

LILLINGTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The 2021 Easter Challenge

We invited readers to choose one of these three images of Lillington and to use it as the prompt for either

- A memory suggested by the image
- A fictional story based on the image
- A poem.

Lillington School Clock

Crown Way

Leamington and Warwick from the
Campion Hills



LEAMINGTON AND WARWICK FROM THE CAMPION HILLS

Time was from Lillington
That Warwick could be seen -
The castle, church and riverside
With pastures vernal green,

But now from level higher ground
That sight is all obscure
Since housing walls stand upright
And views like this are fewer.

Yet one position now remains
From where to see this sight
And that is from St. Mary's tower
Ascending to its height

Which discloses the skyline
From stony battlement
Across the vale to Warwick
Where kings and war lords went.

Graham Cooper



EGG ROLLING ON THE CAMPION HILLS

Does anyone remember taking part in this Easter event? It would have been the early fifties, as I remember. There weren't chocolate eggs in those days of course. Mum would hard boil an egg each, which we would then paint in bright colours, for identification purposes as much as anything.

We were living in Melton Road at the time, and the gang from the neighbourhood, along with me and my brother, would set out over the fields. There was no Crown Way, just the pre-fabs at the time.

We then rolled our eggs down the hill, a bit of a bumpy ride, chased after them, and then the best bit, ate them. It was such good fun.

Veronica Collins



Image LBJ library

ENCOUNTER ON THE CAMPION HILLS



The stranger sat comfortably with his large glass of port in the bar of Leamington's Angel Hotel. He had enjoyed his long walk over the hills, had lunched well at the Stag at Offchurch and had found his way home happily through Cubbington and Lillington.

His only 'difficult' moment had been the encounter with the runaway boy. He had paused to look back from the Campion Hills towards Warwick, and there was this wretched youth hiding in the bushes. Said his name was Tangle or Twist or some such, and had run away from the workhouse and a cruel employer. He had had the audacity to ask for a sip of water from the stranger's flask! If it hadn't meant an interruption to his planned walk, he would have summoned the Constable, and seen the boy back to Warwick where he belonged. As it was, he just turned on his heel and left the sniveling youth to his fate.

The peace in the bar was rudely interrupted by four noisy incomers. Their leader, a stout elderly man who should have known better, seemed to encourage rather than restrain them in their alcoholic excesses. They appeared to be some sort of club, and were off to a ball at the Regent Hotel. None, especially the older man Picklick or Picklock, had any apparent conscience for the effect that their selfish behaviour might have on the innocent young ladies of Leamington.



They were watched carefully by a man at the bar. He seemed well known to the landlord, who called him Mr. Jingle, and overlooked his apparent lack of ready cash, a trickster, if I ever saw one, mused the stranger.

"And you, Sir," interrupted the waiter who cleared the glasses, "have you had a good day?"

"I have," replied Charles Dickens. "But I am still no nearer in finding an idea for my new book."

David Metcalfe

CAMPION HILLS: FAR FROM IDYLLIC



The image of the Campion Hills brings to mind the arrival of a fun fair run by Barkers or Wilsons, both long established Showmen's families. I cannot recall the exact time of year although May and July come to mind, with a change in the weather just when you would want it to be dry. Between 1952 and 1960 I was living in Cromer Road in one of the two Police houses, an easy walk either up Gresham Avenue or through the passageway between 24 and 26 Cromer Road coming out in Rawlinson Road.

The arrival of the fair was preceded by 'bill posting' advertising the date of opening. This enabled one to go on to the hills the day before to watch the rides being built up. There would be all sorts of rides from Chairplanes, Dodgems or 'bumper cars', in those days you could go bumping into each other. The cars in all probability would have been made by Supercar Company Ltd. of Warwick. I seem to recall a big wheel; my memory is hazy as I do not have a head for heights so I wouldn't have been on it.



There would have been a number of stalls, side shows and possibly a set of Galloping Horses (Gallopers), not to be confused with a Carousel which is a continental description for the similar type of ride. The difference being that Gallopers go round clockwise whilst a Carousel goes round anti-clockwise. But that is me being pedantic.

I mentioned where we lived. On a clear night or when the wind was in the right direction, the sound of the fair could be heard whilst trying to go to sleep. The amplified music and the sound of the generators caused greater disturbance to those residents of the prefabs at the top of the hill who were much closer. In hindsight I wish I had taken more notice of the detail of the rides, as in later life I became much more interested in fairgrounds, the steam powered rides and scenic engines that have been preserved. Perhaps my early years exposure to the fairs on the Campion Hills was the catalyst for an obsessive interest in all things steam, in later life.

Peter Coulls

Image Flickr

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



The image looking out from Campion Hills over early Leamington started me thinking about the name Campion.

Clearly not 'Pink Campion', the wild flower that grew everywhere when I was a child.

Why do we have Campion Hills, Terrace, Road, Well, School, and once, Campion Electoral Ward, Campion Lodge and Campion House?

There seem to be two possibilities: one might be Miss Sarah Campion, who in her will dated August 1821 left the magnificent sum of £300 (almost £34,000 today) to the Vicar of All Saints Parish Church, in trust for "the education of females". It was a good many years after Miss Campion's death that the legacy finally came to be used as she intended, but that is another story.

My second and more likely candidate is John Campion (1776-1826), the Willes family tenant of Newbold Comyn Farm, at the foot of Campion Hills. John Campion was a Churchwarden at All Saints, and played a significant role in the developing Spa town, particularly as a member

of the Parish Committee. It was considered a particular honour to be elected to serve on this committee, which was the governing body of early Leamington Spa, dealing with all the secular affairs of the town before the establishment of the Town Commissioners.

Mr Champion was also appointed to succeed Benjamin Satchwell as Treasurer of the Leamington Charity and was considered by contemporaries “a man of unimpeachable and almost proverbial integrity”.

J C Manning, in “Glimpses of our Local Past”, quoting an earlier town guide, recommends his readers to “Take a stroll along Holly Walk and over a stile through open meadows to the hospitable farm of Mr John Champion, on the brow of the hill [where you] will find Newbold Comyn Farm.” He continues: “Here we have the origin of ‘Champion Hill’, clearly derived from the name of the occupant of the Farm in 1812”. (Prior to that, the area was known as Newbold Hills.)



The house in this image, taken from the 1995 Bill Gibbons' Leamington Calendar may well be one of Newbold Farm cottages, with Champion Hills rising in the distance. The Leamington Courier of 23 July 1887, looking back at 'Old Leamington' refers to the home of John Champion: "... and now the only example of Leamington's village days is to be found in the far-off east, in the farm house and cottage at the foot of Champion Hills; a little thatched roof, ivygrown domicile, with the tiniest lattice panes guarded by the olden shutters, which used to be tenanted by Mr John Champion, farmer and millowner."

The image below is from Adelaide Pountney's "The Diary of a Victorian Lady" 1864-1865, and just shows the outline of buildings behind the trees on the left.



M R

ESCAPE TO CAMPION HILL

During the winter of 1969, I did my final teaching practice at the, long gone, Campion School for Girls on Leicester Street, Leamington Spa.

I liked both the staff and the pupils but found the Victorian buildings very dark and gloomy so, during many lunchtime breaks, I'd 'escape' up Campion Hill!



At that time there were swings halfway up on the grass on the right if you cut through the gap in the hedge. I would spend as long as possible swinging out high, with an amazing view over the edge of the hill and down into Leamington, always hoping that no member of staff from the school would appear and reprimand me for my 'childish' behaviour!

After all, I may have felt like fledgling adult, but I was supposed to be 'Miss', the teacher!

Sometimes I walked further up and over the top to the hedge and allotments on the left, also long gone. I was then able to look out over Lillington, little knowing that just over ten years later I would be living there with my husband and new baby.

Dearne Jackson

CROWN WAY: Mr NORTH'S SHOP



I worked on the Crown Way in about 1962-65 for Mr North. It was next to the paper shop.

He was quite a character, very old fashioned. We had many a laugh on his behalf, although he never knew that.

There was one incident that I have never forgotten. He had started selling squash in plastic bottles. He could not wait to show this off to a customer at the till. It was a bottle of Robinsons Lemon Barley (how could I forget).

He told the customer unlike glass it would not break if dropped. He held the bottle up and let go, it fell to the floor bottom end first. The impact was just like a bomb. Need I say more?

I got the mop and bucket and cleaned up the mess.

Needless to say he never demonstrated the advantage of a plastic bottle ever again. His business was later sold to large retailer called A.P.T. It was then called Family Fare.

Mary Kelly

MR NORTH AND STAFF



A night out with staff in 1965, when Mr North sold the shop. Mr Cecil North is wearing a bow tie. Myself first right

Left.. Barbara Kirkland, Brenda Kociszewski, Sheila (?). 5th from left: Jack Kirkland , Barbara's husband. Next Andrezej Kociszewski, Brenda's husband. Cecil North. Eileen Pope. Tim Timms (his wife Eva standing behind him). Then myself: Mary Collins. I married Colin Price He is standing behind Jack Kirkland. I am now Mary Kelly.

At that time Barbara, Brenda, and Sheila all lived in flats opposite the shops. Andrzej bore witness to the Holocaust and survived to live a fulfilling and happy life. He died in 2007.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF CROWN WAY

Being 5 years old when Crown Way shops first opened in 1957, I have vivid memories of four shops in particular.



As a youngster my mum used to take me to get my hair cut at Evans the hairdresser in Leamington which had entrances on Warwick Street and the Parade. That all changed when Jack Unit opened his shop at the bottom of Crown Way. After the first few occasions when my mum accompanied me, she sent me by myself to Units with 2 shillings and the instruction "remember – short back and sides and not too much off the top". I recall on one visit that when I handed over my 2 shillings Mr. Unit told me to tell my mum the price had gone up to half a crown, and to remember the next time.

The newsagent shop also looms large in my memory. Early Saturday evening in the football season my brother and I would run up to the shop to buy the Coventry Pink, and the Sports Argus Blue for the latest football news. A report of the first half of the matches was usually present, and the full -time scores were sometimes in the latest news column. We would often be in a long queue waiting for the vans to arrive with the batches of papers. It was then back home for a bath, and into pyjamas and dressing gowns before Saturday tea.



The fish and chip shop was often visited by a group of us boys on a Friday night following choir practice at St Mary Magdalene's Church. Chips were to be had for 4d or 6d, and if in the money (and hungry) a piece of fish would be bought for 10d. The portions in those days were perhaps less than half the size of those served out today – no wonder we were fitter and leaner!

Finally, the Post Office was frequented for two main reasons. Firstly, to buy reels of caps. These were sold for 1 or 2d and came in a small circular white card box. The reels which were green or red

could be loaded complete into cap guns, or a few caps could be torn off, and placed in the front of a spring loaded "bomb". This would explode after being thrown into the air and hitting a hard surface such as a tarmac pavement. Repeat visits were also made to buy balsa wood planes, which survived comparatively few crash landings. The planes were usually just hand thrown to get them in the air. However, if Terry Hitchcox, a near neighbour from Cromer Road was about, there was more fun to be had. He would tie a heavy-duty rubber band several feet long between two of the trees (saplings in those days) on the large green between Valley Road and Cromer Road, and the planes would be catapulted into the air!!

Les Markham

Image Windows on Warwickshire: Mrs Ramsey and staff.

CROWN WAY MEMORIES

In 1982 I changed my job to work in Coventry. I had to move house with my young family. My brother was living in Coventry at the time, working in the car industry, and he said to me "if you can afford to, don't live in Coventry". Taking his advice, I looked about, starting in Kenilworth. That was just outside my price range and so I switched to Leamington and soon found what I was looking for in Lillington. It had a good school, library, the right Church, good bus service, and good local shops. Just around the corner in St. Andrews Road was a butcher's, run by Ike Truelove, and a local "corner shop" which sold most things. Both are now no longer there.



About a half a mile walk from our house, there were a few more shops down at Crown Way. My wife who, as a young mum, was getting stuck into knitting, was attracted by the haberdashery shop which sold wool and cotton which she liked. Our house needed plenty of work doing to it and that meant that I, in turn, had to get stuck into DIY. There was an ironmongers shop which had lots and lots of useful bits and

pieces which I needed. Even as a young family with a mortgage we still had a few pounds saved and when I saw that there was a local branch of the Coventry Building Society in Crown Way we decided to open a savings account there.

Like the shops in St. Andrews Road, these shops are no longer there. The haberdasher's shop is now an Indian take-away, the Coventry Building Society branch is now a betting shop and the ironmonger's is now a charity shop.

Max Clarke

THE CLOCK



The school clock reminds me of the classroom clock on the wall of my junior school classroom, long ago. In the top class, practising for the 11+ exam, learning to work to time, as the clock ticked loudly on the wall behind the teacher's table. Mr Harrison, the head teacher, walking sternly up and down between the rows of desks. I don't remember him ever smiling, even when later in the year the results came out and some of us had done well enough to go to grammar school. All that poring over "First Aid in English" and its principal parts of the verb, the male and female names of animals and their young, and its lists of capital cities must have done *some* good.

Looking back, Mr Harrison had a thankless task: we were an odd bunch, from all walks of life. I was lucky in that I came from a family where reading, newspapers, magazines, library books, mattered to everyone. One of Dad's sisters, and one of Mum's sisters were both teachers. I regularly had books for Christmas and birthday presents, and books were given as a reward for Sunday School attendance. Mum read to my sister and me every night at bedtime, but there were children who only ever saw a book at school and had little interest in most aspects of learning. School was simply somewhere you went every day, to be warm and dry in winter, with a big playground to play in and a bottle of milk at morning break.

The clock also reminds me of the Victorian Classroom at St John's Museum in Warwick, where I worked for twenty years, as one of many impersonators of "Miss Roach", reliving the experience of a Victorian school day. Miss Keziah Roach was the legendary teacher at St Nicholas School in Kenilworth, whose teaching certificate was displayed alongside the classroom clock and the (very pink) map of the empire. All these treasures gradually vanished: the clock stopped working and there was no one of the calibre of Steve from TV's 'Repair Shop' to put it back in working order; the museum curator worried about sunlight fading the illuminated script of Miss Roach's certificate, and the huge map of the empire was thought to be too jingoistic. There had once allegedly also been a dunce's cap, but it was never there in my time. *[It did exist but was withdrawn from the 'experience' early in the 1990s. Ed].*

The classroom was a composite of many Warwickshire schoolrooms, the furniture acquired as schools upgraded their classrooms. So we had the furniture, the benches and the Monitors' desks, and a proper blackboard and easel. It was quite fun to relive the formal teaching which had been the norm when my grandfather attended a village school in the 1890s, the whole class spelling out loud, chanting tables, reading the class reader, finger under the words, doing mental arithmetic and pre-decimal money sums on the board.

We always had a child primed to sit slouching over their slate, so that they could be made to sit with their arms hooked over the back-straightener, and a couple of children who brought their school pence, who were brave enough for a telling-off for not having brought it first thing on Monday.

Even more fun for me was to take the children outside to do drill, walking in twos and chanting yet again things like, "Children who do drill, seldom are ill". (If they were kept busy chanting or learning a recitation, they had no time to chatter amongst themselves).

Once outside, the children did a few drill exercises, swinging their arms up and out, and doing lunges forwards and backwards. They also did marching, spine straight, shoulders back,

swinging their arms and keeping in step. It was very hard to keep a stern face, sometimes, when children studiously matched the movements of right arm to right leg, left arm to left leg! They were trying so hard, but moving like puppets on strings.

Time was of the essence, - when a whole day had to be crammed into either a morning session or an afternoon, - no over-running, or the bus driver would be at the window, threatening to leave without the class, because he had to get back to wherever they had come from, in time to do the Senior School run, or ferry sports teams to another school.

Some children found it quite forbidding, but the Schoolroom experience often topped the poll on feedback forms, - one young teacher once returned to school a week early from her maternity leave so that she could be with her class on their trip, - she had so much enjoyed the experience when she had been at school.

I loved working at the Museum, with congenial colleagues, and children from every possible type of school, including, every year, children with multiple and severe difficulties, from Exhall Grange.

Margaret Rushton

THE SCHOOL CLOCK



June 1908 was the hottest month for years, and the Lillington big classroom was unbearably warm. The clock above the large blackboard showed ten to four. Adam Metcalfe stared at it hard, longing for it to move more quickly and bring them to four o'clock and release. He spent a lot of lesson time staring at the clock, willing it slow down when Miss Cutter said "You have five minutes to the test" or 'Go faster' at times like this when the lesson dragged on and on.

His father had a fine pocket watch for Sundays, and had taught him the minutes as well as the hours. He knew that ten to four was 3.50.

Tests and marks were very important to Miss Cutter. She added them up every weekend, and Monday started with the ritual calling of the Merit List. Top of the class, number 1 on the list, was usually Daisy Parker. She got to sit at the left hand end of the back row of desks, nearest to the door. Her reward involved the clock as well, as she had to wait until one minute before the end of the lesson, and then go outside to ring the big brass handbell. It was a great honour.

Adam was number 43 in the Order of Merit this week and sat at the end of the front row. Once he had been number 35 and moved to the second row in, but that had proved a rarity.

"Before you go," said Miss Cutter at the end of school, "We have an important visitor tomorrow. Mr Thornicroft, the inspector. I expect everyone to come to school in clean clothes and to be on their best behaviour."

Adam hardly slept that night. He remembered Mr Thornicroft and his relentless questioning of each and every child from the previous year.

Next day dawned, the first lesson but no inspector. Adam's eyes never left the clock, willing it to go faster. Alice, the pupil-teacher, left him alone and practised the nine times table with the rest of the class.

At ten o'clock the door opened and Miss Cutter showed in the inspector. He stood at the front of the class, his gold watch chain level with Adam's eyes, the clock just visible over his shoulder.

"We will start with arithmetic," said the inspector. "Girl number one, how many ounces in three pounds?" Daisy answered correctly, and the questions moved on down the row of children.

Adam felt more and more anxious as the questions came ever nearer. He just started at the clock, willing it on to break-time and release. He stared at the numbers- the big hand edging past the five – nearly at the six!

The questions had reached the front row. "We'll try some history now," said the inspector. "Next boy," he said to Adam's neighbour. "I have seen the class work on the Saxons and Normans. Who was the king of England before King Harold?"

"Edward", answered Martin. He remembered because it was his father's name.

"Excellent!" said Mr Thornicroft.



Adam stared and stared at the clock. The big hand had nearly reached the six, but no further. He could feel the panic rising, constricting his breathing.

"Next boy," said Mr Thornicroft. "In which year did King Canute invade Norway?"

Adam could see nothing but the clock, the hand frozen just before the six. His mind swirled. He panicked and gasped out the time as his father had taught him.

"10 28."

"Excellent answer. 1028 is correct! "The inspector turned to Miss Cutter. "It is very rare indeed to get the correct answer to that question. I congratulate you on your teaching, and this boy for his memory."

Adam just froze.

"I think," said the Inspector, "that this boy, and the class, deserve a reward for the impressive way they have answered my questions this morning. It's half past ten and time for the morning break I believe. Why don't we let this boy ring the bell as a reward for his answer?"

Miss Cutter nodded, not trusting herself to speak.

Adam walked on air to the back of the room. Daisy grinned and handed him the bell. Adam stood outside the door, breathed deeply and rang the bell loud enough to be heard in Cublington. He had no idea what he'd done.

ANOTHER SCHOOL CLOCK

Margaret Rushton's interesting article mentioning Mr. Harrison has directed me to recall the classrooms of the 1950's with their almost ubiquitous clocks and blackboards at Milverton School.

Mr. Tom Harrison was the Headmaster of the Senior School and Miss Barnes was the Headmistress of the Juniors, separated by a pedestrian way between the two sets of buildings. So as to avoid confusion the signals for assembly at the end of breaks were a bell for the juniors and a whistle for the seniors. Tom Harrison usually seemed to be in a good mood with a good sense of humour, though perhaps not when confronted by serious matters. For some reason he made a point of encouraging us not to describe horse chestnuts as conkers and he was very hot on discouraging the creation of ice slides on pavements during the winter since, quite rightly, they could be a great danger to innocent pedestrians.

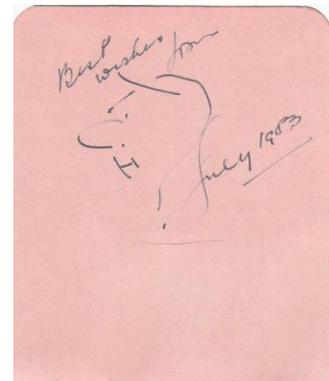
He was a popular sergeant in the local Home Guard in charge of No. 8 Platoon, and he became Secretary of the Home Guard Club in Portland Street. During the Second World War he wrote poems and sketches to perform at their entertainments. In due course No. 8 Platoon celebrated victory in grand scale with flags and bunting at a dinner in Milverton School. Tom Harrison was described as having "a waspish temper at times but what magic has flown from his pen in his contemplative moments". For example, his efforts included

"There's an inland resort known as Leamington
That's very bay window and posh,
And some blokes came up there from London
To escape from the wrath of the Bosche" and

"We've been together now these past four years
And just let me tell you, mate,
There ain't a platoon in the whole Home Guard
As I'd swop for old Number Eight".



More dramatically, his was one of the houses severely bombed in Kinross Road, from which his mother and nephew emerged shattered but alive.



The above descriptions illustrate that Tom Harrison did have a good sense of humour and to further indicate this, at one time it was fashionable for school children to have autograph books and when I asked him to sign mine, he did not give his signature but made a caricature of his initials "T.C.H." combined with a question mark.

With acknowledgement to the publication "We You Salute" compiled by the late Roy Rowberry and others of his reminiscences.

GRAHAM E. COOPER.

Images Windows on Warwick; Graham Cooper

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