

Touchpaper

THE WALTHAM ABBEY NEWSLETTER

June 1996

ISSUE 18

EDITORIAL

Still a problem with the colour so you'll have to put up with a Green Touchpaper again!

Well, Spring at last is here, cold isn't it! Still, never mind, it'll soon be summer and perhaps then we'll have some slightly warmer rain.

With the very slow start to the growing scene in the garden suddenly everything is coming up at once and the mowing season is starting in earnest.

The long range forecast is that we will have a hot and dry summer like last year which might keep the grass down a bit but makes life difficult for those of us on a water meter!

Reunion plans are well advanced and we are asking for earlier booking than previous - see back sheet.

We've had a good number of articles this time around but a little short on letters - don't forget "It's good to write".

Norman Paul
Editor

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BYTES

For those of you who used to live in the establishment's 'tied accommodation':

MONKSWOOD AVENUE AND WALTON GARDENS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Yes, the Association is still with us more than 50 years after it's inauguration as the 'Ministry of Supply Tenants Association, Waltham Abbey'. The first meeting was held on 13th Feb 1953 in the Wesley Hall, Monkswood Avenue when a Mr JHLansdell was elected chairman, Mr HTLester secretary and Dr J Gooding treasurer. The main item of business in 1953 was the Coronation celebrations and a 'children's Tea Party Sub-Committee' was formed, consisting of Mrs Clifford, Mrs Goodhew, Mrs Lansdell, Mrs Lock and Mrs Meek.

(Perhaps Dorothy Clifford would like to send us a 'blow by blow' account of that bunfight).

The first committee meeting was held at the Meek's house and matters discussed included; erection of noticeboard near the Gladeway, education standards in WA Schools and development of social activities for residents. One particular item under AOB caught my attention: "Some daytime social activities for wives were desirable, a room at the Green Man might be suitable." I feel that the problem was solved by the arrival of the next generation of scientists, engineers and administrators!

To bring you up to date, the Monkswood Estate is still concerned about road traffic and dogs fouling footpaths etc. In addition the building of some 25 'starter' homes on the cinder car park has led to problems with the sewers. Although the demise of the Powdermill Club deprived us of a meeting place to hold our AGM, George Savill has negotiated with the Royal British Legion for the use of their premises. Thanks George!

Tony Kosecki managed to talk his way out of the post of secretary in favour of Brenda Ford (one of our new residents) Lou Courtney is treasurer and I am still Chairman (Can't get rid of the job!). Although the activity of the association has been low key this year we had a windfall from the C&G Building Society when they were taken over. If anyone has a tale of the past days of the association please send it to Touchpaper.

Bryan Howard

LAST OF THE SUMMER WINE

Imagine our dismay when we arrived at the 'Owl' on Friday 29th March to find it already full of two coachloads of geriatric recycled teenagers! The landlord was understanding and suggested that we could use the children's room. So now you know - it's official - We've all reached our second childhoods; I can't wait to have ago on the bouncy castle (not included in the price of beer). Gordon Bromberger was greeted with "Happy New Year" to which he reciprocated. He had a cast iron alibi for non-attendances at the Jan and Feb meetings and he didn't need one for Dec as we don't think anyone actually turned up.

16 came last month and it would have been 18 if Bob and Margaret Brown hadn't listened to the traffic reports of the latest jams on the M25!

Ron Treadgold deplored the lack of activity by the trustees of the North Site. We have no idea if any meetings have taken place and all is quiet on North Site, apart from desultory building activity to build cramped, expensive properties which Wimpeys can't sell!

Diane Howse didn't come to the last meeting as retirement has caught up with her and she's just too busy!

Bryan Howard (Again!)

THE FREEDOM OF WALTHAM ABBEY.

At a Special Meeting, held in the Waltham Abbey Town Hall on 9th May 1996 Ken Bascombe was made an Honorary Freeman of Waltham Abbey. Ken was presented with an handsome document to mark the event .

When quizzed about the privileges and duties of a 'Freeman' Ken admits that they appear to be nonexistent and that, apparently, he still has to pay his council tax!

I seem to remember that under ancient law the burghers and freemen of Waltham Abbey are still allowed to gather acorns and take fallen wood from Epping Forest provided that the latter is no longer than 3' nor greater than 2" diameter. Perhaps Ken should breed pigs and set up a firewood round?

In Memoriam

Arthur Stokoe

We have been informed by Arthur's wife Jean that he died on 9th February. He was a quiet, unassuming soft-spoken Scot and, despite a long period of service at Waltham Abbey, little is known of his early history. We believe that he was co-opted into the Ministry of Supply during the war and then went onto Woolwich. Arthur was one of the 'founder members' of DMXR D and was responsible for setting up the Rubber Labs at Waltham Abbey; first under Dr Johnston and then Warburton Hall in the late fifties. His efforts made Waltham a well respected lab within MOD and other research institutes. He remained at Waltham until he retired in 1977. Arthur was a well respected rubber technologist who offered practical solutions to rubber problems that really worked. Possibly his best work was with Bob Richards on hydrazine resistant rubbers. He is remembered as a most generous and helpful colleague.

Captain James Bell MC 1916-1996

Jim's career started in the quality control labs at Lever Brothers after gaining an ARJC at Manchester University. At the start of the war he was seconded to JCS Huddersfield where he worked on signal flares. His initial application to join the army was declined because of his 'war work' but he was later invited to join 'a military civilian organisation' and was told to report to 64 Baker Street; he found he had joined SOE (Special Operations Executive). After a period training SOE agents in the use of explosives Jim went to Ringway and trained as a parachutist and helped develop the hazardous technique of dropping into water (at night). On the invasion of Italy Jim was transferred to a training school in Southern Italy and later dropped into the Aosta Valley to work with the partisans behind German lines. For his work alongside the partisans Jim was awarded the Military Cross and made a life member of the Italian Communist Party. Jim had considerable respect for the communist partisans and was very proud of the latter honour. It caused some consternation when he wrote it on his form when he was subjected to Positive vetting in the '50s. After the war Jim spent some time in Germany obtaining and safeguarding explosives required to restart production in the Ruhr coal mines. On demobilisation Jim joined JSRG at Waltham Abbey and worked there until his retirement to the Isle of Man.

Away from work Jim was interested in exotic vehicles, at one time owning two vintage Scott twin water cooled two stroke motor bikes. His ultimate joy was an E type Jaguar. His other interest was in his succession of beautiful Irish Red Setters.

The following was spotted in the Daily Telegraph obituary column by Eric Baker and may be of interest. Perhaps one or two can remember Mr Sylvester?

William Sylvester, who has died aged 81, was awarded the Empire Gallantry Medal (translated in 1941 into the George Cross) after an explosion in the RGPJ on 18 Jan 1940. At the time he was engaged in purifying NG inside No.2 Wash House. This only 100 yards from the scene of detonation and the building had suffered considerable damage; half the roof torn off, two thirds of walls collapsed and hot water and air services interrupted. Although well aware of the danger from the possibility of NG freezing he remained at his post for two hours until the charge had been processed and stability restored. After the explosion he moved with the RGPJ to Wrexham where he lived for the rest of his life. He is survived by his wife Eileen.

miscellany.too

Also from Ron Treadgold, from the same source;

DEFINITIONS OF STAFF APPRAISEMENT PHRASES

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS - Can't think of a single interesting thing to say about him

LIVELY - Thoroughly disruptive

EASY GOING - Bone idle

MAKING GOOD PROGRESS - If you think his work is bad now you should have seen it a year ago

A SENSITIVE PERSON - Never stops whining

HELPFUL - Creep

RELIABLE - Grasses on his own mates

ADVENTUROUS - Will break his neck before his neck is out

HAS DIFFICULTY INFORMING STABLE RELATIONSHIPS - I can't understand him either

EXPRESSES HIMSELF CONFIDENTLY - Cheeky little bastard

FORTHRIGHT - Arrogant, cheeky little bastard

ENJOYS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY - sex mad

IMAGINATIVE - Can always think up something new for his self-certificated sick leave form

FRIENDLY - Never shuts up

EASILY DISTRACTED - Hasn't done a stroke of work since his last appraisalment

WORKS BETTER IN A SMALL GROUP - Daren't take my eyes off him for a second

NEEDS PRAISE AND ENCOURAGEMENT - Thick as two short planks

NOT YET READY FOR PROMOTION - He's the only one who knows what this group is about

IS EASILY UPSET - Is spoilt rotten

BETTER AT PRACTICAL WORK - Totally illiterate

Hope you don't recognize any of these phrases from your past Staff reports.

THE TOUCH PAPER REGISTER

A FULL REGISTER WILL BE PUBLISHED WITH THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE

NEW MEMBERS REGISTERED SINCE LAST FULL REGISTER

<u>name</u>	<u>currently at</u>	<u>WA dates</u>	<u>WA section 's</u>
John Anderson	RO Chorley	1976 - 79	P1/PR
Audrey Anderson	Frinton [rtd]	1994 - 89	Cash Office/Library/ISRG
David Ashen	MOD Main Building	1963 - 67	M2
'Monty' Banks	Newport Pagnall [rtd]	1950 -79	Machine Shop
Stan Bennett	Upshire [rtd]	1970 - 84	PR
Rose Bennett	Upshire [rtd]	1978 - 91	ISRG/ISRD
Alan Blake	Waltham Abbey [rtd]	1959 - 66	Building maintenance
Dave Catton	RO Summerfield	1981 - 90	P2
Barbara Coe	Cheshunt	1977 - 90	Laundry/P1
Bill Coe	Cheshunt	1967 - 89	BWD
Janet Cooke	Sawbridgeworth HERTS	1974 - 79	Cash Office
W G Critchell	Barton on Sea	1947 - 81	Explosives/ISRG
Wendy Day	Waltham Abbey	?	?
Edna Donaldson	Waltham Abbey [rtd]	1979 - 88	Messenger
Wilf Dukes	Suffolk [rtd]	1953 - 77	Rheology & Adhesives
Norman Foster	Bishop's Stortford [rtd]	1950 - 91	Toolmaker
Adrian Francis	RO Bridgwater	1977 - 89	PR
Ted Hall	Huntingdon [rtd]	1974 - 86	Sheet Metal Worker
Violet Hall	Huntingdon [rtd]	1975 - 85	Laundry
Eric Heptinstall	LANCS [rtd]	1962 - 69	Engineering
Ted Hitch	Bourne LINCS [rtd]	1923 - 67	Main Lab.
Donald Hodge	Dereham, Norfolk	1952 - 68	P1
Jimmy James	Waltham Abbey [rtd]	1962 - 91	Electricians
Mrs James	Waltham Abbey [rtd]	1967 - 89	Adhesion & Rheology
Ken Lawrence	Birchington KENT [rtd]	1956 - 87	P!
Lynne Lennard	RO Waltham Abbey	1979 - 91	P1/Safety
Jack Love	Waltham Abbey [rtd]	1973 - 89	MDP
Betty Matthews	Waltham Abbey [rtd]	1942 - 78	Typing
Charles Meek	Wimborne DORSET	1952 - 77	ISRG
Ian Murray	RO Glascoed	1987 - 89	PR
Muriel Nicholls	Salisbury [rtd]	1940 - 69	Admin.
Dennis Panting	Ware	?	?
Stella Parsons	Waltham abbey [rtd]	1969 - 83	Typing Pool
Jack Patient	St Albans [rtd]	1953 - 62	'Guncotton'/Heat
Cyril Povey	West Sussex [rtd]	1939 - 44	RGPF Main Lab
Jean Povey	West Sussex [rtd]	1937 - 44	RGPF Office
Michael Sales	Southampton	1979 - 87	Eng/QA
David Stanners	-	-	NORTH SITE TRUSTEE
Wendy Stewart	Waltham Abbey	1977 - 82	Cash&Costing/Personn
Peter Stone	Fort Halstead	1967 - 84	P1
Aubrey Thomas	Morecambe LANCs [rtd]	1948 - 81	P1/P2
J G Thomason	Waltham Abbey	19743 - 88	MDP
Eric Trist	Wiltshire [rtd]	1953-7 / 63-67	SPR1/ Adhesives
Blanche Webb	Saffron Waldon [rtd]	1969 - 1981	Surgery
Arthur Wilson	Hungerford [rtd]	1937 - 42	Worktaker
Joan Wilson	Hungerford [rtd]	1937 - 42	Typist

**PLEASE REMEMBER TO UPDATE THE EDITOR ON
CHANGE OF YOUR HOME OR WORK ADDRESS**

e-mail@miscellany.com

Keeping Touchpaper at the cutting edge of technology here are some items dredged up from the information superhighway before falling off my surfboard:

Subject: Life, the Universe and Everything

"I went to a museum yesterday where they had all the heads and arms missing from statues in all the other museums"

"What's another word for Thesaurus?"

NEWSFLASH: Power cut in department store yesterday; 20 people trapped on the escalators!

"When I get really bored I drive down to Lakeside, get a really good parking space, then sit in my car and count the number of people who ask me if I'm just going"

"I bought a de-humidifier and then someone gave me a humidifier for Xmas so I shut them in the same room and let them fight it out"

"I wrote a song but I can't read music. Every time I hear a new song on the radio I think 'Hey, maybe I wrote that'.

"Replaced my car headlights with strobe lights and now it looks like I'm the only one moving"

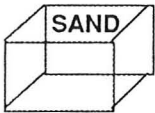
"I watched the Grand Prix racing on TV and I thought -If they left earlier they wouldn't have to go so fast"

"I just bought the latest thing - a microwave fireplace. You can spend awhole evening in front of it in only eight minutes"

NB. Touchpaper Editor can also be reached by e-mail on 100750.1577@compuserve.com

and now - by more conventional postal means a Quiz selection from Ron Treadgold which was sent to him by his son at BT:

BRAIN TEASERS

	MAN BOARD	R ROAD A D	V T O W N	MIND MATTER
CYCLE CYCLE CYCLE	T O U C H V	o — MA BA PhD	LE VEL	KNEE LIGHTS

I think I've got most of them but I'll try and get Ron to give me the answers for the next issue

NORTH SITE NEWS

Or, in this case Non-News! Nothing appears to be happening on the North Site Museum Development. Now it may well be that a lot is going on behind the scenes but, if that's so it's extremely well hidden.

We would welcome any news in this area.

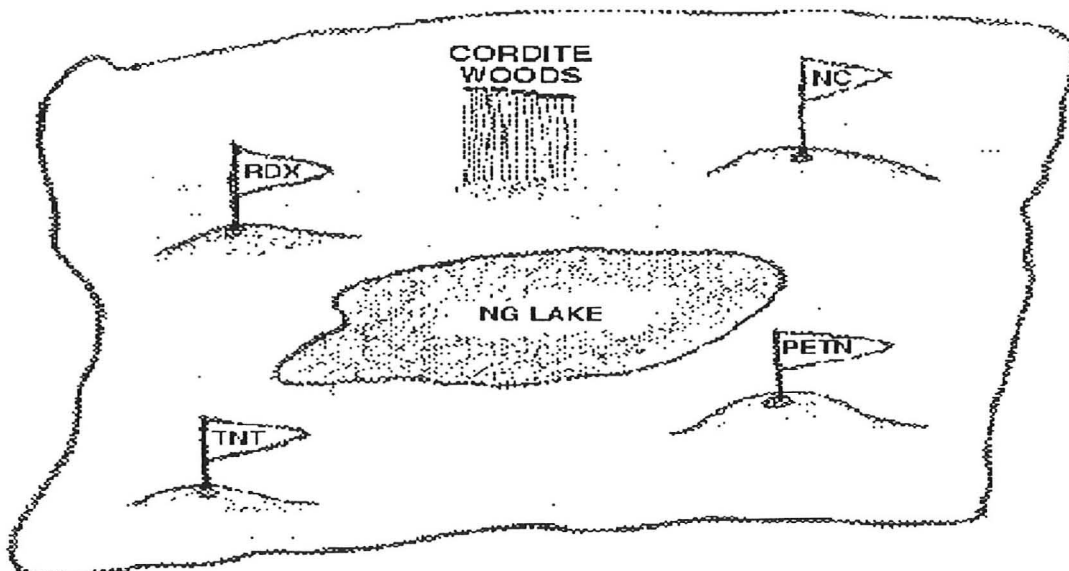
Incidentally, do any of those volunteered for the Oral History Project have any news or up-dates for us?

SOUTH SITE

Here we do have some news, coming to us courtesy of the local Lea Valley Star.

You will re-call in a recent issue the press report by the developers of the South Site concerning their plans for solving contamination problems by building a golf course over it! In a press report titled "Gunpowder 'Plot' Foiled" news is given that the EFDC has just turned down the Lea Valley Development Company's plans despite the company's 'threats' to abandon plans to build houses and a link road from the M25 to Highbridge Street. The decision was, in part, due to the lobbying by the WA Town Council who must be commended (despite using the somewhat inaccurate argument that "*we don't know what are the long term effects of burying gunpowder*"! - still I suppose their hearts in the right place).

CRAZY GOLF COURSE



CERTIFIED SAFE AND FREE FROM ANY TRACES OF GUNPOWDER!

TOUCH

Change of Address..

Just to let you know that, from 15th March this year our new address will be:

12 Sutton Road
Swaffham
Norfolk
PE37 7SN

Please let our friends and colleagues know of this by publishing in Touchpaper. Many Thanks,
Doreen and Ron Darby

SPORTS SPECIAL

Please find enclosed a 'Sports' article. As both Rita and I worked at ERDE I think our son Alan qualifies as a true son of Waltham Abbey. He was even christened in the Abbey by 'Frank the Yank'; many of you will remember that American curate on secondment in 1970. I still keep in touch with Eric Pembridge and have forwarded him a copy of Touchpaper. You never know, you may get an article from the 'Bard of Methyr'.
Ron Rapley

ALAN RAPLEY TO CAPTAIN ATLANTA SQUAD

Buxton's Olympic swimming hope, Alan Rapley, has earned one of sport's top accolades. The 25 year old has been made captain of the British swimming team competing in this summer's Olympic Games in Atlanta.

Alan, who will compete in the 4x100m relay team and perhaps the 50m freestyle, said "I was overwhelmed when the selectors told me. I feel very honoured, to captain my country at the Olympics is just unbelievable.

Alan's duties will be finalised when he soon jets off to a training camp in Florida with the rest of the British team. "I expect it will involve a lot of running about and liaising between the coaches and other swimmers but it's really a case of wait and see"



The team will fly out to Atlanta on July 5 to acclimatise and settle in at the Olympic Village. Before then Alan faces 17 weeks of training and preparation.

"I can't wait for the Games to start" said the City of Sheffield swimmer. "I've first got to come back down to earth after gaining selection and then begin all the hard work"

Congratulations! I'm sure we'll all be watching out for Alan when the Olympics start. Ed.

Coincidence or ?

At almost the same time as Ron Rapley's letter arrived with his mention of the 'Bard of Merthyr' a missive from another reader with an article by the selfsame 'bard'. Is it just coincidence, or are mysterious forces at work? Ed.

I found the enclosed epistle in one of Eric Pembridge's note books after he retired and came across it again recently while turning out some old papers. It is so typical of Eric's sense of humour and may amuse those colleagues who were at ERDE or Woolwich in the early fifties. Very few were amused at the time!

Dick Dedman

Extract from one of Eric Pembridge's notebooks-Jan 67.

Dearly Beloved Brethren

Many years ago, in the days of George the King, did Dr Johnson, who was head of ERDE, decree that scientific staff should keep a book, from which there would be no rubbing out, and into which would be entered all the results obtained by each person, and, as each person filled the book he was to send it to the Library for safe keeping. In this way ensuring that a complete record of work was maintained.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, a true and faithful record did I keep and, when enquiring from the Library about despatching it unto them, they were quite overwhelmed that anyone was still carrying out this practice, let alone wanting to send it to them. Their sum total of record books up until then was NIL. So I did retain the book and begin on Book Two.

Likewise did this remain with me and now, having completed Book Four and as, never once in Fourteen Years has anyone enquired about my books, my zeal has at last deserted me and I do not intend to begin another Book.

I say therefore unto you, the Kingdom of ERDE is like unto a pool of still water into which one occasionally hurls a stone. For a moment, ripples break the surface and then calm once more. I say also unto you that it is easier for a camel to walk down Sun Street in the rush hour than for zealotness and conscientious work to have its reward in ERDE.

In the years that are yet to come, we the faithful, pray that the light will shine in the dark places of ERDE, that generations, yet unborn, who follow us will reap the benefits of us, the early Martyrs.

Amen.

DEADLINE DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE:

Mid August '96

write

fax 01959 516023

or

phone 01959 515632

REUNION 1996

Plans are well advanced for this year's reunion which will, as usual, be held at the Waltham Abbey Town Hall on Friday 18th October from 12 - 4pm.

Following up on comments from previous years we decided to try a different caterer last year and the service seemed to meet with general approval such that we will use the same firm again. However, as indicated last year, they are more expensive and consequently the price to you has to increase to cover both the catering and the hall hire. We try to keep the cost as low as possible for as long as possible but increases are inevitable. **This year the cost will be £6 each.**

Hall hire and catering deposits will have to be paid in the near future so we are asking you to book your places now using the form below.

We will publish a list of those booked in the September issue and although you may continue to book up until about 1 week before the event it will assist us both logistically and financially if you can book as soon as possible.

Please note that there will not be any site visits arranged this year as there have been no developments on either site and consequently nothing much to see. Hopefully, next year will be more fruitful.

PLEASE BOOK AS SOON AS POSSIBLE USING THIS FORM:

.....

WALTHAM ABBEY REUNION 1996

I/We Will/Will not be attending the Reunion this year

Name(s)

(If attending) Remittance Enclosed £.....

PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES PAYABLE TO: N. Paul

RETURN TO: Norman Paul
Bldg All
DRA Fort Halstead
Sevenoaks
TN14 7BP

.....

Cherry tree and mill stone bed formerly on Flagstaff Road, North Site - both now, sadly, removed to make way for housing

