

FINEDON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Canons Ashby House (see page 3)

Photograph by M Shipton

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2016

COMMITTEE FOR 2016

The officers and committee members re-elected at the Annual General Meeting on 25th November 2015 are:-

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| President | Jacqui Minchinton |
| Chairman | Malcolm Peet |
| Vice Chairman | Michael Shipton |
| Secretary | Michael Britton |
| Treasurer | Rachel Terry |
| Minute Secretary | Brenda Beck |

Committee Members

David Bailey Jeremy Millington Sharon Green

Pat Curtis resigned May 2016

Researcher Carolyn Smith



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

Once again I am in a position where I need to thank the officers and committee for their work during my enforced absence. I am particularly grateful to Michael Shipton who carried out most of my duties. Thanks are also extended to Pat Curtis who has felt the need to resign from the committee. Pat has done sterling work in the garden and in dressing models for our exhibitions, Pat has kindly indicated her willingness to continue with these two roles, a decision for which we are extremely grateful.

We have enjoyed a good start to the year with some excellent talks at our monthly meetings. The January meeting, 'Finedon to Van Diemen's Land', delivered by our secretary Mick Britton, was particularly well received. This talk has now been turned into a booklet which has sold very well, copies going to America and Australia. The recipients have joined our membership. Should we rename our Society, Finedon International History Society? Only joking. Looking at the list of speakers it shows that we are nearly half way through the year.

One very pleasing fact is that is we have retained our membership base, other than life members we have over 100 members. With a few stragglers to come in we should pass 110 paid up members. Thank you all, many clubs and societies would be delighted to be in such a strong position.

Thanks to Rachel, on 23 May, 19 members and friends had a very enjoyable private visit to Canons Ashby, touring both the house and the recently restored garden. A full report will given in the next Newsletter.

Our current exhibition "FUDC" will be the 27th exhibition that we have held. This exhibition has needed rather more research than many of the earlier subjects; thanks are due to Carolyn for her extensive work.

CYRIL WILSON'S POEMS

In March 2011 we asked if anyone knew of copies of Cyril's poems produced whilst he was serving with the Eighth Army in Italy.

The two booklets, in which Cyril's winning poems were reproduced have now been traced and the society has purchased copies. A report concerning Cyril's family has also been found in the Northampton Independent. The article can be viewed at the Meeting House.

Recent acquisitions

1. For Trading Place projects. Three Beaufin apple trees have been purchased ready for planting on Apple Day.
2. 'Pioneering on the Canadian Prairies' - reminiscences of A Elson. Mr Elson senior and his family (17 members) emigrated to Canada in c.1904 after the failure of his business. The report tells the story of their early experiences.

SEE PAGE 7 SURPRISE VISITOR FROM CANADA

3. Diary of the Finedon Nursing Division of the St. John Ambulance Brigade. AGM reports 1963 to 1978, and MUSTER record.

2016 Meetings

| | | |
|---------------|--|-------------------|
| January 25th | Finedon to Van Diemen's Land | Mick Britton |
| February 22nd | 100 Years of Gardening | Nicholas Warliker |
| March 21st | Another Icarus , the Rise and Fall of Percy Pilcher and the art of flying | Roy Smart |
| April 25th | Flag Fen, an ever changing story | Sarah Wilson |
| May 16th | Outing to Canons Ashby House | |
| June 27th | The Jurassic Way | Malcolm Deacon |
| July 25th | The role of Northants women in The First World War | Andrea Pettingale |
| Aug 22nd | Northamptonshire Curiosities | Helen Crabtree |
| Sept 26th | The Great War through the Magic Lantern | Kevin Varty |
| Oct 24th | Waterloo, the film industry in Irthlingborough (including parts of Original 1913 film) | Roy York |
| Nov 28th | A G M | |
| December | Carol Singing – date to be confirmed. | |

FROM THE NEWSPAPERS

Wellingborough News 11 JANUARY 1932

FINEDON SAYS NO TO IRTHLINGBOROUGH *For months the possibility of Finedon linking up with some other body under the powers conferred upon the County Council in their review of country districts has coupled the Finedon Urban Council with another body. Various meetings have been held at which FUDC has always strongly stood for retention of its current status. One suggestion which troubled the people was that Finedon could link with Irthlingborough. At a special meeting of the FUDC to discuss the suggestion – to say the least of it—was decidedly hostile to this idea. It was resolved “That this Council oppose any amalgamation of this district with the Urban district of Irthlingborough”*

Wellingborough Rural Council was also considered to be unacceptable, but Wellingborough Urban would be more acceptable, this of course was the eventual course of action.

A SURPRISE VISITOR FROM CANADA *(see also page 4)*

Many of the older residents of Finedon will well remember Mr. Arthur Ellson, who used to live in Obelisk road. Over 40 years ago, he with wife and two children, his mother and father, brother and sisters, left England for Canada, where they founded in Saskatchewan what has since been known as Finedon Farm. None of the family ever returned to this country, but on Friday last Mr Reginald Underwood, Obelisk Road, received a surprise visit from a young sailor who turned out to be Arthur Ellson's grandson. This was his first visit to England. He had only 24 hours leave, but he spent it on a flying visit to the town from which sprang both his mother's and father's people. Arthur Ellson was in his younger days a well-known footballer. He was the eldest son of Mr. Sam Ellson who in partnership with Mr. A H Bailey, was one of Finedon's pioneer boot manufacturers.

FINEDON PERSONALITIES

MICHAEL SUMNER - Harrowden Books

Mike is one of the more recent Finedon personalities having moved his business from Little Harrowden in 2004.

Mike started in books in 2002. He went to an auction and just fancied buying a box of books that looked interesting, he bought them, sold them, making a small profit and so bought more and more and more. Within twelve months he had acquired over a thousand books, which



took up a fair amount of houseroom! So you could say the books decided for themselves they needed a proper home, therefore some months later the move to Finedon was made. Mike said; "Over the years in Finedon I have made many friends and seen a lot of books, passing the 90,000 mark now. I think the great thing about selling books is that one's customers are always pleased to come in and browse, have a chat and often find something that inspires them. It's not like 'having' to buy a necessary item like printer ink or something!

One of the highlights that I shall never forget was the day our Vicar Richard Coles came to do a book-signing session in the shop one Saturday afternoon. I have never seen the shop so busy.

Running a bookshop can be full of surprises. Of all the interesting publications that have come my way over the twelve years or so that I have run the bookshop in Finedon, one of the most interesting is an old newspaper

A copy of The Times dated November 7th 1805. An insignificant date, you might say; no one could blame you. The front page is a collection of adverts and minutiae relating to daily life within the Metropolis. However, turn to page two for something momentous. It has to be borne in mind that in 1805 news travelled only as fast as the fastest ship the fastest horse. Consequently the news that was printed that day told of a great naval victory – a defining moment in British history.

Yes, this was one of the very first accounts of The Battle of Trafalgar, waged some 18 days before on 21st October 1805.

It is not by any means in the style we would expect today. No sensational headline. No roaring jingoism. Merely a wooden report, written in the style of a naval despatch - for that is what it is. The very first report would of course have been published in the Gazette (as statutory matters were always published by Government Authority). This then is the first printing of the momentous news available to the general public.

"Admiralty Office Nov 6

Dispatches, of which the following are Copies, were received at the Admiralty this day, at one o'clock, A.M. from Vice-Admiral Collingwood, Commander in Chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels off Cadiz:-

*Euryalus, off Cape Trafalgar, Oct 22, 1805.
Sirs, The ever-to-be-lamented death of Vice-Admiral, Lord Viscount NELSON, who in the late conflict with the enemy fell in the hour of victory*

The report, over two pages, details the battle, the ships involved and a list of the men killed or wounded.



The newspaper, as must be expected, is in a fragile condition and has bits missing here and there, but considering the fact it has been privately kept for over two hundred years (spending much of its recent life in a Wellingborough attic!) it has done pretty well I'd say.

The newspaper has been carefully washed and several strips of sellotape removed. The two strips of newspaper have now been preserved in a special translucent paper, safe and sound from further decay. The newspaper can now be read, appreciated and reflected upon! History in the attic!

As many customers will confirm, a visit to Harrowden Books is interesting and Mike is always ready to help.

CYRIL BRADLAUGH WILSON

The man from the Co-op, Army Gunner & Poet

Society members of a certain age will no doubt remember one of Finedon's more memorable characters, the late Cyril Wilson.

Cyril was born in Rock Road on 1st February 1909 to Lottie (nee Cramp) and George Bradlaugh Wilson, a former professional goalkeeper for Carlisle FC. Cyril's father was something of an all-round sportsman as he also played cricket and was a boxing coach in Nottingham during the 1920s. The 1911 census records George as a "boot maker riveter" working from home, still living in Rock Road.

Both of Cyril's parents were also born in Finedon. In later life Cyril would write, *"Palmer and Pearson and Yorke with an 'e, Cramp, Main and Wilson were the making of me"*. Cyril had two siblings George, born in 1911 and May born in 1912. The family then moved to Radcliffe-on-Trent, Nottingham where their mother Lottie died, aged 38, in 1919. In the following year his father married Mollie O'Connor and they had one child, Annie Wilson-O'Connor, born in 1921.

Through a search for Cyril on the "Ancestry" family genealogy website I came across Linda Meehan who has researched Cyril in her Wilson family tree, so I contacted her. Linda, who lives in Dublin, is the granddaughter of Cyril's stepsister Annie.

It is a pleasure to say that Cyril's stepsister Annie is still alive and living in Ireland and has provided the Society with war-time photographs of Cyril and, with the help of Linda, recorded an oral history of Cyril's early years.

Cyril was awarded a scholarship to attend the prestigious Mundella Grammar School, (now closed), close to the Trent Bridge cricket ground in Nottingham. It was his wish to become an English teacher and despite being offered a bursary, his stepmother would not let him go and insisted that he should find work to support the family rather than go to university. It was at this point that Cyril began his long career and association with the Co-operative Society by joining the Nottingham Co-op.

It was Cyril's wish to return to Finedon and around 1930 he transferred to the Finedon Co-op and lived with his mother's sister. Cyril immersed himself in the arts: poetry, opera, literature and the ballet. Cyril was a friend of the local author and historian, Reginald Underwood. He contributed to and is acknowledged in Underwood's well-known book *Pageant of Finedon*, published in 1942. Cyril was also a recognised authority on the life and work of the Finedon poet, Digby Mackworth Dolben. In 1967 he organised an exhibition celebrating the centenary of the Digby's death.

Annie records that Cyril was very much in demand as a speaker on the subject of the arts. The Evening Telegraph of 12th January 1939 reports that Cyril was "*thanked by Mrs W Underwood for his reading of The Glass of Milk by Ann Bridge*" to the Finedon Women's Co-operative Guild, one of many such speaking engagements.

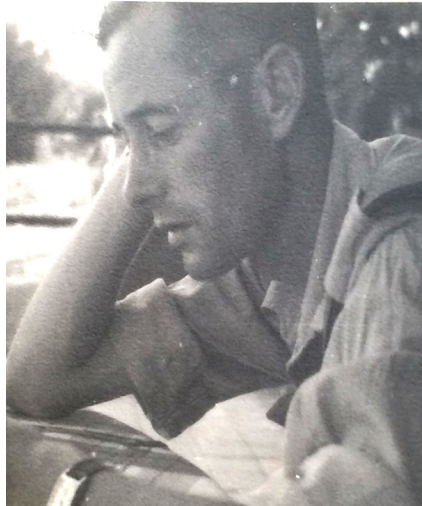
During the Second World War Cyril was conscripted into the army serving as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery with the Eighth Army. His stepsister Annie, cheekily records that "*Cyril was no more a gunner than flying a kite!*" However, with his prefect enunciation and clear dictation Cyril served in a Gun Operations Room relaying orders to the gun batteries on the front line. Annie also adds that whilst Cyril was "*bitter about not going to university he got more out of life by being conscripted*" as it gave him an opportunity to visit and enjoy many of the cultural sites in North Africa and Italy behind the front line. During this time Cyril wrote a number of poems that were observations and reflections of his own wartime service. In 1943 Cyril entered two poems for the prestigious Montgomery Poetry Prize Competition. They were subsequently published in the anthology "Poems from the CMF" with one, "Reverie" winning second prize.

REVERIE

If when we wander through the fields
We find that every pasture yields
Cowslip and ladysmock,
Would we not search all day
To add to our bouquet
Daisy and buttercup.

If none but bright kingfishers
gleam
Among the willows by the
stream
And only thrushes sing,
How we should ache to hear
The cuckoo calling clear
Or see a lark take wing.

And if the sun blazed all the
day
While every night the moon
held sway
And there was never rain,
One star would captivate



**A single cloud elate
And storms be praised again:**

**Gunner Cyril Wilson
North Africa c.1942**

After the war Cyril returned to Finedon and again engrossed himself into his love of the arts and history. After a long career in retail with the Co-operative Society in Nottingham, Finedon and Wellingborough, Cyril retired in 1974. He died in November 1987 aged 78.

The society holds a copy of the "Poems from the CMF" and an interesting and well researched article about Cyril, written in the Northampton & County Independent magazine of 1974. The article also includes a number of other examples of Cyril's poetry.

Mick Britton

A NEW PUBLICATION

FINEDON FIRE BRIGADE

Carolyn has researched the Brigade from its formation in 1906 up to its disbandment when Finedon and Wellingborough Councils amalgamated in 1935. Details of the men who served, their equipment and the various competitions entered are given. Brief reports on some of the major fires in Finedon are also recorded.



THINGDON COTTAGE

Thingdon Cottage photographed from the Grove. Most residents will not have seen this view.



Members of the research group dressed as Quakers for the Centenary celebrations.
From left to right; Margot Munns, Jacquie Minchinton, Phil Sibley, Brenda Beck



Finedon Allen Road WMC Skittle Team c. 1955. The Secretary of the Club,
Bernard York is on the far right.

FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE



Finedon Fire Brigade with the Lilford cup (June 1913) Left to right :Third Officer William Law, Captain Arthur Henfrey, Second Officer William Willis and Fireman Richard Burton.



Demolition of the wall of Whitlark' s garden, Well Street. 16 May 1958. Whitlark ' s house stood opposite Waterlow Bridge. Several skeletons were found during the demolition. Early owners were a Quaker family who followed the practice of burial in their own garden.



Warner 's Bakery in High Street

**From left to right the
workers are
Tim Bird, Ted York and
Dan Clapham**



**Finedon station prior to demolition c. 1980. The station had closed to all
traffic in 1964**

ARE YOU AWARE OF?

A Mackworth helped to capture the King of France at
Poitier

Successful protest against tolls by Finedon men of Thing-
don in 1388

Stonemasons were building our church while the Black
Prince warred.