



The Friends of DAVENTRY MUSEUM

Newsletter 2018-19

Dear Members

I am indebted to the contributions of our members for making this Newsletter possible. I hope you enjoy reading their items and will feel inspired to write something for our annual newsletter this time next year.

New members are always welcome so please forward this newsletter to any friends who may be interested.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and see you at our AGM on Friday 7th September 2018 at 7.30pm. Followed by a Talk: Food Glorious Food: A History of Eating, Shopping and Food Manufacturing in Northamptonshire from 1837 until now! By Jon-Paul Carr

Best wishes

Angela Squire, Chairman

The first item ahead of our talk on Friday 12th October 2018 about Welsh Droving through Northamptonshire by Bruce Smith has been contributed by our secretary, **Helen Schultheiss**.

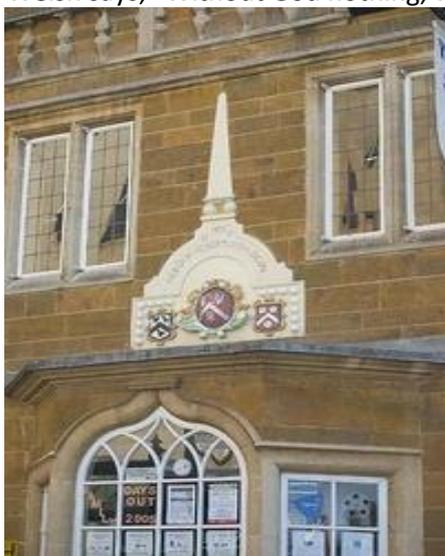
The Welsh Drovers in Northamptonshire

For centuries the population of London's need for fresh meat underwrote a droving industry which at its height saw 220,000 cattle and over one million sheep a year being driven from Wales and the North, into Central London's Smithfield Market, until it was moved in 1880 to the northern outskirts due to pressure of noise, disease and disruption. Droving had Medieval roots with herds of beasts, several hundred - strong were shod with metal shoes. Centuries of travellers encountered huge groups of beasts, sheep, geese and turkeys (wearing leather boots or with tarred feet for protection), being driven to Midlands grazing areas to be fattened up before being sold southwards. The Banbury Lane led into this area and might be reflected in some local names e.g. The Pound in Badby where animals might rest overnight behind The Windmill, where the better off drovers stayed. The tollgate at Newnham (see the Toll-board in Daventry Museum) may have made this route too expensive in time.

The cattle dog of choice was the Corgi, the skilled little "nipper" at an ox's heels. They would often take more difficult routes in order to avoid road tolls, and from accounts in the mid 1800's, Daventry was shown to have the priciest toll-gate (5 shillings), and the most expensive beer! It's rumoured that in Flecknoe at one time, many people spoke Welsh and as late as the 1901 census, a Mr. Chamberlain of Daventry described himself as a "drover". By that time the job would have been moving cattle to the nearest railway station to load on to trains, rather than along drovers' roads. There were way-markers in the forms of three pines, or boulders, or a sharp turn in the road; wide grass verges called "long acres" were used to pasture the cattle along the way.

The drovers were also disseminators of news, who reputedly took the news of the victory at Waterloo into the country.

Young people from affluent families were sometimes sent with the drovers in a cheap version of The Grand Tour – a chance to see the country or travel to London with trusted men. When a Welsh nurse, Jane Evans, went to join Florence Nightingale in The Crimea, she travelled south with the drovers. To help make payments in cash from cattle market sales more secure, The Bank of the Black Ox was founded by a drover, David Jones, in 1799 and continued until bought by Lloyds in 1909. Below is "Welsh Hose" the finest house in Northampton's market square and the inscription in Welsh says, "Without God nothing, with God enough". (www.localdroversroads.co.uk)



Northampton had one of the largest cattle markets in the Midlands and the leather industry established in the Middle Ages was based on this.

Llanwrtyd Wells, Powys, Mid-Wales, has a "Northampton House" and left is the "Welsh House" in the market square, Northampton. Look up on your next visit.

"The Drovers' Roads of Wales" – F. Godwin and S. Toulson

www.localdroversroads.co.uk

Now an item written by the Chairman:

We came, we saw, we remembered

When I arrived at Pozières Memorial near Albert on the Somme, I realised that lots of families have been making their personal pilgrimage at some point over the last five years to visit the grave or memorial of a Grandfather or Great Uncle they never knew; but whose sepia quality photograph of them in a uniform quietly resided on a relative's dressing table.

Those that remembered them alive have long gone and so it has fallen to younger members of families who grew up with the memories of their relative's photograph but little else, to step up and do something for those relatives and to commemorate the 100 years of their loved one's passing.

Everyone along the route had heard it before. "I have come to see my Great Uncle's name on a memorial. He fell and was missing in action 100 years ago"; the taxi driver, the hotel owners, the local barman and even the UK Border officials at Lille Station and Kings Cross.

My Great Uncle, Stanley Spencer May was the oldest son in a family of two sons and three daughters. He was born on 26th July 1899 and he was very close to my paternal Grandmother (his sister) to whom he gave books inscribed with poetry and then signed and dated them. He was in the church choir and she always said he would probably have become a vicar if he hadn't signed up at 18 years of age, but instead waited to be called up, when it might have all been over. The family lived in Holloway, North London and Stanley signed up to the 2nd Battalion Middlesex Regiment. Our very own Gerry Thompson added to the information that we had and provided photographs of memorials, maps of battlefields and copies of company records.

Stanley, with other very raw recruits: "during the night 23rd/24th (April 1918), Battalion moved into front line, in relief of 2nd Bt. Northants Regt."

Then he and his brothers in arms were killed by one of the following:

"At 3.45am the enemy's guns opened an intense artillery and trench-mortar bombardment" and "lachrymatory-gas barrage was put down on the whole divisional front".

"This barrage caused considerable casualties as it continued for about two hours".

"From survivors of the flank companies the following (then) appears to have happened: On the right ... two hostile tanks approached the front firing their machine guns. Smoke shells hid their approach. They then manoeuvred into position from which they could enfilade our trench, causing further heavy casualties. The two tanks were followed by a third and by infantry carrying *flammerwerfer*. Rifle and machine gun fire could not stop the tanks which passed over the front line."

Worse still "the third tank.....turned towards the (support line) and passed right over it, again causing many casualties".

So take your pick which one did for him. Stanley's family were told that "the trench was overrun". Hopefully they never got to see the details above.

The Battalion records go on to record that:

The 2nd Middlesex lost in this action (from 24th to 27th April 1918) 13 Officers and 530 other ranks. In the handwritten records it says "missing 426". Stanley was one of them.

Most if not all those posted as missing on the Somme up until 20th March 1918 are commemorated at Thiepval, a mere stone's throw away from Pozières where those after that date are remembered.

I decided a while ago to make the trip on the 100th anniversary, as if not then, when? But there were a couple of spoilers to overcome. I couldn't get a hotel in or near Albert for love nor money on 24th April – the actual anniversary. It took me ages to work out why. It's the annual Anzac Day and Australians and New Zealanders gather at "their" memorial at Villers – Bretonneux, the battle

where Stanley was posted as missing. The Anzacs recovered all the lost ground in the next few days. So that meant leaving Albert immediately after we had visited Stanley's memorial on 24th April. OK. But then the French train drivers had other ideas after I had made all the arrangements to go via Eurostar and local train from Lille to Albert. Helpfully the train drivers posted a schedule of strike days for weeks ahead, so it did enable me to make some minor modifications. We ended up going to Albert for one night.

Thankfully everything travel wise went smoother than we imagined and from leaving Kings Cross at 9am we were at the Pozières Memorial at 1.30pm UK time. The hotel organised a taxi and in Ted's minimal French and the other's even less English he made us aware that Pozières village was a very short walk away with a bar. It was Saturday 21st April, the start of the lovely summer to come. We stepped out of the taxi and thanks to Gerry's photographs everything was as we expected. I walked through the cemetery to the memorial panels at the back and soon found Uncle Stanley. It was a shock at first as it was exactly as Gerry's photos but just suddenly coming across his name so quickly was like a sudden jolt.



It happened. Look at all these names.



Look around the cemetery and all the graves.

How many more cemeteries are there in an area similar to that bounded by Daventry, Southam, Dunchurch and Long Buckby?

"In the Somme, there are 410 Commonwealth Cemeteries, 22 French Military Cemeteries and 14 German Cemeteries. There are several reasons why there are more Commonwealth Cemeteries than French or German, one reason is that there was no repatriation of British war dead after 1915, and another is that after the war the Imperial War Graves Commission decided to maintain many of the smaller military cemeteries that had been created during the fighting. It was also preferred to give every man an individual burial whereas during the post-war battlefield clearances the French buried most of their unidentified dead in mass graves."

Source: www.somme-battlefields.com/circuit-du-souvenir-lieux-memoire/military-cemeteries

It was amazing. You could see Edward Lutyens' Thiepval Memorial towering over the gently rolling landscape, as he intended, about a mile away.



Going back to my earlier point other families had made this trip and there was plenty of evidence in the form of little crosses, flowers and messages. I left a message saying: "We came, we saw, we remembered."

After about an hour we walked to the village of Pozières and enjoyed a couple of cold beers at the bar which incorporates a museum.

Ted managed to get the taxi man to come and fetch us and I managed to get him to drive past Thiepval. I am glad we did. It got a “Wow” of wonderment from Ted as we rounded a bend in a dip in the road and looked up at it towering above, as if to say “No more. Enough. Peace and quiet will reigneth here forever and birdsong shall though heareth.”

For you Granny. Uncle Stanley RIP.

Here is an item from our committee member, Rita Harding.

When a Cold wind blew on Borough Hill...

Relatively few people are aware that beneath the sheep-nibbled grass on Borough Hill lies a relic of the Cold War – the concrete underground bunker of Daventry post of the Royal Observer Corps constructed to monitor radio-activity after a thermonuclear attack and to give warnings of fall-out.

Only a few years after atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki bringing Japanese surrender and an end to World War 2, Russia exploded their own atomic device, startling Western scientists and prompting a powerful lobby in the United States for rapid development of weapons. The possible dangers of fall-out had become apparent to the US authorities during their tests in the 50's and information was passed to the United Kingdom. In 1954 the first radio-active study was held showing that evacuation was impracticable and dangerous and people must stay in their homes but a warning system on the large-scale continuous monitoring of fall-out was necessary.

The Royal Observer Corps was the favourite with its WW2 network of posts and centres which had passed vital reports of approaching enemy aircraft to Fighter Command and thence to Whitehall. Although the ROC had been stood down in 1945, it had a nucleus of staff and volunteers.

By May 1956 the Home Office had laid down a programme for the siting of underground posts and protected accommodation for centres, together with all the necessary instruments and equipment.

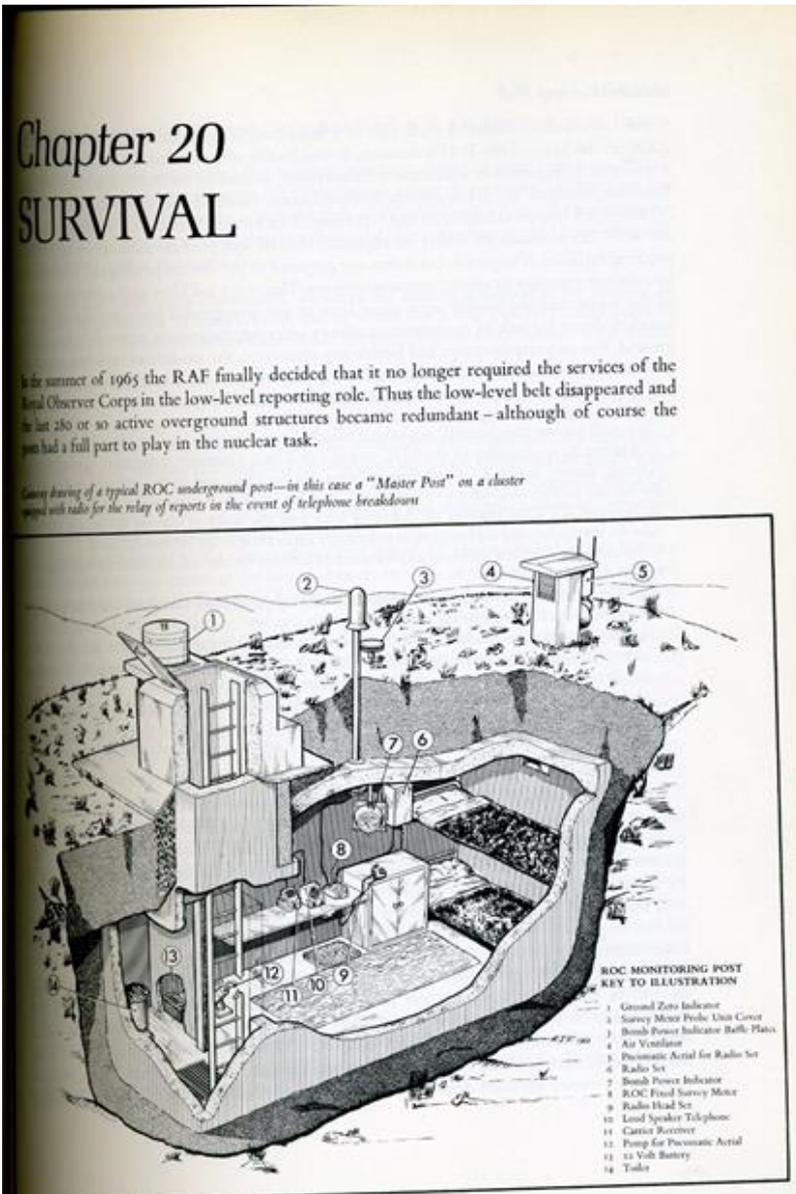
Commencing in 1958 underground posts were constructed, consisting of reinforced concrete protected on top by a 7.5 inch thick concrete slab and 3 inches of earth. A vertical shaft gave access to two rooms at the bottom, (see diagram). Lighting was provided by a battery-powered 12volt bulb.

The post on Borough Hill was constructed in c. 1964, of the basic design. In 1979 a “TRANSITION TO WAR – INSTRUCTIONS TO POST MEMBERS” was issued to be used on receipt of an activation message (over radio or television) that the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation (UKMO) personnel were mobilised. It instructed members to report in uniform, with Identity Cards and those items necessary for existence for two weeks, plus food for one shift. ??? A crew of three would be selected to stay in the post to be ready, if fall-out did occur near a post, to monitor and report their information to their Operations Room. Other post members would be called upon to implement the plans for the safety of the families and off duty personnel.



It is to be devoutly hoped that no-one, be it a great power or terrorist organisation, ever resorts to the use of nuclear weapons (again).

In 1991 the Royal Observer Corps was stood down and it is believed that the Borough Hill post was filled in. All that might be seen today – if the grass is scraped away – would be the metal lid to the shaft.



And last but by no means last here is an item from Angela Adams entitled: **Godincidences!**

David and I were back in Australia this year to visit our son, his partner and our granddaughter. When we were there three years ago I somehow found a website called Weekend Notes which encourages readers to take up various hobbies, go to workshops, concerts, dramatic productions, try new bars, cafes and restaurants and to visit all sorts of parks, gardens, museums, places of beauty and more interestingly for us heritage sites in the Adelaide area. These Weekend Notes have arrived more than once a week during the three years in between our visits and I had "stored" them up ready for this year.

We had visited their National Trust properties in the past but had somehow missed Beaumont House in the Adelaide foothills. Just after our arrival I found out that there was to be a summer garden party in the grounds of the house and we duly went along. Various musical items were programmed in the garden and the first one we heard was remarkably strange. A youngish chap was singing along to a piano that was definitely "out of tune" but all was revealed when he told the audience that he had rescued the piano from an abandoned property in the outback and in fact has a government grant to do just that. What he proposes to do with these pianos remains a mystery and even more so in that he can manage to sing in tune when the piano isn't! We were disappointed that day to find out that the house wasn't actually open then so we planned to return on Easter Sunday when it would be. As normal we were allowed free entry being NT members but were told quite firmly that "one" was expected to buy a "Devonshire tea - \$5 each" to be served after the tour.

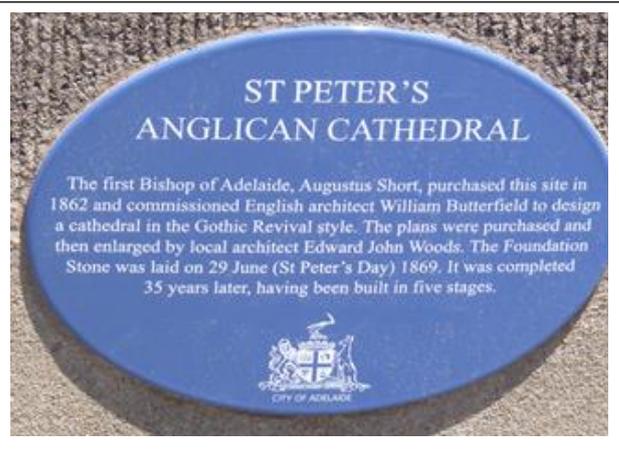
During the tour we learnt about the various different owners of the property including a Samuel Davenport, who we understand is a distant ancestor of our Colin Davenport, and he was responsible for laying out the village of Beaumont. He was followed by the first Bishop of Adelaide, the Reverend Augustus Short who in turn was responsible for the building of Saint Peter's Cathedral, which coincidentally was designed by William Butterfield who re-ordered Braunston Church and designed much of Rugby School. For those of you who are cricket fans and viewers of Test matches you might remember seeing the Cathedral almost next door to the Adelaide Oval!

Well we were enjoying our cream tea when I was reading about the property and squealed with excitement when I found out that Augustus Short before his arrival in Adelaide was the vicar of Ravensthorpe, Northamptonshire! Well some of you already know that my mother and her twin were born there, went to school there and were married in the parish church of Saint Denys. Later I was christened there. It seems that Bishop Short was only too glad to go to Australia because he had problems in Ravensthorpe with the Baptists. Well before my family worshipped at the parish church they had been Baptists and in fact my grandmother had been the caretaker of the chapel. Mum told me that she used to go with her mother when she was cleaning the chapel and was terrified when Grandma cleaned the chandelier immediately over the baptistery pool! It seems that Rev Short had very similar problems in Adelaide and although he did a lot of good work in the city and far beyond particularly with the aborigines, he was to return to England after his retirement. To quote from the guidebook "He had arrived in Adelaide with missionary zeal to lay the foundations of the Church of England in South Australia" My family connections with Ravensthorpe continue in that our older son Nathan met his partner Jo through work in London but Jo's parents live in Ravensthorpe and in fact Jo's father worships at Saint Augustine's here in Daventry!

Life is sometimes incredibly strange and as my friend Dawn Quinn liked to say full of Godincidences!



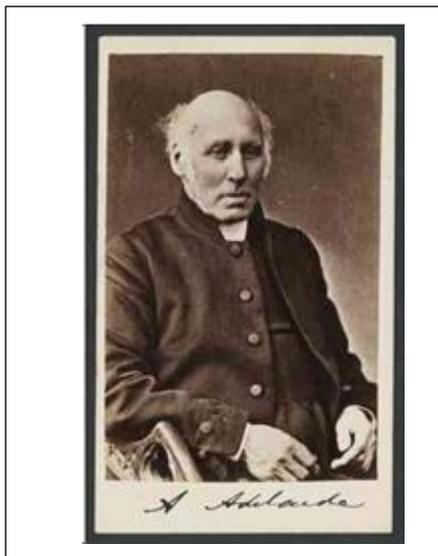
Beaumont House



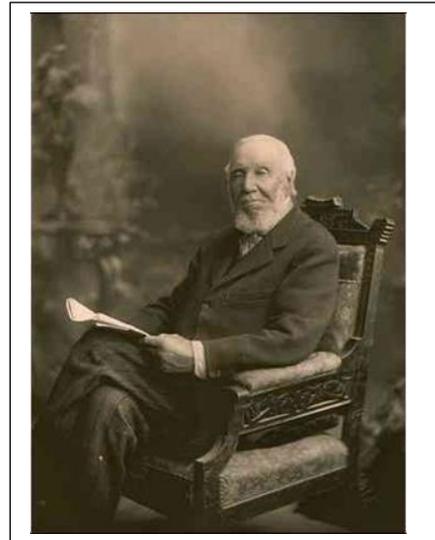
Adelaide Cathedral



Augustus Short: National Portrait Gallery



Rt Rev Augustus Adelaide



Sir Samuel Davenport