

# There's been a Murder!

The date is 18 June 1854 and it is early in the morning. William Mason and his brother-in-law James Collins are walking to Coventry from Leicester. They are on the Hinckley Road and approaching Braunstone Cross Roads when they see a man lying on the ground, next to a hedge. Thinking that perhaps he is asleep, they go over to him, but then see a pool of blood next to his head. They then realise on closer inspection that he is dead.

The men decide to leave the body where it is and go back to the Red Cow. They rouse Robert Hitchcock, the publican, and report what they have found. Robert calls on his neighbour, Thomas Brewin, and they go back to inspect the body. It was decided that Brewin would go into Leicester on the mail cart to alert the police there and meanwhile, another neighbour, Edmund Jones, would fetch the parish constable at Braunstone, within which parish the body had been found.

It appeared that the body had been dragged off the road. His left trouser pocket was turned inside out and there was nothing in any of his pockets. Hitchcock recognised the features of the man, but it was only later that he finally remembered who he was. His name was Samuel Adcock and he lived a mile and a half from the Red Cow.

When the police surgeon arrived, he examined the body and was able to determine that Samuel had been shot in the head from behind. It seemed likely that the weapon was a pistol and that from the angle of the wound, it had been fired by someone shorter than the victim, since the trajectory of the bullet was diagonally upwards.

After the story appeared in the newspapers, some thousands of people walked to the scene of the crime and, disappointed to find no body there, took bits of a young oak as mementos of the tragedy, leaving it stripped bare.

At the inquest, William Sheen, a butcher from Leicester, stated that he had been drinking with Samuel in the city on the previous evening to the finding of the body. He said that when they parted company, Samuel left to walk home in an intoxicated state, but, said Sheen, "not to a very extreme degree". A policeman reported that he had seen the deceased walking along the Hinckley turnpike, but that he appeared sober at that time. A labourer named John Cook thought that he passed him near Shoulder of Mutton Hill later in the evening.

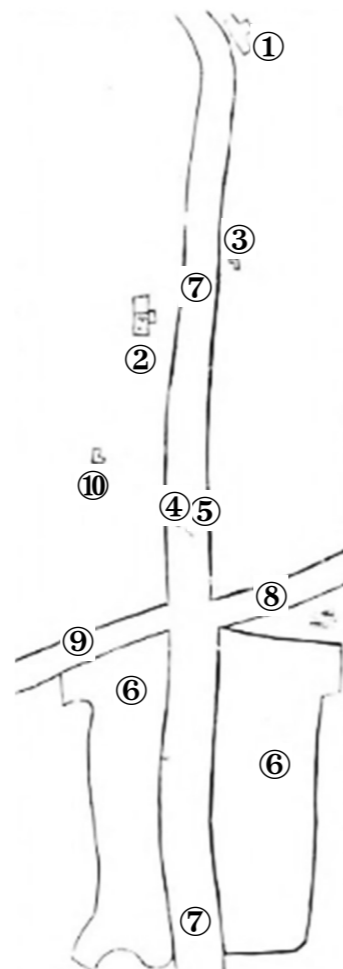
The funeral took place at St. Bartholomew's. The church was crowded to overflowing for the service, with a congregation that, according to the Leicester Journal, was "deeply sympathising in the melancholy event". The corpse was followed to the grave by William Adcock, father of the deceased, his sister, two brothers and his uncle and aunt.

The Leicester Chronicle later produced a sketch showing the places of note connected with the case, shown top right. The Chief Constable, Frederick Goodyer, posted a reward of £100 for information leading to the discovery and conviction of the perpetrators of the crime, and this was matched by a further £100 from William Adcock. The headstone of Samuel Adcock at St. Bartholomew's is also on the right, followed by its inscription.

So how did the story end? [To be continued ...](#)

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Leicester Chronicle sketch



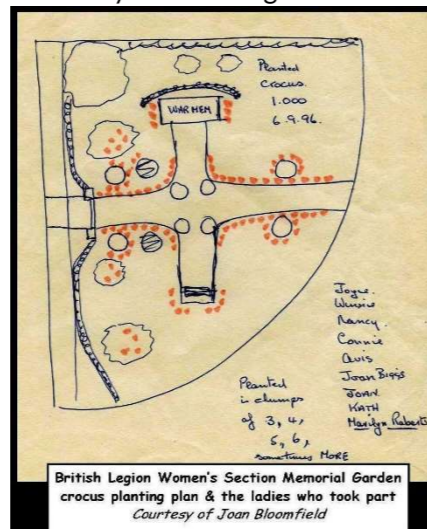
- 1 The Red Cow
- 2 The Grange – residence of W.K. Walker, esq.
- 3 A Cottage
- 4, 5 The two places where the blood was found. No.5 the site on which the body of the murdered man was found lying
- 6 The Spinney on both sides of the road
- 7 The road from Hinckley to Leicester
- 8 The lane to Kirby Muxloe
- 9 The lane to Braunstone
- 10 Farmhouse, the late Mr. Tailby's



THIS STONE IS ERECTED IN AFFECTIONATE REMEMBRANCE OF SAMUEL ADCOCK LATE OF ASHBY SHRUBS IN THIS PARISH ELDEST SON OF WILLIAM AND ESTHER ADCOCK OF LUBBESTHORPE WHO FELL BY VIOLENCE FROM THE HAND OF AN ASSASSIN AS HE WAS RETURNING HOME FROM LEICESTER OF THE NIGHT OF THE 17 OF JUNE 1854 IN THE 24TH YEAR OF HIS AGE  
BOAST NOT THYSELF OF TOMORROW FOR THOU KNOWEST NOT WHAT A DAY MAY BRING FORTH

## Kirby Muxloe War Memorial (continued)

In 1995 the parish council put forward a plan to redesign the memorial garden, and in September 1996, as the new plan neared completion, 1000 crocus bulbs "were planted in clumps of 3, 4, 5, 6 and sometimes more" by the ladies section of the Royal British Legion.



The Kirby Muxloe Stone of Remembrance and War Memorial Gates situated in the memorial garden on Station Road were granted Grade II listing in June 2017 by Historic England. [Ed: the lady from HE who carried this out was my daughter, Joanne Gould]

KT

## Newsletter No. 7 November 2020

Hi and welcome to our KMLHG Newsletter. We do not anticipate any meetings before May 2021, but we will continue to review the situation.

Mike Gould (Chair) Val Knott (Secretary)  
Kate Traill (Treasurer) Judith Upton (Archivist)  
Kerry Burdett

We start by again turning back the clock and continuing on our virtual walk around 1945 Kirby

① As we turn the corner and leave Desford road, we arrive on Hedgerow Lane. One of the first buildings we see is the old cruck cottage on the opposite side of the road. This building had originally been two cottages and at some time it was combined to make a larger abode. The cottage is said to have the deepest well in the village. During the war it has been used as an exercise venue for the Home Guard and today, in 1945, it is a sorry sight. In the next few years, the cottage will be demolished. On the same side of the road, there is still a hut-type air raid shelter and although it stands on a small holding, it has been available for public use throughout the war.

② At number 17, we find the Geary family; Sheila is 11 years old and living with her father Thomas, mother Alice and her sister Janet who is 2 years old. Another sister, Lesley will be born in 1952. Thomas was an Auxiliary Fireman during WWII and spent many hours helping to douse the fires in Coventry on 14th November 1940. Now in 1945, Sheila's uncle Dick (Clarence Russell) will soon be awarded the B.E.M. for his work as an A.R.P. in Kirby during the bombing of the village. In the years to come, Sheila will go on to marry Robert (Bob) Mileham and live in Glenfield for much of her married life. In the next century, she will become a stalwart of our KMLHG. Sheila will be responsible for much of the initial research into the names on the village war memorial.

As we reach the brow of the hill, we can still remember an incident that occurred on the day that war was declared. On 3, September 1939, a young man who lived in the vicinity had announced to all that the "Germans had already been seen at the top of Blood's Hill". It appears that this particular young man was rarely taken seriously, so the incident passed without further comment.

③ Turning down Gullet Lane we reach No. 6 and Miss Josephine Spriggs, who during the war has been involved with the Women's Voluntary Service, working on hospital supplies. In later years, she will be remembered fondly as the lady who donated funds for the building of the "Josephine Spriggs" room at the rear of the Church Hall on Main Street. No. 10 is the abode of Arthur Smith and his family. He is a carpenter by trade but in war time he was part of Blaby R.D.C. Rescue and Demolition party. George Frith lives at No. 18. He is now retired and will be remembered for his fund-raising activities after the Free Church was bombed in 1940. He has spent the last few years salvaging timber from the ruined Church and making all sorts of things (book ends etc.) to sell and raise



money for the rebuilding. At No. 28, we find a plot of land with a sort of shack at the bottom of the long garden. This is occupied by Mrs Gimson, who by this time is a widow. It is said that she always arrives late for services at the Free Church and is rather eccentric. The late Mr Gimson was a chimney sweep; he died in 1939. Eventually a house named "Bridge House" will be built on the site.

④ Turning into the unadopted part of Gullet Lane, after passing two Edwardian houses we find the home of Fanny Porter. Mrs Porter is a mainstay of the Free Church and has lived in this house, named "The Lindens", for the whole of her life. The house was built to her specifications in 1905. Before she was married, Fanny's surname was Harding and she was the daughter of William Harding, a coal merchant who lived on Kirby Fields. Fanny's brother Arthur married Henrietta Sutton, the widow of Peter Sutton, who lived at the Towers. Arthur was also a coal merchant. Moving along the road we reach The Knoll (later named "Silver Edge") which was built in the early '20's. Lastly, we reach "Guillet Close" (the name will change to "Woodlands"), a house built for Olive and Marjory Wilshire. There is now a long wide, open space before we reach the Homestead, which is a large Victorian property, just before the farm. At present the farm is known as "Chilprufe Farm" as the owner is a Mr Bolton, proprietor of the well-known garment manufacturer. Mr Bolton's sister, who is a retired missionary, lives at the Homestead. During the last few years, in order to help the war effort, the fruit in the cages in the garden has been the source of large quantities of produce, which have been processed and bottled, or turned into jam, in the green corrugated farm building know by many as the "Jam Factory". The farm bungalow is inhabited by John/Jack Randall and family, who run the farm. Until 1900, the farm was named "Brickman Hill" but in around 1900, when Gilbert Mee owned the farm, the name was changed to "Elms Farm". At this time, Gilbert owned many of the fields bordering Gullet Lane and some of the houses were referred to as "part of the Elms estate" (The Lindens, The Elms and Guillet Close). Soon "Chilprufe" will revert to "Elms Farm". In the next 40 years, this open land will be sold off for the building of large houses sitting on substantial plots of land. Finally, we turn into Links Road. There are only 9 houses here in 1945; one named "Hathaway" has been built by Ken Cowling, a builder, for his own occupation. However, at present in 1945, the house is let to a locally based R.A.F. Officer. The Cowling family will move in next year. In the next 30 years, the road will be bordered on either side with large individual houses.

JU

## Kirby Muxloe War Memorial

The public commemoration of war dead did not develop to any large extent in England until the end of the 19th century, when the first large scale erection of war memorials dedicated to the ordinary soldier followed the Second Boer War of 1899 – 1902. The policy at the time of the First World War was not to repatriate the dead, which led to memorials providing the main focus for expressions of grief and remembrance.

Memorials range from the familiar cross, obelisks, and statues to the less common including bus shelters, sundials, gardens and park benches. Historic England listed more than 2,500 First World War Memorials during the centenary period of 2014–2018, and although there are estimated to be many tens of thousands of them in Britain, the true figure is not known.

Kirby Muxloe War Memorial Gates were erected in 1923. The pillars were created from Portland stone, with the names of those who fell during the First World War engraved on the right hand pier. At the top of the ornamental wrought iron gates are the initials KM with the inscription AD PERPETUAM AD MEMORIAM below. Joseph Herbert Morcom, a stone mason and resident of the village, worked the lettering on the pillars. He was modelling master at Leicester College of Art, and had a private studio close to the Newarke. He was also responsible for memorials in Queniborough, Quorn and Aylestone. John Russell, whose eldest son Cyril John Russell was killed in action in 1918, laid out the Garden of Remembrance.



Picture from the Imperial War Museum Collection

Thomas and Beatrice Hollis also placed a window in St Bartholomew's Church in memory of their eldest son John Gordon Hollis who was killed in the Battle of the Somme in 1916 age 27. Listed on a carved commemorative plaque on the north wall of the church are the

names of all the men from the parish who also gave their lives for King and country in the Great War.

The unveiling ceremony and opening of the gates were held on 10 June 1923. The opening dedicatory

service, in commemoration of "those in the village who fought and fell for freedom and right" was accompanied by the choirs of St Bartholomew's and the Free Church and the Desford school band. The gate keys were presented to chairman of the parish council Dr C C Garfit, by Colonel R E Martin, CMG TD DL assisted by Eric and Harold Smith. The guards of honour were provided by the British Legion, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. The last post was played by buglers from The Leicester Regiment and was followed by one minute silence. The placing of floral tributes followed the National Anthem.



Eric and Harold Smith were the sons of William Henry Smith and Millicent (Palmer) who lived on Barwell Road. The family were active members of the Free Church. William was killed in action in France in May 1917 and his name is recorded on the Kirby and Arras War Memorials. Eric died of rheumatic fever in 1925 after swimming in the Castle moat. He was 14.

Harold (known as Bill) was married at the Free Church in 1939 and moved out of the village.

The Stone and Garden of Remembrance were unveiled in a ceremony on 15th October 1933. A procession headed by the Leicester Branch of the British Legion & other Legion branches started from the Red Cow corner. They were inspected by Colonel John Brown, who was national chairman of the British Legion, and who also conducted the opening ceremony. According to Historic England "The Stone of Remembrance is a sensitive adaptation of Sir Edwin Lutyens' design for the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission, engraved by Joseph Morcom". It is made of Portland stone and the plaque on the front was engraved with the names of men who fell in the First World War.

After the end of the Second World War the names of the 24 men who fell were added to the stone on a plaque on the left side beneath the dates 1939-1945. The right side bears a plaque with the inscription "Let us also remember" and contains 2 names from more recent conflicts in Korea (1951) and Iraq (2007).

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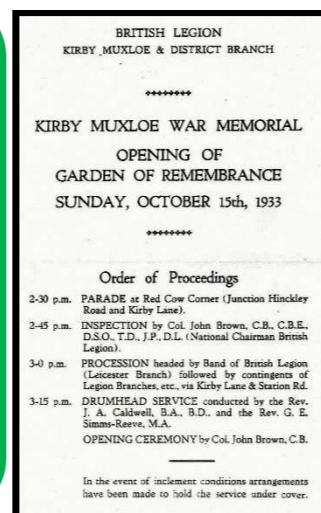
### The Kirby Muxloe War Memorial – We need your help

We have a considerable amount of information about the men named on the Kirby memorial who died serving their country. Research is ongoing but there are just 4 men or women who cannot be found. Unfortunately we only have initials and surnames for the following people but all are believed to have served during WW2:

**R. Lewis      B. Morris      H.W. Smith      R. Smith**

Do you know who they are? Do you have any further information? If so we would love to hear from you. Please contact us at:

email: [info@kirbymuxloelocalhistorygroup.org](mailto:info@kirbymuxloelocalhistorygroup.org) or tel: Kate on 01509 558203



## The Bombing of Our Village

It is now 10 years since we started to research the bombing of the village during WWII. At the time, our History Group was in its infancy and I had certainly not even thought of writing a 50-page booklet about it. Maybe a pamphlet but nothing more. However, the research began and as the weeks passed more and more people came forward with their own personal account of that night, one that they would never forget. So, a pamphlet suddenly ran to 50 pages and our first Kirby Muxloe Local History Group publication was produced. It has to be said that without the encouragement and help of so many people this would not have come to fruition.

A group of interested people, who remembered that night, came together and swapped stories. They were invaluable and as each told their own story the information grew and grew. Soon the Leicester Mercury were involved; they came out to interview our little group, which consisted of Jan Timson, Peter and Pam Cooper and the late Colin Percy and Sheila Mileham. Kirby Muxloe was featured in the newspaper and then on Radio Leicester – we were really on the map! The book was printed and sold out within a couple of weeks.

So, the stories of the bombing were retold. Stan Garner remembered that as the bombs dropped, he went outside with his dad and on looking up at the sky, said "Flaming onions"! They could see a group of enemy planes high up in the sky, making their way to Leicester. Colin Percy told us that he wasn't really frightened, it was all rather exciting! He recalled leaving the shelter after the all-clear was sounded and walking along Barwell Road, picking his way through all the glass and tiles, then going home on Station Road and straight to bed. Later that night, he was awoken again by the sound of more bombs, but as they sounded to be further away, he stayed in bed and went back to sleep. The bombs he heard were the High Explosive bombs dropping on Blood's Hill.

Joy Hawke remembered her father taking a homeless person into a nearby house for some shelter, only to be told "wipe your boots"! Considering that the whole village was covered in mud, slates, tiles and rubble it was rather ironic. Tony Ball recalled that the blast from the bombs was so strong that it lifted up the roofs of the houses on Barwell Road; they were all lifted up together and then set back down again but in a slightly different place. To this day, when some of the nearby houses on Barwell Road, Church Road, Station Road and Main Street are put up for sale, something strange happens. Invariably if the surveyor looks up into the roof space with his torch, he will remark that something odd has happened to the roof. The history is explained and the survey continues.

The late Bob Townsend was at home during the bombing although, he worked in Greyfriars, Leicester, as a clerk in the County Council's Finance Department, often on night duty. He remembered the night well, as he had left his home on Barwell Road and walked up to the Free Church area to see if he could help. His main memory was of the next evening, when after surviving the trauma of the

previous night, they were once again sheltering under the stairs, when there was a loud noise coming from above. His father said "What the devil are they trying to do to us now"?

It appears that a large barrage balloon with a trailing metal cable had broken free from its moorings and had crossed their roof, knocking down the chimney in the process!

A couple of years ago a lady from Glenfield contacted us to say she had an interesting tale to tell regarding the night of the bombing. I went to visit her and she told me that her father was a member of the Glenfield Auxiliary Fire Service and was one of the people who attended the area around the Free Church on the night of the bombing. It appears that, although there was so much devastation, including a fire which had sprung up from a burst gas main, there was still a little time to take a look around the scene. In the middle of the road lay a small blue and white ceramic clog, neither chipped or damaged in any way. As there was no way to tell to whom the shoe belonged, he put it in his pocket and returned home. Almost 80 years later, the same shoe sits on the mantelpiece in a house in Glenfield. I wonder if anyone searched for it in the debris surrounding the Church that night?

Many people have spoken about the air raid shelter which had been built on Kirby Muxloe Primary School grounds. It was an Anderson type shelter and the only purpose-built community shelter in the village at the time. Two brick-built shelters were erected after the bombing. Stories abound of the steps leading down into the shelter; one small boy likened it to a submarine. It was dark and wet and often with a good amount of water on the floor, although it did have electric light, benches for seating and a fan heater.

More people are still coming forward with their individual memories. However, time is now short, as before long these people, who are the only ones who really knew what it was like, will no longer be with us and we will be left with their stories, but nothing more. We still continue to research the reason for the bombing and recently we decided to try to find out if there were any German records that might give us more information as to why the village was bombed. Mike Gould contacted some people who belong to a research group of which he is a member and was given some interesting information. Two replies were from English people and one from a German man. One respondent said that the Germans did not keep records of their flights in order to keep up the morale of the German people. However, another reply stated that the reports were kept in Berlin which was very badly bombed later in the war. So, the reports were most likely destroyed. Another reply referred to the navigational systems in the planes, which were in their infancy and so often the wrong target was bombed. In fact, this happened in London, where originally Hitler had given express orders not to bomb the city. London, however, was bombed due to navigational error. JU

Are there any history-related subjects that you would like us to cover? We welcome feedback, either directly to a Committee member or by email – see right:

### Our Website and Email Address

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