

No: 96



Sherington Historical Society

Newsletter



September 2017

www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs

Special dates for your diary

10th October

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.

14th November

The Gunpowder Plot. Chris Rowe , who came a couple of years ago to talk about the Eleanor Crosses is returning to talk about the Gunpowder Plot.

12th December

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

9th January

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

Mid January

January Jolly. More details nearer the time.

13th February

Wolverton Works. Philip Marsh is coming to talk to us about the Wolverton Works, Philip will talk about life in the Works, the royal train and what was special about the 1838 London to Birmingham train.

13th March

AGM, 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)



Welcome to this Newsletter. These come round quicker and quicker each quarter it feels! Does not seem that long ago since I was writing about our visit to Broughton Church, and here we are again, the summer behind us and the cooler autumn days upon us, making us think about getting the chimney swept and lighting the wood burner to feel warm and snug,

At the beginning of this month we had the Open Day in the Village Hall, bringing it forward this year to go in line with the national Heritage Open Days' scheme. We advertised as we would normally, we brought the archive down from the office. Kay put together some interesting boards about various elements that were on show and the whole day saw about 20 people through the door all day. I am starting to feel that the Open Days' event has run its course, and if we are to put on an event perhaps this needs to be something different - something that would engage the village. If you have any thought, then please let me know.

The pronounced demise of the Society's computer was a bit premature, as I have managed to resurrect it and it's now back working. I have copied off the information and am looking to catalogue it. But the thought is that we still might get this hosted online

Recently, I happened upon a link between Daniel Day Lewis and Sherington Primary School, where he references Sherington School in an acceptance speech he gave accepting a BAFTA in 2007 for the film *There Will be Blood*, but as it turns out this is not our Sherington school but the one based in Greenwich.

Mark Vale

Closing down Pettits – October 1977

The following article is from the Kensington Local Studies blog (see link below). Thanks to Dave Walker who allows us to use his article in our newsletter.

<https://rbkclocalstudies.wordpress.com/2015/10/15/closing-down-pettits-october-1977/>



Alfred William Pettit was born in Sherington c 1856. The son of a farmer, William Pettit, based in Water Lane he was apprenticed as a Draper in Minchinhampton, Stroud, and eventually after working in Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge as an assistant Draper, he opened a store in High Street Kensington called Pettits.

From this end of retail history it's in some ways quite surprising that the old department stores of Kensington High Street lasted as long as they did. I can remember the giant of the High Street, Barker's carrying on as though it would never end, but now the building is dominated by the Whole Food store and another part of it is about to be colonised by Gap. Derry and Toms is memorialised in the Roof Garden (the Virgin flags fly from the rooftop), and Pontings has vanished completely. Those three were the main names of genteel shopping in Kensington but there was another name still remembered by veteran consumers – Pettits. Much smaller than Barker's or Derry and Toms, a little smaller than Pontings, we passed by it in a previous post on the Promenade when I said we would return. So here we are in October 1977 for a last look around at numbers 191-195.





The closing down sale is in full swing at the time of this picture, October 1977

Inside, business looks steady rather than brisk. Perhaps the best items had already gone. As the displays are picked over by shoppers the place starts to look a bit untidy. My wife and her mother paid a visit to the sale about this time.

My wife bought a purple dressing gown at half-price which she used for a number of years. I asked her if the place did look a bit of a mess at the time and she says it did.

The shop had four floors. If there had been a lift you could have heard the announcement: "Household linens and curtains".

This is how it looked.

The department was also looking a bit thin.

Upstairs there is a bit more activity. The scene looks old fashioned, and I ask myself, was that how things were in the late seventies? Am I projecting more recent memories of shopping back onto another era? Or was Pettits out of time even then? I was talking about Pettits with one of my colleagues and she discovered this bit of reminiscence:



"Pettits' clerical department was extremely outdated. It was the last shop still using a system of receipts for customers transported by overhead wires. The cashier sat in a sort of overhead balcony. The sales assistant made out a bill and sent it by pulleys and wires to the cashier, who kept one copy and stamped the other "Paid" as a receipt for the customer, and gave the necessary





change. This was all transported by wire and pulley back to the sales assistant on the ground floor, who then gave the customer her change and receipt. In the 1950s this system had long become outdated in other stores. Most sales assistants at this time were also cashiers.”

This comes from a book called *Cosy Corners in Depression and War: Autobiography* by a woman called Joan

Hughes which regrettably we don't have in stock. (It was found on a website devoted to wire and pneumatic cash systems: <http://www.cashrailway.co.uk> which is well worth looking at if like me you can remember some of the odd systems which used to exist in large stores – I can remember the pneumatic system at Pontings but I've also seen it elsewhere.) The wire system is not visible in these pictures but nor do you see many tills. It's possible that some of the old methods for making payments and dispensing change lingered on into “modern” times. (Somehow I can't quite consign the 70s to the historical past even though I know many people who weren't even born then.)

Our photographer sneaked upstairs into the office, where there is also a distinct lack of business machines.

I can remember rooms like this, desks jumbled together, piles of in-trays, filing cabinets and barely a hint of the technological revolution that would sweep through offices in the decades ahead. The upstairs floors of buildings in Kensington High Street were full of rooms like this one and the traditional office was still alive.



By the beginning of 1978 Pettits was about to go under the hammer.

The Survey of London records Pettits' period of trading as 1890-1978, just short of 90 years. But before they occupied the whole corner. Alfred Pettit, drapers, just had number 193. I think this may be a picture of the first shop, which I tracked back in



Kelly's Directory as far as 1888 although it may go further.

Pettits seems to have expanded into the larger premises in the early 1900s just in time for a retail boom. The 1920s and 30s were the peak for the shops of Kensington High Street.

This page is probably from a 1930s brochure. Or is it later? The prices might be a clue.

The picture over the page shows a celebration for 50 years of trading which would take us to roughly the same period, probably the late 1930s.



Happier times for Pettits. But unlike other larger establishments the building is now home to a single store – a branch of Waterstones. So you can still go there now and browse through the books, (something I'd much rather do than look for curtain material, but that's just me), and imagine the shoppers of the past.

Kelly's Kensington Directory 1903: 191 Pettit A W draper and furrier. 193 Pettit A W, milliner and ladies outfitter.

Postscript: Forgive me for a little uncertainty with some of the pictures. The pictures of Mr and Mrs Pettit were not labelled as such but it was recorded that the originals were loaned by the



An empty unit which formerly held a selection of Pretty Polly tights



On the back of this picture was written "Mrs White". I assume she is the one behind the counter pointing out what's left for the keen shopper leaning towards her.



company so photos could be taken. I would welcome any comments/information from former staff or shoppers. My special thanks to Maggie Tyler, an assiduous researcher as always.



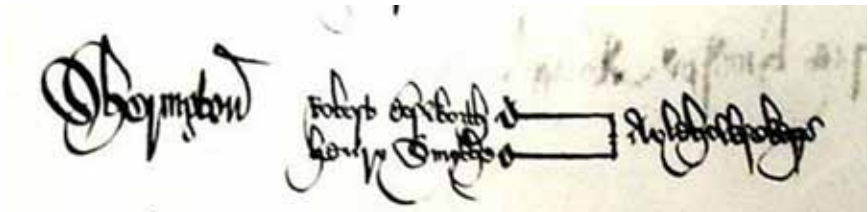


This gentleman could be Alfred Pettit himself with his wife

Email from Australia

“Thanks for the challenge on the page at:

<http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs/ale1577.htm>



I see: Sherrington - Robert Popeworth?? George Smythe - Aylehousekeepers

Thanks soooo much for the access to burials, marriages, baptisms going back to 1698. It was extremely helpful and one of the best resources I've found while building my family tree. You all deserve a huge pat on the back for the transcriptions, photos and range of years available – for free! I couldn't believe it when every other resource pops up with a subscription offer.

Very best wishes, Suzanne Burns (Australia)”

Sherington Historical Society Open Day 2017

Here are some photos from the Open Day







presents

A talk by Chris Rowe

The Gunpowder Plot



Sherington Village Hall
Tuesday 14th November 2017

7.45 pm for 8.00 pm

Refreshments available
Raffle

Entry: £2.00/£3.00 for members/non-members

Web: www.mkheritage.co.uk/shhs

Email: SheringtonHS@yahoo.co.uk