

No:88



Sherington Historical Society

Newsletter



September 2015

www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs

Special dates for your diary

Saturday 26th September 2015

Open Day. Subject: Sherington Authors. Sherington Village Hall 12.00 noon - 4.30 pm (setup from 9.30 am).

Tuesday 13th October 2015

A Doctor in the Family. Illustrated talk by Stephen Kennedy. Stephen will give us a talk about another member of his family. Last year's story was truly fascinating. We're sure this one will be just as amazing.

Tuesday 10th November 2015

Members Can Talk: A chance where we can talk about something we care about. Please contact Caroline to let her know what you want to talk about.

Tuesday 8th December 2015

Christmas Party: Games, wine and nibbles. Bring a nibble to share and need there be any more said.

Tuesday 12th January 2016

Members meeting. Please come for a low-key evening archiving and chat.

Mid-January

January Jolly: More details nearer the time.

Tuesday 9th February 2016

Ox and Bucks on the Somme, 1916: Very topical we think this year. Stephen Barber is coming to give a talk about what the local light infantry got up to during WW1.

Tuesday 8th March 2016

Annual General Meeting: Time to review the year and appoint the committee for the next.

Our Tuesday monthly meetings start at 8.00 pm unless otherwise stated.

Mark's Musings (A ramble from the chair)

At the time of writing the plans for the Open Day make me feel very excited about the coming event. This is the one time in the year where we get to show all we have, although we are getting very close to not being able to show it all as the Office space is getting very much fuller and Kay is having to move stuff around continually to access other parts of the office. Liz has been busy collecting old copies of some of the Authors' work that will be for sale on the day, so you could take away some of the works of our authors. As ever on the day there will be refreshments and a raffle.



While putting together the authors, someone asked “What is a Fief?” and we all tried to grapple to an answer, so I thought it was time to get a definitive answer, so I went to my Collins English Dictionary and the entry states:

fief or feoff: NOUN. The property or fee granted to a vassal for his maintenance by his lord in return for service. Was used in feudal Europe dating back to the C17 from the old French fie from Germanic origins compared to old English fēo meaning cattle, money. (A vassal is the man who entered into the relationship with the lord).

So it sounds like it's payment for working for the lord. I hope that clears it all up then!

With the new Neighbourhood Plan that is being put together, the group co-ordinating has sent feelers around the village to various groups asking about submitting ideas. If there was a grant from planning gain with the new houses, what would we submit? Lucky we were early in on that one, as asking for a bigger storage and exhibition space where we could really feel the benefit would be ideal.

We are starting to see more entries coming in to the Wild Sherington competition, so keep snapping and keep submitting. I am sure that Liz will give further details elsewhere in the newsletter.

Next month's members meeting is Stephen Kennedy is giving another talk about his family, this is sure to be one not to miss, so ensure you're early to get a seat. The following month is the Members Can Talk meeting, which again is always very interesting and a good evening out.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter.

Mark Vale

News snippets

So far we have had 62 entries for the Wild Sherington photographic competition, showing a diverse range of wildlife and plants. There's still time to take part as the deadline for submissions is the end of the year. So get snapping! You can see all the entries on the website here: www.mkheritage.org.uk/sherington. We are keen to have more entries from the younger generation for the under 11 and 11-18 sections. The photographer doesn't have to live in Sherington, but the photo must be taken within the Sherington boundary. David Mackay has kindly agreed to judge the entries in the New Year.

Peter Barnes from Simpson contacted us by email and asked for information about Tony and Gertrude Perkins who lived in Hillview in the 1990s. They had lived in Simpson while working at Bletchley Park during the Second World War. As part of Heritage Open Days on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 September Peter was involved with putting together a small exhibition about the fifteen BP workers who were billeted in Simpson. At 3.00 on both days he led a guided walk around the village, identifying where the workers lived and talked about their relationships with the then residents. Pearl and Philip were able to help with information about the Perkins for him to include in the exhibition. Peter has kindly let us reproduce his findings on Tony and Gertrude in this newsletter. The article starts on page 6. The photo on the front cover is of Gertrude (left) talking to others at a Thursday group meeting in 1997.

We also had an email from Caroline Spaughton who wanted to be put in touch with Lynda Jefferson. She sent us an article, the first part of which starts on page 9. Part 2 will appear in next month's newsletter. Lynda Jefferson has also sent us further information about her family, which will be reproduced in future newsletters. Thanks to them both for fascinating articles.

Sherington Historical Society

**Open Day
presents**

**Sherington Authors
and
Book Sale**



**September 26th 12-4pm
Sherington Village Hall
Free Entry
Village archive to view
Raffle and refreshments**

TONY PERKINS (1912-1991) & TRUDIE PERKINS (1914-1998)

Background

For the past 15 years or so I have been researching the history of the village of Simpson, where I live. I have drawn on the extensive published work of Ted Legg but I've also been fortunate to have benefited from the detailed memories of a small band of Simpson residents, now in their 80s, who have lived in the village all their lives. I first heard the names of Tony and Trudie Perkins from Bill Bowler, whose father was a dairy farmer. As a young teenager during the Second World War, Bill helped to deliver milk in Simpson, including to Blechley Park workers billeted around the village.

Until recently, I knew little about Tony and Trudie beyond their names and the limited information available on the Blechley Park website's Roll of Honour. Earlier this year I discovered that Trudie had visited BP in the 1990s and had left an address 'in Newport Pagnell', but they declined to tell me more. Still secretive!

Then, in August, research on the internet uncovered information about Tony's chess prowess and a chance reference led me to Sherington, where I've benefited from the memories of members of the Historical Society, for which I am very grateful. I welcome the opportunity for what follows to appear in your Newsletter. It is still very much 'work in progress' and I would be delighted to have any further information from members the Society. Please contact me at peterwrbarnes@hotmail.co.uk.

I have used the names Tony and Trudie throughout as I believe that that was how they were known in the 1940s. I now know that Trudie was known as Gertrude when she lived in Sherington.

Nicholas Anthony Perkins, known as Tony, was born on 7 December 1912 in Easthampstead, Berkshire. From 1924-31 he attended Rendcomb College, a small public school near Cirencester and from there went to St. John's College, Oxford to read mathematics, with a scholarship worth £100. He learned to play chess at the age of 7 from watching his father and went on to play in four Varsity matches against Cambridge between 1932 and 1935.

After graduation he joined the Post Office and, in 1937, moved to Edinburgh where he joined the Civil Service Chess Club. He played in the Scottish Championships in 1938 and 1939. He was invited to join the Scottish chess team for the 1939 Buenos Aires Olympiad but was unable to accept. In the event, Scotland did not

participate because of difficulties in putting together a team and a change of dates by the organisers. His contemporaries who played in the British chess team – Stuart Milner-Barry (the then chess correspondent of *The Times*), Hugh Alexander and Harry Golombek (chess correspondent of *The Times*, 1945-89) - did travel to Argentina but had to return home when war broke out in September. Before long, all three were recruited to Bletchley Park.

On 4 September 1941 Tony Perkins married Gertrude Sinclair Davis (b. 24 November 1914) at Melrose in Scotland. At that time she was known as Trudie, though in later years she used Gertrude.

Tony arrived at Bletchley Park in December 1941 and worked in Hut 8, which was responsible for decrypting German navy Enigma signals. The hut had an inner room where cryptanalysts like Tony worked, and a 'Big Room' where the supporting staff kept traffic records and tested the results from the bombes. In the late summer of 1942 a solution had been found to the cipher known as Porpoise and the purely cryptanalytic work eased off. Tony and Harry Golombek were transferred to other sections in October/November. That may have been to a department which decrypted German Intelligence Service signals.



Trudie joined him at Bletchley Park in February 1942 and worked in Mansion Room 51, Hut 9 and the Central Administration Office. In later years she told friends in Sherington that she was a mere 'filing clerk' and declined invitations to talk about her work at BP because she said she only had a boring job. She also said that she didn't know what Tony actually did during the war as they never discussed their jobs, even when the nature of the work was beginning to be generally known.

Trudie left BP in April 1943, around the time of the birth of their first child, Stephen.

Tony and Trudie lived at The Mount, a sizeable property in Simpson. The house was owned by Donald Janes, who was living in Australia, and during the 1940s it was being rented by Hugh Sipthorpe and his wife. Bill Bowler recalls that the Perkins family lived in a downstairs room to the left of the present day entrance, which faces the road (in the 1940s the front door was on the south-facing side of the building, to the left in the photograph). Bill delivered the Perkins' milk each morning, on his way



to Fenny Stratford railway station to catch a train to school at Wolverton; they were very particular about where the bottle was left!

The Mount had a number of benefits for a couple with a young child: there was a bath with hot running water and a telephone. These facilities were also

attractive to fellow BP workers in the village, such as Bentley Bridgewater, who lived opposite, and Angus Wilson (subsequently a well-known novelist), who is said to have entertained Stephen with animal noises.

While at Bletchley Park, Tony maintained his high standard of chess playing. In December 1944 he was Board 5 in a match between Bletchley and Oxford University. The Bletchley team included Hugh Alexander, Harry Golombek and 'Max' Aitken (10 times Scottish chess champion). Bletchley won 8:4.

Tony left Bletchley Park in March 1945. He and Trudie had two more children, a son and a daughter, Clare.

He continued to play competitive chess, participating in the Scottish Championships (1948, 1952 and 1954), the British Championship (1955) and as a member of the Scottish team at the 1958 Munich Olympiad. He was active over many years as a player and administrator for Middlesex.

He retired from the Post Office Headquarters in 1974. In the early 1980s he and Trudie moved to live in a bungalow at Hillview in Sherington, where they became active members of the local community. Tony, described as 'much more reserved' than his wife and 'very much an academic', continued to play chess. He also rode a drop-handlebar racing bike. He died on 26 May 1991 and is commemorated at St Laud's Church, where there is a bench named in his memory.

Gertrude died in 1998.

Peter Barnes



Rugby Heritage Project - Call for stories!



The history of Rugby in the Milton Keynes area
– A long tradition that's worth celebrating ...

Have you or your family been involved in local rugby?

Do you have photos, memorabilia or simply memories you'd like to share?

Living Archive Milton Keynes are creating an exhibition for the Rugby World Cup and would love to hear from you!

email: rugbyheritagemk@gmail.com
Telephone: 01908 322568

This October Milton Keynes will host three of the Rugby World Cup international games at Stadium MK. As part of the celebrations Living Archive Milton Keynes will be producing an exhibition to showcase the history of Rugby. Teams in our area have been playing rugby for over 100 years and we need your help to bring this history to light.

If you've played for a local team, worked behind the scenes or if you're a loyal fan, we'd love to hear from you. We're looking for people with photographs, films, memorabilia, programmes, equipment, cups and medals but particularly memories to contribute to our project. All material will be copied or photographed and returned.

If you'd like to be part of this project, get in touch with Cheryl Butler, Rugby Project Co-ordinator – rugbyheritagemk@gmail.com, 01908 322568.

Fanny Osborn Ponting nee Jefferson (28/7/1851- 27/11/1885)

Part 1 - Early life and marriage

Issue 78 of the Sherington Historical Society Newsletter carried an article "The Jefferson Family in Sherington and further afield - Edward Jefferson 1798 to 1854 (Part 2)". This recounted the life of Edward Jefferson including his second marriage and the only child of that marriage, Fanny Osborn Jefferson who married John

Jones Ponting of Ponting Brothers Ltd, a large department store in Kensington High Street, London.

I have been researching the Ponting family for a number of years, but this is essentially the story of Fanny and her children.

Fanny Osborn Jefferson was born on 28 July 1851 in Sherington, Bucks, the only daughter of Edward Jefferson and Sarah Swannell nee Osborn who had married on 12 December 1850 at Newport Pagnell. It was a second marriage for both of them. Edward had previously been married to Sarah Checkley and they had eleven children.

On 30 March 1851 Edward and Sarah were living at Calves End, Sherington where Edward was farming 240 acres employing 14 labourers. Sarah would have been expecting Fanny.

Fanny's father Edward died on 8 April 1854 when Fanny was less than three years old. In his will he provides for his wife Sarah by granting her the interest and profits on a £1000 investment and the remainder of his estate is divided equally between all his children. If any child is under 21, as Fanny clearly was, his executors are to invest their share until they come of age. The value of his estate isn't known, but the auctions described by Lynda in her earlier article, of land in Sherington, Newport Pagnell and Marston, near Ampthill suggests that the children would all have been well provided for.

In 1861 Fanny, a 9-year-old scholar is living with her mother, a 'proprietor of houses' in High Street, Newport Pagnell. Sarah Jefferson died on 15 February 1870 aged 60.

John Jones Ponting had been born on 10 April 1843, one of seven surviving siblings, the son of Henry Ponting, a Gloucestershire farmer and Jane Jones. By 1861 he had left Gloucestershire and was an assistant linen draper living at 35 Stephenson's Terrace, Islington. John's older brother Thomas Hewett Ponting set up as a draper first in Archer Street in about 1863, moving to 123 Westbourne Grove, Kensington, and in 1871 26-year-old John was living there with Thomas, their widowed mother, Jane and sister Mary. Jane was 'living of her own means', but all of the children were described as drapers 'employing 4 assistants' and at that point may have been in business together.

Fanny and John married on 1 August 1872 at Kensington Parish Church, they were both 'of full age', Fanny having reached maturity and became entitled to her share of her father's estate three days previously. It is not clear how they would have met,

for when the 1871 census was taken 16 months earlier Fanny, aged 19 was a pupil at Townley House, Ramsgate.

Not long after they married, in 1873 John Jones Ponting went into partnership with his two younger brothers William and Sydney as 'Ponting Brothers' at 125 Kensington High Street. This was and remained a separate enterprise from brother Thomas's drapery business.

The business in Kensington thrived in the early years of John and Fanny's marriage expanding into 127 Kensington High Street in 1876 and was to become 'the largest retail fancy goods and silk business in London'. Brother Sydney, having himself married well, 'retired' from the partnership in 1884, selling his interest to his brothers for £759.1s.10d and went back to live in Gloucestershire. William and John Jones Ponting carried on in partnership and later, after John Jones and Fanny had divorced, it expanded further, in 1890, into 123 and 123A Kensington High Street and then in 1893, to Scarsdale House, an old stately home which they initially used to house employees, but which was later demolished to be replaced by a modern extension.



The business was incorporated as 'Ponting Brothers Ltd' on 20 May 1898. Whilst William and John Jones Ponting remained minority shareholders, the share issue generated the equivalent, by today's standard, of over £1M for each of the brothers, making them both rich men. However,

once the family lost control the company overstretched itself financially, expanding the premises as illustrated right. The company went into liquidation on 30 January 1907. It was bought out, initially by Barkers who with its successors continued to operate from the same premises under the 'Pontings' name until the early 1970s.

Caroline Spaughton

SHERINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS

“A Doctor in the Family”



“Tales from the Boer War to WW1”

A selection of poetry and prose
interspersed with contemporary
newsreel footage

Sherington Village Hall
Tue 13th October 2015
All Welcome



A Talk by
Stephen Kennedy