

The Leamington Omnibus Autumn 2018

Newsletter of the Leamington History Group

www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk

Private Harry Lewin

As we remember with pride all who served in the Great War, and the Centenary of the Armistice draws closer, Tom Lewin writes: Dad never really knew his father Harry, who died in the 3rd Battle of Ypres in July 1917. Obviously, my sister Bobby and I never knew him either, so it took a mini-pilgrimage to the battlefield memorials on my part to discover what became of him.

Henry Lewin, known as Harry, came from a Coventry family, but he was born in St Helens, Lancashire, where his father worked for a time as a cotton weaver and his mother as a silk weaver. The family had returned to Coventry by 1901, where Harry became a metal polisher, a skilled finishing job involving polishing and buffing to remove damage or scuffs and abrasions from a metal surface to reveal its brightness. In 1901, in Thomas Street, Coventry, the Lewin's neighbours were all involved in the watchmaking trade, jewellery or cycle manufacture. This was a time before large factories and assembly-line systems, when "cottage industries" were the norm and in Coventry, it was common to find whole streets of skilled workmen devoted to the separate manufacturing processes of cycles, watches or jewellery. One family would begin the process, the family next door would complete the next stage, and pass the item on yet again for further work or completion. It is still possible to follow a Watchmakers' Trail in parts of the city.

In 1908, Harry married Caroline Louisa Bolt. They lived in lodgings for a while, but by 1911, were living at 60, Court Street, Leamington, with their children Walter, born in 1909 and John, born in 1910. A daughter, Norah was born at Court Street in 1912, and my dad, Robert in 1913. John died in infancy, and a fourth son, William was born in February 1918,

after my grandfather had died.



235006 Private Henry Lewin, (pictured left) had previously served with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment but enlisted at Leamington in late 1916 in the 1st Battalion, Worcester Regiment arriving in France shortly afterwards. The Worcestershire Regiment were involved in the capture of Messines Ridge in June 1917, and the assault of Pilkem Ridge in July. It was during the attack on the Ridge on 31st July that Harry was first reported missing, then officially reported killed in action, or died of wounds. His body was found five weeks later by men of the Machine Gun Corps, and buried nearby, but as fighting continued, his makeshift grave was lost. Along with many others who suffered the same fate, Private Harry Lewin is commemorated on the Menin Gate at Ypres, and locally, on the War Memorial at St John's Church and the Euston Place Cenotaph in Leamington town centre.

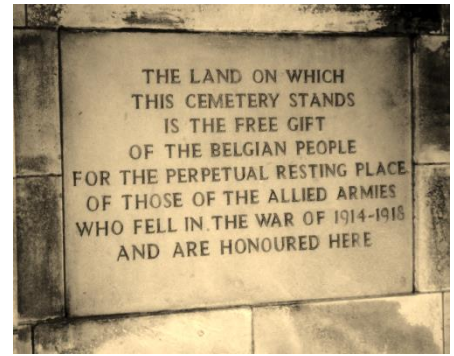
Harry's young widow Caroline received the usual formal letters of condolence and his medal entitlements (the British War Medal and the Victory Medal) from the War Office, and the following February, a missive headed "Effects-Form 45G", informing her that she was to receive £2.12.4d, as the amount due on the settlement of accounts of her late husband. The last paragraph issued a caution, presumably to ensure that this sum would not somehow be frittered away: "Of the above amount, two-thirds is the property of the deceased's children _____ (their names were not included) and must be used for their equal and exclusive benefit."

A kindlier letter was written by Harry's Company Commander, offering the deepest sympathy of all ranks and telling Caroline, "I can assure you that your Husband did his duty to the end. Every man who went over was a hero. They were wonderful."

I determined to find out all I could about my grandfather, and with the help of friends in Leamington such as David Eason, I was able to fill in some of the gaps in the story. With the support of a student for whom my wife and I acted as host family during her stay in England, we were able to go to Belgium, visit Tyne Cot and the Menin Gate, and find Harry's name for ourselves. It was a very moving experience.

Lewin & Family]

Tom Lewin/Bobby Baulch [Photographs © T



Anthony Eden, Gents Hairdresser, 97 Clarendon Street.

Anthony Eden – the *real* Anthony Eden, *Leamington's* Anthony Eden, not the former politician, MP and Prime Minister, - grew up in Brook Street, Leamington, which for a time was one of Leamington's poorest and most overcrowded districts. In 1955, Brook Street properties were to be demolished and the area redeveloped, and Anthony and his mother moved to a prefab in Gresham Place, Lillington. They lived there until 1960, when they moved back to New Brook Street and a newly-built flat.

Anthony started work at Christmas 1957 with Neville Lawson, in his basement salon at 18, Parade. At that time he remembers, there were at least 15 gents' hairdressers in town, including Neville Lawson at 18, Parade; Jack Pearce, Tavistock St; Tom Cox, Tavistock St; Les Haddon, Chandos St; Evans', Warwick St; George Fennel, Grove St; Tobias, Clarendon St; Mike Mulledy, Regent Grove; William John, Priory Terrace; Maymans, High St; Paddy's, High St; Tommy James, Clemons St; Unitts, Regent Place; Chimes (Bob's Dad), Church St; and Clarksons, Tachbrook Rd. Doubtless there were others, and many Ladies' hairdressers too, all jostling for business. Ladies' salons probably had it easier, as new fashions were coming in all the time, and they could offer the latest fashionable haircut, or the latest permanent wave, - long before today's elaborate hair colouring systems and the notion that the client is "worth it." It was a long time before men got away from "short back and sides" cuts and started looking at more individual hairstyles.

For Anthony, and maybe others, Neville Lawson was "the best boss going", a really great man who eventually set up his protégé in his own salon in Kennedy Square in 1966. It was a bit tucked away, - in yet another basement at the back of other shops, but it was a start. In 1987, another well-known figure in Leamington hairdressing, Bob Chimes, gave Anthony his second big break: he sold him the lease to 97 Clarendon Street, and he moved there, combining the businesses for a time. Anthony has been at Clarendon Street ever since, and is still working, though not full-time, after 60 years in the business, 51 of them as his own boss. Not bad for a boy from Brook Street!

Heritage Open days, 2018

As in many previous years, Leamington History Group volunteers were on hand to steward the display of the history of Jephson Gardens, based at South Lodge. Thursday afternoon started brightly enough, but then down came the rain, and visitors beat a hasty retreat. Things were better on Friday, and were almost back to normal by Saturday and Sunday. We totalled 82 visitors over the four afternoons and the Cemetery Walks attracted a good crowd each day, with 70 interested visitors over the two days. Thank you to all our supporters and to our trusty volunteers.

Royal Leamington Spa Free Guided Walks

In spite of competition from other providers, Leamington History Group's free guided walks have had the most successful season ever. The heatwave didn't discourage either supporters or guides, so much so that we now wonder where we go next! So many people now turn up for walks that an additional guide is sometimes needed, putting further pressure on the guides who give their services entirely free.

Are there any more would-be guides out there? We would love to hear from you. I am happy to discuss any aspect of the walks, - the format, the topics, time constraints, and insurance cover. Guides usually lead between two and four walks each season and are free to choose a theme of their own, provided that it doesn't duplicate an existing topic. Walks last between 1 hour and 90 minutes starting in mid-June and continuing until mid-September, on Tuesday afternoons at 2.30 pm and on Wednesday evenings at 7 pm until the end of August. In September, all walks start at 2.30 pm. Group walks, for which there is a small charge, can be arranged at any time, provided that there is a guide free. Each year, by invitation, LHG guides lead the Mayor's Charity Walk, and we conduct tours of Brunswick Street Cemetery for Heritage Open Weekend.

If you are interested in becoming a guide, please get in touch. You would not have to lead a walk on your own, - bring a friend! Although serious in their intention, - we want people to know about our town and its sometimes surprising history, - the walks are never formal. They offer a chance to share information and even make new friends. Contact us through the website, www.leamingtonhistory.co.uk, or call in at South Lodge Jephson Gardens, opposite the Pump Rooms, any Tuesday morning between 10 am and 12 noon.

Michael Pearson, Walks Organiser

Memories of a Schoolboy Job

Can you remember what you did at 6 am every weekday morning and on Sundays in the early sixties? I can. I had a paper round, a job you could do from the age of 15, and one that every boy used to want to do. There were quite a few Newsagents then, - Webbs in Brunswick Street, McDonalds, Osbornes in Clemens Street, and Forbuoys in Tabor's old shop on Tachbrook Road, but there was still stiff competition for this job, - so my mum had put my name down when I was 5 at Jack Harris'. We lived in a cottage that backed on to Jack's shop. He kept twelve butcher's bikes in a yard at the back, for deliveries, and his wife Nancy worked behind the counter. I started work at 7 am. On my first day Christopher Plummer, the son of a partner in the building firm Cranston & Plummer, showed me the ropes. Jack and Nancy mentored their paper boys, and sorted out any problems. Dennis Draper put the orders in the bags. He wrote W-B-A on the first three papers, - to indicate The Wheatsheaf, Mr Baker and Arnolds, and then I just had to remember who wanted what. My route was Tachbrook Street to Brunswick Street, Hitchman Road, St Helen's Road, then back along Tachbrook Road, and all of Windmill Road: 105 in total. By 7.30, I would pass Jack Harris with his bike, on duty at the Lockheed gate, selling papers to the men as they arrived for work. I then had to get myself back home and get ready for the walk up to school in Leicester Street. Tuesdays were a challenge, - thanks to two magazines, Woman and Woman's Own. On Thursdays and Fridays, there were the Radio Times and the Courier. Timing myself by St John's Church Clock, I completed my round in 35 minutes on other weekdays. The worst winter I experienced was 1962-3, when the round took up to an hour. One day, the papers were late. I was asked to go back to the shop at lunchtime but half way through the round, I was stopped by Mr Bissell, the School Inspector, as children were not supposed to work outside specified hours, before or after school. The Harrises were really worried, but we never heard anything more about it.

I gradually realised that the Round presented me with a real sociological survey: The terraced houses in Windmill Road took The Mirror and The Morning News; for St Helen's Road (where one of the customers was LHG founder-member F....J....) it was The Telegraph, The Mail, The Express; Hitchman Road took all sorts of papers, mainly The Mirror (The Sun was then a broadsheet), and a couple of customers took The Sketch.

Tom Lewin

Reviews with Tessa Whitehouse

Monday 25 June: Kay Bugg: Lost Churches and Chapels of Leamington Spa

Do you often walk around this lovely town and notice the variety of buildings and wonder why they are there and their purpose? A closer look often reveals unique architecture and interesting stories. In this talk Kay focused on the many disused chapels and churches which are now put to other uses. As Leamington developed as a health spa and wealthy visitors began to make the town their home, the question of regular worship arose and soon, designated buildings were provided to satisfy demand, starting with a Non - Conformist Chapel in Clemens Street. As time progressed differences of interpretation caused people to look for alternative styles of worship and eventually churches and chapels were built to meet the needs of Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, the Salvation Army and Roman Catholics. So many have now vanished – some demolished and others converted to meet the demand for industrial premises, office accommodation or residential properties. By the middle of the 20th Century, Christ Church at the top of the town was no longer fit or safe for church services and although its demolition robbed us of a familiar landmark, it gave the town a beautiful open space to be enjoyed by everyone. We have also lost St Albans Church in Warwick Street with its copper-covered green spire, and Warwick Street Baptist is now part of the Royal Priors. Mill Street Chapel vanished to become the Urquhart Hall, then the Sikh Community Centre, followed by the 'Life' offices, and the Gothic style St Luke's Church in Holly Walk provides office accommodation. George Street Chapel catered for the needs of Leamington's first Roman Catholics and succumbed to other religious uses after the construction of St Peters Church in Dormer Place. Spencer Street Congregational Chapel is still awaiting a decision on its future and Clemens Street Chapel, still with some original architectural features, is now a cycle shop. My own special memory is of the chapel in Clarendon Street, for years the home of GorRay skirts, and now the site of townhouses. All these buildings have left us their legacy and Kay, with the help of Michael Cullen who did the original research for his Master's Degree, did a wonderful job re-telling us their stories. We left feeling all the better for listening to Kay.

Monday 23 July: Alex Darkes and Nick Baker: Peeps at Princethorpe

Nick Baker, Princethorpe's former archivist, told us how an enclosed order of Benedictine nuns first established a monastery in Montmartre in France, and fled to England following the Revolution and its grisly consequences. After many false starts elsewhere the sisters eventually settled at Princethorpe, where they built their convent, St Mary's Priory with its landmark tower of Napton bricks. Other buildings were made of clay from the estate itself. The rising land behind the estate allowed the nuns to retain their privacy and seclusion, protecting the convent and the girls they taught. Over time the number of pupils dropped, the school closed but the nuns stayed on. During the 20th century the number of nuns living at Princethorpe declined and the last ones left in 1966. Alex Darkes then took up the story: he was an early pupil at the school, and later taught there. He recounted how Missionaries of the Sacred Heart at St Bede's Prep School bought the premises in 1966 and moved from Binswood Avenue Leamington to Princethorpe, to establish a boys' school. His many photographs showed how the school has expanded, how some old buildings were replaced and others converted to be used as classrooms, laboratories and a sixth form centre to offer the most up-to-date facilities. Princethorpe College is now a co-educational day school, with nearly a thousand pupils from a wide catchment area. It was a privilege to hear the story of its foundation and continuing success. How astonishing to think that if it hadn't been for the French Revolution and the law forbidding the taking of solemn vows, Princethorpe College would never have existed!