



# FULBOURN VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY

*"To save Fulbourn's past for the future"*

**NEWSLETTER NO. 51 Spring 2020**

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## **POSTPONEMENT OF FULBOURN VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY 20th AGM.**

Owing to the coronavirus epidemic and closure of The Fulbourn Centre, the **20th AGM** due to be held on 16th April will be **postponed and now re-arranged provisionally for 17th September 2020**. Many apologies.

You will receive notification of the A.G.M. together with a Committee nomination form in August 2020. Please do consider putting your name forward - the tasks are not onerous and are shared between us - and now you have the whole summer to give it some thought! They include: Chairing Committee Meetings [Chair]; Taking Minutes and arranging Agenda with Chair [Secretary]; Finances - keeping accounts to submit to committees, banking and reimbursing speakers [Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer]; Archives and Research - recording acquisitions, maintaining easily accessible records, keeping a register of visitors, helping with research queries [Archivist and Assistant Archivist], entering accessions onto a data-base [I.T.]. Responding to email enquiries [at present, the Chair or Secretary does this].

Other responsibilities are concerned with co-ordinating the Talks Programme: contacting, booking and following up individual speakers; ensuring publicity of programme; summarising of talks for inclusion in The Mill. Publicity is an important feature of F.V.H.S. and is covered by our Newsletter, notice board, posters of Talks (creation and distribution) as well as notifying The Conduit of our annual programme and keeping the web-site up to date\* [Webmaster]. Members are reminded of meetings by email or hand delivery - and The Fulbourn Centre supplied with the dates and times of when we require a room.

We also organise fund-raising events eg Christmas Party, Coffee Mornings and tours. Of course, you do not have to be on the Committee to help in this respect!!

\* John Timperio our wonderful web-master, owing to work commitments would like some assistance with updating the website. It just consists of entering details of the new Talks programme on the Upcoming Events page and the names of Officers on the About Us page once a year, after the A.G.M. The Newsletter only needs to be added twice a year. **REMOTE TRAINING WILL BE GIVEN!** (and an Idiot's Guide prepared). This is a chance to learn new skills! Interested? Contact me on C.570887 or (preferably) by email [glynisarber48@gmail.com](mailto:glynisarber48@gmail.com)

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## **COPY OF EMAIL SENT BY CHAIR OF FULBOURN VILLAGE HISTORY SOCIETY IN SUPPORT OF A PLAQUE TO BE ERECTED AT FORMER FULBOURN MENTAL HOSPITAL**

'On behalf of Fulbourn Village History Society, I wish to support Joanna Hudson's project of erecting at the former Fulbourn Mental Hospital, a commemorative plaque to George Brewster. As you are no doubt aware, in 1875 he died aged eleven, of suffocation whilst sweeping the flues of what was then known as the County Pauper Lunatic Asylum for Cambridgeshire, the Isle of Ely and Borough of Cambridge.

Negative publicity for the tragedy and the subsequent involvement of the Earl of Shaftsbury which lead to the Chimney Sweepers Act of 1875 seven months later, ultimately stopped the

practice of sending children up chimneys. The death of George Brewster was therefore a local event that had national consequences. Fulbourn Village History Society aim to encourage research into and an understanding of local history, especially that of Fulbourn, Cambs. A memorial to George Brewster who died within the boundaries of Fulbourn parish would be a significant contribution towards the understanding of our heritage.'

*The management company of Capitol park have now agreed to having the plaque on a plinth in the grounds of the former hospital.*

## THE POOR IN 19C FULBOURN PART II by Glynis Arber

I became quite fascinated with the story of Sarah and Ann Littlechild (Newsletter 50) - so much so that I have done some independent research on the subject of how the poor were treated in Fulbourn during the 19C.

This is a somewhat general account of my findings using 'The English Poor Law 1780-1930' by Michael E Rose (David & Charles 1971) as a reference book for background material as well as an excellent BBC Radio 4 programme 'In Our Time: The Poor Laws'. Also of great help were the websites [workhouses.org.uk](http://workhouses.org.uk) and [capturingcambridge.org](http://capturingcambridge.org)

### A very brief look at the historical

**background:** since Elizabeth I, poor relief for people not in paid work and without the means of supporting themselves was the responsibility of individual parishes through a levy on the parish rates paid by those who had significant property within the parish. Each parish decided its own allocation and who was entitled to relief but this was only provided to those who were settled within the parish ie. not 'visitors' or strangers - unless there was a reciprocal arrangement with other parishes. By the 18C the population of England had increased, more people moved around and there was significant inflation during the 1790's. All this had the effect of raising the cost of poor relief and a new system was required.

In 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act joined neighbouring parishes into a Union overseen

by an elected (unpaid) Board of Guardians. They appointed salaried officers eg the Relieving Officer and Workhouse Master, settled relief applications, supervised the Workhouse and expenditure, though not collection, of the Poor Rate. Chesterton Poor Law Union was formed on 2nd April 1836 with 37 constituent parishes including Fulbourn.

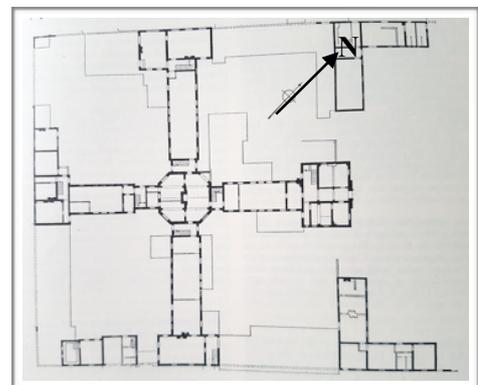
Within a Union, parishes continued to levy their own rates to meet the cost of their own paupers. It was up to each Union to decide if they built a workhouse to house the poor or used existing buildings. Chesterton Union's workhouse was built in 1836-8 on the west side of Union Road in Chesterton, to the north of Cambridge on land purchased in 1836.

Designed by local architect John Smith, it was based on the popular cruciform or "square plan" and built at a cost of £5,716 (worth approximately £387,552.23 in 2017 according to the National Archives currency converter).

It was a built of grey brick with three storeys and four wings, extending from a central octagon. This contained the master's lodging on the upper floor above a brick vaulted kitchen. The SE range had able bodied women's accommodation and in the NW range opposite, able bodied men. Girls were housed in the NE range and boys in the SW. Each had their own schoolroom on the ground floor. By the mid 19C Chesterton workhouse had around 160 inmates. The old buildings were finally demolished c.2003.



**Left: Chesterton entrance block from the E in 2001 (photo Peter Higginbottom). The original entrance contained a porter's lodge and bedroom on the ground floor with the Guardian's Board Room and Committee Room above.**



**Above: Cruciform Plan of Chesterton Workhouse.**

Here some confusion arises. At least from 1775 Fulbourn already had its own Almshouses which were, it may be assumed, set aside for the poor of the parish. It would appear that these functioned separately from the Union workhouse. The 1851 census reveals that of a total of 37 individuals living in the almshouses, 23 were in receipt of parish relief and the others were either children or their elder siblings who were engaged in paid work but still lived with the family. (There were only 22 occupants in 1861 - and no information as to whether they were on parish relief).

Apparently, a distinction was made between outdoor relief and indoor relief. The former could take the form of a grant or even a loan paid partly in cash and partly by a 'ticket'. This ticket allowed the recipient to be provided with a ration of bread/flour collected by them from a central distribution point. It could involve long journeys away from the villages but the Chesterton Union seems to have tried to mitigate such a situation as The Cambridge Chronicle takes them to task in November 1836 for using parish churches as distribution points and perhaps by implication, thereby making the life of the feckless undeserving poor easier.

This attitude by the newspaper was also in keeping with the intention of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act ie to make the conditions experienced by those receiving indoor relief within the workhouses rather than at 'home' very uncomfortable. Aimed at the able bodied

poor, those admitted to the workhouse would be given work to do - including hard labour. There was also a strict punishment regime for transgressions of the many rules.

It was argued that fear of being sent to the workhouse would make agricultural labourers (and indeed other sections of the poor) less improvident. Ultimately, as the parish poor rate fell, farmers could then afford to pay higher wages for labour as they would be reluctant to lose their workers to the Workhouse. In practice, the poor rate went down but wages did not rise. Michael Rose calculates that only 10% to 20% of paupers in the mid nineteenth century were actually sent to the Workhouse. It was also more expensive than providing outdoor relief, as the the parish rate payers would have to bear the full cost of maintaining a pauper and his/her family within the Workhouse.

Moreover, outdoor relief allowed small earnings to be made by the poor which might also be augmented by local charities such as **Roger Carraway's Charity** that, amongst others, operated in Fulbourn. Some of the mid 19C Accounts for this Charity still exist. Infact, rural landowners had a financial incentive to keep families within the village as they were required to help with the harvest. However, this was seasonal work and farmers did not want to pay them throughout the whole year. Providing small amounts of outdoor relief, to tide them over the winter was thus cost effective.

**The Poor in 19C Fulbourn Part III will be continued in our next Newsletter.**

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## CAMBRIDGESHIRE ARCHIVES UPDATE

The Dock, Ely CB7 4GS Tel: 01223 699399 Email: [cambs.archives@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:cambs.archives@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)  
[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-culture/archives](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/libraries-leisure-culture/archives)

Following its transfer from Shire Hall, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire Archives opened at its new location in Ely on 10 December 2019. From 2 January 2020 it recommenced accepting documents. However, please note they are closed on Monday and Friday, open Tuesday and Thursday 9.30 - 17.00 (no document production 12.45 - 14.00) and also on Wednesday 9.30 - 17.00 (no document production 11.45 - 14.00). They are closed on the 1st, 2nd and 4th Saturday in the month but open (by appointment only, bookings to be received by 12.00 pm on Thursday) on the third Saturday of the month from 10.00 - 16.00. Closed all day Sunday. **[Corvid-19 may have affected opening hours].**

## HIDDEN HISTORIES OF ARTEFACTS HELD IN OUR STORE:

Remember these..... by Glynis Arber



### PORTABLE MANUAL TYPEWRITER

Definition from [britannica.com](http://britannica.com)

‘any of various machines for writing characters similar to those made by printers’ types, especially a machine in which the characters are produced by steel types striking the paper through an inked ribbon with the types being actuated by corresponding keys on a keyboard and the paper being held by a platen that is automatically moved along with a carriage when a key is struck.’ Various machines were invented during the 19C but until the technology improved by around the 1870’s they were much slower than handwriting.

FVHS’s machine still works! It was manufactured by the BRITISH OLIVER TYPEWRITING COMPANY and has the typical green olive colour of the Oliver machines.

### HISTORY

The *Oliver Typewriter Co.* originally was headquartered in Chicago, Illinois. Between 1895 and 1928 more than one million machines were produced for a market targeted at home use.

Competitive pressure and financial troubles resulted in the company’s liquidation in 1928. A group of investors purchased the Company’s assets and formed the *British Oliver Typewriting Company* based in Croydon, England. They manufactured and licensed the machines until

.....well, I certainly do! The first machine on which I learnt to touch type was a manual typewriter. I can still fondly recall the sound of the bell signalling the end of a line just before you had to move the carriage return lever enabling the paper to advance and the next line be typed. In my opinion, the electric powered typewriters and now computers, which replaced manual machines, do not provide the same tactile and auditory satisfaction!

Similarly, my first ‘joined up’ writing exercises used pens with steel nibs that needed to be dipped into an inkwell - initially a messy (and consequently, quite enjoyable) process for a seven year old. I was also promoted to Inkwell Filler Monitor - power at last!

Whilst researching the nibs in F.V.H.S.’s collection I discovered that each one was engraved with the name of its manufacturer. This provided a fascinating insight into Britain’s (or more accurately, England’s) manufacturing sector. Did you know that by the 1850’s Birmingham produced half the worlds steel pen nibs? Over time many of the original firms amalgamated, diversified and in most cases, disappeared following competition from new technology in the form of the biro and fountain pen. A scenario that has been repeated with much of the U.K.’s traditional manufactured goods.

Editor.

their closure in the late 1950’s. The last Oliver typewriter was made in 1959.

### METHOD OF USE

The Oliver Typewriter was the first effective ‘visible print’ typewriter allowing the full page of text to be visible whilst it was being printed. It has a ‘strike down’ design meaning the type bars strike the platen (or roller) from above. The type bars are bent to form an inverted U shape and rest on ‘towers’ on the sides of the typewriter. These grew progressively larger and, as more keys were added, limited the design of the machine to a three row QWERTY keyboard and precluded the addition of a fourth keyboard row dedicated to numbers. The QWERTY keyboard came to be called the "Universal" keyboard, as alternative keyboard designs fought a losing battle against the QWERTY momentum.

However, portable machines produced as Types 1-5 by the British Oliver Company had four row keyboards. The one in our collection probably dates from the early 1950’s. Its original Instructions are also in the carrying case.



## STEEL DIP PEN NIBS

Dip pen is a writing tool consisting of two parts: a metal point - “nib”, and a handle that holds the nib. Formerly made of copper and bronze today this is made of steel. Dip pen is used for writing and drawing but it does not have its own reservoir for ink being dipped into an ink bottle or inkwell so it could then be used.

### METHOD OF USE

It has a slit that leads the ink from a vent hole to the paper and works by a combination of gravity and capillary action. Handles can be made of plastic, metal, glass and even bone. Nibs are made in different shapes to suit different needs but they mainly are made in two styles: broad nibs and pointed nibs. **Broad** nib, also called broad-edge or chisel-edge, appeared first of the two. It is a stiffer nib with a flat, wider “point”. When writing, the user changes the direction of the stroke resulting in thin or thick lines. The **Pointed** nib has a sharp point but it also can give thin and thick strokes. Thick strokes are achieved with stronger pressure on down strokes which spreads the “tines” of the nib and leaves more ink on the surface. With less pressure the tines don’t spread and the nib writes a thin line. Except for writing, pointed nibs are used by artists and drafters for sketching, mapping and technical drawing.

### HISTORY

In 1822, John Mitchell started to make the first mass-produced steel metal pen nib. Other manufacturers followed as the advantage of these nibs became evident. They were cheap, lasted longer than quills and did not need to be sharpened. It may well be argued that this helped the development of literacy, especially for those of the poor who had access to education.

By the 1850s, Birmingham was a world centre for steel pen and steel nib manufacture. Thousands of skilled craftsmen and women were employed in the industry. Women made 18,000 pens a day, under strict rules they had to follow such as no talking, no singing, no wasting the metal. Men were the tool makers and looked after the furnaces but most of the production staff were women. In the late 19th century children also were employed at early ages around 10 -12 years old.

(SOME) MANUFACTURERS OF STEEL PEN NIBS IN F.V.H.S.’S COLLECTION

We have examples of nibs from the manufacturing companies of both **John**

**Mitchell** and his brother, **William. William**

**Mitchell** established his own business in 1825 and almost 100 years later merged with Hinks, Wells and Co to form British Pens which employed 1000 people in the Bearwood Road area of Birmingham.

During the 1960’s

**British Pens** acquired

the pen business of Perry & Co and John Mitchell which reunited the original firm of the two brothers. In 1969 they also amalgamated with the nib manufacturing company of **Joseph Gillott** - whose founder had been the Mitchell’s brother in law (there are two nibs in our collection incised with his name, one of which is in photo below). The Gillott pens are still sold, being ideal for drawing, mapping, comic book illustration and small copperplate writing. In 1982 British Pens were purchased by the owner of William Mitchell and subsequently re-named William Mitchell (Calligraphy) Ltd.  
*[At which point in my research I started to lose the plot!!]*



**R.Esterbrook  
Blackstone Pen  
284**

The pen nib in our collection (below) was inscribed GEO W HUGHES MILLION PEN BIRMINGHAM ENGLAND 304.



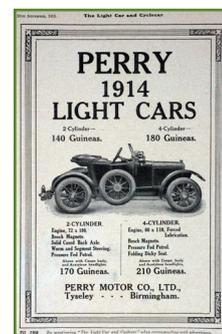
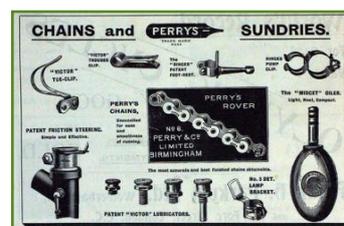
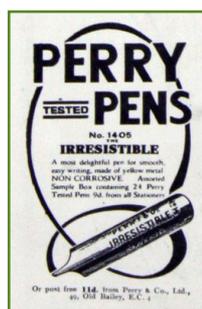
**George Hughes** set up business in 1840, his knowledge of metallurgy being instrumental in the company's production of very high quality pens. Now derelict, the brick and terracotta factory was built in 1893. The company closed down in 1960.

An especially entrepreneurial manufacturer was **Richard Esterbrook** - F.V.H.S. have two of his firm's nibs. Originally a maker of quill pens in Cornwall, he then worked in the stationery trade at Birmingham and learnt about the mechanical process invented by Mitchell for making steel pen nibs. Realising there were no steel pen manufacturers at that time in the U.S.A. Esterbrook recruited five craftsmen who worked for John Mitchell and by 1858 set up business in Camden, New Jersey. *[For once, 19C British technology exported to the U.S.A - and not imported from there!]*

Esterbrook died in 1895. A year later the company set up a branch in Birmingham, England and in 1947 bought out John Mitchell. Some time later, the firm ceased production of dipped pen nibs although it continued as the Venus Pencil Co which had a modern factory in Kings Lynn until 1972 when all Esterbrook operations ceased a year after Berol had taken over.

The largest number of nibs the Society has is 12, not including duplicates, from one manufacture are those produced by Perry & Co. This firm's history is complex - and perhaps a condensed timeline can best provide an example of the way a company changed and evolved in order to survive.

**1824** firm founded in Manchester as James Perry & Co. Moved to London selling stationery supplies. **1876** public company of Perry & Co registered, merging the Birmingham businesses of Josiah Mason and A. Sommerville & Co (manufacturers of pens), Wiley & Son (manufacturer of pencil cases, solitaires & studs) with James Perry & Co (manufacturers and merchants of London - including the manufacture of cycle chains and accessories. **1876** Acquired its Birmingham base at Lancaster Street Works. **Late 1890's** financial problems - helped by James William Bayliss part owner of Bayliss-Thomas car making company. **1897** Perry & Co Ltd registered after company reconstructed. **1912** Perry car designed and Perry Motor Co. formed. **1914** had 2,000 employees. Specialities included steel pens, pen holders, cycle chains, free wheels, hubs, bells and cycle accessories, gold pens, solitaires, studs, sleeve links, stationers', tobacconists' and drapers sundries. **1926** Acquired Bayliss, Wiley & Co. **1945** the company transferred its chain making and cycle coaster hub business to a subsidiary, Perry Chain Co Ltd. The pen business was continued by Perry & Co (Pens) Ltd. while Perry & Co (Holdings) became the main parent company with financial control of the whole Perry Group.



**PERRY & CO'S  
IRRISISTABLE No 1405**

Useful websites: [historyofpencils.com](http://historyofpencils.com)

[Grace'sguide.co.uk](http://Grace'sguide.co.uk)

Google Search relating to the name of the manufacturer