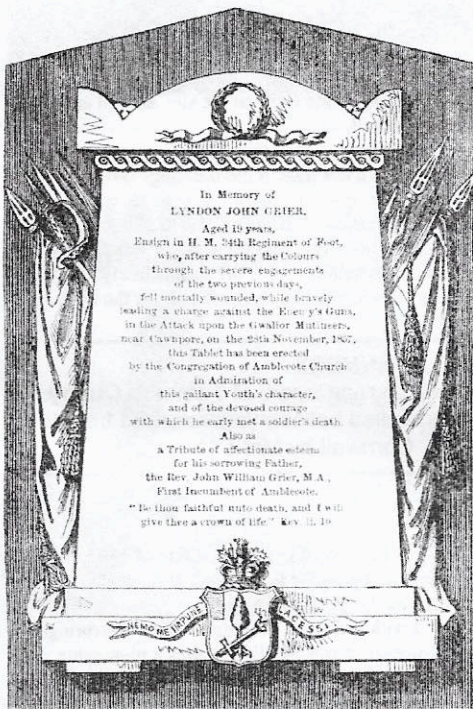
Next day Topi, (reinforced by yet more troops from Gwalior) pressing his advantage and moved his field guns to within a four hundred yards of the British trenches. Keeping up a murderous fire it seemed only a matter of time before the British defence collapsed and Cawnpore, with all the implications this had for Lucknow, and indeed northern India as a whole, fell into enemy hands. In some desperate fighting parties of British troops broke out of the defences in attempts to destroy Topi’s artillery. One, consisting of 180 men under Colonel Wilson of the 64th Foot, spectacularly rushed a battery of four guns and spiked three of them before being forced to retire with fifty percent casualties. Described by turns as ‘plucky’ or ‘foolish’, there is no doubt that such actions kept Topi at bay both physically and psychologically. Wilson’s action was followed by others and it was in one of these that Grier, leading a mere dozen soldiers, was mortally wounded. It is a sad fact that subalterns such as Grier were often regarded as expendable, being assigned in battle to ‘forlorn hope’ actions which either made their reputation or resulted (more likely) in their death. Indeed, the account in the *Illustrated London News*, describes Grier as having attacked the same position as Wilson which, by the same account, was hopeless.

However enough was done to hold Cawnpore, and later on the 28th, by which time the severely wounded Grier was dying, the Lucknow force returned. Under the command of the energetic General Colin Campbell this both reinforced and rallying the garrison, and Campbell simultaneously withdrew from the town whilst energetically attacking Topi’s forces whose lack of professionalism gave the British forces a decided advantage. Indeed, this defensive attack turned into a rout and the rebels were harassed over several days to dispersal.

Nevertheless it was to take a further two years before the mutiny was totally suppressed, largely because the British relentlessly pursued those responsible (and some who were not), if not to the ends of the earth, then certainly to the ends of the subcontinent in order to kill them.

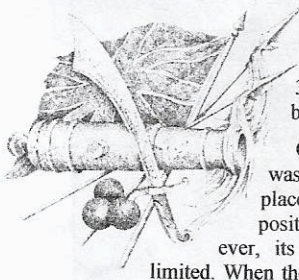
Grier was buried at Cawnpore, probably with little ceremony and in an unmarked grave. However, as was the fashion of the time monuments were erected to the dead, with the officers and NCOs named and the other ranks numbered. A tablet remains to this day in All Souls Church, Cawnpore

(Continued on page 8)



The Monument as it appears in the ILN

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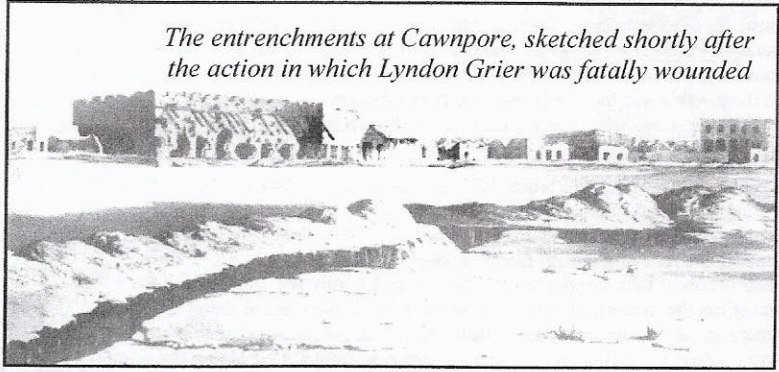


which records the names of three officers, four NCOs, one Drummer and twenty four privates from the 34th who died on the 28th of November.

Closer to home the tablet to Grier was erected in Holy Trinity church and placed on the east wall in a prominent position facing the congregation. However, its period of display was relatively limited. When the organ was re-sited in 1900 it was placed in front of the tablet so that from that time on viewing has had to be by special effort in the narrow space between the organ casing and the wall. Indeed this space was previously occupied by the bellows blower who, until electricity was introduced, was required to pump a large handle (still in existence) situated there.

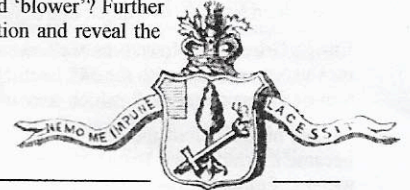
In July an expedition was mounted to photograph the monument which involved the temporary removal of a bookshelf and some ladder work.

The tablet has suffered some minor damage over the years, losing a portion of the motto around the badge (possibly the Grier family badge?) at its base. In addition photography revealed some vintage graffiti in the shape of



The entrenchments at Cawnpore, sketched shortly after the action in which Lyndon Grier was fatally wounded

the name "D. Baker" (sadly without a date) also on the base. Perhaps this was the name of a bored or disaffected 'blower'? Further research may answer the badge question and reveal the graffiti culprit!



CORBETT CELEBRATION

Under a glorious mid-summer sky on Sunday 3rd of July the Society joined forces with the League of Friends of Corbett Hospital, Holy Trinity Church and the Chaplaincy of Corbett Hospital to celebrate the 112 year life of the hospital.

This is, as we are sure everyone is aware, now closed and awaits demolition. The site is to be used for new out-patient and primary care health facilities and some residential housing.

In attendance was the Lye and Stourbridge Salvation Army Band who got the proceedings off to a jolly start with a few well known tunes before Father Paul Tongue, Vicar of Amblecote, welcomed those present. Apart from a good sized crowd these included our new MP Linda Waltho, local councillors Pat Martin and Colin Banks and Alderman John Simpson.

Interspersed with some good old fashioned traditional hymns several remembrances of the hospital were made, together with hopes for the future. Nick Baker, Secretary of the Amblecote History Society spoke first about its opening in 1893, quoting from contemporary accounts of the various press comments made by those present about *their* hopes for the future. None could have foreseen the actual circumstances of the closure though John Corbett at least, by the inclusion of a 'closure clause' in the hospitals constitution, realised that, one day, this would be necessary.

Linda Waltho MP spoke on behalf of the community recalling, as do most local people, a personal involvement with the Corbett Hospital which has in so many ways touched so many people over the generations. She expressed a hope that an area within the new build (a memorial garden perhaps) might be created to commemorate the old hospital and John Corbett. This suggestion was met with popular approval.

Ann Turner, Director of Nursing for Dudley Hospitals Trust spoke on behalf of the Trust and again recalled the great affection of the local population for the old Corbett. She looked forward to the ethos of the Corbett



being transferred to the new facilities being built on the site, as well as to the modern acute unit at Russells Hall.

Father Paul then closed the formal proceedings with a blessing and those present took the opportunity to take a last look at the buildings and grounds in their present form.

To conclude the event a balloon release/race took place with 500 red balloons launched from the top of the hill. Although the weather was fine there was a stiff breeze at altitude and the balloons took off spectacularly in a south-westerly direction. Many thanks are due to Geoff Hill for the donation of a TV/DVD as a prize.

WINNERS

The winner of the balloon race was L M Turner of Quarry Bank and the furthest travelled balloon was returned from the Camel Estuary, Cornwall by Mrs C. Yeoman

STANLEY SPENCER'S AIRSHIP

The balloon release also celebrated the centenary on the 7th of August of a flight by aeronaut Stanley Spencer who, during the hospital fete of 1905, lifted off in an un-named airship from Corbett Hospital and flew it under its own power towards Brierley Hill, finally landing on the golf course at Scotts Green from whence he was transported back to Amblecote by cart. The following day a second flight was made with a landing at Brierley Hill.

Spencer's flight was in many ways unremarkable: his underpowered machine struggling with an envelope filled with town-gas from the nearby Stourbridge gas works (a cheap alternative to hydrogen) could do little but manoeuvre gingerly in the prevailing breeze. However, it was by all measures a pioneering event, representing the first powered aerial voyage across the Black Country and preceding the first heavier than air flight in the region by some five years. To the watching multitudes at the fete, although used to seeing tethered balloons, this was something entirely new. An airship that by its own power could fly where it wanted at will. In 1903 the Wright brothers in America had carried out the first airplane flight and a mere two years later it was still undecided which aircraft technology would prevail. Any knowledgeable observer would know that powered flight was – for good or ill – destined to dominate the coming century, and that here, at the Corbett Hospital fete, they were watching history in the making.