



# FULBOURN VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

"To save Fulbourn's past for the future"

## HAPPY 5th ANNIVERSARY FULBOURN VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

Your Society had a very special festive meeting on December 10th 2004 when they celebrated their 5th anniversary. Held at Fulbourn manor by kind permission of Hon. President, Richard Townley, 70 members were entertained by barber shop quartet 'The Watermen' and fen folk duo 'Big Apple Pie.'

Musical Mayhem at the Manor was a unique blend of humour, pathos and nostalgia with a programme ranging from medieval carols, through traditional songs to a Glen Miller medley. Personally I will always treasure the memory of our Chairman, wearing a fetching claret hat (normally worn by Linda as she zooms around Fulbourn on her bicycle), whilst singing the part of a young lady whose virtue is under threat!

The convivial company was further regaled by mince pies and mulled wine. Candles were then lit on the birthday cake whose initial cut was administered by Norman Osborne, from whom the idea of forming a History Society originated five years ago. It is a great credit to the committee (past and present) as well as the dedicated volunteers who help with the research and facilities offered at the History Hut, that the 150 members of FHVS enjoy a varied programme of talks on history topics - not to mention regular issues of this edifying and informative Newsletter. In return your committee acknowledge and value the members support, since an active and interested membership maintains enthusiasm within the village for the preservation of our local heritage.

Long may it continue!

Glynis Arber (Secretary)



The 5th Anniversary Cake prior to Norman's surgery.

## AUTUMN LECTURES



Just in time for Halloween, Maureen James presented an illustrated talk on "A History of Witchcraft." A brief introduction about the general background to Witchcraft, including its

social context, was followed by a more detailed account of individual cases. These peaked in the mid 17th century, during the investigations of the notorious Witchfinder General, Matthew Hopkins. Contemporary accounts of trials and incidents involving the so called witches in East Anglia were dramatically read aloud, whilst woodcut engravings of the punishments undergone by the unfortunates (mostly poor elderly women) accused of practising witchcraft gave the audience further insight into what must have been a terrifying ordeal.

Our second lecture, in November, concerned events which took place much more recently and in Cambridgeshire itself. Michael Bowyer explained how our county, city and indeed villages were affected by Word War II. It appears that Cambridge had several 'firsts' including the bombing of houses (off East Road with civilian casualties) as well as being the target of first very high altitude bombing from a height of 40,000 ft. Recounting the recollections of contemporaries as well as his own personal anecdotes, Michael vividly evokes stories both humorous and tragic of a 'historic' period which is still within living memory. At the end of the meeting a collection was made for the Air Ambulance Service and £27.24 was raised for this deserving charity

## BECOME MORE INVOLVED !

Now is your opportunity to experience the sense of satisfaction that can only be achieved by becoming more deeply involved in what is one of the most vibrant and active organisations in Fulbourn. The Fulbourn Village History Society is looking for a new Treasurer and a new Vice Chairman to replace those officers who are standing down. If you wish to be considered or would like more information as to what is involved (neither are too time consuming) then please contact either the Chairman or the Secretary as contact details shown on page 4 to discuss the matter. Act now please if you are

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## STOURBRIDGE FAIR

by Glynis Arber



Our first lecture of 2005, by Honor Ridout, was a great success. From a vast knowledge of her subject matter, she dispelled many myths about Stourbridge Fair, replacing them with the even more interesting reality. Indeed, it appears that there was never a River Stour in the Cambridge area, and the name probably originated from a corruption of 'Steers bridge' eventually pronounced and spelt as 'Sturbitch'.

Despite a lack of primary evidence from medieval times, a fascinating description of the Fair could be interpolated from later

periods. Daniel Defoe provided one such account in the early eighteenth century and the Cambridge Chronicles, Corporation and University records were other valuable sources of information. Furthermore, a nineteenth century sketch of the layout of the Fair exists, which also shows facilities for public conveniences that look very much like their modern equivalent the 'portaloo'. The Fair officially began in 1211, when a Charter from the King allowed its proceeds to be given to the leper hospital whose chapel still stands alongside Newmarket Road. By the 16th and 17th centuries Cambridge Corporation held the Charter and the Fair was one of the largest in England, with wholesalers and retailers coming from all parts of the country.

During three weeks in September, wooden structures or 'booths' were used as temporary shops selling a great variety of wares. They were grouped according to the products sold, thus visitors could wander along Cheese Row (perhaps where the name Cheddar Lane came from) and the 'Duddery' - where cloth wholesalers congregated. Moreover, household wares, luxury goods, food timber, animals etc. could all be purchased at Stourbridge Fair, whilst the University was targeted by book-sellers. However, students were discouraged from attending the Fair, due to its reputation for immorality. Certainly there were numerous coffee houses, at least 25 places selling alcohol and several booths staging theatrical shows. The Cambridge Chronicle also records incidents of theft, horse stealing and disorderly conduct.

As communications and transportation of goods improved, especially with the arrival of the railway in the mid-nineteenth century, it becomes evident from local advertisements that shop-keepers no longer needed Stourbridge Fair as an outlet to buy or sell their products. Gradually it declined as a commercial entity, ceasing altogether in 1933. This account above is, of course, just a summary of the basic facts and in no way can indicate the 'human element' which Honor Ridout's amusing anecdotes so well portrayed. Personally, I am still chuckling over the encounter one gentleman had with a lady of negotiable virtue from Barnwell known as the 'Limping Chicken', not to mention the unfortunate woman whose elaborate wig, aptly described as 'head furniture', fell off to reveal a bald skull beneath!

In conclusion, our January meeting proved an extremely pleasant evening which all members present thoroughly enjoyed and will long remember.

## FULBOURN FLORA by Peter Reeves

Wild plants used by our Forebears

### No. 3 DANDELION

There may well be an element of surprise in seeing this particular plant, better currently known as a troublesome lawn weed, listed here as with a place in folklore. Indeed, the Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) - also known locally as Clock or Yellow Gowan - is perhaps full of surprises. The first surprise is that its normal common name is, like the names of several meats subsequent to the Norman invasion (boeuf, mouton, venesoun) described in the French terms as opposed to the normal British name. Whether or not the petals of the Dandelion (Dents de Lion) actually resemble lion's teeth I am happy to remain in ignorance of but do understand the general tooth-like shape.

The Dandelion itself will require little description since, along with the Daisy and Buttercup, is one of the few distinctive plants that virtually everybody will instantly recognise. It is both a common and widespread plant of most grasslands with a long flowering period but not always unwelcome. The leaves, which are rather bitter, are a rich source of minerals (particularly potassium) proteins and vitamins and are highly prized by many grazing animals. Dandelion seeds are a common herb supplement included in grass mixtures for paddocks for racehorses by stud farms nationally. However, the Dandelion is not only for animal consumption. The leaves can be used in salads either blanched (like chicory to which it is similar) or green in which case they are best eaten young. I can remember eating them in salads during World War II myself when normal foods were scarce, with as I recall a little sugar (also in short supply) sprinkled over. The flower heads can be used to make a herbal drink, infused in boiling water. The petals can also be used to make an excellent country wine which, as I can personally testify, it is best to leave to mature for some time. The roots can be used as a coffee substitute when lifted, washed and dried gently to a brittle state in a warm oven. They are then ground, roasted and used as one would ordinary ground coffee. This use is also in common with chicory - remember the Camp Coffee & Chicory Essence which used to be common after the War years and may be still available? The root also contains a white milky fluid which is a form of latex and can be used to make a crude rubber. The possibility of cultivating this for commercial purposes by a country desperately short of rubber during World War II for war purposes was, it seems, considered at the time but not implemented.

The leaves have long been noted for their diuretic properties and are said as a result of this action to be helpful in reducing high blood pressure. The roots are also said to have useful medicinal properties, being effective for detoxification of the body, helping relieve constipation, skin problems and gallstones.

Culpepper was, of course, very familiar with this plant and its diuretic properties, pointing out one of its local common names 'Piss-a-bed'. He goes on to add it was considered useful for curing infections of the urinary tract as well as a useful drink against fever and a lotion for sores. He points out also that it was common for the Dutch and French to eat this plant extensively in the Spring, benefiting their health.

**FROM THE ARCHIVES** - A selection of interesting bits 'n pieces selected by Pat White from the Society's growing archive

### Loss of Old Elm Tree Touches Village's Heart

Generations of courting couples in Fulbourn are mourning the loss of a stately elm known locally as "The Bird Tree". For the elm, which succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease, has had to be axed from the hedgerow in a quiet country lane where it gave benign shelter to hundreds of youngsters who used it as a meeting point.

But despite its role in the marriage game no one was admitting its place as a silent witness to their romantic dreams. They were all being very coy. "Of course I know that tree well and so do hundreds of others but I don't want to be named and I'm not splitting on my friends' said one. And another added: 'I think my wife knew some people who met by that tree but she doesn't want to say'. It was left to Mr Douglas Crane, a former parish clerk who works at the Cambridge University Library, to fill in the background. 'All the older generation know all about that tree because it played a big part in their lives' he said. 'It was a meeting point for hundreds of couples. In the local dialect it was sometimes known as The Bud Tree which I suppose could have something to do with budding love'.

Mr Crane wrote a moving obituary to the tree in the parish magazine and believes that it was probably planted during the enclosure awards in the 19thc. But its association with village history doesn't end there. It stood in a hedgerow on the Babraham side of the village near Doggett Lane where it was an important feature of a 260-acre farm run by the Chaplin family, who have been in business there for nearly 200 years. 'It is sadly missed from our farm' commented Mr Adrian Chaplin. 'We had no choice but we are certainly hoping to replace the tree with another, although whether it will be an elm I can't say. Perhaps we can get a resistant one, if not we might put in a beech. One thing is certain. We can't have a Bird Tree field without a bird tree to go with it.'

The parish council chairman, Mr Bill Hames, has to admit that he was unaware of the tree's significance until he saw the magazine piece. 'I'm a newcomer. I've only been here 28 years' he said 'But we are trying to plant saplings at a rate of around 50 a year. At this rate we are just keeping on top of the losses and adding a bit extra as well. News of the loss will probably be discussed at the next parish council meeting, though nothing can be done about it now. The tree had to go because it got into a dangerous condition.'

So several generations of courting couples will miss out on what was a favourite rendezvous. But there is hope that a new bird tree will eventually preside over future love affairs with the same gentle indulgence displayed by its predecessor in local folk lore.

**OVERSEER** Settlement Papers.

Removal Orders from St Clement's Cambridge: Removal out of the parish, Alice Hollick, being with child, to Fulbourn on 2 August 1809.

Apprenticeship: Thomas Buttriss, apprentice to John Kefford of Fulbourn, cordwainer on 15 June 1779.

**FULBOURN CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL**

A NEW ORGAN having been purchased for the use of the Church and Congregation assembling in the above Place of Worship, it is intended to celebrate the event on TUESDAY EVENING NEXT, March 30<sup>th</sup> 1875 when several anthems will

be sung by the Choir, including friends from Cambridge and the neighbourhood. Service to commence at Seven o'clock. *NB - a Collection will be made at the close of the Service to defray the incidental expenses occasioned by the erection of the Organ.*

## LOCAL STUDIES

Cambridgeshire History on the Net

On the Library Service web pages there is a collection of images and text which reflect Cambridgeshire as it was at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each entry provides information about a town or village and a selection of photographs taken from the extensive collections held in the Cambridge, Huntingdon and Wisbech Libraries. Take a look for yourself; log on to [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/library/history/home1.html](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/library/history/home1.html).

Image Websites.

The following websites contain a wonderful selection of illustrations and photographs. They provide vivid images of ordinary folk, local communities and daily activities. Most can be printed off for private use but high quality prints have to be purchased.

[www.francisfrith.com](http://www.francisfrith.com) A commercial site. Clear images from 1860-1970 of British towns and villages. Also has a keyword index.

[www.imagesofengland.org.uk](http://www.imagesofengland.org.uk) Hosted by the National Monuments Record, this is a library of photographs of England's 370,000 listed buildings

[www.commanet.org](http://www.commanet.org) A community archive displaying illustrations from more than 20 local authorities.

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/viewfinder](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/viewfinder). Images of England's industrial heritage.

[www.transportarchive.org.uk](http://www.transportarchive.org.uk) Images of railways, aviation & canals for the entire country.

<http://collections.iwm.org.uk> The Photographic Archive of the Imperial War Museum has more than 6 million images covering both world wars and also the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> c.

### VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY

The Victoria County History was begun in 1899 and aims, eventually, to record the history of every city, town and village in England. The recent publication of Volume 10 completed the coverage of Cambridgeshire. Volume 10 (Cheveley, Flendish, Staine & Staploe Hundreds) together with Volume 4 (City of Ely, Ely, Witchford and Wisbech Hundreds) and Volume 9 (Chesterton, Northstowe & Papworth Hundreds) are now available on the Internet on the British History Online website ([www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk))

### WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

The BBC's recent popular series on family history has given a boost to family history research. The BBC's new website is a rich resource designed to help you explore your family's past. There is lots of information on how to get the most out of family history archives. Log on to [bbc.co.uk/family](http://bbc.co.uk/family) history and see what the site can do for you.

See next issue for 'top ten tips' for researching family history.