

Anniversaries and Victory

June is of course a big Anniversary month - the 15th being 800 years since the signing of Magna Carta, and the 18th, 200 years since the Battle of Waterloo, an event that brought an end to the Napoleonic wars.

In April many of us enjoyed an excellent outing. Bletchley Park born of a war within living memory, was our destination. The decoding and encrypting machines; mathematical and methodical minds, all put to work to speed the ending of the 2nd World War. It must have taken a lot of determination and strength of character (never mind the Official Secrets Act) for the men and women involved, not to share the nature of their work with anyone for over fifty years, and in some cases never.

May 8th was the 70th anniversary of VE Day. The end of May saw a smaller, local anniversary, namely the centenary of Glemsford Methodist Church (see article by Marilyn Nash).

Pure serendipity but while looking for some connection between the Magna Carta anniversary and Glemsford, I found nothing - Clare being the only local connection! What did crop up though were a couple of mentions of Glemsford in an ancient chronicle (12thC.) The chronicle and its contents relating to Glemsford, will be featured in the December issue - some winter reading, but for now, enjoy your summer.

Remember to have a go at writing a piece of local history/interest for your Newsletter, items/articles always needed to fuel four issues a year! Thanks to members who have already contributed or are preparing articles.

Jenny Wears, Editor





Remember these men, named on the War Memorials of Glemsford, who gave their lives in this quarter of 1915.

11th May: Frederick Oakley. Sergeant 2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment. Aged 31 when killed in action in France and Flanders. Buried at Wytschaete Military Cemetery, Belgium. He had been a 'fibre yarn puller', living on Chequers Lane.

14th May: Thomas Pearman. Rifleman with 4th Battalion Rifle Brigade. (The Prince Consorts Own). Killed in action Friday 14th May in France and Flanders. Commemorated on the Menin Gate Belgium.

25th May: George Bradenham/Bradnam. Private in 1st Battalion Suffolk Regiment. Killed in action Tuesday 25th May in France and Flanders aged 26. Commemorated on the Menin Gate, Belgium.

Prior to enlisting he had been a shoemaker, living at Tye Green.

With thanks to Steve Clarke and Martin Edwards (Roll of Honour)

A Waterloo and Glemsford connection?

Very little! Despite trawling through various records at Bury Record Office. A newspaper report and some information to be found at the PRO Kew do, however, mention the West Suffolk Militia and Glemsford in the early 1800s.

The Napoleonic Wars, which finally ceased in 1815 with The Battle of Waterloo, had been a series of wars between France and various European countries, including England and lasted approximately 26 years.

The Bury and Norwich Post, January 8th 1800, reported, "On Wednesday and Thursday last, The West Suffolk Militia passed through Bury on route to Glemsford, Lavenham and Clare".

From Kew PRO, "Certificate of payment of a certain amount to Ann, wife of Christopher Thompson and his family,

as he was now serving as a substitute in the Suffolk Militia in place of Robt. Grimsey of Stoke by Nayland. This was paid by the overseers of Glemsford and orders for the repayment of that amount by the overseers of Stoke by Nayland, to Glemsford, was made on 26th January 1807".

Men ordered to enlist in the Militia, were in certain circumstances, allowed to ask that a substitute be enlisted on their behalf. The Overseers of the Poor then made a payment to the substitute's family.

Finally, an advertisement (for weapons of war), from a Long Melford gunsmith. "Wanted immediately, about 35 loads of sound walnut timber, best prices given. Apply S. Scott. Gunmaker, Melford". From Bury & Norwich Post 6 March 1800.

The Welsh Miner's Strike of 1912 and the Glemsford Connection

It isn't often that the military is called upon to support the civil powers in the event of industrial unrest, but this is what happened to the 2nd Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment, including several Glemsford men in 1912.

The Welsh colliers strike was in progress and the Government of the day, fearful of civil unrest, especially of a conflict of interest between the local police and miners – all from the same small mining communities, called upon the Army to provide law and order if necessary.

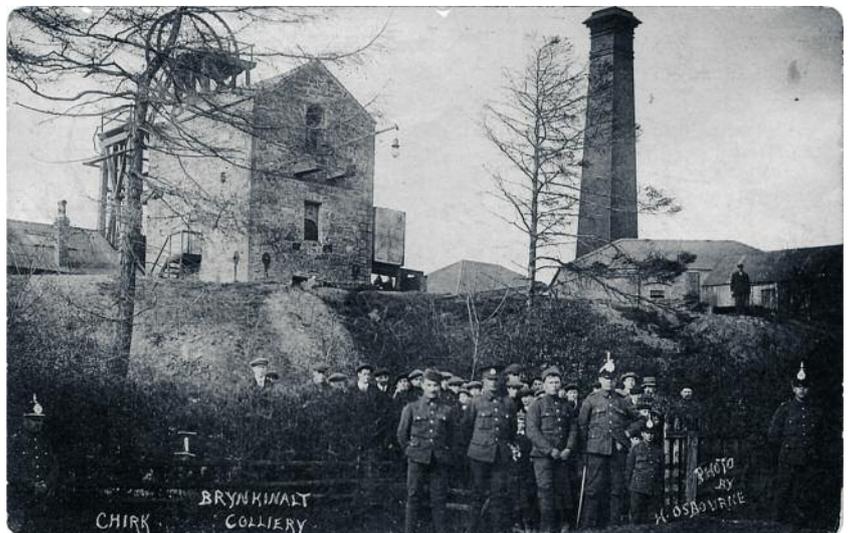
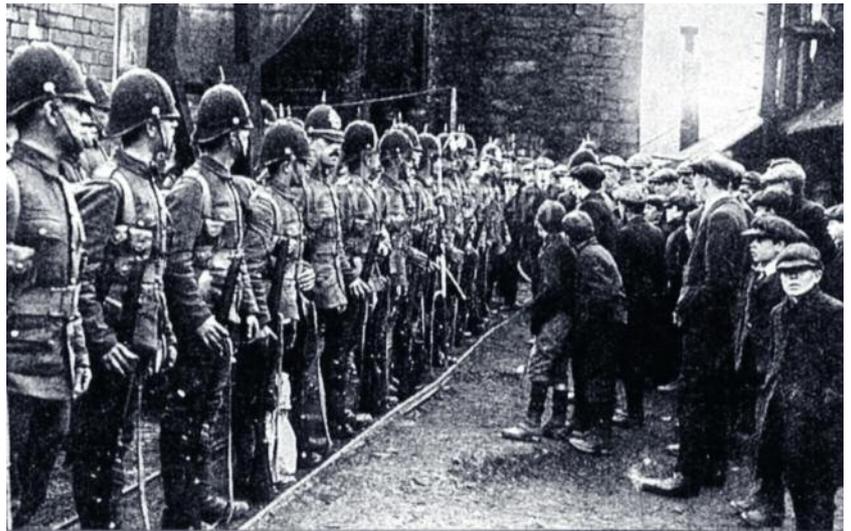
The detailed Army unit was the 2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment, who had recently returned from colonial duties in the Sudan.

They were quickly transported to Brynkinalt Colliery in North Wales and prepared for action. Fortunately the strike was peacefully concluded within a few days and the miners and troops soon returned to their normal duties.

It is said that the relations between the miners and the Suffolk Regiment were of a most cordial nature on their departure. This was due in part to a collection, from the Battalion, to the family of a miner who was killed in an industrial accident.

This concluded a small but interesting episode in our history but it was soon forgotten – being overshadowed by the coming of the 1st World War.

Sid Watkinson



Glensford Methodist Church

Glensford Methodist Church was opened in May 1915, so we are now in our centenary year.

The Primitive Methodists originally worshipped in the chapel off Egremont street (where Greyhound road is now). This was known as Renters Chapel. In 1906 an agreement was signed between Long Melford Congregationalists and the Primitive Methodist Society allowing them to use Glensford Chapel for their services at a nominal rent of £1 per annum.

During the planning process for the new Chapel, the following observations were noted:

- The population of Glensford was 1,500 at the previous census.
- The newest and best homes are on the opposite side of the main road.

Other Churches and Chapels and distances from the proposed site are:

- Hyper Baptist – 100 yards
- Second hyper Baptist 700 yards
- Small congregational 2,000 yards
- Church of England less than 1 mile.

The list of trustees (7 alive, 3 deceased and 1 refused to act) included:

- Joseph Moulton, a member, mat maker from Sudbury
- Joseph Jeremiah Richardson, a member, insurance agent from Cavendish
- Henry Turner a labourer (refuses to act and has left the Church)
- William Bird a Congregationalist, O.A.P. from Cavendish
- John Smith, assistant steward, labourer from Glensford
- Ernest Watkinson, circuit steward, retired grocer from Glensford

- George Worledge (deceased)
- George Joshua Hambling, Congregationalist, schoolmaster from Great Yarmouth
- Two other trustees deceased.

As a point of interest, in the 1881 census Ernest Watkinson (later to be a circuit steward) was living with his parents and five siblings in Workhouse Lane and was a coconut mat maker. According to the list of trustees he later became a grocer. He died in 1926 and there is a memorial to him in the Church.

The building was started in 1914 and was designed by architect Joseph Custerson. The builder was Harry Debenham of Tye Green, son of the deceased Alfred Debenham. Harry could be the older brother of William mentioned on the war memorial as Stephen Clarke's research shows Williams's father is also called Alfred Debenham. The estimate for the new building was £495. The final sum came in at £502. 2s. 7d according to the detailed bill submitted by the builder. The original umbrella stand, which is thought to be the one still existing in the porch, cost 14 shillings.

The building consisted of the main chapel, a vestry and the Sunday school hall. There was also a copper house and toilet outside.

The first baby to be christened in the new church was Bessie Maxim (nee Prentice) who was organist at the church for 75 years from the age of 14. Her nephew Nigel Sandford now plays the organ and her niece Sandra has attended the church for more than 60 years.

In 1925 some minor repairs were carried out by Harry Debenham. The very polite agreement read as follows:

“To Trustees of the Primitive Methodist Chapel, repairs to outside, fences etc.

Gentlemen,

To carry out small repairs, painting etc, to the Primitive Methodist Church Glemsford as per specification August 1925.

I do hereby agree to carry out the above in a workman-like manner for the sum of twenty one pounds sixteen shillings £21.16.0d.

Signed H. Debenham”

Other miscellaneous information:

- Electric lights were installed in 1930/31
- In March 1932 Mrs Jillings rented a space for one in pew three for 6d.

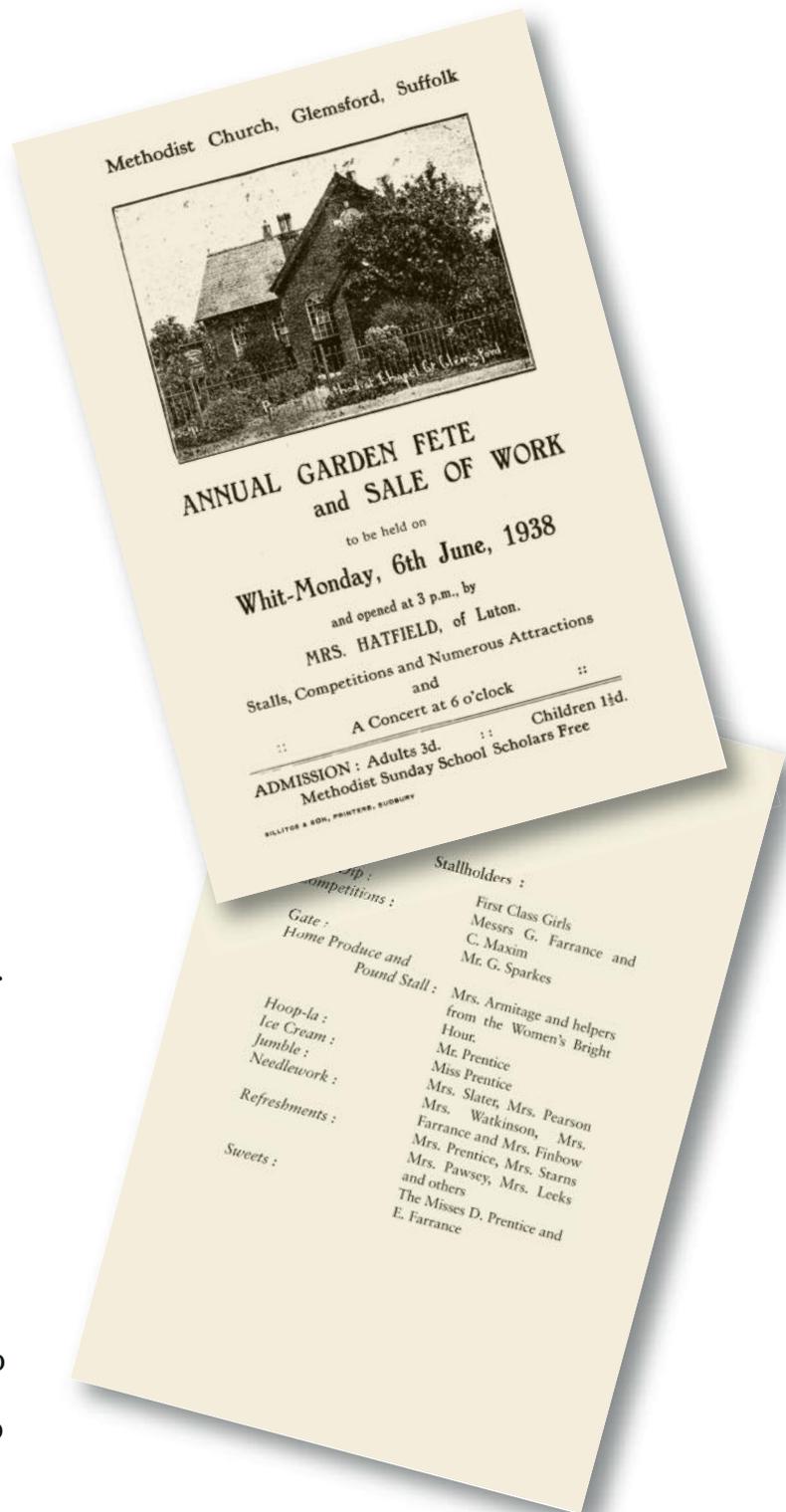
A letter in the 1932 sale of work programme was as follows:

“Our object

With every confidence we commend our sale of work to your sympathetic interest. We make the modest claim of being a real live church and we are doing what we can to fill a worthy place in our village and to contribute towards the enrichment of its common life. Last year owing to lack of accommodation for our Sunday school scholars, our schoolroom was enlarged. Other additions, including classroom, minister’s vestry and kitchen were built at a cost of £400 towards which we had £250 invested. Owing to the splendid efforts of our people we now have a debt of only £90 which we are anxious to reduce considerably at this effort.

We anticipate generous response from all our friends and gifts and donations will be gratefully received.

James Kirby, Minister”



- Purchase and installation of a reconditioned organ 1936 - 1937
- The new toilet block was built in 2005

Marilyn Nash

GLEMSFORD STATION 1943-1951

A CHILD'S-EYE VIEW – Part 3

*Some time ago, Steve Clarke received this material from one **Celia Hall**. It has not been published until now, so with thanks and acknowledgement to Celia, we will be serialising her reminiscences over four editions of the newsletter. Should anyone wish to use the articles for research or a project, please mention both the title and author's name.*

LESS HAPPY TIMES

Of course, life wasn't all fun. There were many times, mainly in the summer, when the track-side would catch fire, set alight by sparks from the engines. Then everyone, myself included, would have to run down the line and beat out the flames – a hot, dusty job.

On one occasion a fire threatened the flax field above our house and I had to be part of a chain passing buckets of water along to put out the flames. Not being very big, it took a lot of effort for me to hold the full bucket long enough to pass it on to the next person. It was a serious fire and we all thought we would be unable to stop it spreading, but eventually a barrier was made between the bank and the field and the fire slowly came under control. It frightened the adults though, something I was not accustomed to seeing.

FEAR OF INVASION?

However, there was another time when my mother and I were terrified. We heard the sound of marching outside our house.

We looked out from behind the curtains and saw a continuous stream of soldiers coming down the lane. We rushed into the next room, which had windows overlooking the station, and saw that they had not gone onto the platform but were passing by the side of the house towards the goods yard. There seemed to be hundreds of them. Their

uniforms were different from British ones and this made my mother panic. She rushed around bolting windows and doors and kept me from going near the windows. We kept very quiet and waited. We knew that my father was on the station with the other staff, but not exactly where they were or what was happening to them.

We waited a long time before my father called to us through the back door. He said that everything was all right and that the soldiers were Polish and couldn't travel until the next day and would camp overnight in the goods yard. This did not reassure my mother at all, but there was no choice but to accept the situation. I was puzzled at the depth of my mother's fear because the soldiers did not look threatening to me.

The next morning my father brought three of them to the back door and they gave me chocolate (very dark and very bitter) and a Polish badge, which I wore for several years (see photograph).

I felt very sorry for those soldiers who had to sleep on the hard flints of the goods yard.

WINTER STORMS

More frightening for me was trying to get down the hill on my way home from school in the blizzard that started the excessive snowfall of 1947. As I turned the corner at the top of the hill, the full force of the blizzard hit me and flung me backwards. I held on to the hedge and tried to creep down slowly. I had to stop often and turn

my back to the snow in order to be able to breathe. I was determined to keep going, but I was making hardly any progress at all. Then I saw my father in front of me. He told me to hold on to the back of his coat and shelter from the wind as we went down. We slipped and slid and slowly got to the bottom – and to my mother who was thinking we'd both been buried in the snow.

Next morning the snow was six feet deep and the hill was blocked, so no school. However, in the middle of the morning we heard a knock on the door and there were my friends Joan and Keith from the village. They had found a way of coming down through the fields. We were astounded that they didn't fall into a deep drift!

AND FLOODS

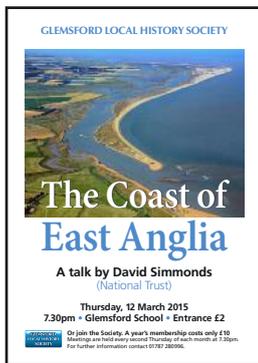
After the snow came the floods, and my father and brother had to rescue people who had underestimated the depth of the water between the two bridges on the other side of the station. It all looked quite comical to me, although it wasn't for those who were thoroughly wet and cold.

AND NOW?

My childhood years at the station were very special because at no time since have I felt as safe as I did then in the middle of a railway community, or as free with the space to roam while still on railway property. I've never fully adjusted to urban living, always feeling hemmed in by too many buildings and missing the wildlife that abounded around us.



GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY News

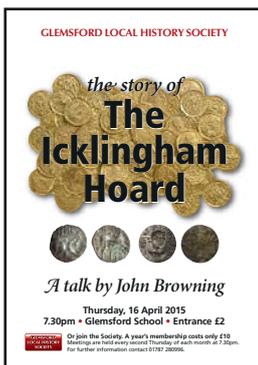


IN MARCH, OUR speaker was David Simmonds, a volunteer worker for the National Trust. He drew a very large audience and introduced his subject by speaking briefly about the Trust, which has existed for 120 years, founded in 1895 by Octavia Hill, Robert Hunter and Rev. Hardwick Rawnsley. The aims are to preserve and protect both areas of natural beauty and buildings of historical importance.

He then took us on an illustrated tour around the coast of East Anglia, of which

742 miles are under NT supervision, from Brancaster to Northey Island. The terrain encompassed tidal creeks, salt marshes, shingle spits, heathland and of course, cliff erosion.

The talk was peppered with relevant literary quotes and historical facts. Sutton Hoo to the ghostly pagodas of Orfordness, via the Battle of Maldon 991AD, all part of a very interesting tour, with inspiration for us to visit and explore the National Trust sites of East Anglia's coastline for ourselves.



OUR APRIL SPEAKER was John Browning, a farmer, from Icklingham and owner of a 55 acre designated Roman site. His subject was 'The Icklingham Hoard' and he told us a fascinating story of treasure seekers rather different from the usual.

As far back as 1877 a rich Roman villa had been excavated on his land and the existence of a Christian cemetery was also well documented. This is Breckland, an area of Suffolk which is basically sandy with flint over chalk; the earth regularly yielded up selections of coins, bones, nails and other small artefacts.

The drought of 1978/79 served to encourage a number of freshly formed bands of metal detectorists to invade his land uninvited and illegally during night hours. Together with police and family members John caught a number of these 'night hawking' groups; in fact between 1979 and 2005 fifty-five people were prosecuted although the court decisions on sentences were often a lottery and any finds quickly disappeared into the ether!

One day a spate of digging signified a real 'hot spot' and suspicions were raised, but not until much later did Thames TV contact John showing him photographs of treasure almost certainly found on his land. The subsequent TV programme exposed a laundering chain, an illegal exporter in Sydney, a number of people 'in the know' but no confessions in court.

Via the British Museum he learnt that most of the treasure hoard, which consisted of a large number of 1st century pagan temple bronze statuettes, had resurfaced in New York, some in the Getty museum including the most valuable piece of a feline creature.

The rest – at least that which is known about – is privately owned by an elderly woman. However, finally, via a long, tortuous and ultimately very expensive route, John has agreement that upon her death the hoard will be returned to the nation to be put in the British Museum for all to see.

THE GREAT EXHIBITION OF 1851 AND THE CRYSTAL PALACE was the subject of our May talk when speaker Geoffrey Kay vividly brought to life the story aided by some remarkably interesting slides.

In the 1800s Henry Cole, possibly inspired by the beauty of the 1789-built Ironbridge in Shropshire, passionately wanted to raise standards of architectural design and to promote the British ability in this field to the rest of the world. His idea of a great, international exhibition held in a building like none other, needed influential people able to raise funds, to which end he recruited the help of Prince Albert amongst others. Albert's keen involvement quickly absorbed his wife, Victoria, who readily provided a temporary site, Hyde Park.

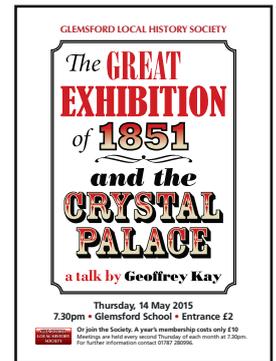
However a really inspiring design was required; many appeared, all rejected, then enter Joseph Paxton, head gardener at Chatsworth House and much used to working in top-of-the-range greenhouses. He heard of the quest and legend has it that his doodled sketch was the blueprint adopted for the greatest, most amazing building ever seen. Made of cast iron and glass it was quickly christened 'Crystal

Palace' and, remarkably, constructed in just ten months.

The Great Exhibition ran from spring 1851 until October attracting six million visits, in addition to raising both crime and birth rates in a London never before so crowded and vibrant! All countries, worldwide, sent exhibits to the Palace; these were of a flamboyant, eclectic mix, many enormous, others completely 'over-the-top' aimed to show off industrial prowess, but the public adored it and it was a huge success, even though loathed by some famous critics!

However this story, as we all know, did not have a happy ending. Following the Exhibition the building was dismantled and re-erected in Sydenham Park where it stood, in splendour, playing host to a number of events, until the fateful night of November 30th 1936 when a huge fire rapidly took hold burning it to the ground. Nevertheless its legacy survives in the Royal Albert Hall, built from proceeds, the Victoria and Albert Museum and, of course, in the name of the famous football team hailing from the Sydenham area.

Margaret King



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, June 11th **A Guided Historical Walk Around the top end of Long Melford** with Julie Thomson
Meet at 7pm in Long Melford Village Hall car park.
The tour lasts about an hour and includes a visit to the Heritage Centre. Donations in box provided would be welcome. Suggest £2 please.

Thursday, July 9th **A Summer Function:**
Meet at the Methodist Church, Hunts Hill, at 6.30pm for a talk about its history by Peter Chubb. Then, no earlier than 7.45pm adjourn to Melton House for refreshments.

Thursday, September 10th **Anne Grimshaw: A Weaver at Waterloo**
(first talk of the new season)



The Morris Men of Little Egypt taking part in the celebrations for the Centenary of Glemsford's Methodist Church

GLEMSFORD
LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

Newsletter | Summer 2015 edition

Annual Subscription: £10.00 **Visitors:** £2.00 per time

We meet on every 2nd Thursday of the month in Glemsford School at 7.30pm.
We welcome your continued support and that of others. Please encourage your friends and neighbours to join us.