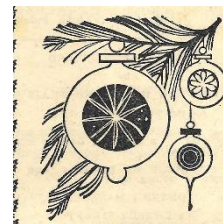


## GREETINGS FOR THIS FESTIVE SEASON from STOWUPLAND LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



Hopefully these festive images will get you in the mood for Christmas shopping. They were scanned from a December 1967 local newspaper advertising two Stowmarket shops. The baubles artwork decorated an advertisement for Gordon Ince which is still trading: whilst the candle was copied from a press advertisement for Le Beverley, which is no more.



As you read this you may still have time to join us for our last meeting of 2024, on **Wednesday December 2<sup>nd</sup>** (7.30 in the Village Hall).



This is our gift to you, a 'freeby' for members and visitors, so bring a friend. We will merrily welcome a trustee to share his knowledge of some of our local hostleries – **Stowupland's Pubs, Past & Present**. Don't worry he won't be emulating the Singing Postman, but do you know where and when this photo was taken?

December's meeting will commence with a very brief AGM. If you like bring your own drinks and/or nibbles to sustain you but we will supply biscuits, tea, coffee or water.

Couldn't join us in December then you will have to wait till 2025 for our next talk – i.e **Wednesday, February 5<sup>th</sup>** when we resume our woodcraft theme. This time we will welcome Ricky Lewis who combines his interest in Suffolk's Medieval past with his skills in carpentry to talk about **the restoration of historic timber framed buildings**.



Jerry continues the wood theme with his review of our October meeting. Don't forget you can hear audio versions of his reviews on our website, look for **Jerry's Jabbas**:-

### **A Look at The Women's Timber Corps or "Lumber Jills" by Nicky Reynolds.**

In October we looked at the above with Nicky providing a slide show of how it began and an explanation for the nick name "Lumber Jills" - it was a take on "Lumber Jacks." This organisation was formed in 1915 and was required to address a serious shortage of timber for the war effort. With men at the front a call was put out by Lord Selbourne for ladies who could 'swing an axe'. This soon brought in volunteers for tree cutting, sawmill work and drivers for transporting the timber to the mills and out to the users. We were surprised to note that a formal Corps was not set up until April 1918. At this point a uniform was introduced, and a more structured organisation formed.

Figures at the time showed wood was in high demand due to the German U-boats successfully restricting allied shipping imports of wood in 1915. The country needed to produce 80% of all its requirements of hard wood and 95% of soft wood. Work for the Lumber Jills was hard and days

long over this period. By November 1918 there were 370 ladies working in the industry, and after the war many stayed on to work in the Forestry Commission, helping with replanting and land management.

Sadly, war came again in 1939 and timber was again in high demand, so by January 1940 the call went out to reform the “Lumber Jills”. Much of the structure was revived from the days of WW1. Similar skills were required axe swinging, driving and saw mills skills. In this area, a camp was set up near Bury St Edmunds with work taking place in the surrounding area. Uniforms were available this time and days were again hard work. Most of the Lumber Jills lived in huddled accommodation with their days beginning at 6.15am, breakfast at 7am, then out on the land to work, usually an eight hour day, with a packed lunch and back in for 10.30pm with lights out at 11pm. There were local social highlights with functions around the area, and a number of American bases around East Anglia to visit.

The demand for timber during both major wars was high and the “Women’s Timber Corps” played a huge part in the production of timber for the war effort. Again, after the Corps was disbanded in 1946, a lot of the ladies stayed on to work the land for the Forestry Commission, Nicky informed us that the “Women’s Timber Corps or “Lumber Jills” were finally recognised in 2000 with a medal struck to recognise their work during both wars and surviving members took part in a march past for Armistice Day in London the same year.

Neil thanked Nicky for the very informative talk, and she took part in a Q and A session. Liz as always was on hand with welcome refreshments. If you get the chance, I recommend this talk as Nicky has a good insight into the subject.

Now returning to Stowupland with a suggestion for a walk back in time, maybe a stroll for Christmas Day afternoon, when traffic noise along the Main Road (A1120) maybe less. I still remember how strange the silence of the early days of lock down seemed.

Whilst we can’t recapture the rural sounds and smells of 100 years ago perhaps, we can use the Rev Leslie Brame’s description of his walk along the Main Road to see the village through his eyes. In his manuscript ‘**As I Remember It**’ he described walking from Stowmarket to his home near Barn Cottages. Although many of his memories relate to his life in Stowupland in the 1920s and 30s he did return home for some visits in later years and some of his recollections are possibly from these later visits so I have added a few notes of explanation.

Whether taking a virtual stroll from the comfort of your armchair or wearing out some shoe leather you may find it useful to have our leaflet ‘A Brief Look at Stowupland’s Heritage’ to hand.

He starts off from where the Stowupland Road from Stowmarket reached Thorney Green Road, (remembering that the B1115 did not exist, and the lane he is using runs alongside today’s allotments - a track that today leads nowhere but then would have led from Stowmarket to a T-junction with the option of going straight on to Thorney Green Road and the Green or turning right – no housing or other roads, just open fields.)

‘We come to a signpost where the Back Road leads to the Back Lane and Gipping, and the Front Road points to Stowupland and Mendlesham. We turn right to get to the Front Road, passing Mill Lane on the right following the road round to the left.’

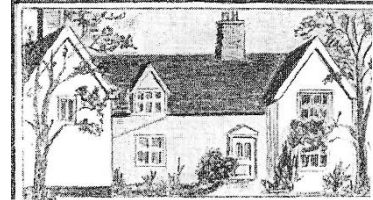
*(Presumably this Mill Lane is Mill Street, with Elm Farm on the corner. There was no road where the A1120 leaves Stowupland today)*

'Apart from the commons, the whole area is farmland, belonging to the farmers who lived on their land. Along the front road comes the Chapel on the left a bit further on the Boys' Brigade Hut, built during the war years as a 'temporary' wooden structure for army use. It had withstood a great deal of rough usage from both owners '



*(The front extension to the chapel has not yet been built. The Boys Brigade had moved their hut from Creeting but it no longer stands).*

*'Then on our way we come to Abbotts Farm (Crown Farmhouse) and the Crown Inn with a good forecourt and a*



*few cottages adjoining.*

*'On the right we pass the cemetery, and on the left an unpretentious village hall, then another group of cottages and the Post Office.'*

*(The village hall was not built until the 1950s and when Leslie was growing up he described many social gathering being held in the Chapel.)*

'The Post office 'was not an imposing building' being one room of a cottage, selling newspapers and stationery. Later it developed all the facilities of a P.P. and later still it became the telephone and telegraph centre. The P.O was set well back from the road; on the way to it we passed a small shoemaker's shop, and adjoining it a large open shed called a "travis"; this harked back to the time when that set of buildings was used by a blacksmith, and horses to be shed used to wait in the travis. The forge was at that time on the site of the shoemaker's shop. I suppose that was called progress. Now Mr Reeves was both shoemaker and postman. He did his rounds on a heavy bicycle with large square carrier baskets back and front for letters and parcels. He worked through two deliveries a day, so he was a busy man.

'Next came the church (Church Of England of course) standing back in an avenue of yew trees, with the disused graveyards all around it, and its copper steeple, now weathered to green, pointing heavenwards, on a square tower with its one bell.'

*(He then left Church Road, turning left),*

'passing through a kissing gate leading to an avenue of lime trees, leading to a footbridge and a meadow behind the church and the school. Then we pass the wide gate opening onto the school yard playground, and the elementary school standing well back, with the headmaster's house adjoining. We are now in Church Walk which takes us up a rise to the hamlet where our family lived. Our family home had as its postal address No1 Church Walk, but it has changed now to No.3 Church Road, to co-ordinate with modern building and traffic developments.

*(Leslie tells us that the group of houses where he was brought up were referred to as a hamlet).*

'All the cottages in the hamlet, fifteen in all, were originally "tied cottages", which meant they were built for workers at the hall farm, a little further along the road. The Hall was, I suppose, originally a kind of manor House, but it was not acknowledged as such in my parents days. The owner of the Hall was Thomas Carter, who therefore became landlord to the inhabitants of all the tied cottages.

'Today we might call our houses "units", but at the turn of the century they were called houses or cottages. Our family lived in the first of a row of three 'houses' under one roof. They were set

back from the road by about a chain, in a row parallel to the road. The fronts and backs of the house were built in brick, but the ends of the block were made in lath and plaster, pebble dashed on the outside. The roofs were slate, and did not need such a high pitch as thatch. Each house had a brick chimney, with three flues in each. All the front doors were fitted with letter-boxes, used by the postman, and the paper boy in the 1930s. This block of two-storied houses had iron window frames with casement lights, so paintwork was minimal. The paint of the front doors added a dash of colour, reflecting the wish of the resident of each unit.

‘Separated by a wide strip of garden, including Uncle Happy’s fowl yard, the next block of three cottages stood at right angles to the road. A path ran from the road along one side of *the block and gave access to the three houses. These were probably older than the other blocks, being built in oak timbering with plaster between the studs. They were two-storied dwellings, with a steeply pitched thatched roof, topped by rather stumpy chimneys and chimney pots. This meant they had only one flue, and consequently just one fireplace in each house.*

‘Moving along up the footpath by the road, we find a stone wall, running right along the three large garden plots and the next block of three houses, up to a wide carriageway leading to the back of the next two blocks, and continuing up beside the carriageway. That block was the most imposing of all our four blocks, probably because it was the last to be built. It was taller than all the rest, made of red brick and tile roof, with full height on both floors. These houses had sash windows, so the glass panes were larger than those with casement windows. The road sloped gently upwards, so I suppose these houses were at the highest point of the Uplands of Stow, apart from the Hall, which stood on a slightly higher rise.

‘Moving on to the last block, we find the wall continued, down the side of the wide cartway, and along the public footpath till we come to a pond, which collected water from two ditches and stood stagnant until the cottagers used it up to water the gardens in dry seasons. This block of six dwellings was set further back than the three and was covered by a long thatched roof with one brick chimney for each house, and had weatherboard sides preserved with brown creosote. The windows were casement style, with small leaded panes, giving the cottages a quaint look. They were called the “Barn Cottages” and it was easy to see why. The building was originally a very large barn which had been adapted to make six cottages. The builders had squeezed in an upper storey for bedrooms, all of which had sloping ceilings, making it difficult for adults to stand upright near the windows. Certainly ‘quaint’ would have better described the barn Cottages than ‘comfortable’.

We will leave Leslie and the 1920/30s for now, though maybe return to his memories of Stowupland at some point in the New Year.

**DOWN MEMORY LANE** – my thanks to one of our members for sharing her father’s school photo from the 1920s. As well as a very smart looking class of 12 year olds we now have a photo of Mr Bramhall. Something for another time but for now do you remember your school panto’s?



These 3 elves - Alex Love, Steven Woods and Tony Calthorpe - took part in Stowupland County Primary School’s panto’ of 1967. The local press carried a full page coverage on December 22 with 7 photos showing the children who took part. They also carried adverts for the Seasonal Gifts that local shops, such as Scarff’s, Gordon Ince, Le Beverley and L.H Juby Ltd had in stock.

Have you seen the dedication to Alex Love over the Bus shelter on the corner of Trinity Walk?

STOWUPLAND LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



### **Who walked the paths you walk?**

You don’t need to ‘*know*’ history to join SLHG !

We do all the hard work, so you don’t have to!

**If you have any queries about Stowupland’s past or our meetings,**

**Please contact Jerry Voden on 01449 703717 or [voden@btinternet.com](mailto:voden@btinternet.com)**

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