GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
NEWSLETTER
Free to members, 50p where sold
AUTUMN 2014

A Hundred Years On

This first newsletter of the new season has, not unexpectedly, some articles relating to the First World War. In the Spring issue, Robin asked us to 'share our research with others' and that is what you have done. The WW1 experiences of two Glemsford men were given to the Society to display at the Glorious Glemsford weekend. One of these is included in this issue with the other to follow in the next edition.

The names of those who did not survive the 'Great War' are listed on Glemsford's two war memorials, and they will be remembered in the newsletters of this centenary period.

At St Mary's Fete, in June, a member of our History Society was asked a question by a visitor to Glemsford. It related to local history and an address; the questions and answer can be found within.

And finally a series about Glemsford Railway Station, written by Celia Hall, is included in the newsletter. The first installment to be followed by another three.

On the closing pages you can read about those meetings you may have missed and details of forthcoming events.

Finally, I hope that you, the members, will continue to contribute articles, information, or snippets relating to Glemsford, its history and its people and so ensure the continuation of a newsletter that is both informative and enjoyable. (It's useful to have a little stock of items!)

Jenny Wears, Editor

GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Chairman's Comment

Our Local History Society has now been in existence for well over 20 years, and I'm pleased to be able to say, that as yet it shows no signs of slowing down.

The Society itself may well be seen as an entity in its own right, but really it is made up simply of a large number of people, who of course have a common interest, but who also clearly enjoy each other's company.

Among this group are some who are happy to contribute even more of their time and effort in promoting that sense of happiness and well-being.

Among the foremost of these for many years has been Robin Ford who unfortunately told us during the Summer that he wished to step down from further active involvement.

Robin has been a member of the Society since the dawn of time, and has been serving as a Committee member for the past thirteen years.

What we know of Robin is that, despite his gentle and unassuming manner, his contribution to the Society has been both generous and reliable in so very many ways throughout his time on the Committee.

His erudition on almost any subject, and his personal acquaintance of almost every learned person in Suffolk in the areas of History or Natural History (his primary interest) have been of great value to the Society, as has his editorship of the Newsletter for the past five years or so.

But it has been his willingness to contribute also in so many less glamorous ways as well, that has caught our attention.

We've all enjoyed his regular supply of tea and coffee which he worked to provide after every meeting, while we just chatted away and enjoyed the chocolate biscuits (and all this at his own expense despite our efforts to repay him).

Similarly, when we needed a digital projector, he always seemed to find one for us, again at his own expense as it later transpired. And when we were short of a Speaker at an AGM, who would always be the first to step forward and help out.

And surely no-one will forget that while we enjoyed the hospitality of our President at Christmas, gathered around the warmth of the log fire, that it was Robin out in the wind and rain with torch and Hi-Vis jacket helping us to park in the unfamiliar surroundings.

The success of the Society may well be said to be more than just the sum of its parts, but no-one has contributed more to that than Robin himself.

Robin now needs the time to support his family, and to pursue his primary interest of Natural History, including as I understand it in his Stewardship of Cornard Mere.

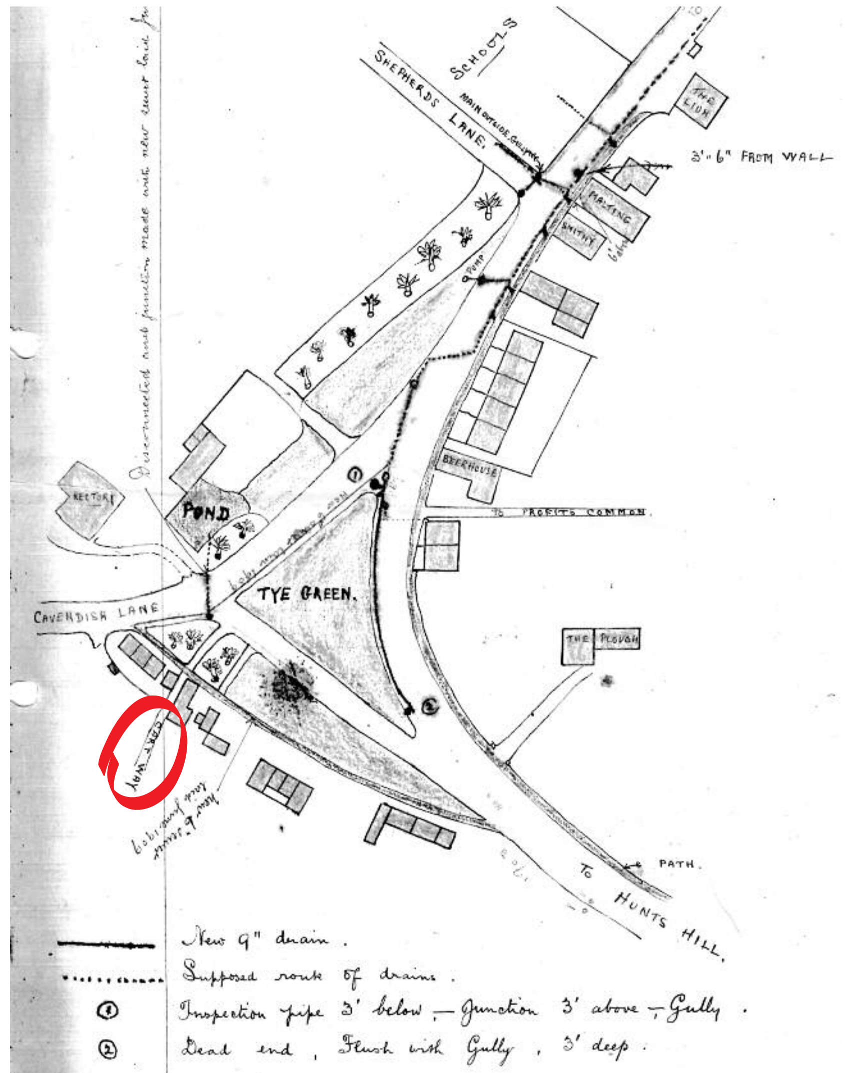
We wish him well in everything he is trying to achieve, and thank him for his constant contribution to our Society, in view of which, we have been pleased to offer him Honorary Membership of the Society, which we hope he will be able to utilize by visiting us whenever he can.

Patrick Currie

The question asked, relating to local history, was the whereabouts of "Woodfield Alley"? As it turns out, Woodfield Alley changed its name every decade!

1871 C/R it was Tye Green Alley; 1881 Woodfield Alley; 1886-1909 it was entered on a drainage surveyor's map as 'Cartway'. Then for some reason it became known as 'Shitpot Alley'!

This footway leaves Tye Green, between Ash House and Patches, leading to fields known as Woodfield Allotments, Little Woodfield and Middle Woodfield.



Of the two men with Glemsford connections to die in the First World War, in 1914, only one of the following is on the village memorials.

William Arthur OAKDEN, was born in Camberwell,Surrey, but lived in Glemsford. He was a Private in the 1st Batt Royal Berkshire Reg and died 14th November 1914 and is commemorated on the MENIN GATE at Ypres.

Ernest W BROWN, this name is on both the public and church memorials. He was born in Glemsford and died on Sunday 6th December 1914. A rifleman of the 3rd Batt, Rifle Brigade, Price Consorts Own. Unfortunately, there is some difficulty in knowing whether he was the E.W. Brown of Plum Street or Angel Lane.

Sid Watkinson
with thanks to Steve Clarke and Martin Edwards (Roll of Honour)

Bernice Victor Goodey

A Glemsford serviceman injured in WW1

My great uncle, Bernice Victor Goodey, suffered a serious head injury while serving in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), in 1916. We still have the official letters addressed to his father, which tell their own story. They are now frail and yellowed, but nearly 100 years later you can still imagine the anguish they must have caused.

Bernice, then 21, was Walter and Jessie Goody's only son, born in 1895. The couple's first child, a boy named Hessel, died in infancy.

Walter and Jessie ran the Weavers Arms, a beer house in New Cut. They also had two daughters, Gladys, born about 1898, and my grandmother, Elvira, born 1900.

After the outbreak of the Great War, Bernice, like so many of his former class-mates at Glemsford School, joined the Army. He enrolled as a private in the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

Bernice had left Glemsford to get work before the war and was shown on the 1911 Census as a pageboy in a private household in Gorleston, Norfolk.

Army form B104-80B

Bernice's parents' preference for unusual first names has helped research, narrowing down search results considerably.

The first alarming letter to arrive at the Weavers Arms was from the War Office. A standard C2 Casualties form said Pte Goodey was listed as "dangerously ill" with GSW – gun shot wounds – on a casualty list dated April 27th, 1916. More details from the Middle East were promised, as and when available.

An agonising wait passed until the arrival of Army form B104-80B, dated May 16th, from the Infantry Record Office. Pte Goodey was still on the dangerously wounded list, but he had been moved to the comparative safety of the Persian Gulf.

Three days later came better news, on another B104-80B form... "he is reported by telegram to be out of danger". Almost a month after that a postcard arrived with a June 19th Southampton postmark. This was Army Form W3229, pre-printed with "I have just arrived at..." and filled in with the name of a military hospital on the south coast. On the back were printed details of how family members could obtain a reduced price rail ticket, for one visit only.

Bernice had made it to ward 36A Surgical, of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, near Southampton. This was one of the biggest military hospitals in Britain at the time, with a total of 2,500 beds – many in Red Cross huts that had been built in the grounds to accommodate the growing numbers of casualties.

The family learned that part of his skull had been shattered by gunshot. Surgeons, who were becoming ever more experienced in dealing with devastating injuries, repaired the damage by inserting a metal plate into his skull. Not only did Bernice recover, he went back into Army service.

British Army WW1 medal records show he transferred to the Suffolk Regiment.

Following the war, Bernice went to live and work in Cambridge, returning to Glemsford infrequently. In 1926 he married Clarice Oakman in Cambridge, they did not have any children. Bernice worked as a Porter at Queens' College and his death, at 74, was registered in the Huntingdon district in December 1969.

Glenyse Day

Hidden Gems

In the process of researching our family history I wanted to discover more facts about my maternal grandfather who died in an accident in 1902. Six years later my grandmother married the policeman who had visited her to break the news. Many years later relatives said to me "You do know that your grandfather was probably murdered, don't you?"

William Stephen worked for the Port of London authority. He had been suspicious of some activities and had returned at night to investigate. It was stated that "a box had fallen on his head". He died of a fractured skull at the age of 23. There was a police investigation but not enough evidence to prove an attack by anyone.

This motivated me to look for police records, with no success. After that it seemed logical to study some local newspapers to see if there were any accounts of the incident, so we paid a visit to Colindale newspaper archive.

We looked at the London Evening News for March 1902, and as I am very easily distracted, I went on to read some of the interesting bits in one of the January issues.

My reason for writing this article is to make you aware of the useful and fascinating items to be found buried in these old neglected archives. When my father travelled to London every day he always bought this newspaper on his way home. It dealt with all the news but many other items were informative and humorous.

In 1902 there were reports of the Boer War on the front pages. In January of that year we found: A Miss Dorothy Catherine Draper died in the USA. Aged 95, she was said to be the first person ever to sit for a photographic portrait – she only had to sit still for about six minutes!

Back in England, there was a smallpox epidemic and by January 30th a thousand cases had been reported, seventeen from Stepney.

Another article was headlined "Who shall control London's water-supply?" Unfortunately I didn't stop to note down that detail!

A Dr Arnold had died aged 70, he was the organist at Winchester and had been a pupil of Samuel Sebastian Wesley. (This is not Arnold of Rugby.)

The March copy of the paper gave us several more tit-bits. The price of coal was up 1d a hundredweight due to the very cold weather. There was a letter commenting on the size of girls' feet, it is assumed they were getting noticeably larger! A more momentous statement said that it was being proposed that there should be an electric railway between London and Brighton. Lastly, if one was so minded, a mummy could be purchased for the outlay of between £5.10s and £6. I was amazed at the variety of tales, but also feel that it gives a vivid picture of what was going on at the time. The newspaper archive is one that deserves to be delved into a lot more often.

PS. Unfortunately Colindale archive closed in Nov.2013 and is in the process of moving. Further details can be found on the internet.

Shelia Willmoth

GLEMSFORD STATION 1943-1951

A CHILD'S-EYE VIEW

Some time ago, Steve Clarke received this material form 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.*

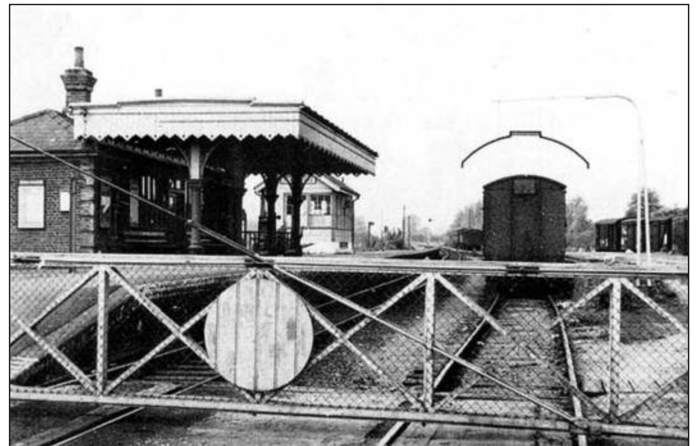
AN ARRIVAL

I was five years old when I arrived at the station with my parents, Charles and Mary Turner, and my brother Peter, who was 15. It was an icy February day and we found that the inside of the station house was colder than outside. It took days for the one kitchen range to warm the house enough for us to take off our outdoor coats. This coldness was probably partly caused by a crack down one wall in my brother's bedroom through which we could see daylight. Later we were told this was the result of a bomb being dropped behind the house. It was not a good start.

THE SIGNALWOMAN

However, things began to improve for me once I could begin to explore the station and surroundings. My first surprise was to find that we had a signalwoman rather than a man. The staff at our previous station, Worstead, in Norfolk, were all male, so I was pleased to see a young woman here. She had taken the place of a man who had been called up into the army. Her name was Lily Farrance and she was a war widow, which I found terribly sad. We took to each other immediately and I spent a lot of time with her in the signal box over the next two years. Then the war ended and she had to leave to allow a man to take the job.

The signal box was fascinating – bells rang, levers were pulled and I could look down on the passengers waiting on the platform and watch the tiny branch trains pull in and stop just outside. The drivers and firemen soon got to know me and Lily would hand me the tablet (giving right of way to the train on the single track) to hand to the firemen. She told me to say "Right o'way to Clare" as I did so, though I had no idea what it meant and just repeated it parrot-fashion. This always caused amusement for some reason.



On winter evenings, Lily cooked cheese on toast for my tea on the black stove at the end of the signal box and I enjoyed eating it at the table overlooking the platform where I could watch what was going on.

THE STATIONMASTER'S OFFICE

My father's office was not such a friendly place. If a train were late there was much bell-ringing and urgent telephone calls on a large black wind-up telephone and messages tapped out in morse code. I kept in a corner while this was happening. My father took great pride in all 'his' trains being punctual, constantly taking his gold watch out of his waistcoat pocket to check the incoming train times and ensure that the outgoing trains left to the second. He was formidable if anything went wrong. His clerk must have found him difficult to work for.

GANGERS AND SHUNTERS

There were, of course, other staff on the station. A group of gangers 'lived' beside the track in a hut made from sleepers, with a thin chimney poking ▶

out of the roof to take the smoke from their stove inside. Their job was to inspect the rails and track for faults and remedy them. They had a long distance of track to look after and to travel to the farthest points they used an ingenious type of trolley. This consisted of a wooden platform on wheels. Poles could be attached to two of the wheels and by moving these poles up and down all the wheels could be made to move. The faster they worked the poles, the faster the trolley would move. I longed to travel with them, but it was considered too dangerous. I could only watch them working close to the station. They moved along the track tapping the rails to determine by the sounds given whether anything was wrong.

The shunters, who arranged the goods trucks into the required formation for a particular train, were highly skilled in the way they went about doing this. They would alter the points to enable trucks to be moved from one track to another, then the shunting engine would 'nudge' a truck down the track towards a second one. A shunter would stand by this truck and calculate the exact moment to lift its coupling chain and drop it over the hook on the first truck. They continued until the whole arrangement was complete. I'd watch this for hours.

MIXED FREIGHT

All kinds of goods travelled to and from the station – grain, sugar beet, coal and livestock. On one occasion a pony arrived and the farmer who had come to collect it put me on its back and sent it off down the lane and over the bridge with me clutching its mane and trying not to fall off. I'd always loved horses but it was the first and last time I rode one without a saddle and bridle.

PORTERS AND CARMAN

The porters, who had a tiny room on the platform, were kept busy all day. They opened and closed the crossing gates, carried passengers' luggage to and from the trains and kept the coal fires going in the ticket office and waiting room. It was their job to paint the edge of the platform with the right-angle shaped brush and maintain the station's gardens. This was deemed very important because all the stations on the line competed each year for the 'Best-kept station' prize.

The last member of staff was the carman who drove the station lorry carrying goods to and from the station. I regularly had lifts to the village with him.

TRAVEL BY TRAIN

Trips on the train were always fun in the single carriages with their leather straps to open and close the windows, landscape pictures on the walls above the seats and a mirror in which passengers would check their appearances before leaving the train.

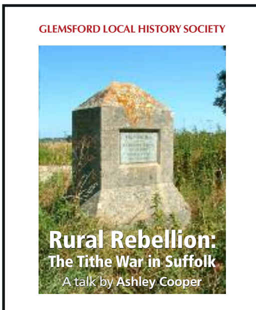
Less comfortable, but exciting, were the times I was taken onto the footplate of the goods engines working in the goods yard. The cold of the wind coming in contrasted with the intense heat from the firebox as the fireman stoked it up. I bounced around clinging to anything I could find to stop myself falling out. (No health and safety rules then.)

THE COMMUNITY

I knew a great many people because of living at the station. Besides the staff I became friendly with all the passengers and each year my father arranged for me to sell flags for the railway benevolent fund because he knew that no one would refuse to buy a flag from me!

In the village I was known as the "stationmaster's daughter", which meant that I had to behave myself because my father would have been informed quickly had I not done so…

GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY News



FOR OUR MAY MEETING we welcomed back popular historian Ashley Cooper who spoke with humour and insight on a little known subject 'Rural Rebellion: The Tithe War in Suffolk'.

Peppering his talk with references from literature, poetry and historic accounts, Ashley said that the paying of tithes dated back to Saxon times when records show the tithe 'rule' of one in every ten sheaves of corn being paid to the local rectors. This evolved to include livestock, wool, non-cereal crops and garden produce as well.

Suffolk became the focus of rural rebellion because from Norman times it had been inhabited by many farmers and landowners – in 1066 it was the second most populated part of England, housing 7460 freemen. No surprise then that 300 years on this yeoman class was much involved in disputes arising from the Peasants' Revolt and the richness of the wool industry.

Following the Reformation, lay tithes were introduced and these could be bought to produce an annual income for some. Ashley quoted many unjust cases which showed that tithes were forever contentious reflecting badly on the behaviour of the Church of England and many of its incumbents, Simon of Sudbury amongst them (and we know what happened to him!)

From 1800s, slowly but surely, rebellion began to ferment; wealth drained from the area; farmers mounted protests. Hardly surprising, when in one village a farmer with just 127 acres saw his tithes disappear into the rich coffers of King's College, Cambridge!

By the 1930s the depression, the drop in wheat prices and the acres of derelict land -all were factors leading in 1936 to a huge march to London by Suffolk farmers. Finally logic prevailed; the payment of tithes was amended and wound up completely by 1976.

THE JUNE EVENING VISIT for a tour of Little Hall in Lavenham was most interesting and one to be recommended.

Little Hall is a timber framed medieval hall-house built in a characteristic East Anglian style, Parts of it date from the 14th century, the rest from the 15th and 16th, with the final addition in the 17th century of a long wing.

It boasts some amazing features including original flooring, a cross screens passage, some beautiful period furniture and, on the first floor, a fine crown-post upholding massive beams which still show evidence of soot deposits from open hearth fires. Its setting on the market square is further enhanced by a lovely country garden.

Owned for many generations by the wealthy Causton family-wool merchants, clothiers and farmers it was not until prosperity waned that the house took on a somewhat different role being subdivided into six separate tenements and, as the 1851 census reveals, lived in by 20 inhabitants.

Following WWII when the hall played host to evacuees, it was bought and restored to its former glory by the twin brothers who subsequently bequeathed it to their friend Reginald Brill head of Kingston School of Art when it was used for many years as a hostel for art students.

Little Hall now belongs to the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust and it seems its future is assured. Well worth a visit!

IN KEEPING WITH recent tradition it was decided that our July meeting should take the form of a guided walk concentrating on times past before we retired to Melton House for the annual summer party.

So it was that on a dull and drizzly evening, as unlike the perceived idea of July weather as possible, (but utterly typical for GLHS 'summer' events!) I met up with a hardy bunch of nigh on 30 members, umbrellas at the ready, waiting patiently at Greyhound Road.

It was obvious from their comments that 'the show must go on' and thus I commenced my guided walk, describing the position and nature of former Glemsford shops as far as my memories allowed.

Dodging the showers while taking some time in discussing and supplementing own efforts, we finally arrived at our destination more than ready for food and drinks! As ever we were aptly rewarded and our thanks go to Patrick and Pauline for all the hard work and preparation required in hosting this event again.

I am sure it was thoroughly enjoyed by all members and visitors who attended and it made a fitting ending to our season – even if waterproofs were again much in evidence!

RON MURRELL'S TALK in September on William Corder and the Red Barn Murder drew a large audience who keenly appreciated his very erudite re-telling of the tragic, macabre story.

Young Maria Marten, daughter of a lowly-paid mole-catcher, lived in a humble Polstead cottage and following a spell in service, where she saw how the other half lived, was forced to care for her younger siblings after her mother's death.

However Maria was far from the virtuous maiden portrayed in later, hugely popular Victorian books and melodramas. In fact her flirtatious promiscuity resulted in two illegitimate children by her early 20s.

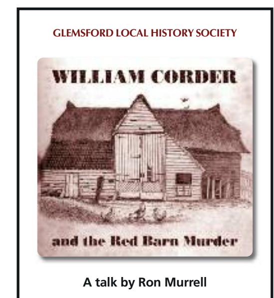
Peter Matthews, the father of the second, was able to give her the fine clothes she coveted and a taste of London high-life plus a substantial annual allowance for his son's upkeep, a financial carrot which tempted her next lover, William Corder, an intelligent scholar with a quick yet cunning mind.

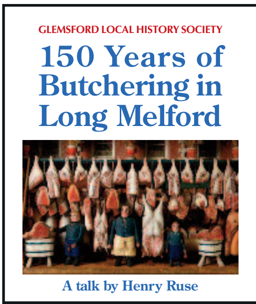
Corder's family were yeoman farmers owning 320 acres and living in the 'big house' in Polstead. Maria, still eager to raise her social standing, was soon pregnant once again and hoping for marriage. Sadly the baby died, but still Maria pursued William meeting him for secret trysts in the Red Barn, so called for its location against the red rays of the sun.

In May 1827 following such a tryst, Maria disappeared. William answered subsequent queries with stories of his marriage to Maria and a house in Ipswich. Flash forward to 1828 when Maria's stepmother, following dreams of Maria's murder and burial in the barn, persuaded her husband and friends to investigate. Using his mole-catcher tools to prod and dig, all too soon he found the body of his daughter.

Corder, by then married, was quickly found, charged and ultimately hung in August at Bury St. Edmunds jail, confessing at the 11th hour to the shooting of Maria. Reputably crowds of up to 20,000 attended the hanging which was slow and gruesome. Inches of the rope were sold for a guinea a piece and the body was dissected for medical purposes, while the skeleton became a hospital teaching item until 1947.

Today you can see all the ghoulish relics in Moyes Hall Museum and do visit Polstead to find the Corder house and graves, plus Maria's cottage (now very gentrified!), but unfortunately not her grave (souvenir hunters desecrated two gravestones) or the barn which succumbed to a 19th century fire.





IT WAS GOOD to welcome new members and a number of visitors in October when local butcher, Henry Ruse, spoke about his family's involvement in 150 Years of Butchering in Long Melford.

In his really engrossing and humorous talk Henry told us that it was 1848 when his great-great-grandfather first opened a shop in Cavendish, to be followed in 1860 by great-grandfather renting the present shop in Long Melford, buying it some 18 years later for just £400!

Following generations of the Ruse family, greatly helped by one Ambrose Jones, continued to run the business; often surviving widows were in charge!

Back in the 19th century animals were kept on adjoining land, slaughtered in the slaughter house frequently and sold to customers who habitually shopped each day. There was no refrigeration and meat had to be as fresh as possible.

While fat, suet and meat on the bone were much in demand for added goodness, other meat was salted for preservation and in summer pork was off the ration. By the 1920s cork-lined zinc ice-boxes were available which helped ease the problem.

Henry showed us some old slaughter instruments including knives, bolts and the gruesome pole axe and described the immense skill required to wield such tools and to understand the various ways of killing different animals. Happily today, much improved far more humane methods are used in the slaughter house which is, I believe, the only remaining one in Suffolk.

Butchering, like any successful enterprise, has to move with the times as life-style and fashion dictates. In recent years Ruse's shop has undergone a complete revamp and in adapting to changing tastes now stocks much leaner meat, minced lamb, many chicken cuts plus a huge variety of cooked meats, flavoured sausages and burgers together with a large delicatessen section.

I doubt if Henry's forebears would even begin to recognise the place!

Margaret King

Change of Opening Hours at West Suffolk Records Office – Bury

Mon - Tues: 9.30 - 4.30

Wednesday: Closed

Thurs - Sat: 9.30 -4.30

FORTHCOMING **EVENTS**

Thursday, November 13th	**Annual General Meeting** Michael Copp: The Poetic Response to World War 1 (A commemorative talk for the Centenary)
Saturday, December 13th	**President's Evening** at 'Chequers'. (Members only)
Thursday, January 8th	**Liz Trenow** (local author): For the Love of Silk – A Sudbury family's 300 year silk-weaving history
Thursday, February 12th	**Nick Sign:** Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni
Thursday, March 12th	**David Simmonds** (National Trust): The Coast of East Anglia
Thursday, April 16th	**John Browning:** The Story of the Ickingham Hoard
Thursday, May 14th	**Geoffrey Kay:** The Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Crystal Palace

GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter | Autumn 2014 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.