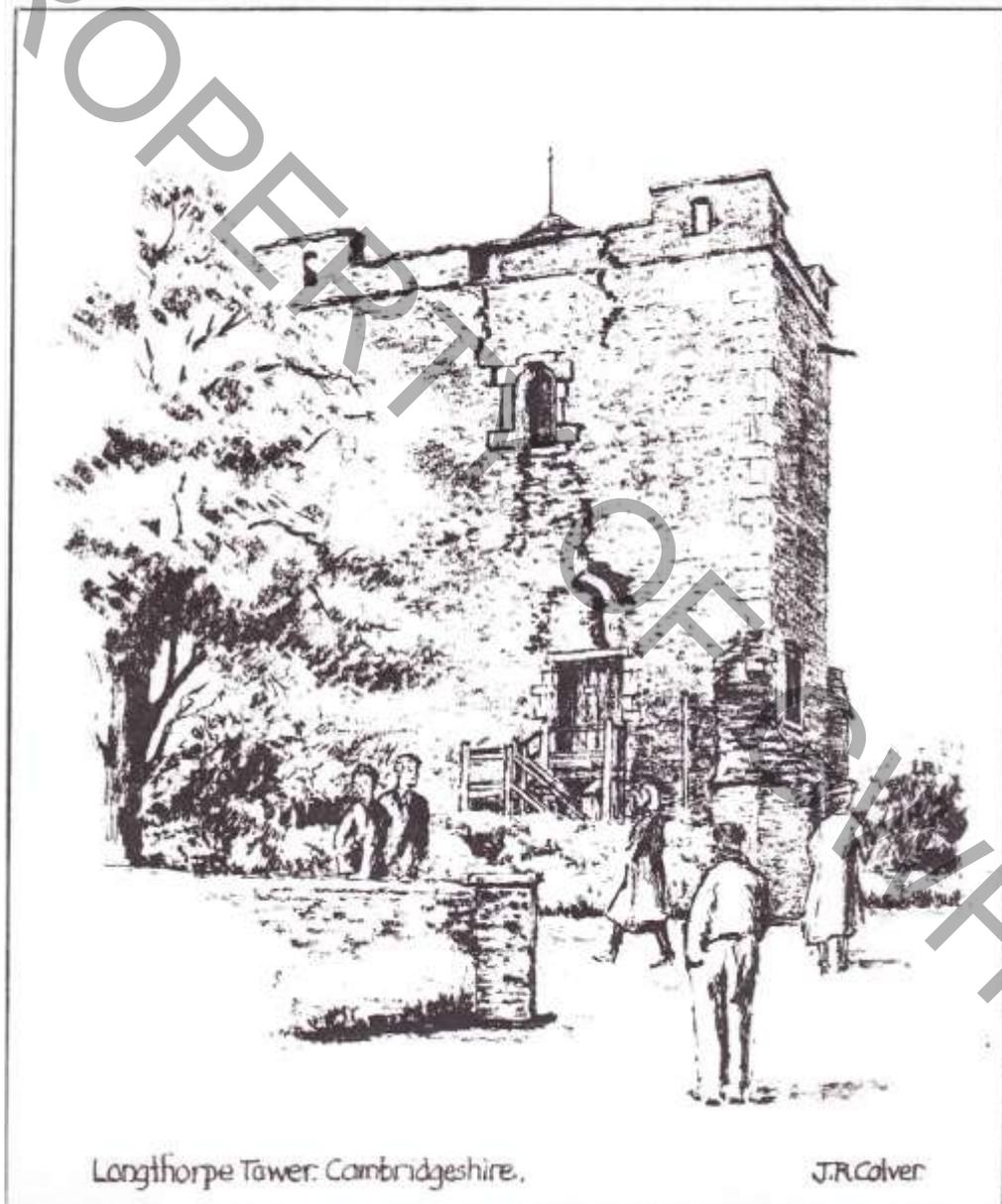




Greater Wigston Historical Society
White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

BULLETIN 49



PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - OCTOBER 1997 TO FEBRUARY 1998

Thursday 16th October 1997

'Wharf Street Revisited'¹ talk with slides - Cynthia Brown 7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Thursday 20th November 1997

'Tracing Your Family Tree' - Joyce Billings, Leics. & Rut. F.H.S. 7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Thursday 18th December 1997

Christmas Party with slide quiz 'Leicester's Skyline' - Norman Pilgrim.
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Thursday 15th January 1998

'NOT the Resorts in Spain'¹ the Moorish influence in the towns - George Jackson.
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Thursday 19th February 1998

A.G.M. plus 'Firewatching during the War'¹ - Stella Tweed.
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

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FRONT COVER

Jim Colver's drawing this time is of Longthorpe Tower, a folly on the A47, 2 miles west of Peterborough. The house at Longthorpe of which this tower formed a part, is a survival of the earlier fortified Manor House, though little is known of its history, owners or tenants.

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The great tower was added to the existing house c1300 possibly by Robert de Thorpe, steward of Thorpe Abbey, & it was in all probability he, or his son, who were responsible for commissioning the remarkable wall paintings in the great chamber of the first floor. These are of Biblical & domestic scenes forming the most complete set of such works of the period in England. Although neither the house, nor the ground floor of the tower is open to the public, the first & top floor remain much as they were built. Ascending the newel staircase, fine views of the Nene Valley can be seen from the parapet walk.

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The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st February, June & October. Articles etc. (which are always welcome) should be submitted to either of the Joint Editors three clear weeks before the publication date please.

Joint Editors: Mrs. Chris Smart, 197 Queens Road, Leicester.

Mrs. Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston.

June meeting ...

On Wednesday the 18th of June the Society met in Leicester to visit the churches of St. Mary de Castro and St. Nicholas.

The Collegiate Church of St. Mary de Castro is situated in Castle Yard in the Castle Park area of Leicester city centre. The Church is about 900 years old and incorporates many notable features from the many periods of its development.

The tour was conducted by the vicar who showed himself to be a knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide. The Church was founded in c.1107 by Robert de Beaumont as a collegiate chapel attached to the castle. The church developed from that time onwards with enlargements to meet the changing demands of the congregation and extensive 19th century restoration by Sir Gilbert Scott. Many of the earlier features remain, partially hidden by later alterations , and this makes its history hard to unravel.

We were asked to look, in particular, at the Norman sedilia, probably the finest in the county and the tower, unusually set inside the south aisle. The reredos by G.F. Bodley, 1899, was quite lovely when illuminated.

A short walk around the outside of the Church followed and we were able to see how the Church has developed externally and also how it fits into the context of its surroundings.

Another short walk, via the footbridge over the busy traffic of St. Nicholas Circle, brought us to the Church of St. Nicholas.

The nave of St. Nicholas is Anglo-Saxon and is the oldest church architecture to be found in Leicester. Reused Roman tiles and bricks can be seen in various parts of the Church. Presumably taken from the adjacent ruined Roman buildings. During the Middle Ages the church was altered and enlarged. In the 19th century extensive structural repairs were carried out, including the construction of the wide brick arch. The north aisle was constructed in 1875 and the whole building restored by Charles Baker in 1904-5.

Many thanks to the Vicar of St. Marys and St. Nicholas for making this an enjoyable and informative occasion.

AUGUST MEETING

On an incredibly hot & sultry evening a contingent of about 50 members met at the Council Offices for a conducted tour of this very interesting building. Our guide was Mr. Walker, Assistant Chief Executive.

Bushloe House was originally built in 1850 by the architect Stephen Fry (see Who's Who No: 17) for his own occupation. It was constructed of soft yellow brick under a Welsh slate roof. The main outside features are a squared bay window with moulded stone jambs, fine ornamental chimneys & the deep cornice below the overhanging eaves. It was bought by Hiram Owston (see Who's Who No: 18) in 1866 & he made substantial additions in 1880.

We commenced our tour by going through the main front door which is contemporary but not in its original position. It is huge & has a most interesting locking mechanism & not the sort of key you would slip in your pocket! We were shown a kitchen area where traces could be seen of where a row of bells once hung for summoning servants. Most of the rooms still have their original fireplaces, one with a black & gilt marble chimneypiece. It is however not easy to visualise how imposing they must have looked now they are filled with computers etc.

The three flight open well staircase is perhaps the most interesting feature. It has heavy wooden banisters & solid but finely carved acorn newel posts. Above is a coved planked lantern dome with painted glass panels. The walls have a painted frieze of abstract sunflowers & geometric patterns. There are also panels of painted glass in the hall decorated with scenes from nature such as an owl under a crescent moon. Originally the carpets & ceiling were also decorated in a matching theme. All this interior design is believed to have been the work of Christopher Dresser as was the furniture some of which is now in the V & A Museum. (Though when I visited there last year they could only show me one small chair!)

Looking out of an upstairs window we had a good view of the chimneys & also saw the fire bell which can still be rung by pulling a metal cable. We were shown a plan of the property dating from the 1950's. It was possible to see where the outbuildings stood & where traces remain of Mr. Owston's outdoor theatre. In the gardens there are some notable ornamental trees including a Wellingtonia & we learned that if the grass is not cut for a while in Spring all sorts of wild flowers appear, a legacy from when the whole area was a grazing meadow. The grounds were originally 2^{1/2} acres & included two staff cottages in Manor Street. The Council bought the property in 1942 & built the Council Chamber when Oadby & Wigston Councils amalgamated.

The Chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked Mr. Walker for a most interesting tour. It was however clear that because of the numbers present not everyone could hear the commentary. When planning another visit of this kind we must remember to ask to be split into groups with more than one guide.

A few of us who lingered learned that the Council meeting had finished & were invited to look inside the Council Chamber. We were able to see a Roll of Honour for local boys who lost their lives in the two world wars & a board showing the names of all past council chairmen. There were various mementoes of official visits to Wigston's two twin towns & the current years framed socks paid in lieu of rent by the FWK Museum. Councillor Bill Boulter gave an impromptu talk mentioning the beam from the old Quaker Cottage with the motto "Above al thyng sware not but ye and na" but unfortunately this was locked in another room. He also mentioned Mr. W.J.R. Pochin's sword (see Who's Who No: 15) which has apparently been mislaid & a search is underway. As the light began to fade he told of going into the house late one evening & clearly hearing childrens' voices coming from a side room. Subsequently, a grand-daughter of Mr. Owston, not knowing anything of this, left a plan of the house showing what each room was used for & that particular room was the nursery!

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Colin Towell gave a talk about Richard III. The evening concentrated on the connections Richard had with Leicester, the Battle of Bosworth Field & the great debate about whether or not Richard was responsible for several murders at the time, including those of his nephews, the Princes in the Tower.

Part of the talk consisted of the reading of an essay by Catherine Cook, a relative of Colin's, entitled "Richard III - Hero? Villain? or Man of his Time?" The essay sets the scene at the time in history & examines five so called "murders" of which Richard was accused; Edward Prince of Wales, Henry VI, his wife Anne Neville, his brother George of Clarence & his nephews.

Many historians are quoted & the conclusion is reached that Richard was probably not responsible for the murders but he was acting in a violent period of history in a way which was necessary to defend himself & his family.

The timetable of events on both sides leading up to the Battle in 1485 were detailed, as were the leading parties & their parts in the Battle, particularly the Stanleys.

Colin's talk was interspersed with readings from Shakespeare's play, the use of family trees & maps on a flip chart & many slides prepared by Peter Mastin who operated the projector. The slides were of both pictures in text books & local history books & of real life views of the battlefield area, the Richard III statue in Leicester, & the West Bridge.

Hopefully everyone went home with a little more knowledge of this important time in history helped by the very pertinent points made by members of the audience after the main talk.

(Our very grateful thanks to Colin for supplying this summary of the meeting himself because unfortunately neither of the editors could be present on that evening).

AT HOME WITH OLWEN

An addition to the published programme occurred in July when a party of approx. 25 members travelled to St. John's Road to the home of well known Leicester Mercury artist Olwen Hughes. Olwen outlined her early life as the daughter of a Welsh hill farmer, her training as a teacher, & eventual arrival in Leicester, where her husband, an archaeologist, had obtained a job.

They lived in Great Glen but always seemed to be travelling into Leicester so 20 years ago decided to move closer to the town. The house they chose had instant appeal. It was different - with unusual features & some excellent woodcarving particularly on the staircase & newel post which features a lions head.

Research led to the discovery that the house was designed by well known local architect Isaac Barradale for Thomas Birch a noted woodcarver. Thomas was born in Manchester & examples of his craft can be seen in the John Rylands University Library. He came to Leicester & married Amelia Fleetwood a stonemason's daughter. They had 4 children, but lost a lot of money through investment in the Manchester Ship Canal & had to leave St. John's Road for a smaller property in Clarendon Park. One son became a furniture designer & another followed his father as a woodcarver. Olwen has discovered a grand-daughter living in Countesthorpe & with her whole-hearted support hopes to create a small museum of the artist's work within the house. She is writing a book "The Story of Two Woodcarvers" to raise money for this venture.

We were entertained in her adjacent garden room which she has turned into a studio to display her work. We enjoyed lovely sandwiches, cakes & strawberries & cream. All profits again going to her museum project. It was a lovely, friendly, informal evening & we were shown many beautiful items of embroidery, painting & woodcarving. We did not want to leave but after a warm vote of thanks from Edna Taylor we departed with many memories of a very talented & energetic lady.

WIGSTON WHO'S WHO NO: 18 HIRAM ABIFF OWSTON J.P.

Hiram Abiff Owston was born at Snarestone Hall. Leics, on 7/3/1830, the younger of the two sons of John Hiram Abiff Welborn Owston, Gentleman, & his wife Mary Sharpe Owston, nee Spencer. His grandfather, Welborn Owston, had been an auctioneer in Ashby-de-la-Zouch & later the governor of Leicester Goal in Highcross Street. Both father & grandfather were much involved with freemasonry & the unusual Christian names Hiram Abiff were taken from a character who features in the allegorical part of that society's proceedings.

Hiram Abiff & his brother, another Welborn who was 10 years older, were educated at Appleby Grammar School. Welborn trained as a solicitor at Ashby & had a promising career which was cut short by his death at the tragically young age of 29 years. Their father, to whom Snarestone Hall had come via his wife's family, supposedly farmed the estate but was extravagant & too fond of drink. This latter failing contributed to a fatal riding accident in 1844. Hiram Abiff, at that time only 14, & his mother were reduced to relative poverty & moved to 43, Princes Street, Leicester. Brother Welborn survived long enough to see him through the remainder of his education & obtain articles for him with Richard Toller who practised law in Wycliffe Street. Both the boys were serious young men who avoided high society & were teetotal all their lives, no double because of the manner of their father's death & its consequences.

Hiram Abiff qualified as a solicitor in 1852 & moved to Bristol for a time to widen his experience before returning to Mr. Toller. He then worked for Harry James Davis who had a practice at 12, Horsefair Street before being invited to become a partner in 1862. This partnership prospered & two years later moved to better premises at 23, Friar Lane, in the more professional part of town. A serious set back occurred on 10/8/1866 when his partner, Mr. Davis, died aged only 33, but Hiram Abiff bought his partner's share of the business from the widow, including the mortgaged property, & in under 3 years had repaid everything & was the sole owner free from all debt. He continued as a sole practitioner for a further 8 years.

Just five weeks after the death of Mr. Davis he bought Bushloe House in Wigston from the previous owners the Fry family. In another two weeks, on 3/10/1866 he was in the parish church at Parsley, Yorkshire, where he married 25 year old Elizabeth Walley Varley, the daughter of William Varley, a manufacturer, of Stanningley Hall., is this hall was close to both Leeds & Bradford it seems likely that her father was connected with the wool trade.

The couple had 6 children, Harold Bertram on 19/8/1867, Evelyn Amy 26/6/1869, Oswald Leicester 23/10/1870, Ada Mabel 20/7/1872, Zoe Marguerite 17/12/1874, and after a 9 year gap - Leicester Varley on 10/2/1883. This last birth when Elizabeth was 41, proved too much for her & she died of exhaustion two weeks later on 25/2/1883. This was not the only domestic tragedy to occur to Hiram Abiff, as his first son Harold died when a toddler, & his second son Oswald when aged 11 due to a fall from his pony. These two children were buried in St. Wistan's churchyard as was their grandmother Mary Sharpe Owston. It was clearly decided that she should be laid to rest in Wigston, rather than Leicester where she still lived, or returned to lie with her husband at Snarestone

On 18/3/1884 Hiram Abiff remarried at Olney parish church in Buckinghamshire, Ann Vann Stone, the daughter of Nathaniel Chamberlain Stone. Mr Stone had been land agent to the Duke of Rutland's Aylestone estate & had bought, as sitting tenant, Aylestone Hall from his employer when the estate was sold in 1869.

After 11 years as a sole practitioner Hiram Abiff decided in 1877 to take into partnership one of his articulated clerks, James Sherwin Dickinson. The enlarged practice continued to expand & came to specialise in the new legislation connected with limited liability companies which were being formed in large numbers at this time. Later, in 1883 William Simpson was also invited to become a partner. The Wigston office currently in Long Street appears to be a more recent arrival. The first reference so far discovered being in a 1936 directory when the address was given as Central Avenue.

Hiram Abiff served as JP for both the city & county courts. In 1883 he was invited to be President of the Law Society. He was a director of the Leicestershire Banking Company & since its amalgamation with the London, City, & Midland Bank, a member of its advisory board. He was a local member of the board of the Commercial Union Insurance Company. He acted as clerk & secretary to the Grand Union Canal Co. & the Leics. & Northants Union Canal Co. for 25 years until their amalgamation in 1893 with the Grand Junction Canal Co. which he negotiated. A Conservative in politics he was active in the Harborough Constituency as Honorary Secretary for many years & then Vice President. He re-organised the party machinery & worked tirelessly at election times. He was engaged professionally in returning a Conservative member for Leicester in 1861, the only one returned for that borough since the Reform Act. He twice acted as Under Sherriff in 1885 & 1886. He was author of two books 'Law Relating to Highways' & 'Duties of Overseers' which went through several editions.

In Wigston he was instrumental in obtaining Urban District status for the Council & was Chairman in 1895. He supported All Saints' Church where he was a sidesman & gave the chancel screen. With that other leading local lawyer, Thomas Ingram, & Orson Wright he helped establish the new church of St. Thomas for South Wigston.

He set up a Land Society by helping a group of locals to purchase their own allotments on land to the right of Horsewell Lane between the council houses & Ecobs Garden Centre. This later progressed to the purchasing of plots for house building & was renamed the Wigston Conservative Building Society. He was Chairman of the first school board & of the Wigston Floral & Horticultural Society. He was on the committee which organised the Queen's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1877 & again helped plan suitable festivities when the Duke of York married Princess Mary of Teck in 1893. He was fond of acting & was a life member of Leicester Drama Society. It was a hobby he initially took up at the suggestion of Mr. Davis to improve his confidence when representing his clients in court. He created an open air theatre in the grounds of Bushloe House.

He retired from business when aged 63 but retained close links with his old firm. He died on 18/10/1905 & many notable people attended the funeral at All Saints' including the Lord Mayor of Leicester. He is buried in Wigston cemetery & a memorial plaque was erected in the church. His second wife Ann Vann Owston died 5/9/1928 & is buried with him. His only surviving son, Leicester Varley Owston, followed a military career but sadly contracted a tropical disease while serving in India & died unmarried in 1926 aged 43. His daughter Evelyn Amy also did not marry & is remembered with affection as 'Miss Owston' who lived all her life at Bushloe House, the last 14 of them alone. She died on 11/8/1942 & the Lady Chapel in All Saints' was restored by the family in her memory. It was after her death that Bushloe House was bought by Wigston Council for use as the Council offices. This son & daughter are buried with their father & step mother.

The other two daughters both married & left the district. Ada Mabel married Lieut. E.H. Rymer RN who later became an Admiral, & Zoe Marguerite married Mr. Lovelace Serjeantson of Hamlith Hall, Yorks. A daughter of this latter couple, Elizabeth Gordon, although living in Scotland keeps in touch with the grandson of their former coachman in South Wigston, & occasionally calls on him during trips to the south of England.

The law firm Hiram Abiff founded continues to thrive to this day. In 1996 it was joined with Thomas Ingram's practice & is now known as Harvey Ingram Owston.

Tricia Berry.

Sources: 'The Master Builder' by D.S. Hunt, 'A Dictionary of Edwardian Biography' Edinburgh 1985, Marriage Certificates, gravestones in St. Wistan's churchyard & Wigston cemetery, various directories, transactions of GWHS & the information about the Land Society from memories of the late E.F. Brouhpton.

SUCCESS IN INDIA

Congratulations to Chris Smart & fellow climbers who have recently returned from their epic trip to India. Four English men, including Chris's partner Colin Knowles, & one Indian guide, have achieved their aim of climbing the previously unconquered CBII in the Himalayas, while other members manned the base camp. This gives them the right to name the mountain & Independence Peak has been chosen because their arrival in India was within a day of the 50th anniversary of independence from British rule.

A PIECE OF NOSTALGIA

Thanks to member, Doreen Boulter (Wiggy Maggy) for sending us Maud's Poem which she wrote for a lady who lived in Cross Street to celebrate her 90th birthday.

"Perhaps it will bring back memories for all those Old Wigstonians" she writes "especially those who lived in Great Wigston."

Maud's Poem

Just a handful of memories, Maud,
Of Sunday Walks up Gullivar Hill
And Sunday sermon hats.
Summer and Winter Days
And the privey, out the back.

The 'osses and carts, and the oakie cart,
That trundled round the streets,
The Infirmary parade, and all the drays,
And Charlie Moor's Brass Band.
Come Wigston Feast, off up the fair,
The first week in November,
And that was a night to remember.

Winter nights and warming pans,
And toasting bread by the fire,
Gas lamps gleaming on frosty paths,
Will the nine o'clock 'osses pas by'?
A 'V' nerrand' up to sampson's shop
And mind you keep on the corsey,
And Friday night across the road,
For some chips from Mr Mawby.

Running through the 'postese'
To call in Ned Smith's shop,
On through the Lanes, past Minchin's Hut
And Nashes Bell Street clanging
Slow down, Walk proper, you never know,
Old Shreddie might be watching.
Gently we turn the pages, in our book of memories,
Looking back to those days of 'remember when'
And often, with the laughter, come the tears,
As we recall those bygone years.

WORLD WAR II

Thanks to Mary Freestone for sending us the following rationing recipes & to Jim Colver for the poster. We will feature more items on the same theme in the next Bulletin.

RECIPES & HANDY TIPS

The following recipes appeared in a pamphlet called 'Cheerful Rationing', November 1939. This publication was issued monthly, price 1d, by The Electrical Association for Women. The Association was founded in 1924.

CHRISTMAS FARE - PUDDING

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1/4lb flour | 1/2 teaspoon salt |
| 1/2lb suet | 6oz brown sugar |
| 2oz peel | 1/4lb currants |
| 1/4lb bread | 1/4lb carrots |
| 1/2lb raisins | 2 eggs |

Grate carrots, mix well together - steam for 8 hours.

APPLE PEELING SAUCE

Boil peeling with some lemon rind for 15 minutes in water. Add 1 oz brown sugar, drop of lemon colouring and a few cloves. Thicken with arrowroot.

STEAMED BREAD PUDDING

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 6oz bread | 2oz margarine or dripping |
| 2oz brown sugar | 1 teaspoon baking powder |
| 2oz dried fruit | 1 teaspoon black treacle |

Soak bread then squeeze out water. Mix all together, then put in greased and sugared basin. Steam for 1 1/2 hours.

RABBIT - SERVED FOR A GUEST DINNER

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| Rabbit joints | 1 onion |
| Soaked prunes | 1 cooking apple |
| Seasoning | |

Cooking time 1 1/2 hours. Serve with potatoes.

Mary Freestone.

Issued by the Ministry of Information



in co-

operation with the War Office

And the Ministry of Home Security,

JUNE, 1940.

**If the
INVADER
comes**

WHAT TO DO - AND HOW TO DO IT

THE Germans threaten to invade Great Britain. If they do so they will be driven out by our Navy, our Army and our Air Force. Yet the ordinary men and women of the civilian population will also have their part to play. Hitler's invasions of Poland, Holland and Belgium were greatly helped by the fact that the civilian population was taken by surprise. They did not know what to do when the moment came. *You must not be taken by surprise.* This leaflet tells you what general line you should take. More detailed instructions will be given you when the danger comes nearer. Meanwhile, read these instructions carefully and be prepared to carry them out.

When Holland and Belgium were invaded, the civilian population fled from their homes. They crowded on the roads, in cars, in carts, on bicycles and on foot, and so helped the enemy by preventing their own armies from advancing against the invaders. You must not allow that to happen here. Your first rule, therefore, is :—

- (i) IF THE GERMANS COME, BY PARACHUTE, AEROPLANE OR SHIP, YOU MUST REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE. THE ORDER IS " STAY PUT".

If the Commander in Chief decides that the place where you live must be evacuated, he will tell you when and how to leave. Until you receive such orders you must remain where you are. If you run away, you will be exposed to far greater danger because you will be machine-gunned from the air as were civilians in Holland and Belgium, and you will also block the roads by which our own armies will advance to turn the Germans out.

II

There is another method which the Germans adopt in their invasion. They make use of the civilian population in order to create confusion and panic. They spread false rumours and issue false instructions. In order to prevent this, you should obey the second rule, which is as follows :—

- (2) DO NOT BELIEVE RUMOURS AND DO NOT SPREAD THEM. WHEN YOU RECEIVE AN ORDER, MAKE QUITE SURE THAT IT IS A TRUE ORDER AND NOT A FAKED ORDER. MOST OF YOU KNOW YOUR POLICEMEN AND YOUR A.R.P. WARDENS BY SIGHT, YOU CAN TRUST THEM. IF YOU KEEP YOUR HEADS, YOU CAN ALSO TELL WHETHER A MILITARY OFFICER IS REALLY BRITISH OR ONLY PRETENDING TO BE SO. IF IN DOUBT ASK THE POLICEMAN OR THE A.R.P. WARDEN. USE YOUR COMMON SENSE.

III

The Army, the Air Force and the Local Defence Volunteers cannot be everywhere at once. The ordinary man and woman must be on the watch. If you see anything suspicious, do not rush round telling your neighbours all about it. Go at once to the nearest policeman, police-station, or military officer and tell them exactly what you saw. Train yourself to notice the exact time and place where you saw anything suspicious, and try to give exact information. Try to check your facts. The sort of report which a military or police officer wants from you is something like this :—

" At 5.30 p.m. to-night I saw twenty cyclists come into Little Squashborough from the direction of Great Mudtown. They carried some sort of automatic rifle or gun. I did not see anything like artillery. They were in grey uniforms."

Be calm, quick and exact. The third rule, therefore, is as follows :—

- (3) KEEP WATCH. IF YOU SEE ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS, NOTE IT CAREFULLY AND GO AT ONCE TO THE NEAREST POLICE OFFICER OR STATION, OR TO THE NEAREST MILITARY OFFICER. DO NOT RUSH ABOUT SPREADING VAGUE RUMOURS. GO QUICKLY TO THE NEAREST AUTHORITY AND GIVE HIM THE FACTS.

IV

Remember that if parachutists come down near your home, they will not be feeling at all brave. They will not know where they are, they will have no food, they will not know where their companions are. They will want you to give them food, means of transport and maps. They will want you to tell them where they have landed, where their comrades are, and where our own soldiers are. The fourth rule, therefore, is as follows :—

- (4) DO NOT GIVE ANY GERMAN ANYTHING. DO NOT TELL HIM ANYTHING. HIDE YOUR FOOD AND YOUR BICYCLES. HIDE YOUR MAPS. SEE THAT THE ENEMY GETS

NO PETROL. IF YOU HAVE A CAR OR MOTOR BICYCLE, PUT IT OUT OF ACTION WHEN NOT IN USE. IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO REMOVE THE IGNITION KEY; YOU MUST MAKE IT USELESS TO ANYONE EXCEPT YOURSELF.

IF YOU ARE A GARAGE PROPRIETOR, YOU MUST WORK OUT A PLAN TO PROTECT YOUR STOCK OF PETROL AND YOUR CUSTOMERS' CARS. REMEMBER THAT TRANSPORT AND PETROL WILL BE THE INVADER'S MAIN DIFFICULTIES. MAKE SURE THAT NO INVADER WILL BE ABLE TO GET HOLD OF YOUR CARS, PETROL, MAPS OR BICYCLES.

You may be asked by Army and Air Force officers to help in many ways. For instance, the time may come when you will receive orders to block roads or streets in order to prevent the enemy from advancing. Never block a road unless you are told which one you must block. Then you can help by felling trees, wiring them together or blocking the roads with cars. Here, therefore, is the fifth rule :—

- (5) BE READY TO HELP THE MILITARY IN ANY WAY. BUT DO NOT BLOCK ROADS UNTIL ORDERED TO DO SO BY THE MILITARY OR L.D.V. AUTHORITIES.

VI

If you are in charge of a factory, store or other works, organise its defence at once. If you are a worker, make sure that you understand the system of defence that has been organised and know what part you have to play in it. Remember always [that parachutists and fifth column men are powerless against any organised resistance. They can only succeed if they can create disorganisation. Make certain that no suspicious strangers enter your premises.

You must know in advance who is to take command, who is to be second in command, and how orders are to be transmitted. This chain of command must be built up and you will probably find that ex-officers or N.C.O.'s, who have been in emergencies before, are the best people to undertake such command. The sixth rule is therefore as follows:—

- (6) IN FACTORIES AND SHOPS, ALL MANAGERS AND WORKMEN SHOULD ORGANISE SOME SYSTEM NOW BY WHICH A SUDDEN ATTACK CAN BE RESISTED.

VII

The six rules which you have now read give you a general idea of what to do in the event of invasion. More detailed instructions may, when the time comes, be given you by the Military and Police Authorities and by the Local Defence Volunteers ; they will NOT be given over the wireless as that might convey information to the enemy. These instructions must be obeyed at once.

Remember always that the best defence of Great Britain is the courage of her men and women. Here is your seventh rule:—

- (7) THINK BEFORE YOU ACT. BUT THINK ALWAYS OF YOUR COUNTRY BEFORE YOU THINK OF YOURSELF.

HARRY SLANEY'S DIARY

Harry Slaney is not a member of our society but very kindly helped with the recent Toon & Black article. As a result of this he sent us the following diary & a collection of poems, some about his wartime experiences & some about his native South Wigston. Part of this material is featured on the following pages & more will appear in future issues. Thank you, Harry, they remind us of the great sacrifices made by so many of your generation.

Pte Slaney W.H. 4860436
Aged 20 Weight 9st 2J.bs
Medical exam. Ulverscroft Rd. Drill Hall
September 22nd 1939. Passed A1

Nov.15th Jan. 1939 Depot Glen Parva
Feb 13th 1940 Park Rd. Blaby
Feb.23rd Arrived Jericho Palestine.
Mar. Latrun.
June. Gedera.
Sept. Left Palestine.
Sept 9th Arrived Sidi Haneish. Western Desert.
Dec.10th In Action at Sidi Barrani, Bardia, Salum.1940
Feb.13th Left Salum By boat to Alex 1941 (Leave in Cairo)
April 9th 1941 Back up to Mersa Matruh.
May.12th Then Sidi Haneish. Where I recovered a photo left in dugout 1940.
May.14th Back to Alex.
May 15/16th Left enroute to Crete. On Fiji & Gloucester. Both sunk 22nd May off Crete.
May.20 Arrived Crete.1941, German Para's Dropped on us.
May.29th Evacuated on Dido was dived bombed & received direct hit on "B" gun turret. (I was under "A", lucky for me.)
May 31st Tahag camp Egypt, sent cable to Peg (safe & well writing soon)
June 11th Left Egypt bound for Palestine, then Syria.
June 22nd In action against Vichy French. Rough do.
July 12th Armistice.
Sept.17th Left Ras-Baal-Bec (Syria)
Sept.19th Left Bijrut on H.M.S.Hobart, bound for Alex.
Sept.23rd What a year, Jan.1942
Feb.4th Leave in Cairo. Met Millie's Husband George. On route for Syria. Had Battle dress issued thought we were coming home.
Feb.17th On way back to Egypt.

Mar.1st Issued with tropical kit.

Mar.6th Left Egypt bound for Ceylon. On S.S. Neu Amsterdam. Unescorted very fast. Arrived Colombo Ceylon.

Mar.16th year here, mostly training & sport not too bad. Played Rugger against Don Wesson who was in the 11th East African Rifles. I broke my arm new years eve playing against the New Zealanders. Managed to rejoin 2nd Batt. on learning they were leaving for India.

Feb.2nd 1943 Left Ceylon. Arrived Ranchi India, after 7 days on train.

May 11th Arrived Jhinger Gacha. Fell ill sent to hospital Calcutta for 3 weeks.

July 1st Travelled south to Y tank camp Bangalore

Sept. Started Chindit training. 13 platoon. Bren gun support for flame throwers.

Oct. Training at Bi japugn Christmas dinner here.

Jan 17th 1944 Entrained bound for Ledo road

Feb 8th Started long march into Burma. 630 miles in all.

Feb 29th Leap year up to my waist in Chindwin trying to get Mules to swim across

Mar 25th In action at Auktaw. Had bullet through pack. Cpl Flowers killed

Mar 26th Forced march to Indaw. Heavy fighting until 30th March Pulled out under cover of air strike. Last man to leave. H Slaney.

April 30th Flown out from airstrip Aberdeen. Landed overnight at Imphal. Next day D C 4 came in with supplies, asked where we needed to go. Took off in terrible storm, however hours later landed safely at Comilla. Saw Vera Lynn. Sent filmed message to Mum and Ped.

May 5th Six day trip down to Bangalore. Here everyone had Medical check up. Apart from being bright yellow from taking Mepacrine tablets I was OK. Had months leave in Bangalore. Three days of this spent with some others as guests of Maharajah of Mysore.

Fabulous time. After getting back, went to hospital to give blood. Met Lieu. Col. Wilkinson who had been wounded and flown out of Burma, asked how he was, and said I got back without even a scratch. So had to give blood. He said "how noble of you":- Attended Methodist church and met Rev. Hopkins. When I told him I came from South Wigston he told me his brother was minister at Blaby Road, Methodist Church. It's a small world.

Sept 23rd Sailed from Bombay on S S Stratheden back through Suez and Med. Arrived home Liverpool Oct 26th. Sent on leave for a month, got married and went back to rookie training at Moreton Morrell Warwickshire.

Jan 1945 Very ill, after two weeks in hospital, had five weeks in convalescent at Shuckbrough Park

June 1945 Had leave and was sent to Germany to join 1st Batt. At Minden, played in the ruggar team. And had two courses on motors and carriers. Passed both.

Mar 3rd 1946 Left Minden on route for demob at Northampton

Mar 8th Mr W H Slaney aged 27 weight 9st 2 lbs After 6 years and 4 months service

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Colonel T Novis wrote the following reference on my De-Mob Book

“A loyal, willing and cheerful man. Can be relied upon to carry out any job put before him”

“Military Conduct Exemplary”

These are the bare facts of my movements during the war. There are many stories of tragedy, courage, and typical moments of humor from those who helped to keep our spirits up, during the years spent with the 2nd Batt. Then the 1st in Germany. I only need to look at a particular date, to be able to remember them.

Harry Slaney 1989

Now 70½ years old. 50 years on.

These words are written in my copy of the History of the Regiment which I hope my children and grandchildren will treasure.

Up Date Jan 26 / 95.

As I have said I went to Morton Morrell after being repatriated. I was there on V.E. Day & spent the time celebrating with the Post Master & his staff & family in the Village Post Office.

V. J. Day was quite a different story. I had been stationed with the 1st Leicesters at Menden Germany & a few days before we were offered a short leave in Brussels. I went, we all moaned because the windows of the carriages had been blown out by the bombing & hadn't been repaired this turned out to be a blessing. Because we hadn't been travelling far in the dark when we passed through a station a man was waving a Red Lamp & blowing a whistle. I lay on the floor again, where I had been sleeping, when all of a sudden there was an almighty crash. Two trains had on, on the same track. The date was Aug 13th. There were many casualties, but I was lucky to be in one of the rear ~~coaches~~ ~~coaches~~ coaches. I ended up with badly bruised ribs where I had been thrown against the leg of the seat. When we were later in Brussels. I was XRAYED & strapped up. So I was in Brussels for V. J. Day, but you'll see by my pained? expression on the enclosed photo I wasn't too happy. However considering what I had been through during the war. I should have thanked the Lord I was still in one piece.

Marry Slaney

Waiting and Wandering

*Waiting and Wandering
When the day will come
When we will see the glory
Of the setting sun
Over England's hills and valleys
As in the days of yore
Living in contentment
And in peace for evermore*

*Waiting and Wandering
When will come the time
That we will sit beneath the roses
And hear the Church bells chime
Borne on the evening breeze
So infinitely sweet
We will cherish all these moments
When once again we meet*

*Waiting and Wandering
About a day that's new
Living in reality
Of prayers and dreams come true
Knowing all the joys
We never knew before
Sharing our happiness
And love for ever more*

*W H Slaney
10th April 1944
71 Column Chindits
Written in Burma*