

The Elsworth Chronicle



Holy Trinity Church

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ELSWORTH CHRONICLE

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COULD YOU MANAGE 20,000 STEPS FOR THE ARTHUR RANK CAMBRIDGE HOSPICE?

The annual Star Shine Night Walk cannot take place this year owing to Covid-19 depriving the Cambridge Hospice of a vital source of income, normally in the region of £40,000. The hospice is not State-funded and relies on donations so as to provide care for people at the end of their lives.

In order to guard against this shortfall, people are invited to participate in a 20,000 step challenge [to approximate 10 miles], which could be at home [counting the steps] or on the road if the required government regulations are met. The event is to take place during the two weeks between the 23rd May - 6th June. **Further details may be obtained by Googling starshinenightwalk.com.uk.**

As many will know, the Arthur Rank Hospice supports people in Cambridgeshire living with an advanced serious illness or a life-limiting condition and those who need end-of-life care. More than 4,000 patients each year are supported in the hospice at Cambridge, the Alan Hudson Day Treatment Centre in Wisbech and in the patients' own homes via the Arthur Rank Community Team. This care, which is provided free of charge to patients and their families, enables people to improve their quality of life and fulfil their end of life choices.

It will cost £8.66 million this financial year to provide these services, of which £4.68 million is budgeted from contracts with the NHS and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Clinical Commissioning Group, leaving £3.98 million to be raised. Your help would be very much appreciated.

ELSWORTH DURING PREVIOUS WORLD-WIDE PANDEMICS

At the time of writing we are still endeavouring to keep coronavirus at bay. Pandemics, of course, have swept over the land in the past when the people of Elsworth were threatened similarly, namely in the fourteenth century at the time of the Black Death; during the Great Plague of the seventeenth century, and with three less publicised severe virus outbreaks in the 20th century. The present mortality figures are horrendous, pointing to so many personal tragedies but it is salient to recall that other pandemics in this country have killed even more. Throughout our church has been standing here over the centuries witnessing these times of great anxiety to the people of Elsworth and, no doubt, was well used.

In our present circumstances in the 21st century we can now better empathise with those who suffered in the past. The situation locally at these disastrous times need not be merely conjectural, and, focussing first on the Black Death of the fourteenth century, records relating to **Elsworth** and nearby villages exist. First, though, a reminder of the situation of that time. The plague, initially carried by fleas on rats, originated, as with Coronavirus, in Asia, probably China, and spread its way westwards via the trade routes, first into southern Europe and then northwards. It brought disaster in its path, with up to some **50%** of the population on the continent being killed. It is recorded that practically all of the population of Florence succumbed. It entered this country via Melcombe and within two years had brought about the deaths of between **20% and 50%** of the entire population.

In Cambridgeshire we are fortunate in having access to the research and writings of C.T. Smith and Christopher Taylor. The county was most unfortunate, though, in experiencing the return of the plague several times in the fourteenth century, as a result of which it is **estimated that the population of the county fell by almost forty percent in the years between 1279 and 1377**. In our part of the county, it has been recorded that at the manor of Oakington thirty-five out of fifty of Crowland Abbey's tenants died,

Cont /

at Dry Drayton the figures were twenty out of forty-two and at Cottenham thirty-three out of fifty-eight. Not all parishes were affected, however. One such to avoid the horror was **Elsworth**, where there was no trace of such a horrific pattern, but its people must have lived in a permanent state of anxiety. Shelford was another which seemed exempt from earlier waves of the plague, but not from all that followed.

To move on, outbreaks of the plague continued off and on for three centuries, but never again sweeping over the entire country, but rather breaking out in different localities at any one time. Of these, The Great Plague of London of 1665 is of note, the last of these major rat-flea-carried epidemics. Its death role was severe, with estimates of **70,000** in the capital, with Pepys writing of some **6,000** deaths from the plague in one week. Although the capital was the focus of the epidemic it was also experienced elsewhere, particularly in the south and in towns. The townfolk of **Cambridge** suffered - 177 were recorded as dying of the plague between July 1665 and March 1666, and a second outbreak of June 1666 was even worse, with almost 600 dying. Members of the university, in contrast, seemed able to escape infection; most vacated the colleges, as did Isaac Newton, and took refuge out in the country, while those who stayed remained gated within their colleges, much like the present policy of isolation within our homes, with provisions provided by the college servants.

Although those living in rural areas were less likely to suffer than those in the towns, such an environment did not necessarily prevent the pestilence. The Derbyshire village of Eyam not only highlights this fact, but provides a most moving account of self-sacrifice by the willingness of its people to isolate themselves in quarantine when the plague unexpectedly came within the village and it was decided that no one should leave so as to prevent the illness being passed to others outside. Some 75% of the population were to succumb as victims.

To move back in thought to our area, in spite of its nearness to

the Great North Road with the possibility of infection being brought to the inns of Caxton from travellers from London, there is no evidence that **Elsworth** suffered from the plague. No doubt these travellers were of the affluent class and not of the poor whose squalid dwellings and closeness to each other made them far more vulnerable. No doubt Pepys would have journeyed this way at times when visiting his family home at Brampton.

The great sweeps of illness mentioned above, which had brought such despair and loss of life, would then seem to have bypassed **Elsworth**. Although the 17th century Great Plague would not have brought long-term permanent changes, the legacy of **the Black Plague** of earlier times was significant in the extreme and was to change the social fabric not only then but over all subsequent centuries. **Elsworth** may have escaped the plague at that time but its ramifications were felt here as elsewhere in the country for it marked the end of the feudal system which had characterised the nation for centuries. It will be recalled that up to the time of the Black Death the feudal system obliged peasants to devote some time cultivating the land of the lord, a peasant's own needs being met, hopefully, by the produce of his scattered strips of land and perhaps from his livestock on the grazing land held in common. The horrific loss of life at this time meant that there were no longer sufficient hands to till the land of the lord and the traditional methods of working had to be revised. Some peasants used their newly found bargaining power to work for the lord for money, others, perhaps with greater foresight, agreed with their lord to rent land of the manor and pay wages to those with little land. With the increasing use of money the peasantry was thus divided and a middle class emerged.

Readers of these lines who have got this far deserve a break. The pandemics of the twentieth century will be considered in Part II - page 20. They, too, make gruesome reading, one in particular resulting in an estimated world-wide death roll of between **20 and 50 million**.

AWF

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FOODS

ELSWORTH SPORTS CLUB

For the past few seasons Elsworth has been unable to field a football team to grace the Grass Close. However, there is a distinct possibility that a team will be entered in the Cambs Sunday League for next season.

Swavesey Spartans have continued to use our facilities, mainly on Saturday mornings, for their teams for U15 girls and boys and U16 boys and ladies.

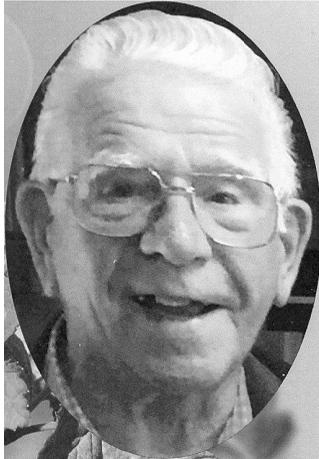
The table tennis season was brought to a premature end in early March due to the coronavirus outbreak. The Ely League has decided that hopefully the few remaining matches may be played later in the summer but Elsworth, as a club, has decided for the players' safety that the season is over. Although some teams may later complete the season's fixtures, the current standings show Elsworth 1 in 5th place of 9 teams in Division 1; Elsworth 2 also in 5th place of 9 teams in Division 2 and Elsworth 3 in 3rd place of 9 teams in Division 3. All three teams fell at early hurdles in the handicap competitions. Club and social table tennis evenings are usually arranged during the summer months and also during the playing season but this year there is obvious uncertainty due to the current pandemic.

The cricket season was due to commence for Elsworth on the 2nd May, with the team competing in the Cambs League Junior Division 5 West. It was also hoped matches in the Business Houses League on week-day evenings would have been played, but in both cases it remains to be seen whether any matches will be played this season owing to Covid-19. Hopefully some may take place later in the summer.

Snooker on Monday mornings and monthly whist drives on Friday evenings have both currently been cancelled, but hopefully will be resumed later in the year. Some renewed interest has been shown in carpet bowls and hopefully this will restart later in the year also.

Roger Fensom [Tel.267534]

Obituary



ALFRED KENNETH MOORE
17th January 1935 - 30th September 2019

Ken was born in Harefield, Middlesex, the eldest of five children. They lived in that village throughout the Second World War, and it was there that he found his love for the outdoor life with the chance of mischief along the way. Apparently his attendance at school was somewhat patchy, with Ken being caught at the local farm watching the farmers at work and, at the same time, discovering his passion for tractors. A tale from his childhood he loved to relate was, when he was seven, having to dive for cover with friends when being shot at by a German plane along the canal.

Very much a practical man, Ken enjoyed relaying how it was through this gift that he first met his future wife Sylvia. Apparently he was underneath a car carrying out repairs when he spotted Sylvia's legs and was smitten straight away. A whirlwind romance followed with the two marrying at St. Mary's Church, Harefield in March 1961.

Ken and Sylvia set up home in Chesham, Buckinghamshire, initially living in a caravan before moving to Amersham, where Andrew, their first child, was born. A move back to Harefield followed where Maria and Caroline were born, completing their family. At that time Ken worked for

Alcan Foils and the Greater London Council, having a side-line occupation repairing motorbikes. The next move was to Hillingdon, Middlesex, where they stayed for 23 years, Ken being very active in the garden, their allotment and carrying out many improvements to their house as well as building his own garage from scratch. He also set up his own business “Moore’s Maintenance Services” and was able to find time for long distance running, regularly competing for Middlesex Harriers. During this time their six grandchildren were born.

In 2007, with Hillingdon becoming more congested, Ken and Sylvia decided to “escape to the country”, finding Elsworth the perfect place in which to relocate. They arrived at 18 Church Lane in December of that year. They integrated quickly into the village community, making many close friends - in particular George, Margaret, Ray and Beryl – and became active with village organisations, Ken being a rota driver taking patients without access to a car to the medical surgery; being a regular volunteer at the village community shop where his “meet and greet” chatting skills were put to good use.

Ken was a kind, caring person, always willing to help anyone. It was always a joy to see Ken at village functions as he exuded merriment and friendship. Most importantly, he was a loving, caring husband, father and grandfather.

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Obituary



PATRICIA SKIDMORE
26TH April 1925 - 30th October 2019

Pat was a Londoner and was very proud of being born within the sounds of Bow Bells. She was educated at the Hugh Middleton School in Clerkenwell, a large, possibly Victorian, building which, typical of the time, catered for children from the infant stage to when they left at 14 years of age. The classes for the infants were on the ground floor, with the juniors on the first and the seniors on the second floor. Regretfully the marriage of her parents broke up and Pat and her brother remained with their father who was to remarry.

The Second World War broke out when she was a teenager and when she was but seventeen years of age she enlisted in the A.T.S. as a driver. She was very proud of her time of service in the armed forces, particularly that she never had or caused an accident, not even a scratch to her vehicles. Similarly she was very proud of her brother who was an R.A.F. navigator on the Dam Busters raid on the Ruhr in Germany.

After the war Pat moved to this area, firstly to Fenstanton and then to St.

Ives where she joined the St. Ives Amateur Dramatic Society, taking on many acting and singing roles, often in Gilbert and Sullivan. Even into her eighties she retained her fine singing voice, but without its former power. It was at St. Ives that Pat met her future husband, Percy, who was the society's sound and lighting engineer.

Pat and Percy lived in Elsworth, in Church Lane, before moving to Kent for a few years prior to Majorca and Spain where they lived for 33 years. Elsworth clearly meant much to them and after many years in Spain they decided to alternate between Spain and the village, turning to their home in the sun during the winter and living here in Constellation Park during the summer months. In 2010 they moved permanently to Elsworth. Sadly Percy died in 2011 but Pat was to give her energies to village activities, being a member of the W.I., The Jubilee Club and a regular member of the Elsworth Lunch Group. She remained active and alert and very independent until the end of her 94 years, living without help in the house but with support from caring friends who helped with shopping and watched over her needs.

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Obituary



JOHN GEOFFREY HICKS
7th April 1936 - 21st October 2019

John was a resident of Elsworth for over 40 years. He lived first in Orchard Close, then at The Limes for 31 years, during which time John Throssell reinstated wooden sash windows to restore the house's original Georgian character, before he finally moved the short distance to Paddock Row.

At The Limes John grew vegetables and occasionally won prizes at the Elsworth Show for his potatoes and tomatoes, which he joked was usually when he was the only one in the class! John enjoyed contributing towards the life of the village in a variety of ways. Over the years he had been a trustee and treasurer of the Samuel Franklin Fund, parish councillor, school governor, volunteer at the village shop and for several decades church organist, continuing to play into his 80s.

John was born in Surrey, though he spent most of his childhood in Whittlesford, as his father was a RAF Officer stationed at Duxford during WW2. John attended The Perse School where he developed an interest in aviation through the cadets and learning to fly a glider solo. After school John went onto Downing College to read Mechanical Sciences, specialising in aeronautics.

Upon graduating from Cambridge John took up a position at Vickers-

Armstrong where he worked on the aerodynamics of the ill-fated TSR-2 fighter jet and VC10 airliner. Much of his professional life, however, was spent as a consultant welding engineer working on projects such as North Sea oil platforms, the Jubilee Line extension, the Millennium dome, the London Eye and the Thames Barrier. His work took him around the world and, whilst working for a year with an oil company in Perth, Australia, he met his second wife Janet. Alongside consultancy he also found time to be the Secretary General for the International Institute of Welding and by 1990, his reputation was such that he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

John continued working as a consultant well into his 70s as he took on the not insignificant role of Secretary of the Alumni Association at Downing College and Editor of its annual newsletter which led to him being elected a Fellow Commoner Emeritus.

Janet's death in 2014 was a significant blow for John but he continued to get out and about, taking up watercolour painting and joining a choir in Papworth. In his final years he was glad to be able to remain living independently in Elsworth surrounded by neighbours and friends who kindly offered their support as age caught up with him. He is greatly missed by his two sons, David and Peter, and family.

JUBILEE CLUB

As you know, we have had to cancel our club meetings until at least the beginning of September this year. However, hopefully, we will be able to finish the year on a high note and start again in January 2021 with a full programme.

Many thanks go out to all our members for their support in the past and we look forward to meeting you once more when permission is granted.

Betty Simcock [Tel 267470]

Obituary



BRENDA DOROTHY SHAW
January 1933 – August 2019

Brenda was born in Bulwell, Nottingham on January the 7th 1933, the daughter of Emily and Wilfred Marsden. After attending school, she worked as a skilled machinist in the hosiery trade for many years. She was a very active person and loved cycling and badminton. In 1956 she married Bernard Shaw and they remained together for 63 years. Brenda and Bernard lived in Nottingham where they raised two sons. The first, Lee, was born in 1959 and now works in Kiel in Germany as a biomedical scientist. Their second child, Martin, was born in 1962 and shared many of his father's interests, including engraving and military history. As a result of Bernard's and Martin's interests, Brenda followed their example and became an active member of the 95th Regiment of Rifles in the British Section of the Napoleonic Association. This association re-enacts key battles of the Napoleonic Wars. During these campaigns she marched many a league through the fields of France, Germany and Belgium in full equipment, comprising a uniform, a real rifle with a bayonet and boots. She was often confronted with Martin, his face blackened from handling gunpowder cartridges. Tragically, Martin died in 1978 which was a great loss for the whole family.

She and Bernard often flew over to Germany to go on holiday with Lee and his wife Beate and their grandson Colin. They made many friends in Germany and she is very fondly remembered by Beate's parents Hans and Helga Mäver.

Over the years, Brenda had developed a keen interest in the countryside, painting, poetry, nature and especially gardening. These hobbies and the help of her sister Anne, who had lived in Elsworth for many years, prompted her and Bernard to move there from Nottingham in 2005. Although she did miss some aspects of city life, Brenda was very fond of the peace and quiet, as well as the rural setting of Elsworth. She enjoyed meeting people from the village, including her neighbours on the Constellation Park site, members of the Jubilee Club, the congregation at the Holy Trinity Church and the weekly encounters with her fellow passengers on the bus to St Ives.

Although she had been very ill in the weeks leading up to her death, her passing away in August 2019 was sudden and unexpected and has left a gap in the lives of all members of her family. In spite of Brenda's absence, her legacy of paintings, prose and poetry will help keep the memory of her alive. She even wrote the following poem about a stroll through Elsworth, which her family thought might be of interest to the village. It's probably unfinished and anybody who would like to complete it is invited to do so by the family.

Down the Drift I wandered,
Through church-yard silent, still
Through the gate down yonder,
Then down the Causeway hill.
Brook Street then I traversed
Where a stream once freely flowed,
But now, alas, a tangled mass
Where weeds at random grow.
On then down through Paddock Row
I freely went my way,
To Fardells Lane where in the spring
Sweet primrose lights the day.
Cow-Parsley follows close behind
Jack-by-the-hedge and daisy
Celendines in shining gold
And blue bells sweet and dainty.
Trees cast their welcome leafy shade
As Meadow Drift I cross...

Brenda Shaw

ELSWORTH, CONINGTON AND KNAPWELL WI

Elsworth, Conington and Knapwell WI ended 2019 with a Christmas Celebration in December at the George and Dragon in Elsworth. After a delicious Christmas meal all members, plus a guest, enjoyed brainteasers and a quiz.

The speaker at the January 2020 meeting was Colin Kirtland, who gave a talk entitled “Wildlife in the Garden”. He explained that the garden was a particularly important habitat for wildlife, especially in East Anglia, where there were large arable fields without hedgerows. The garden contains a huge variety of species. The decline in numbers of well-known birds such as sparrows and starlings was probably due to loss of suitable nesting sites, a reduction in food sources and pollution. We could help by feeding birds throughout the year, but it was important to stress that some birds fed their young on insects. Birds greatly benefitted from water in the garden as they needed water to groom their plumage.

In February 2020 Sharon Herbert gave a talk on “From Police Officer to Therapist”. Sharon detailed her journey to becoming a therapist. As a serving police officer in the City of London, Sharon’s concerns over mental health and its effect on family life had led Sharon to train as a therapist. Currently she works as a therapist with police officers and adolescents who come into contact with the police, alongside her work as a serving officer.

The March meeting was the Annual General Meeting for 2019/2020 when Lynda Minshull was re-elected as President. After the formal part of the meeting, the committee had organised some entertainment. Each member filled in an anonymous form detailing their favourite hobbies, food, holidays etc. Great fun was had as members guessed which description fitted which member.

Members have been supporting the NHS by working with other villagers to make scrub bags for Hinchingsbrooke and Addenbrookes Hospitals.

Regrettably due to coronavirus, the meetings for April, May, June and July have been cancelled. The situation will be reviewed in September.

Helen Askew (Secretary)

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ELSWORTH DURING PAST EPIDEMICS PART II - THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The 20th century brought three notable pandemics to the United Kingdom - in 1918, in 1957 and in 1968, all bringing marked loss of life. Many of us would have been alive in the fifties and sixties and yet I suspect very few have lasting impressions of widespread grief and concern during those decades. But what of that of 1918? On the global scene this was horrendous, it being estimated that **500 million** were infected and between **20 and 50 million killed**. With the advent by then of daily newspapers and their widespread distribution at the time, it might be expected that a detailed picture could be drawn from accounts published, but unlike the present when news accounts are daily, prolific, lengthy and detailed, coverage in this country of the 1918-20 pandemic would seem sparse, even when recourse is made to daily summaries from that time drawn from the combined sources of The Daily Telegraph, the newspaper section of the British Library and the Media Resource Library. The loss of life from this pandemic of **1918-20** in this country was, however, enormous, some **228,000 people having died** through it by the time the pandemic had subsided, with an estimated world-wide death figure of between 40 and 50 million people. In contrast to the present day, the outbreak of the virus did not dominate the thoughts of the country's leaders - indeed although it was recorded in this country in the May of 1918 it was not mentioned in parliament until October of that year when, after declining in August, a second wave returned with a vengeance. With regard to **Elsworth**, it has not proved possible to unearth documents relating to the impact of the virus on the parish, but, as noted below, parish burial records throw some light on the matter.

The two other pandemics to affect the United Kingdom in the 20th century - **1957/8 and 1968/9** similarly brought no strong action from the government and life for those spared went on regardless. The sporting calendar went on uninterrupted, with Aston Villa defeating Manchester United in the Cup Final and Cambridge winning the Boat Race, both in 1957. Seemingly minimal coverage was given by the Press despite the fact the some **14,000** were to lose their lives in England and Wales over 6 months in the 1957/8 flu outbreak and the world total of deaths was to be between one and two million as a result of this pandemic.

The **1968** flu outbreak was more severe than that of 1957/8, bringing more than **80,000 deaths** in the United Kingdom with a world figure estimated at between one and four million. Again little notice was taken by the media, and people living now who had been alive then could be forgiven if they had no recall of the threat and death-toll of that time.

Recourse has to be made to the parish burial records to establish if the pandemics of the 20th century had left significant mortality marks locally in **Elsworth**. In all cases Elsworth would seem unaffected, for the relevant figures of the three pandemics do not present marked spikes, quite the reverse with the number of deaths in the significant years being both lower and higher than those of the flanking years either side or near of the pandemics in focus.

From the paragraph above it will be seen that **Elsworth** has had the good fortune to have avoided the ravages brought about by successive pandemics over the centuries. An enormous impact on the social structure here and in the entire country, though, was made by **The Black Death** of the 14th century with the creation of a middle class employing hired labour, as considered in Part I, a system which, of course, remains with us to this day. Now what of the future? Many commentators express the view that Covid-19 will bring marked changes in social and economic conditions. Time will tell, of course, but it would seem unlikely to be as pronounced as those brought into being by the 14th century severe pandemic. The editor would be interested to receive the views of readers.

AWF

ELSWORTH ARCHIVES

The Elsworth Chronicle has amassed many photographs of old Elsworth to form the pictorial archives of the village. The photograph below has been received. It is clearly of Tom and Victoria Wrigley's house in Smith Street. For archive records, information regarding the building in the foreground would be appreciated - that is, was it a bake-house and when was it demolished? The editor and team would be grateful for any information.





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