



# VECS Newsletter Autumn 2017



Hailes Abbey



The Church

## **Trips and Talks by Sue Campbell**

On a glorious day in August we visited Hailes Abbey where the custodian, Richard Rhodes, gave us an exceptionally interesting tour of the site, parish church and the new museum.

In September we will be visiting the Richard III Centre at Leicester and other interesting buildings in the city centre. This will be the most successful event in terms of the numbers attending. We have 33 people booked but one third of these, who take us into profit, are not members of this society.

Our Autumn programme of talks starts on 10<sup>th</sup> October with Keith Cattell's talk—An Englishman's Castle is His Home. Keith is a retired architect and brings this knowledge to his presentations. He will be explaining how castles have changed over the centuries.

On 14<sup>th</sup> November Philip Jarvis is visiting us to talk about The Steam Era in Worcestershire. Philip lives at Webheath and is an expert on the Barnt Green, Redditch and Ashchurch Railway. This line has now been completely dismantled apart from the section from Redditch to Barnt Green.

## **Twyford Farm - A Personal History, by Pat Stanton**

*(The Valley, Evesham now occupies the land where Twyford Farm once stood)*

The Huxley family's first connection with Twyford Farm came in 1915 when my paternal grandfather moved his family of wife and six children from Shropshire. Grandad had accepted the position of Farm Bailiff (today he would likely be called Farm Manager) on the condition that the tied cottage of a very small "two up and two down" was enlarged. The owner, Mr Donald Fisher, agreed to extend the cottage by adding two further spacious bedrooms upstairs and the equivalent downstairs space then made a large living room which contained a black leaded range for cooking and warmth. The scullery and pantry were then added on.

Dad was 13 at the time, had already left school as he was able to read and write and was also deemed "employed" as he was helping on the farm. In 1915 Twyford was a mixed farm with beef cattle and growing a mixture of arable crops, likely to have been cereals, sprouts and peas. There would have been a few fruit trees but not on the large scale that was to come. In his late teens Dad decided to emigrate to Canada taking advantage of an Assisted Passage Programme offered by the Canadian Government.

In the summer of 1933 my Mother visited Twyford for the first time. She had become friends with Dad's sister Kath as they were both students at Cheltenham Teacher Training College. The invite was for the weekend and read "as my brother Charlie is visiting from Canada and it will be fun!!". ....Mum stayed for two weeks and Dad's return ticket remained unused.

Mum and Dad married in 1939 and following a further "up grade" they moved into the cottage in 1940. One bedroom was made into a bathroom and part of the large landing into an inside toilet. The black leaded range was replaced with a vitreous enamel one - black leading and my Mother would not have been a happy relationship! Water for the original cottage had been supplied by a well and pump which had been condemned some years earlier. The farm and cottage at that time was then connected to mains water. Twyford was never on the main sewer but the inside toilet made the "bottom of the garden privy" of two large positions and a third smaller one redundant!

By now Grandad was nearing retirement and Dad had officially taken up the reins as Farm Bailiff. At this time the farm supported 12 workers, three living in tied cottages, one of which was Dad's, the other two tractor/lorry drivers living in the two semi-detached cottages in the dip in the old Norton Road near gas showroom and craft centre. Others travelled from Evesham or Norton on a daily basis. To retain them over the winter months they mended wooden bushel boxes, cleaned out ditches etc. until the season turned to harvesting again and their numbers grew with casual seasonal labour. For a short time Twyford also had some Italian Prisoners of War in residence. By 1942/1943 the Birmingham car factories proved to be a more attractive option for land workers and soon only the two in tied homes stayed, plus Dad of course. Gradually the working horses were phased out to be replaced by tractors - a small Ransome, an Alice Chalmers caterpillar tractor and then Massey Ferguson's. Bomford & Evershed' were hired to bring in heavy machinery to do tasks such as making new drainage ditches and removing tree stumps etc.

**Twyford  
1955**



The call to produce more food during and after WW2 saw the arable acres gradually being planted up with plum, apple and pear trees and strawberries, the crops of which were more permanent and more lucrative. Spring was always a welcome sight with acres of white and pink blossom promising the harvests to come. The labour-intensive annual reseeding, planting and rotating of arable crops was soon over. If you are a dog walker any fruit trees you see still standing will have been planted by Dad who was able to plant in perfectly straight lines in whichever direction you looked and without any measuring tool but his eyes!! It will also be obvious that Dad's main winter task of pruning on a rotational basis the acres of orchards hasn't been done for the last 40 odd years!

Both my sister and I were born at the farm, Judith in November 1940, I in March 1945. We had very free and happy childhood. Although the bright lights of Evesham two miles away were only available by bicycle or bus we did not see this as a disadvantage during our teenage years. As my Mother came from a large family we had several cousins who would spend the summer months with us. When we were quite small we would make, often unstable, dens and castles out of chip baskets or bushel boxes. As we grew up we were allocated a ladder to pick fruit to earn our pocket money, fortunately by then aluminium ladders had replaced the very heavy long wooden ones. Strawberries were the first seasonal crop followed by various varieties of plums, pears and apples. Local seasonal workers were augmented by travelling gypsies, the latter staying until the hop harvest started in Herefordshire. In the mid to late 1950's and into the 1960's the arrival of MALE students from the near continent (travelling with an organisation called Concordia) was eagerly awaited by the local teenage FEMALE population. The students' living conditions were by today's standards very spartan - Nissan huts, army beds, army blankets and a concrete ablution block with cold showers!!

The first harvests of most crops achieved a premium price as “dessert” quality and were sent to Evesham’s Smithfield Market or by train to Covent Garden, Birmingham and Scotland, despatching from Evesham’s “freight” station which is now built on. (“Yesterday’s pick was available to the housewife today” without the need for the convoluted distribution chain of today’s supermarkets). Later pickings were sold for processing or under contract. Strawberries in particular achieved a premium price if delivered to Smedley’s canning factory in Worcester Road if the fruit arrived in time for the start of the 8.00am shift! In later years blackcurrants were grown under contract for Ribena Cordial. The blackcurrant crop filled the gap in the weeks after the strawberries had finished but before the early plums were ready. The summer months were very busy with long days, Dad often working from dawn to dusk!

Some may remember the “On-Wards” vans? They visited Twyford regularly to provide paraffin, gas cylinders, cleaning products, buckets, brushes, brooms, soap etc. (For those of you who know the musical Oklahoma; ‘Ali Hakim’s cart comes to mind.) Milk and bread were delivered on a daily basis. The bus service was good but we had to allow time to walk down the quarter of a mile drive to the main road to catch our chosen one in time!!

In 1956 a refrigerated cold store for apples was built and the cottage was upgraded once again – we had mains electricity!! Dad’s constant fight with a bank of accumulator batteries to produce some indoor light was over and doing homework and piano practice by the glow of a Tilly Lamp was a thing of the past, although we still weren’t allowed to leave any light on in any room if we weren’t in it at the time. It also meant that we no longer had to go to Alcock’s in Evesham to collect a recharged battery for the “wireless” with strict instructions not to spill any of the contents as it dangled from the handle bars of our bicycles!! The cold store meant that apples could be packed during the winter months thus extending the availability of “fresh” apples. Packing apples meant a few weeks work was available for several ladies from Norton village or Evesham. The packing shed was the tidiest of the various barns which meant that it could easily be turned into a fabulous venue for a teenage party!! Electricity meant Mum could say goodbye to the bottled gas used for the washing boiler and cooker but she never abandoned the range cooker for the Sunday roast! Dad had a very productive kitchen garden so we were never short of seasonal vegetables or of course fruit of any kind! The pantry shelves were always full of jars of jams, pickles and bottled fruit.

We did start to notice a gradual decline in the wildlife which had become so familiar - a lovely old barn was pulled down so the barn owls had to find a new home, the number of swallows declined, no more stag beetles, yellow hammers, cuckoos, lapwings, skylarks etc., all eventually disappeared. Was this due to the use of some toxic sprays or the gradual changes in farming practices? Dad’s view was that it was a combination of both which brought him some sadness as he loved nature, but his job was to produce fruit tonnage to the maximum possible. Dad retired in 1973 aged 70; by that time the effects of joining The Common Market had begun to bite and when someone asked Dad if he was sorry to see the demise of his life’s work, he philosophically responded that there was no point in growing fruit that no-one wanted to buy!

### Growing Evesham in 2017 by John Goodwin

**Waitrose:** There has been a lot of negative press about Evesham’s new Waitrose Store but I’m not adding to that. It’s good to see construction is at last underway, with the steel frame all but complete and a hoped for completion date of March 2018. Actual opening date will probably be later as it will need fitting out prior to being open to the public.



**The Vauxhall:** Slowly something is emerging from the eyesore that was the Vauxhall. I talked to the developer recently and he was non committal about who would be opening there. Starbucks will have one unit and there will be a fish restaurant and a fish and chip shop. Watch this space!



**New Houses in Cheltenham Road.** Pictured below are some of the 47 houses being built off Cheltenham Road on the Arysta site. It's interesting because it is the start of the SWDP allocation of 500 new homes; although these are being built by Newland Homes, there is an outline application by Bloor Homes for 460 still being considered. If my maths is right then that exceeds the allocation already, without considering the remaining land included in the SWDP for that area. It is interesting for another reason, I can't remember the last time a timber framed house was constructed as part of a housing development in Evesham. It was all the rage when Elizabeth I was around, and probably at other times since. Barratts Homes made a bold attempt in the 70s and 80s but had a very bad press with major constructional defects becoming apparent once occupied.

Timber framed buildings are more common now because of the speed of erection, thermal and energy efficiency, it is also considered ecological and sustainable. The method of construction means that once the substructures are in, the scaffolding is erected (see picture below). Then the timber frame sections are craned into place and bolted together, floor joists, then timber framed sections forming the first floor craned and bolted into place. All topped by the roof trusses and bracing to stabilise the structure and tiled. In this instance they are bringing up the brick and block external cavity wall to clad the timber frame. There are Pros and Cons, but that maybe is for another Newsletter.



## Planning to get old? By Richard Thomson

One thing is for sure, society as a whole isn't.

Have you looked around Evesham to see the range of property being built? You will find very few properties designed to accommodate older people specifically, yet this is the proportion of the population which is growing most rapidly. By 2025 8.2 million households will be headed by someone aged 65 and over - up 23% from 2015.

In 2012 a national report 'Ready for Ageing?' concluded that society was **'woefully unprepared for ageing'**. Nothing much has altered over the past five years to challenge that view. Policy changes so far have failed to address the built environment. Planners, developers, architects, local authorities and institutional investors should be in the vanguard of dealing with the massive demographic shifts ahead.

If planners and councillors are going to have a local plan that really accounts for ageing they must consult with older people and ask them about their needs and their aspirations. With community engagement now included in the Localism Act 2011, developers and planners are obliged to respond to local views – but are they really listening?

If society wants to deal with the challenges of an ever-ageing population - rather than the usual developer-led ranks of semis and detached houses aimed at one demographic, why not engage with local people to seek out designs for self-sustaining communities?

A community will stand a better chance of thriving where there is a good range of home types and a mix of tenures to suit **all** age groups, set within an attractive and welcoming environment which can encourage neighbours to support each other.

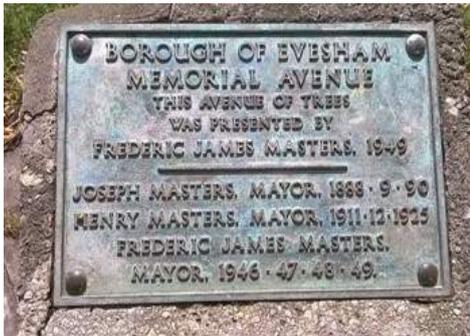
## **Monmouth and Cardiff Castle Trip, 19th June 2017. Another day in the sun, organised by Sue Campbell**



It was a simple enough question posed by a visitor to Evesham "Why has Evesham got so many lime trees?" It started me down a path to try and discover a reason.

Common lime is a deciduous broadleaf tree, native to the UK and parts of Europe. Its Scientific name: *Tiliax europaea* of the *Malvaceae* Family. Common lime is rare in the wild in the UK. It is a hybrid between small-leaved and large-leaved lime, and common lime has characteristics of both species. The bark is pale grey-brown and irregularly ridged, with characteristic large burrs and leaf shoots at the base of the tree. Twigs are slender and brown, although they become red in the sun.

According to the Woodland Trust, Limes are usually planted in urban and residential areas, so why? They claim the mythology and symbolism of long associated with fertility. In the UK they are sometimes commemorative, in France and Switzerland, limes are a symbol of liberty, and the trees were planted to celebrate different battles.



I couldn't find anything to substantiate liberty or battles; fertility is outside my aged experience but they were commemorative on two occasions in Evesham and the information is contained on two riverside plaques. The Crown Meadow plaque is shown in evidence (left) and is self-explanatory, commemorating the three generations of Masters who served as Majors of Evesham but only by reading the Workman Gardens information board do the reasons for that splendid lime tree avenue become apparent.

Originally known as The Workman Pleasure Grounds, I would guess the Limes were planted at the time of its opening in 1864. The whole of that plaque makes interesting reading and if requested we could reproduce its content in some future edition.

Jayne O'Conner from Wychavon suggested contacting Diana Raphael who has information regarding the history through family connections. Diana responded by saying her grandfather (Edmund Thomas Huxley) worked for Evesham Borough Council and physically helped to plant them as part of his job, that was in the early 1900's. They were planted from Abbey Park to the end of the Corporation Meadow at that time.



Diane thought in the 1970s Evesham Rotary Club planted more Lime Trees from the Corporation meadow to Hampton Ferry. She was not sure if they commemorated anything, just that they made a pleasant walk along the riverside. I haven't checked the minutes of Evesham Borough Council Meetings which are housed in the Archives at County Hall Worcester.

There seems to be an overlap on Diana's thoughts and the Master's plaque so that is a bit of a grey area.

Then of course we have all, well what's left of them, the lime trees in Vine Street, High Street and various other roads throughout the Town. Obviously a much cherished species and despite the motorists' concerns about that resinous deposit it leaves, a great asset to Evesham.

The most common use of common lime is as an ornamental tree in large parks and estates; now I've investigated them locally they seem crop up everywhere, Cheltenham is a prime example. An Interesting fact; during the war lime blossom was used to make a soothing tea.

According to Woodland Trust “lime wood is soft and light, white-yellow and finely textured. It is easy to work and often used in turnery, carving and furniture making. Lime bark was traditionally used to make rope, and lime flowers were considered a valuable source of food for honey bees. The wood does not warp and is still used today to make sounding boards and piano keys. Limes can be coppiced and used for fuel, hop-poles, bean-sticks, cups, ladles, bowls and even Morris dancing sticks.”

## Evesham Tourist Signing, by Colin Tether

Evesham has always been a tourist town, as a place of pilgrimage in Medieval times and more latterly as a holiday haunt for those from the industrial Midlands. Nowadays during the summers, caravans and mobile homes gather on the riverside and our visitors enjoy Evesham’s growing number of attractions.



One of Evesham’s Town Plan initiatives was to improve the tourist signing. Sadly the ambitious project to replace the signs we see as we enter the town has temporarily stalled through staffing issues at the County Council. When they are installed we should see good looking signs on the approaches showing photographs of our town’s attractions.

Does the Civic Society have a role in improving the signing? I think so and our recent visit to Monmouth showed the way. Their Town Map, in my view, looks good as a piece of street furniture. In addition the maps are large and easy to read. They compare rather well with Evesham’s maps which are contained in the glass fronted cabinets in the town centre.

I was particularly impressed by the ‘*Monmouth Heritage Blue Plaque Trail*’. The sign shown below provided all the information the visitor needs. It was a joint project between Monmouth Town Council and Monmouth Civic Society implemented in 2009. I think this is something Evesham could do just as well as we have so many attractions for the visitor to see.





The 'Contributions' identified on the sign are the **Section 106 agreement funds** following negotiations between the Planning Officers and Developers.

This is just one example. Probably many millions of pounds are held in the Wychavon coffers looking to be spent from other developments. But how much?

It is good to see the public display of the sign and it will also be good to see what other funds are waiting to be spent in the town.

## Castle Street Slipway and Chapel Street 'Garden' by Colin Tether

The Civic Society was instrumental some years ago in saving the Town Slipway off Castle Street. Rather nice landscaping was installed, a lawn, some bushes and an information board.

**BUT** anti-social behaviour led to local residents complaining. Now fencing has been installed and this seems to have solved the problem. It is a pity though as the lawn area is no longer available. Peeking through the fence we can see that the lawn is still nicely cut.

**WHICH** is more than we can say about the old Registrar's Office garden on the corner of Chapel Street car park.

This neglected space is wholly the responsibility of Wychavon. I am told they have insufficient funds to pay for regular maintenance.

Can that be true?



## About your Society and Newsletter, by John Goodwin

**Letters to VECS** – We welcome questions about local issues or anything that is relevant to The Vale of Evesham Civic Society's activities. Email: [vecs1972@gmail.com](mailto:vecs1972@gmail.com) or phone 07870283119 or send an old fashioned letter to 68, Bridleway Views, Evesham. WR112AQ. We will include questions and answers in the next issue at Christmas.

**Newer Members.** Most of our members are "mature", why not enquire from your younger friends if they have specific issues that we can address or help with that affects them in their local community? They might even like to join us and with our help resolve these issues or at least bring them to the attention of the relevant Authority, Utility or Body.

**Contributors** – Your Society Needs You. Your articles and opinions are important, why not share them with us. It could all make for a very good next issue.

This letter has been edited and produced by Colin Tether on behalf of the Vale of Evesham Civic Society.