

The Elsworth Chronicle



Holy Trinity Church

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ELSWORTH CHRONICLE

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ELSWORTH UNDER THREAT

Elsworth is a delightful village in which to live. Few, if any, would dispute this. Its lanes and houses are attractive - not many Cambridgeshire villages can boast of so many thatched dwellings; it is located away from the principal main roads, and, apart from "rush hours" is quiet and peaceful. We have excellent facilities - primary school; garage; two public houses/restaurants; church; sports club; community shop etc. And, of course, within this setting we have a community of friendly helpful people who clearly feel an identity with the village.

There is, though, one thorn which is a barb for some. That is the sparsity of public transport provision for those without their own car. This matter is to the fore as the County Council has now outlined a provisional scheme for this area following the proposed future removal of subsidies on bus routes. Regretfully this does not reflect the somewhat optimistic comment in these pages made in May last year. Discussions continue.

At the present time, three bus routes serve Elsworth - No.8 which links our village with Bar Hill/Cambridge; No. 2 [6.50am to Cambridge returning in the afternoon]; No. 9 to St. Ives on Monday and Friday [one bus there and back on both days].

Of these services, the No. 9 to St. Ives on the two market days is a lifeline to those otherwise confined to Elsworth. Some 21 people use it, although numbers could fluctuate a little, of course, week by week. Unlike many rural buses which invariably attract few passengers, the No. 9 is clearly well used and yet County officials have proposed axing it in their provisional scheme for the future. The plan favoured by the County is to replace No. 9 with a shuttle service to Swavesey, from where St. Ives could be reached by changing on to the guided bus.

Such a plan has been heard with complete dismay by the current users of No. 9. Imagine the scene on a winter's day with shoppers, among whom are many elderly ladies, having to wait in the rain and perhaps strong wind when changing buses at Swavesey so as to return westwards to St Ives, having been brought eastwards. It would be even worse on the return when heavy shopping bags are to be carried. The Parish Council has unanimously given its support to residents and will be involved with future discussions with County officials.

Continued overleaf

Continued from page 3

The need of the County to explore means of reducing the cost of public transport is understandable, but it would seem there are alternatives which would be acceptable and save money. For example, the Demand Response Bus, now available to parishes south of the A428 could meet our needs. This is a pre-bookable service available for specific runs - e.g. to the local market towns - as well as to meet other needs. In this way, a bus never runs without passengers.

The County Swavesey Shuttle proposal consists of three journeys out daily on Mondays to Fridays with four returning daily [35 weekly runs]. As this is unacceptable to the majority of our bus users, other possibilities have been put to the County by the Parish Council for consideration. Should the Demand Response service not be favoured for one reason or another by the County officials, there are clearly other alternative schemes, offering many variations which could be considered.

Example Package (incorporating a St Ives Service with the Swavesey link favoured by the County).

Elsworth to St. Ives on Monday and Friday only [4 bus runs].

Elsworth to Swavesey twice a week, two times out on these days, with three returning. [10 bus runs]

Elsworth to Bar Hill/Cambridge twice a week, two times on these days [8 bus runs]

Total 22 bus runs - a marked reduction in costs compared with the Cambs proposed Swavesey Shuttle, if this is the purpose of the Cambs exercise. Such a scheme would provide direct links to both St. Ives and Bar Hill whereas the County Swavesey proposal severs all direct links with major shopping outlets.

A concluding comment. It would seem to make little sense for the County to axe Service 9 which is well used and replace it with an untried scheme which fails to meet the needs of Elsworth and perhaps used by no one.

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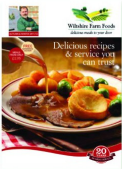
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Obituary



Donald Richard Barrett-Harley 1925 – 2014

Don was born into the comfortable surroundings of Apes Hall near Littleport, home of his parents Cissie and Sidney, who was farm manager for Sir Frederick Hiam, one of the largest land owners in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. Three years later his sister Betty was born and they shared a very happy childhood growing up in that boom period between the two wars. Don had a love of all things to do with engineering and Meccano always featured heavily when birthdays or Christmas came around.

Expansion of the Hiam's estates saw Don's family move to Stretham where his father took on responsibility for Stowbridge Farm. Their new home was beside the river and messing around in boats soon became part of his early childhood. Don attended Stretham primary school where he met Bernard Chapman who was to become a lifelong friend.

When Don was 14, war was declared and a shortage of labour saw him regularly working on the farm. Too young to fight, this did not prevent the young Donald from talking his way into the Home-Guard, the Dad's Army 'Private Pike' character no doubt!

A few years after the war, his father and uncle decided to take the big step of farming on their own and acquired a farm at Chittering which is midway between Ely and Cambridge and Don worked in this family business.

In 1947 he married Sylvia and they bought a bungalow with a small-holding in Stretham. Two years later they had a daughter Ann and they continued to live at Stretham for the next twenty years. Sadly the marriage eventually broke down and Don and his wife eventually divorced.

In 1970 Don's father and uncle decided to retire and the family farm was put on the market. Don had already indicated that he did not have the desire (or the finances) to purchase the business and in mid-life needed a career change. His love of engineering saw him targeting engineering companies and eventually he was employed on a trial basis by the Huntingdon firm of Ruston's. He obviously impressed them as he remained with the firm until retirement.

In 1972 he married Brenda and they moved to Elsworth, a village that he came to love, and he fully engaged with local village life - bowls, the Church, Jubilee Club and bell ringing. Don and Brenda were married for almost 40 years but sadly cancer separated them all too early. Don was a man who spoke his mind, you knew where you stood and maybe not all appreciated his forthright manner. It was a brave person who phoned him or visited if he was watching rugby (especially the All Blacks or Wales). If you were brave enough to disturb him you may well have been greeted with ...Damn and Blast!

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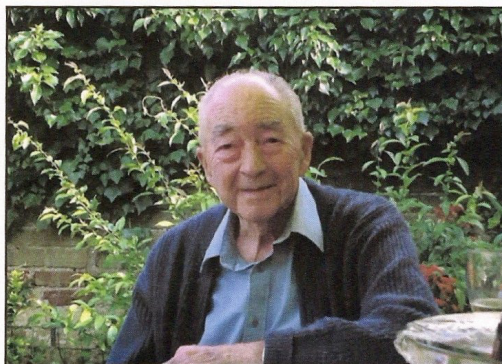
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Obituary



FREDERICK HENRY CHARLES MOBBS

Fred was born on the 14th October 1925 in North Elham, Norfolk. When the family moved to Lawn Farm at Elsworth he attended the village school, which was then in Brook Street, until, aged 14, he went to work on the land. Later he moved again with the family to Papworth, where he stayed until he joined the R.A.F. in 1942. Earlier, he had been a young member of the Home Guard.

In 1961 Fred married Ena at Elsworth Church and they lived in the George and Dragon public house which her father - and then Ena - managed, staying there until 1974. From there they moved to Roger's Close and eventually Boxworth Road.

Fred went into partnership with his friend Arthur Oldham and formed 'Elsworth Metal Weld and Engineering Company' in 1971, based at Castle Acres Estate. During the time they worked together Fred and Arthur invented a unique way of welding stainless steel heat sealing bands. This way of welding proved to be far stronger than alternatives and therefore the bands would last much longer than others on the market at that time. They proved so popular in the packaging industry that they sold worldwide, especially in America. Fred also constructed the wrought iron work around the village sign opposite The Poacher. He retired at the age of 63 to spend more time with his family.

Fred enjoyed darts, and was a member of both village pub teams. He loved fishing and shooting and also spent a lot of time walking his dog and tending his vegetables in his garden and greenhouse. He passed away on the 2nd July after having suffered a stroke.



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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE BLEET FAMILY IN ELWORTH

By John Catto

Certain families have lived in the village for two hundred years or more. One of them is the Bleets, who sparked my interest when I discovered that they had owned my cottage for most of the first half of the twentieth century, letting it out to various tenants. The family also had one or two cottages in The Causeway, but most of their property was in The Drift.

William Bleet was born in 1805, the youngest son to Charles and Catherine Bleet of Fenstanton. He married Catherine Neal in 1827, and together they ran The Plough Inn in Brook Street. They had a daughter Mary and a son William Charles I [born 1833] who was later, in the census of 1851, to be listed as an apprentice carpenter and joiner. He married Mary Webb in 1859. His business clearly prospered, as by 1861 he'd already taken on four men, and in 1871 he was listed as a builder employing five men. By then, William Charles I and Mary had moved to 'Caudell End' and had six children: Mary [1860], Emma [1863], William Charles II [1865], Annie [1867], James Edward [1863], and Catherine Susan [1870]. The 1881 census declares him as a builder and blacksmith employing three men and two boys, and in 1891 the sons William C and James E were carpenter and blacksmith respectively. Maps of the 1880s show the smithy, yard and house in what by the end of the 19th century had become firmly known as Bleet's Drift. Unfortunately all of this establishment was demolished in the 1960s. Near the Boxworth Road was a large thatched house [shown as three dwellings on the map] occupied by William and Louisa Desborough and their thirteen children and grandchildren in 1901. Sadly, it too was pulled down, probably in the 1970s.

William Charles I died in 1911, having outlived his wife by 8 years. His sons carried on the business, and were shown in Kelly's Directory of Cambridgeshire 1929 as Bleet Brothers, carpenters. This rather belies the true extent of their skills, which included building, undertaking, wheel-wrighting and farming, with James being a blacksmith and farrier as well. William was slightly crippled, and never married, living with his sister Mary until he died in 1949.

James married Helen Augusta Sandercock, a farmer's daughter, in 1911. The Sandercock name is well known in Elsworth to this day,

the family having tilled the land of the farm now owned by the RSPB a little to the south of the Boxworth Road at the end of The Drift. James and Helen lived in the Chapel House on Boxworth Road until 1917 and then at Chestnut Villa [the present No. 7]. They had three children, Edna [born 1911], William Charles [1914] and Eric [1917].

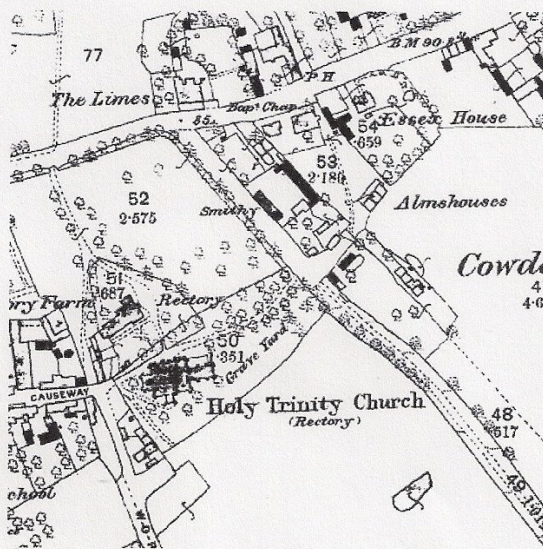
The Bleets owned several properties in Elsworth in addition to the smithy and yard. In 1906, William Charles I bought a parcel of land at the lower end of Church Lane [currently nos. 9, 11, 15] with five dwellings standing, plus a few more derelict. On William's death they passed to his sons, with the provision that his three daughters could remain in residence whilst unmarried. It is not certain that any of them took advantage of the legacy, and so the houses probably carried on with tenants. At any rate, at some stage the Witherows bought half the plot [13 and 15], but James continued to own 9 and 11 until 1947. James also ran a chicken farm at Cowslip, roughly where Constellation Park is now. In 1952, or thereabouts, a former prisoner-of-war called Karl Antrack bought the land at auction. Helen died at the end of December 1952, while on a visit to her daughter Ena in Sleaford, Lincolnshire. James died in Elsworth a few months later, having outlived his brother William Charles II by four years. Catherine Susan survived until 1959, to the age of 88 [her gravestone incorrectly says 84].

Rather more is known about the next generation, Daphne Bleet [whom Eric married in 1953] being fortunately still with us, and living, somewhat appropriately, two hundred yards farther up the Drift from the former smithy. On leaving school, Eric had joined the family firm, and when war was declared joined the RAF, serving most of the time in the Middle East. He carried on with mechanical work afterwards, initially joining his brother William who ran the Swavesey Garage until the mid 1970s, but in 1952 he left to work for farmer John Meeks, remaining there until retirement. Daphne and Eric's two children, Denise and Kevin, live nearby - Denise, married to Billy Knibbs, in Paddock Row, and Kevin in Conington.

To return to the 19th century, we should not forget how large a part The Plough Inn played in the Bleet's history at Elsworth in addition to the family business at the smithy. 'Old' William and Catherine between them ran it from 1840 or earlier, possibly owning it by the time of William's untimely death in 1854, when he was injured in an accident while loading haulm [straw reeds]. Catherine carried on until the mid-1880s, with the

help of grand-daughters Kate and Mary Osborne Marshall, after which it was run by the Clarke family. An interesting piece of continuity [and a cross-link to another Elsworth family] is that Thomas Throssell 'wheelwright' was a lodger at The Plough from before 1871 to at least 1891. As with The Three Horseshoes [on the other side of Brook Street, No. 6] and The Dolphin [at the foot of The Causeway], The Plough has been a private house for more than fifty years now. Kelly's Directory of 1929 lists it as an inn run by Mr Allum; it finally closed for business in 1961. The Chapel House and Chestnut Villa remain, but all the land up The Drift has been re-developed now. It might be nice to commission some ceramic plaques for the old families, the Desboroughs, Throssells, Bleets etc. before all become forgotten.

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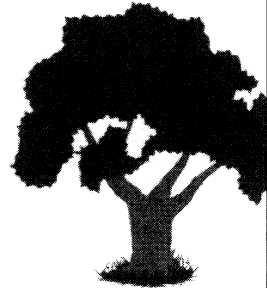
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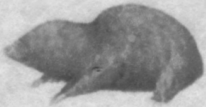
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ELSWORTH ALMS-HOUSES

In Elsworth we are fortunate in having so many thatched dwellings from the 17th century, one even earlier. At the present there would seem to be over twenty.

Prior to the “Away with the old” attitude of the 1960s there were even more. Casualties of that time include the Elsworth alms-houses. Fortunately their exact location is known and has been mapped [see page 13] and photographs exist, one of which is shown on page 17. They came into being from the thoughtfulness of Samuel Franklin - nephew of the Rector, Richard Franklin - who left £400 in his will of 1695 for the erection of three small alms-houses of one room each to house widows of 60 years and over, and for the purchase land to maintain them. The Victoria County History records the cost of building was £105, and that thirteen acres were acquired to support the widows, who were installed by 1728. William Lunn, Rector here, one hundred years later, was to augment the charity in his will with a gift of £700 stock, from which four guineas were to be paid to the widows and the balance used for repairs. However, a Chancery suit in the 1840s to recover his legacy reduced the capital to £430.

What of the inhabitants? Notes for the years 1841 to 1911 have been compiled by Dr. John Catto of Church Lane and make interesting reading. Some were in residence for many years. Mary Cooper, for example, a retired school-mistress, is first recorded as living in an alms-house in 1861 when she was 71 years of age, and remained until 1883 when she died at the age of 93 years. Another in residence over a long period was Judith Wilderspoon who is first noted in 1861 and remained in her alms-house until her death in 1891 at the age of 92 years. The longevity of the ladies in the alms-houses is somewhat surprising at first glance, given the life expectancy of the period, until it is recalled that it was the many deaths in childhood which accounted for the low average figure. Of the sixteen named, three were noted as being between 90 years of age and 92, five between 80 and 90 years, ix between 70 and 80. That is, 50% of the residents noted lived to 80 years of age or more.

The last of the alms-house ladies left in 1961 and in 1968 the derelict and collapsing building was sold and demolished. There seems to be no trace on the ground now, but maps show that it was sited opposite the present No.4 Cowdell End.. However the name of the founder of the alms-houses is with us still. Franklin’s Close, off Fardell’s Lane, commemorates this benefactor, and, of course, the Samuel Franklin Trust lives on.

Footnote

The spirit of helping the needy lives on. In 2001 Elsworth was singled out for a

special award in the “Village of the Year” competition for the help given to the elderly. For this, special credit must be given to Terry Stevens who week-in, week-out, chauffeured people to a day centre and was responsible for delivering medicines from the Papworth surgery to those unable to undertake the journey themselves. His daughter Catherine and family continue this delivery service although now living in Papworth, for which many are so very grateful. Again, then and now, the surgery car scheme, transporting patients of all ages to the Papworth surgery is an example of a caring community.

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ELSWORTH SPORTS CLUB

Now into autumn, both the football and table tennis seasons are well under way with cricket having finished at the end of August.

The cricket season for Elsworth was somewhat disappointing, as of their scheduled sixteen matches in 'Division 4 South' of the Cambs Junior League, two were cancelled due to bad weather and three were conceded as one side or the other was unable to field a team. Of the eleven matches played, two were won and nine lost, leaving Elsworth just above the relegation zone. The last match of the season produced a very close finish with Elsworth winning by just one run, enabling it to survive in the division and denying the opposition, Cambourne 2nds, promotion. The Club did not enter a team in the mid-week Junior Houses League, but intends to do so next year.

Anyone interested in cricket should contact either Bill Knibbs on 01954 267266, Anthony Taylor on 01954 268042 or Craig Mills on 07764 479486.

The football season started in September, and having gained promotion last season Elsworth found themselves in 'Cambs. Junior League Division 1B'. From the beginning the team has found life tougher, not helped by losing four players during the closed season. Of the eight matches played, two have been won and four lost in the league, and unfortunately the team has exited from both cup competitions at the first hurdle.

Anyone interested in football should contact David Triggs on 0789 1011055.

The table tennis season also started in September with Elsworth fielding three teams in the Cambridge League and two in the Ely League. In the Cambridge League the first and second teams have both played five matches to date and are currently lying second and fifth respectively in the second division, with the third team being placed eleventh in the third division, also having played five matches. In the Ely League, the first team is in sixth place, having played three matches in the first division, while the second team is in first place having played five matches in the third division.

Social or club table tennis is also played, normally either on a Thursday or Friday evening.

Anyone interested in table tennis should contact Bill Knibbs on 01954 267266.

Playing carpet bowls on Wednesday afternoons has currently been suspended due to lack of support but it is hoped that it will resume. Snooker is played on Monday morning and whist drives are held monthly on Friday evenings commencing at 7.30 pm.

Roger Fensom



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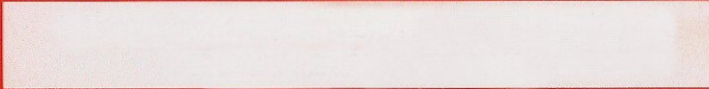
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ELSWORTH, KNAPWELL & CONINGTON W.I.

Our monthly meetings in the school hall usually follow the same pattern - about half an hour of business chaired by the President, Margaret Stevenson, with contributions from those representing the other monthly activity groups.

The visiting speaker then takes over with a talk for about an hour. The topics are varied - in June we journeyed through Rajasthan and in July we were transported back in time to the days of corsets, crinolines and camisoles, with a lively and amusing commentary on the complications of wearing these garments. How glad we are to be living in the 21st century!

September found us looking ahead as our speaker arrived well prepared with all we needed to make Christmas decorations and our October speaker had a wealth of information about Cambridge folklore. November's topic is entitled 'Beating the System' and promises to be an amusing account of life of a lady plumber.

We have 32 members just now and welcome visitors to our meetings which are usually on the second Wednesday of each month.

Isobel Farrow [Tel. 01954 267472]

JUBILEE CLUB

We meet on the first Thursday of most months in Elsworth School Hall from 2.30 to 4.30 p.m. We have a speaker or entertainment, tea and biscuits and a raffle. It is a good chance to meet other villagers for a good chat and to keep up to date with their news!

In June and July we have coach trips which are open to all members and friends. This year we had enjoyable days at Bressingham and Southwold.

January 8th starts off 2015 with our New Year Lunch at the George and Dragon. If you would like to try us out, please come along - you will be made most welcome. For more information please contact Betty.

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