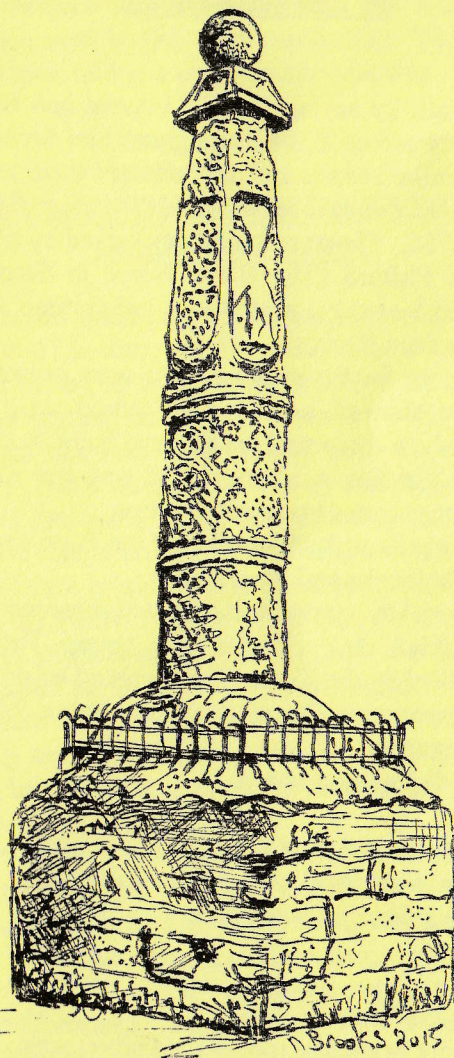


BMB

# Stapleford and District Local History Society



**Newsletter No 38 – Spring 2015**

**£1.00**

**Free to Members**



## MEETING REPORTS

12 November 2014

### MURDER, MISFORTUNE AND MYSTERY

by Peter Hammond

Peter introduced this talk by saying that his interest had been aroused by a coroner's report he came across in the Nottinghamshire Archives. He went on to investigate all the similar reports and has collected them together. We were to be favoured with a selection and he started his list of quirky stories.

The first was from 1756. Thomas Squire was kicked by a horse and died at the house of Stephen Pickard (The Black Horse in Stoney Street). The coroner's verdict (aided by twelve jurors) was 'misfortune'. We were shown the original documents from the case.

This became the pattern for the evening. We were presented with original documents and Peter showed us how we could use these to extract information, not only about the actual participants but also about the nature of life in those days. He did this in a very skilful way and was obviously very knowledgeable, encouraging audience participation.

He also included accounts of the Overseers of the Poor, extracts from Burial Registers, Coroners' Daybooks and Broadsheets.

The stories were very wide ranging and included someone killed by a falling gate, mothers who killed their children and young Thomas Bramley of Stapleford who was killed by the Times (Nottingham/Derby) stage coach.

Peter gave us an interesting list of the main causes of death that were recorded on these documents:

- 1 'Visitation of God' – natural causes
- 2 Lunacy
- 3 Accidents with horses and carts
- 4 Children and infants involved with fires or scalding
- 5 Children given overdoses of laudanum
- 6 Concealed births
- 7 Poisons
- 8 Drowned in the river Trent
- 9 Suffocation – badly ventilated rooms and carbon monoxide in wells or caves
- 10 Fights
- 11 Suicide – had to be buried in unconsecrated ground
- 12 Over eating or over drinking – often the result of bets

Peter's final story was about Judge Sir Charles James Watkin Williams, who died taking what *The Times* called 'post-prandial' exercise while on assize in Nottingham on 17 July 1884. The woman in question was a Nellie Banks and the broadsheet headline was 'Judge died in a brothel'.

This was a brilliant talk. The original documents were engrossing. Peter's knowledge of his subject was extensive and his sense of humour and insistence on audience participation were captivating. The evening was full of interesting facts and tales told in a very professional way.

John Shaw

14 January 2015

### A TASTE OF TUDOR ILKESTON

by Stephen Flinders

Stephen's talk was based around the 1598 Henry Fletcher map of Ilkeston and he began by saying that Ilkeston was very lucky to have such an early map. He told us how he had traced it, then photographed it, about fifteen years ago. Finding this map had inspired his further research.

The first part of the talk was about various other ways Stephen had found out about Ilkeston in Tudor times. One was an archaeological dig (this is the subject of another of Stephen's talks). He said they had found a Tudor barn and manor house. He then searched all around Ilkeston to see if he could find any houses that had Tudor origins. He showed us some pictures of these.

He also searched the Parish Register of St Mary's Church, local wills and inventories, a 'Survey of Ilkeston', written in 1608, and the Manor Court rolls. He showed us examples of these, and for each he gave interesting facts and stories. These included some very personal details of Tudor life, often naming actual people, adding that a lot of these names still exist in Ilkeston today.

He ended the first half by talking about the local gallows which stood near to the Gallows Inn, which still exists today.

In the second part Stephen talked about the map. He took us all round the Ilkeston of Tudor times. The map was detailed and surprisingly accurate. Most of the places could still be found. He explained how he had spent some considerable time finding and photographing them. One example of this is that in the district of Cotmanhay the map shows only one farm (belonging to a Mr Skevington). In Cotmanhay today there is a Skeavington Lane. He also found and photographed evidence of the course of the river Erewash shown in the 1598 map.

He finished the talk with pictures of a 3d model he had made of the map. There was a copy of the map on a table at the front of the hall and members of the audience showed a lot of interest in this.



As usual with Stephen's talks, one of the main ingredients was his infectious enthusiasm. This was backed up by a tremendous amount of detailed and interesting information, mainly collected through his own research. This talk was impressive, informative and entertaining.

John Shaw

11 February 2015

**THE FRIARGATE LINE, DERBY**  
**by Keith Blood**

Keith told us that his interest in the Friargate Line had started fifteen years ago when he trained to be a Blue Badge Tourist Guide for Derby.

His talk was largely based on a book by Mark Higginson ('Friargate Line' – available, but very expensive) and would be in two parts: firstly a photographic trip along the part of the Great Northern Railway from Awsworth to Etwal, passing quickly through Friargate Station and, secondly, a more detailed look at the station itself.

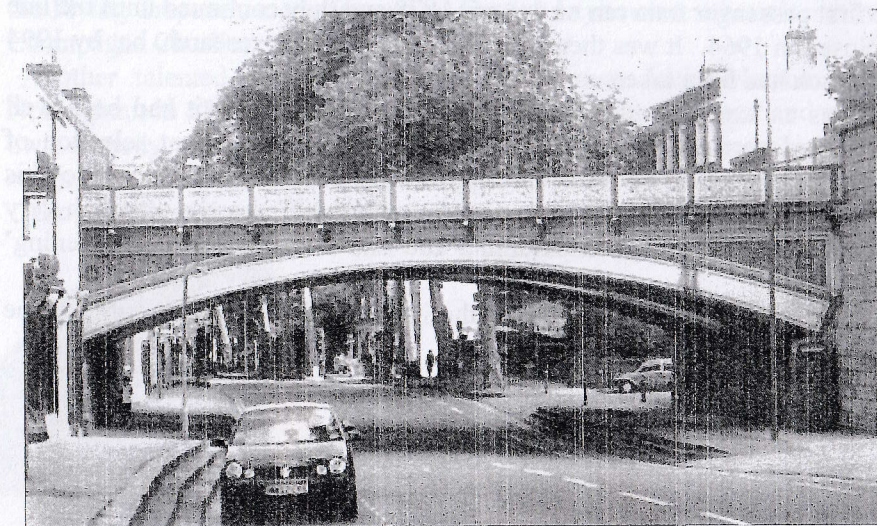
This part of the Great Northern Railway stretched from Nottingham to Egginton Junction and its aim was to transport Nottinghamshire/Derbyshire coal, Burton beer and Stoke pottery into London. In 1836 there were three railway companies linking into Derby, and George Stephenson combined them into the Midland Railway Company. The line from Nottingham to Derby was opened in 1872.

We were then taken on a pictorial trip from Bennerley Viaduct to Mickleover. Peter had a series of really clear photographs which he explained very well. They included the Morley and Mickleover tunnels and stations that have now disappeared.

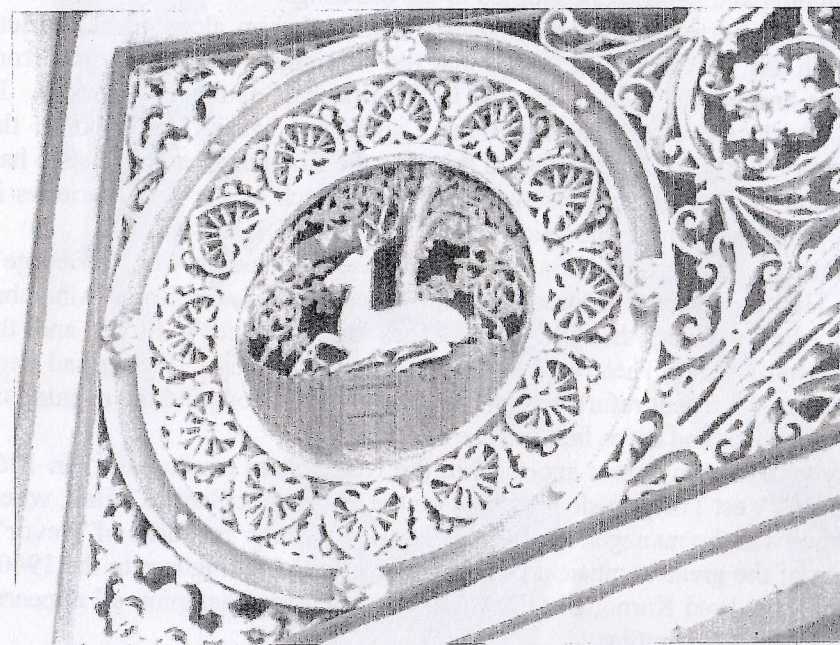
For the second part of his talk Keith concentrated on the Friargate Station. He showed us the original plan of a very impressive and elaborate station. Unfortunately, the money ran out and a more modest station was built. The proud owners of the grand Georgian houses on Friargate did not want a station near their homes. They were over-ruled but were promised an elaborate, grand bridge.

The next series of photographs showed the past and present state of the station. Its present state he referred to as 'a splendid nature reserve'. Included were pictures of the handsome Friargate Bridge, with local roads and buildings.

Although the line was mainly used as a goods line, it also carried passengers and became known as the 'Holiday Line' as it took many Rolls Royce workers on their way to the East Coast during their annual holidays.



Friargate Bridge, Derby



Detail from Friargate Bridge, Derby



The first passenger train ran on 1 April 1878 and they continued until the line was closed in 1964. It was then used for a few years for research, but by 1994 all the track had been taken up.

This was an excellent talk for four main reasons. Firstly, it had been well planned and was easy to follow. Keith provided an excellent selection of pictures accompanied by clear descriptions. He was very conscious of his audience and often asked, "Are you happy with that?" Lastly, although very knowledgeable, Keith was unassuming and had a charming 'easy listening' manner.

As usual for a railway related talk, the hall was full and I am sure no-one went away disappointed.

John Shaw

11 March 2015

### MUSIC HALL AND ME

by Trevor Lee

With his guitar and a variety of hats, Trevor entertained us to an evening of 'musical delights' as he talked about the history of the music hall. Feet were soon tapping and the audience joined in the old songs.

Trevor was born into a musical family who took him along to the variety theatre in the 1950s. He explained that the first music halls developed from the 'free and easies' held in taverns in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1852, Charles Morton established the Canterbury Music Hall next to the Canterbury Tavern in Lambeth, and this was the first purpose-built music hall in London. Other larger halls were built later, such as the City Varieties in Leeds, which hosted the television series 'The Good Old Days'.

In Nottingham, various halls were established, including the St George's Music Hall on Parliament Street, which opened in 1854, the Royal Alhambra on St Mary's Gate, the Old Malt Cross on St James's Street and the Nottingham Empire Theatre of Varieties, opened in 1898. Trevor had been involved in the recent refurbishment of the Old Malt Cross and the opening up of the basement and caves beneath the building.

Many well known names appeared in the Nottingham music halls. In 1868 the famous Vest Tilley made her debut on the stage of St George's Hall, where her father was the manager. George Robey, a particular favourite of Trevor's, and one of the greatest musical performers, came to Nottingham in the 1940s. Marie Lloyd, Fred Karno, Charlie Chaplin and Harry Champion all appeared at the Nottingham Empire.

Many of the songs were based on true stories such as Charles Coborn's 'The Man Who Broke the Bank at Monte Carlo', and 'The Daring Young Man on

the Flying Trapeze', made famous by George Leybourne, otherwise known as Champagne Charlie.

Another talented performer and songwriter was Billy Merson, born in Nottingham in 1879. He was a gifted acrobat and contortionist and wrote his own comedy songs and films. Trevor chose one of his most well known songs, 'The Spaniard That Blighted My Life', to finish off his talk.

Altogether a very entertaining evening.

Margaret Watt





## 20<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 8 APRIL 2015

### CHAIRMAN AND SECRETARY'S REPORT

At the end of a busy year it is my pleasure to give a positive annual report on the Society's activities. Monthly meetings have been well attended and the programme has provided something of interest for everyone, with a strong emphasis on aspects of the local history of the Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire area.

Additionally, with the centenary of the outbreak of World War One, the Society's display *Stapleford's Fallen Remembered*, in St Helen's Church's Memorial Chapel every Saturday morning from July to November 2014, attracted significant numbers of visitors and many appreciative comments. The major research undertaken by Malcolm Jarvis into all the names on the memorial was supplemented by Nigel Brooks's reports and photographs telling the stories of individual men, from the local press of the time. These are being recorded in our forthcoming newsletters.

The Society's full colour book 'Stapleford Past and Present', showing then and now photographs of each site, compiled from Nigel's comprehensive photographic record, with informative captions, was launched in May 2014. It has proved so popular that we have only about thirty copies left.

We have held three Committee Meetings during the year when reports are made on our various activities. Nigel reported that it was becoming increasingly difficult to find speakers for our meetings and suggested that, in common with many other groups, there should be no meetings in January, when the weather is often bad, and in August, when many people are away on holiday. After some discussion the Committee approved this change which will operate from the start of 2016.

The Archives Group (EB, NB, CR and BB) meets regularly to continue work on sorting and labelling the large amount of interesting material we have acquired.

The Society has mounted displays at Stapleford Carnival and Erewash Museum's Heritage Open Day. Barbara Brooke and Eileen Bloor have led two guided walks round the 'Town Trail'. NB gave a slide show at The Old Cross pub and he and Eileen Bloor have led two power point presentations, sharing memories with old people's groups. BB has given three talks on the history of Stapleford to a group at Long Eaton and one in Chilwell, as well as her annual presentation at George Spencer Academy.

The last of the thirty four plaques installed by the Southern Broxtowe Blue Plaques group was unveiled at Beeston station in October, and members are now working on the creation of an illustrated, printed guide (to be followed later by an online version), which will cover the various sites in Attenborough, Beeston, Bramcote, Chilwell, Stapleford and Toton. Members from Beeston & District Civic Society, Beeston & District Local History Society, Bramcote Conservation Group and our own Society are looking forward to completion of this mammoth, but very worthwhile, project which has been ongoing for well over five years. The route to be followed in the guide is based on a local map and gives the initial spot to our own Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren.

Now it is my opportunity to thank members for their help and co-operation in the smooth running of our Society, and especially to all Committee members for their additional assistance throughout the year. As well as Malcolm's WW1 research work, he is also newsletter editor, overseeing contributions from many members. Pat Hodgkiss, our Treasurer and Membership Secretary, is ably assisted by husband John. Nigel, as Programme Secretary, organises our speakers and is responsible for publicity. Pat Kelly is our librarian, helped by Dorothy Prentice, and Eileen runs the sales stall. Our thanks go to all the members who write meeting reports and articles for the newsletter, to Lillian and Tony Britton who serve refreshments, and to Robert Butler who arranges for our accounts to be audited by C J Lucking & Company.

May I take this opportunity to remind you that, thanks to John Shaw, the Society has its own website, giving basic information about us, the books we have published and details of our programme. Only this week he received orders for two 'Stapleford Past and Present' books from Australia. The website address is [www.staplefordlocalhistory.co.uk](http://www.staplefordlocalhistory.co.uk) Have a look for yourself.

So, thank you to everyone who helps in any way to make our Society the warm, friendly group it is. Can you persuade friends and neighbours to come along to a meeting and give us a try? We have space for some new members! Thank you for your friendship and I look forward to another successful year ahead.

Finally, I have to advise you that Meg Oliver, who has been a committee member since 2004, has resigned, due to her impending move out of the area and we all extend our thanks for her contribution and very best wishes for the future.

Broxtowe Borough Council, which owns all the buildings near to the Maycliffe Hall, is considering redeveloping the whole site, so we may have to find a new venue for meetings. With this in mind, committee members will



soon visit the former Wesley Place Chapel building which is available for hire on Monday evenings..

Barbara Brooke  
Chairman and Secretary

### REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

You will see from your copy of the Accounts that the bank balance on 31 December 2014 stood at £4,805.76, a deficit on the year of £666.50.

This was made up as follows:

Two charity donations of £100 each were made, one to the British Heart Foundation, in memory of Audrey Choulerton, and the other to the Royal British Legion, as a centenary gift alongside our World War One display *Stapleford's Fallen Remembered*.

£144.00 rental for the hire of the hall was outstanding from 2013, for which we had received no invoice at the correct time. £195.10 was outstanding on unsold copies of 'Stapleford Past and Present', and £127.40 was incurred on general expenses.

Thanks go to Robert Butler for auditing the accounts, and to committee members for their continued support.

We had 54 paid up members in 2014 and the average membership attendance at monthly meetings was 28. At the moment we only have 40 members and we should all encourage others to come along to a meeting to see what we are all about.

Pat Hodgkiss  
Treasurer and Membership Secretary

### ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Only one nomination was received for each post, so the Officers were automatically re-elected for two years:

Barbara Brooke, Chairman and Secretary  
Pat Hodgkiss, Treasurer and Membership Secretary

## STAPLEFORD CROSS

### Introduction

Stapleford Cross is one of the most important Anglo Saxon monuments in the country. It is not surprising, therefore, that it figures prominently in the new book to be published in the summer entitled *The Corpus of Anglo Saxon Stone Sculpture in Nottinghamshire*. This will be the latest in the British Academy series that, in due course, will cover the whole country and is the culmination of ten years of research by Prof. David Stocker and Paul Everson. Stapleford Cross has never before been considered in such detail and with such a high level of expertise and their interpretation and insights can safely be considered the definitive statement on the matter. The authors have provided us with a draft of the entry for Stapleford and have given us permission to use it in our Newsletter. What follows consists of direct extracts from their draft together with my attempts to condense detailed discussion and technical descriptions into something I understand! I apologise if, in so doing, I have misrepresented their arguments.

### Description

When we talk about Stapleford Cross we usually mean the whole structure, plinth and all. However, only the shaft is Anglo Saxon. The shaft is about 9ft. 6 ins high made of hard sandstone. It is well weathered and has lost perhaps 2ft from the top and is also truncated at the bottom. In shape it is rounded at the bottom and gradually works into a square cross section towards the upper part.

It is divided into four stages. The lower part of the shaft is tall and, unusually, it is highly decorated with complex interlace patterns in low relief. The south face appears to contain vinescroll shapes, although damage to the face probably caused by blade sharpening makes it difficult to decipher. The other three faces are decorated with complex interlace patterns including a frieze of 'Stafford knot' pattern. The east face features rows of 'free-circles' interlinked by running strands.

One pattern dominates the second stage. It occupies the whole of the south and east faces at this level, and laps over the angles of the shaft onto both the west and north faces. It is based on a complex encircled motif forming three rows, with strands doubled.



The third stage is more or less square and consists of four panels facing north, south, east and west. The west face resolves itself into a regular design of five tiers of three 'free circles' each, with passing strands linking the whole design together. The north panel is filled with a fine, fleshy vinescroll. The east panel is decorated with two vertical back to back runs of interconnected 'Stafford knots'. Strands are doubled to maintain the rich surface texture that is such a feature of the monument, however. There are three tiers of two 'knots' each within the panel. The south facing panel contains the only figure sculpture on the cross. This has been the subject of much speculation. The original surface has been carefully planed off to leave the flat face you see today. (See below).

The fourth stage, above the final surviving collar, consists of the lower parts of four more panels, defined with similar moulded borders to those below. Within each of these panels is carved yet more interlace, but at this level the shaft does not survive well, and the interlace is extremely difficult to read.

#### The Figure

The figure on the south face of the shaft near the top used to be described as that of a raven. More recent interpretations have suggested that it is of St. Luke. This is based on a reading of the two projections on either side of the head as horns, thus linking it with the symbol for St. Luke of a winged ox. However, the depiction of St. Luke in this manner is very rare and only one other sculptural example is known to exist at Ilkley. Careful examination of the figure shows that the surface face of the sculpture has, in fact, been carefully 'planed' off with a broad flat chisel leaving it flat in the centre with the remnant of the original sculpture around it. Into this flat surface crudely executed eyes and mouth have been cut in a somewhat incompetent manner. Once it is accepted that we have lost the entire upper face of the sculpture how can what remains round the edges be interpreted?

Within the stone's original surface the figure has bold projections to left and right of the body. They must be wings as they rise too high above the neck to represent shoulders. The figure appears to be wearing a collar, which lies in the same plane as the 'drapery' to either side of the figure's legs, and is therefore not planed away, but is rounded and articulated. The collar supports an overlarge 'head', but this has been planed flat. The space above the head





and beneath the panel's border is deeply sunk but appears to be undecorated. It may have once contained a metal insert to form a crown or halo. A bold gash or straight channel runs diagonally across the figure from the lower tip of his left 'wing' to the upper tip of the right 'wing'. What is described as a rectangular fillet beneath the figure's feet actually has two pairs of two supports below it, as if legs to a long horizontal body. And in the fields to either side of the figure, below the wings, sinuous curving features suggest the raised extremities – head to the right, tail to the left – of a beast being trampled by the figure.

The figure clearly stood in a balanced, full-frontal pose and it had wings. In its pose, therefore, it is part of the tradition of large hieratic figures that originates in English sculpture in the seventh century and continues through to the eleventh century. The three-dimensional features beneath the wings to either side, possibly to be interpreted as sleeves hanging down behind (above), were thought by Arthur Mee to be the remains of a 'serpent'. This is a shrewd observation by one who knew the shaft extremely well, in all lighting conditions. If that were correct, and could be confirmed, then – with wings and serpent – the figure could only represent St Michael. An interpretation as St Michael would also offer an explanation for the long diagonal gouge across the figure's body, which would then become the seating for a second metal insert representing a spear piercing the serpent's head by the saint's left foot.

The cult of St Michael is famously associated both with dramatic hills and with the locales of folk religion, and Stapleford Hill, with its wide views, and the Hemlock Stone offer that link. In these circumstances, St Michael might be a credible identification for the figure on the Stapleford shaft.

#### Age

Many suggestions have been made as to the age of Stapleford Cross and there have been a wide range of possible dates between the seventh and the eleventh century. Comparisons have been made with other monuments and suggestions have been made based on their known datings. However, Stapleford is an entirely different scale of monument in a different stone type and decorated in an entirely different manner and such conclusions lack validity.

A better approach in narrowing the date for Stapleford is through considering its single figure sculpture. St Michael dedications are common enough to occur at many different moments in the pre-Conquest period. St Michael was venerated in England from at least the seventh century and depictions of St Michael occur throughout Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Scandinavian art, and there is nothing distinctive about the Stapleford figure that might indicate a specific date. If the figure is correctly identified as St Michael, however, it does suggest that the shaft probably stood in the churchyard from the time of its erection. One of St Michael's most important roles is conveying souls from earth to heaven and in overseeing the process of their judgment. As a consequence there is a strong association between the archangel and churchyards, with sculpture and architecture organized to confirm the relationship. A tentative date is suggested, therefore, of the ninth century, perhaps first half - (800-850).

#### The base.

The expert inspection of the cross produced a surprise. The base has always been ignored, as being likely to have been constructed at the time when the cross was re-erected in 1760 having been found lying in the churchyard. We know that stone from Bramcote, St. Michael's, was used when the cross was moved from its position at the roadside into the church yard. However, Stocker and Everson believe that the simple moulding on the truncated pyramid which supports the shaft indicates that it is possible that this part of the base is contemporaneous with the shaft and that Stapleford has not one but two Saxon monuments.

#### Conclusion.

Stocker and Everson's conclusions are based on a careful examination of Stapleford's cross and an evaluation of its place within the England's Anglo-Saxon Corpus. There are few certainties in this field as only very rarely can a sculpture be dated by hard evidence. Often decisions have to be made on a balance of probabilities and we should be grateful that, at last, our cross has been given the expert consideration that it deserves.

Keith Goodman



### ADDITIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY 2014/2015

Basford Bystander, Feb/Mar no.162, Apr/May no.163, June/July no.164,  
Aug/Sept no.165, Oct/Nov no.166  
Local History News, Winter 2014 no.110, Spring no.111, Summer no.112  
The Local Historian, Volume 44 no.1, no.2, no.3  
Ilkeston & District Local History Society Newsletter – no.21, no.22, no.23  
Sandiacre History Group Newsletter – no.26, no.27, no.28  
Nottinghamshire Historian Spring/Summer 2014, no.92  
Derbyshire Family History – nos. 145, 146, 147  
Did you Know? Nottingham – a Miscellany by Francis Frith (2 copies)  
Stapleford Past and Present by Nigel Brooks  
Trowell – Festival of Britain Village  
Grandfather's Derbyshire by Cyril Hargreaves  
Legends of Nottingham by Pat Mayfield  
Ey Up Mi Duck by Scollins and Titford  
Derby in Old Photographs – Buxton  
T C Hine – Architect of Victorian Nottingham by Ken Brand  
George Green – Miller and Mathematician – 1793 – 1841 by M Cannell  
George Green and Sneinton, published by Nottingham Castle  
An Autobiography by Mary Howitt – 1758 – 1843 (specific chapters deal with  
life in Nottingham)

### ADDITIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES 2014/2015

Stapleford Boys' School - 1) photo 2) Admissions list 1905-1928  
Sammy Taylor – farming, Hickings Lane – 3 photos  
Coronation – Central Avenue Party and cake  
Jaguar pub closure  
JD Wetherspoon – Staff and Serpent fencing – photo  
Coronation medal, King George VI - photos  
Press cuttings – Frisby's shoe shop closes, RC Mace, butcher, closes,  
Poole's Garage, Carr Fastener closes, Sails closes  
Tradesmen's bill heads (on back of Stapleford Past & Present)  
Stapleford Past and Present – Nottm Post 'Bygones' article  
Facelift for Walter Parker's grave – Ilkeston Adv. 08.05.2014  
Broxtowe Guided Walks 2014 leaflet  
Midland Hotel area – photo of sweet and tobacco shop, early 1930s  
100 years of Freemasonry in the Hemlock Stone Lodge No.3734

### STAPLEFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY LOCAL STUDIES RECENT ACQUISITIONS

A Tommy in the Family by K Gregson	L98.2
In Coal Blood by G Green	L85
Lace Here Now (2 copies)	L67.1
Poetry from the Trenches of the Sherwood Foresters 1914/18	L85.1
Discover Celtic Derbyshire by Jill Armitage	L90.1
Ruddington 2013 – A Year in Photographs	L90.2
The Church History Project – Our Churches (A Comprehensive Guide to Churches of Southwell and Nottingham Diocese)	L21(Reference) L21(Loan copy)

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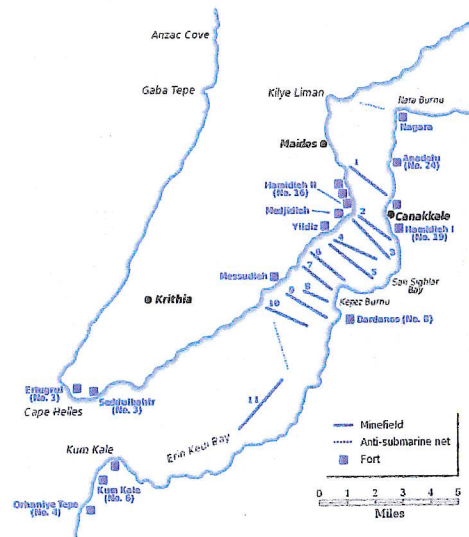
### PROGRAMME

10 June	The History of Girls' Schools in Victorian Derbyshire Liz Keeley
8 July	Bess of Hardwick: a Woman of Many Parts! Maureen Taylor
12 August	History of Shipley Hall and Park and the Miller Mundy Family by Patrick Ashcroft
9 September	History along the Erewash Valley Trail Robert Mee
14 October	The Victorian Fair, Freaks and Fisticuffs Ann Featherstone
11 November	Adverts you have known and loved Maureen Rushton
9 December	Christmas Social Event



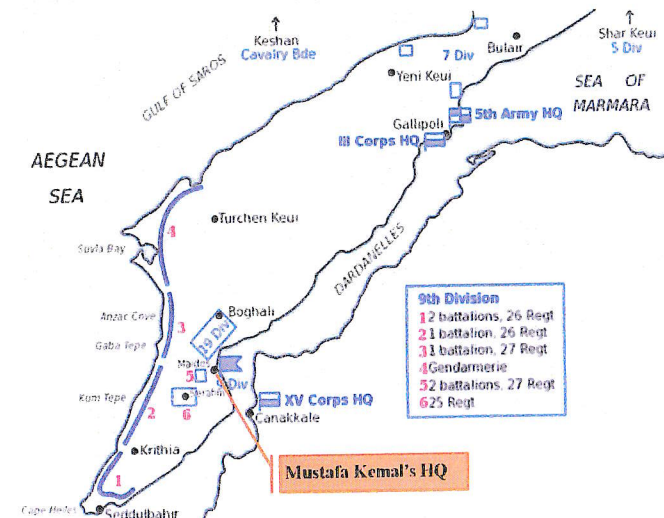
## Gelibolu, later known as Gallipoli.

War clouds grew all over various parts of the world during 1913 with many countries preparing for war. The war volcano erupted on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1914 when 19 year old Gavrilo Princip shot and murdered Archbishop Franz Ferdinand of Austria whilst on a visit to Sarejevo. As with all plans for war, it is left to politicians, and they shuffled their allegiances with other favourable countries. One strategic area that politicians looked at was the Dardanelles. The stretch of water known as the Dardanelles is 65 kilometres long,



7 kilometres wide, 1½ kilometres wide at the narrowest area. It was controlled by the Turkish Empire. However, it was a vital route for the control of the Russian, Asian and European trade routes.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1914 Turkey signed a treaty with the Germans and in October 1914 closed the Dardanelles to Allied shipping. The British attempted to open up the route using a large fleet, including 18 battleships. Three were sunk by mines laid in the water, so other battleships refused to attempt the route until minesweepers cleared the route first. Unfortunately the minesweepers were manned by civilians who refused to clear mines until battleships had laid down heavy fire onto the forts protecting either side of the waterway. This led to stalemate. This proved quite a naval disaster, so it was decided that a land assault would be made, to silence all the forts along the route. This assault took serious planning, and troops would be used from various parts of the empire. These included Australia, New Zealand, and India. The whole area to be attacked would be difficult with high rocky areas above the chosen landing beaches. The Turkish army were found to be well dug in in their deep caves protecting them from any naval





bombardment.

Troops were sent from various parts of the empire to take part in the landings and to fight both the Turkish and German armies. Amongst them was the Portsmouth Battalion of the Royal Marines Light Infantry. These included Private John (Jack) Sothern and Stapleford's Lance Corporal Walter Parker, who for his bravery was awarded the Victoria Cross.



Royal Marine Light Infantry prior to embarking for the Dardanelles. Pte Jack Sothern is third standing from the right. Picture courtesy of Helen Jarvis.

On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1915 successful landings were made at Suvla Bay. The included men from the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, The West Riding Regiment, which included Stapleford's Harold Jackson, whose story is detailed in Newsletter No2 of Spring 2006.

If you wander among the graves at Shrapnel Gully Cemetery, Gallipoli, you will find in front of the Stone of Remembrance the Special Memorial to Lieutenant R Empson, Portsmouth Battalion, Royal Naval Division, of Somerset, England. Empson was killed on 1 May 1915 just three weeks short of his nineteenth birthday high up on the ridge at the end of Shrapnel Gully. Few Australians today are aware of the presence on Gallipoli of the men of the Royal Naval Division who fought beside the Anzacs during the Battle of the Landing between 25 April and 3 May 1915.

In drizzling rain during the night of 28-29 April 1915, the exhausted men of the 3rd Brigade AIF, men who had fought their way ashore at dawn on 25 April, were relieved at the front line by the Portsmouth and Chatham Battalions of the Royal Naval Division. Hearing that marines were coming to their aid, the Anzacs believed they would be British regular soldiers from a famous regiment, men who they had been urged to imitate, models of 'steadiness, order and training'. Bean, however, described these



particular marines as raw, untrained, many barely 18, youths – 'Some had but a few weeks training; most only a few months'. They had expected to go into orderly trenches but found only holes in the ground, hastily dug to protect the Anzacs from Turkish bullets:

*From the dark came the distant sounds of Turkish bugle-calls. Close in front of them from the dense scrub flashed the occasional rifles of snipers; overhead the bullets cracked; machine-guns sent the mud of the parapets in showers upon them.*

[Charles Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, Vol 1, Sydney, 1935, p.533]

Among these youngsters filing into these precarious positions was an older recruit, Lance-Corporal Walter Parker, aged 33, from Stapleford, Nottinghamshire.

The Anzac front line, as the marines found it, was merely a series of disconnected pot-holes. The most isolated position lay across 350 metres of open ground and was garrisoned by 60 men led by Lieutenant R Empson. During the afternoon of 30 April, the Turks began vigorous attacks on the marine positions and a number of them were

overrun. Empson's little band was now even more cut off and alone and he sent back a message for urgent relief.



Walter Parker VC, sometime after World War I, shaking hands with King George V. Parker had actually left the services when The King had presented him with his VC at Buckingham Palace on 21 July 1917. [Photograph in Stephen Snelling, *VCs of the First World War: Gallipoli*, Stroud, 1995 p.93]

A party of marines was detailed to go to Empson's aid and, when a medic was requested, Lance-Corporal Parker volunteered. Parker had already drawn attention to himself for his brave direction of the battalion stretcher-bearers in battle. As the relief party emerged into the open in the dark, they came under heavy fire, a man was hit, and Parker stayed with him while the others went on. As day dawned Parker realised that to reach Empson he would have to run over open ground totally exposed to Turkish fire. Despite being threatened by an Australian officer that



he would shoot him if he did not turn back, Parker leapt from the trench and ran down the slope towards the cut-off position. During his epic run he was twice wounded but reached the trench to the cheers of his comrades. There he learnt that none of the other members of the relief party had got through; they were either dead or wounded or had given up in the face of such murderous fire.

Parker now set about treating the wounded notwithstanding his own injuries. During a full scale Turkish attack, which was beaten back, Lieutenant Empson was killed and command assumed by Lieutenant A Alcock. By the next day, May 2, the little garrison had been reduced to 40 unwounded men and ammunition was running low. Retreat was essential. Again Parker proved himself a brave and capable leader by managing to get all the wounded back safely up the hill in the open through the enemy bullets. During this evacuation, Parker suffered multiple wounds, some of them serious, and he crawled the final few metres to safety.

Parker's heroism and self-sacrifice had been noticed by many in the Royal Naval Division. He was recommended

for the Victoria Cross but the award was only confirmed after a series of mishaps in June 1917, more than two years after Parker's time on Gallipoli. By then ill health had forced him to leave the service and for the rest of his life – he died in 1936 aged 55 – he was a semi-invalid due to his war wounds. Parker's daughter, Vera Constance, born in 1919, was christened in honour of his VC. She recalled the last years of her father's life:

*He was a very sick man for a lot of years ... When he knew he was dying, he set out to get my mother a pension. But the authorities said he had survived too long for his death to be have been caused by his war wounds. When his doctor heard, he hit the roof. He said he had treated him and that he was a complete wreck. He said it was a miracle he had lived so long.*

[Vera Parker, quoted in Stephen Snelling, *VCs of the First World War: Gallipoli*, 1995, p.93]

Lance-Corporal Walter Parker VC lies buried in Stapleford Cemetery. In August 2000 Stapleford's new town square was officially dedicated as the 'Walter Parker VC Memorial Square' and a plaque there tells of his deeds on Gallipoli. It



makes no bones about the cause of his death – 'He died in 1936 as a result of his wounds'.



A photograph of Walter Parker VC in later life wearing his war medals. The Victoria Cross is on the viewer's left. In recent years Parker has been remembered in his home town of Stapleford, England, by the naming of the new town square the 'Walter Parker VC Memorial Square'. Visit the [www.stapleford.gov.uk](http://www.stapleford.gov.uk) for further information. [AWM H13928]

Contemporary observers and later historians have not dealt kindly with the Royal Marine Division at Anzac. Lieutenant General William Birdwood, the Anzac Corps commander, himself an Englishman, was particularly scathing describing them as 'nearly useless'. He can perhaps be excused by the fact that he faced a situation in

those early days on the peninsula when the Turks could well have driven the Anzacs into the sea and Birdwood needed the best of troops to assist him, not raw recruits. Recruits could die in battle, however, as well as anyone else.

On 3 May, the Portsmouth Battalion, Parker's battalion, was ordered forward during the failed attempt by Australians and New Zealanders to capture the ridge line at the end of Monash Valley, the last great Anzac attack of the Battle of the Landing. Charles Bean recorded how the marines were bravely led up the steep slope of Dead Man's Ridge and how, when they reached the top, they were mown down by the Turkish machine guns 'with great slaughter':

*For many days afterwards on the ugly bare shoulder at the top of Monash Valley their dead lay like ants shrivelled by a fire, until a marine climbed out at night and pushed them down into the valley, where they were buried. The name 'Dead Man's Ridge' clung to this shoulder when its origin was almost forgotten.*

[Charles Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, Vol 1, Sydney, 1935, p.533]



The men of the Royal Naval Division were finally withdrawn from Anzac in mid-May. They had played their part in the terrible actions that made up the Battle of the Landing in the most hotly contested central section of the line at the head of Monash Valley. The names of those of them who have no known grave can be found on the British Empire and Dominion memorial to the whole Gallipoli campaign at Cape Helles – the Helles Memorial. The remains of those who were found, like young Lieutenant Empson of the Portsmouth Battalion, lie in the cemeteries of Anzac, a reminder that it was not only the Australians and New Zealanders who fought the Turks on this part of the Gallipoli peninsula. When he came to write the official Australian history of the campaign in the early 1920s Charles Bean summed up the part played by the Royal Naval Division at Anzac in these words:

*Young and but partly trained, thrown without preparation into a terrible struggle, over-tried, gallantly but often needlessly exposing themselves, they had suffered heavily, and their dead lay thickly among the Australians and New Zealanders upon those dreadful heights.*

[Charles Bean, *The Story of Anzac*, Vol 1, Sydney, 1935, p.116]

Remembering the men of the Royal Naval Division who fought and died at Anzac brings to mind one of their number who, although he did not ever fight on Gallipoli, was perhaps the best known of them all. On 23 April 1915, Sub-Lieutenant Rupert Brooke, Hood Battalion, Royal Naval Division, destined for Gallipoli, died from blood-poisoning aboard a French hospital ship and was buried on the Greek island of Skyros. Before the full horrors of places like Gallipoli and the Western Front became evident to a new generation of poets, Brooke had written lines which might stand as the epitaph for the English dead of the Royal Naval Division at Gallipoli. Most of them had rushed to volunteer in August 1914 when, it was said, the war would be over by Christmas:

*If I should die think only this of me,  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed.  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,*



*A body of England's, breathing English air,  
 Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.  
 And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
 A pulse in the eternal mind, no less,  
 Gives something back the thoughts by England given;  
 Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
 And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
 In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.*

[Rupert Brooke, 'The Soldier', The Complete Poems of Rupert  
 Brooke, London, 1933, p.148]

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From the notes made by Private Jack (John) Southern  
 of the Royal Marines Light Infantry regarding the  
 journey to The Dardanelles:-

'Very good voyage taking things altogether. Rather  
 rough in the Bay of Biscay. Took it very well indeed,  
 was not sick at all. Supposed to have been chased by a  
 submarine in the bay. Went 150 miles out of course.  
 Food very good on the ship. After landing found  
 water very scarce. Had to walk about 1 mile for a  
 wash and then about half an hour. Food very good in  
 camp. Altogether about 57,000 men in camp at the  
 time.

Courtesy of Helen Jarvis.



**Walter Parker spent his early years in London and moved to Stapleford to begin work at the Stanton Ironworks as a coremaker. At the outbreak of the first World War (1914), Walter Parker enlisted into the Royal Marines Light Infantry Division and was awarded the Victoria Cross for his bravery and gallantry while under enemy fire at Gaba Tepe, Gallipoli, Turkey on the 1st May 1915. The story is as follows:**



On the night of 30th April 1915, Lieutenant Empson, RMLI who was in command of an isolated fire trench at Gaba Tepe sent a message asking for ammunition, water and medical stores; in the trench there were also 40 men and a number of wounded.

The message was received by Captain Syson, RMLI Officer Commanding 'C' Company, Portsmouth Battalion, who detailed a party of Non-Commissioned Officers and men to carry water and ammunition and called for a volunteer among the stretcher bearers. Lance Corporal Parker of the same battalion at once volunteered to go.

There were no communication trenches, and in attempting to emerge from the nearest trench one of the party was wounded. Lance Corporal Parker thereupon organised a stretcher party to take this man back and then started off for the trench which Lieutenant Empson occupied.

It was now daylight. The intervening space was at least 400 yards and was completely exposed and swept by Turkish rifle fire; several Australians had already been killed while endeavouring to convey ammunition to Lieutenant Empson.

Parker alone succeeded in reaching the trench: all the remaining Non-Commissioned Officers and men in his party were either killed or wounded. After his arrival he rendered assistance to the wounded, displaying extreme courage and remaining cool and collected in very trying circumstances.

In the early morning of the following day the trench had to be evacuated and Parker helped to remove and attend to the wounded, although during this operation he was seriously wounded.

Parker had during the three previous days displayed consistent bravery and energy whilst in charge of the battalion stretcher bearers during a very trying time, as in nearly every case the wounded had to be evacuated over exposed ground and under fire.

Owing to the fact that the Commanding Officer, Adjutant, Sergeant Major and the Company Commander were all wounded at this juncture the recommendations for gallantry etc. for the Portsmouth battalion were much delayed. The Brigadier General Commanding the Royal Navy Division at the time, however, considers this man should be awarded the Victoria Cross. **London Gazette \_ 22nd June 1917**



Severely wounded during the operation Parker was eventually invalided from the service in June 1916. Beside his VC he was awarded the 1914/15 Star, the British War and Victory Medals and a war gratuity of £10. The men of the Division presented him with an inscribed marble and gilt clock. He never fully recovered from his injuries and died, aged 55, at Stapleford, on 28th November 1936 and was buried in Stapleford cemetery. A Memorial Service, in his honour, is held annually at St Helens Church Stapleford on the Sunday nearest 30th April by the local RMA.

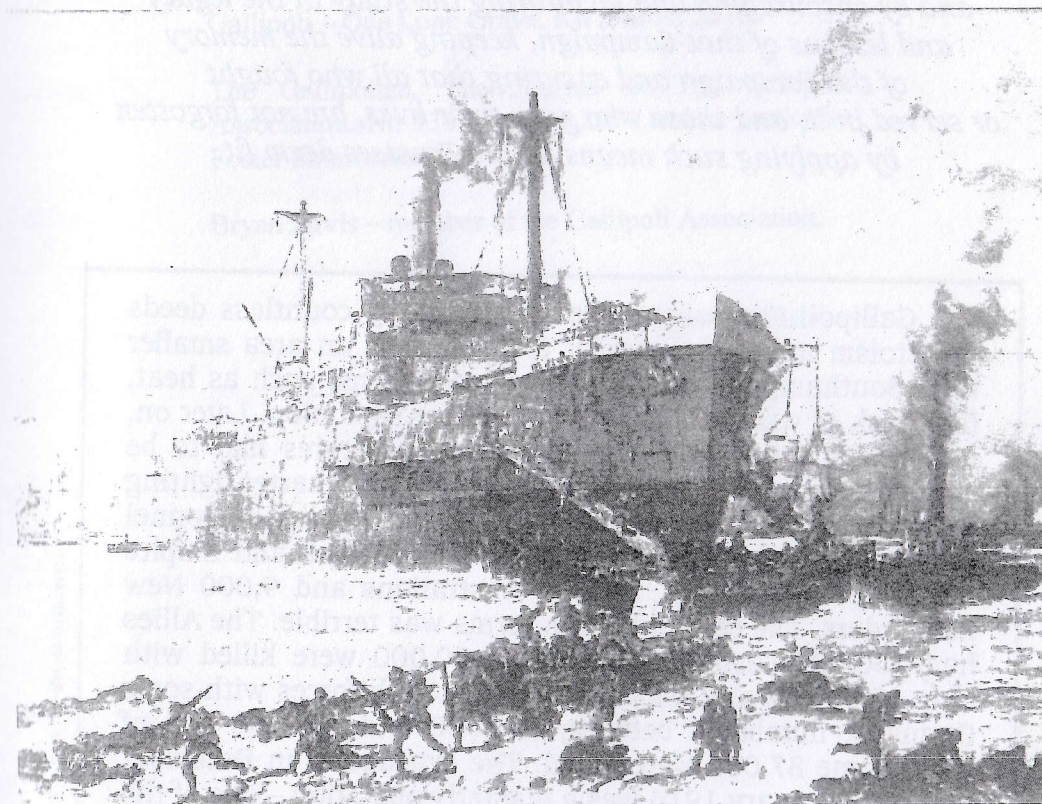


Studio portrait of Lance Corporal Walter Parker VC, Portsmouth Battalion, Royal Marine Light Infantry. Parker's medal is just visible in this photograph on his tunic but it is not clear if this is a superimposed image. [Photograph in Stephen Snelling, *VCs of the First World War: Gallipoli*, Stroud, 1995, p.88]

# The Gallipolian

*The Journal of the  
Gallipoli Association*

No. 136 - WINTER 2014



*The River Clyde at V Beach, 25 April, 1915*

*by Charles Dixon - reproduced by kind permission  
of The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment (Queen's and Royal Hampshires)*





## OBJECTIVES

*To advance education for the public benefit  
by raising public awareness of the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915  
and by encouraging and facilitating the study in the legacy  
and lessons of that Campaign, keeping alive the memory  
of the Campaign and ensuring that all who fought  
or served in it, and those who gave their lives, are not forgotten  
by applying such means as the Trustees deem fit.*

The Gallipoli Campaign is characterised by countless deeds of heroism and endurance. It took place in an area smaller than Southampton amid appalling conditions, such as heat, flies, lack of water, equipment and proper sanitation. Later on, rain and a freak spell of sub-zero temperatures had to be endured, to say nothing of the desperate close quarter fighting throughout the campaign. Some 559,000 Allied personnel were committed, of whom 420,000 were British and Empire troops, 80,000 French, 50,000 Australians and 9,000 New Zealanders. The cost in human terms was terrible. The Allies had 250,000 casualties, of whom 50,000 were killed with only 10,000 having known graves. Turkish forces with some Germans, numbered between 300,000 and 400,000 and of these some 87,000 were killed. The evacuation in December and early January 1916 was a masterly operation – one of the great feats of military history.

I would like to thank the following for their help, articles and information regarding the Gallipoli history:

Stephen Snelling – VCs of the first world war. Gallipoli. Stroud 1995. – photograph of Walter Parker VC with the King.

Charles Bean – The story of Anzac volume 1, Sydney 1935. with quotes from Vera Constance, daughter of Walter Parker VC.

Gallipoli – One Long Grave. Kit Denton 2010.

The Gallipolian. The Journal of The Gallipoli Association. No 136 – winter 2014 and in particular Foster Summerson.

Bryan Jarvis – member of the Gallipoli Association.

M.G. Jarvis. Editor.

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## LIFE IN THE 1500'S

### Some useless facts

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May and were still smelling pretty good in June. However, they were starting to 'smell' so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide their body odour.

Baths equalled a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, 'don't throw the baby out with the bathwater'.

Houses had thatched roofs, thick straw piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the pets, dogs, cats and other animals, mice, rats and bugs lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying 'it's raining cats and dogs'.

Published in the Surrey Retirement Association newsletter.

Editor, if not true, then it brings a smile.

Ilkeston Advertiser Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1917.

Town Hall, Ilkeston.

Wednesday November 7<sup>th</sup>.

Grand Concert on behalf of Comforts Fund For Wounded and Discharged Soldiers;

Artistes are:-

Mrs G Riley, Soprano

Miss G Beresford, Contralto

Mr F.L.E. Jones, Tenor

Mr A Stevenson, Tenor

Mr W. Meer, Base

Haydn Quartet Party - The Filberts.

Corporal W. R. Parker. V.C.

Pianist Miss Buxton

Chair taken at 7pm by The Mayor

Tickets

Front seats 1/-

Second seats 6d



**PRICE LIST of items for sale at Society Meetings**  
**At any other time please apply to the Chairman**

Stapleford Town Trail	£1.00
Stapleford Tea Towels	£2.95
Leather bookmarks	£0.80
Local views – framed	priced individually
Local views – cards with envelopes	£1.00
Pen & ink drawings by Jack Vernon	£1.00

Full colour illustrated maps of Stapleford + Borlase Warren  
Coat of Arms in gold frames (produced to order) £14.00

Society Newsletters – some back copies available at reduced  
prices

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NEWSLETTER EDITOR – Malcolm Jarvis - 0115-932 3457  
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TREASURER – Pat Hodgkiss – 0115-9469152

**The deadline for submission of items for the next Autumn  
2015 issue of the Newsletter is 30 September 2015.  
Material can be given to any of the above named.  
This is YOUR newsletter! We'd love to hear from you!**

Front cover:  
Stapleford Cross drawn by Nigel Brooks