

## VE Day 1945

In these strange times, it is difficult to pen any article which portrays happiness and rejoicing. However, we must not forget V.E. Day (Victory in Europe) which was celebrated or, more appropriately, commemorated on May 8<sup>th</sup> this year. I have chosen to use the word "commemorate" as, although it was a day of celebration of the end of WWII in Europe, it was also the day that many people will remember with great sadness, with the fact that although the war was at an end, many of their friends and family would not be returning home.

On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> May 1945, at 2:41pm, Germany's unconditional surrender was signed at Rheims. The following day marked the official end of war in Europe. At 3:00 on May 8<sup>th</sup>, the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, delivered a message to the nation: the war in Europe was over.

By the end of WWII, rationing was still in full force and there were few luxury food items. Sugar, butter and meat were scarce and so were eggs, although in the village many people kept hens at the bottom of their gardens, so maybe in K.M. they were not so scarce. Fresh fruit was difficult to come by and everyone was surviving on the food that they either grew in their gardens or by eking out the meagre rations, collected on a weekly basis from the grocery shop. However, this did not stop the people of Kirby Muxloe from celebrating with street parties. There were many parties in the village but the one that stands out is the party in the school playground. All children attending K.M. Primary school or younger were invited to take part. The tables were set out in a "V" shape and we are told that they were decked out in red, white and blue striped tablecloths. Where did the food come from? According to one very reliable source, door to door collections were made, asking for anything that could be spared for the party. Butter, margarine and cornflour were mixed together in order to make the sandwiches go further, the filling either fish paste, meat paste or jam. Bread and dripping was plentiful and households conjured up plates of small cakes and biscuits. In 2020, there are not that many people in the village who remember those days. Memories are very dim and distant as most people were very young, not really knowing what was happening, but knowing that something was different. However, some of the people interviewed still hold on to very vivid memories. One was living on Barwell Road with her mother, her father still away at war. She remembers very clearly that the garden of Newlands Nursing Home (on the corner on Barwell Road and Station Road) was decorated with fairy lights, which were all round the garden. People were banging on anything they could get their hands on, blowing horns and generally making a lot of noise. She said to her mother "What's going on?"; her mother replied "It's the end of the war". Her mother was not particularly excited as her husband had not yet returned home from the fighting. Fortunately, a few days later, he just walked through the door.

Another resident, who lived on Main Street,

remembers seeing and hearing a large group of lads, who were dancing around a lamp post well into the night.

The final entry in the Air Raid Precaution Record Book for Kirby Muxloe in 1945 was as follows - Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May, V.E. Day, 15:00 hours. - "Broadcast by Mr Churchill stating that Germans had surrendered unconditionally and that final ratification would take place at 00:01 hours on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1945, in BERLIN". The page was marked in red. There are many stories still out there and unfortunately, due to our present situation, it has not been possible to meet people and talk about their memories. We hope to do this and record the results when time permits.

As many of you will know, a series of celebratory activities had been planned for the village. Our library had great plans for Saturday May 9<sup>th</sup>, with an afternoon tea with soft jazz music playing in the background. The Village Hall was to be open with dancing, various activities for children and an opportunity to arrive with your own picnic, to be consumed whilst watching all the different happenings around you. We, as the village History Group, were planning a large display of wartime photographs and memorabilia. Work had been going on at our newly formed "Memories" group, in preparation for the event. We have managed to blow up our photograph of the "V.E. Day" children's tea party, held in the school yard and have been able to put names to many of the participants. The picture originally loaned to us by both Stan Garner and Norman Lally, led to much discussion in the memories group, especially between Tony Ball, Jeff Vines and Jan Timson. We were hoping to have more people joining us in subsequent meetings who might be able to add the last few names. When we get back to normal, whatever "normal" will look like, we will be displaying the pictures in the Library and in the Church Hall.

There is a thought that if, by August, we are allowed out to gather more within a social setting, we will commemorate "V.J. Day" (Victory in Japan). On 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945 there was another smaller party in the school yard, with tables set out in the shape of V and J to celebrate V.J. Day, the true ending of WWII, when the Japanese surrendered and the world was at last at peace. JU



*Kirby Muxloe Local History Group*

*Newsletter No. 1*  
*May 2020*

**Hi and welcome to our first Kirby Muxloe Local History Group Newsletter !**

**We've produced this in the middle of the Covid-19 virus pandemic because we can no longer hold the meetings that we have been running for over a decade and we didn't want to lose touch with all of you who have supported us so well. We hope to return to "normal" (whatever that turns out to be) as soon as we can, but for now, we hope you enjoy reading our newsletters.**

**So please accept this with the compliments of our Committee:**

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

As we have just commemorated VE Day, we thought it would be nice to turn back the clock and take you on a virtual walk around the Kirby of 1945 and the years just after WWII. The 1918 map above has not changed much in the intervening years, so follow the yellow trail as you read the article below.

① We start our walk next to the Free Church - now laying in ruins after being bombed in 1940. The site has been cleared with all the wood sold off as firewood or fashioned into bookcases and other items. The school rooms on Church Road, although badly damaged, were refurbished in 1941 and are used for services and meetings. Fund raising to rebuild the new Church is well underway. Since the bombing, donations have been received and many fund-raising activities have been taking place. The design for a new church has not yet been discussed, so the plot looks flat and empty. In later years, once the footings have been dug out, the area will become a playground for boys who, when the builders have gone home, will play soldiers in the deep trenches.

②③ Several nearby houses have had to be demolished. Hudson's butchers shop at 1, Main Street, seems to have escaped serious damage. The Manse opposite the Free Church was demolished, together with several other houses on both sides of Main Street, near to the Church. Some of the worst damaged houses had to be burnt down, as a safety precaution to stop people getting hurt by falling masonry. One of these belonged to Mr Tew, the local chemist. He lived and worked at 9, Main Street. After the bombing, he and his family moved in with some friends on Gullet Lane. He carried on his work as a chemist from a wooden building, hastily erected as soon as the site was cleared. It is not certain when most of the houses were rebuilt - do any of you know? Despite the devastation in the village, no one was seriously hurt at the time, although one elderly lady died later, possibly from shock.

④ At No.29, between Castle Rd. and The Royal Oak, is Jack Chesterton, the blacksmith. We may hear the sound of him striking against an anvil before we get there. He often worked with Tom Moore, the wheelwright, to put new rims onto farm cartwheels. Jack has also made door and gate furniture for village houses since the 1920's. He was the last of several generations of Kirby's blacksmiths. A familiar face around the village, when he finally retired, after 40 years' work, he said "No longer does the village wake to the sound of the anvil".

⑤ On the other side of the road, where One Stop will be eventually, is Battens the Seed and Feed Merchant. The shop sells many other goods, including bird seed, corn, dog biscuits and other animal-related produce. Everything is in large sacks, which sit on the floor. Our goods will be put into paper bags and then weighed to calculate the cost - nothing pre-packed here! We will need our ration book to buy poultry food. Tom Poyner and his new wife were the first people to move in, back in the 1930's.

⑥ Back over the road again, and we reach the Royal Oak, now right on the roadside - it will later be moved. The licensee is George Upton - well-known local prankster! He once put an inebriated customer on his horse, with man and saddle facing the wrong way. It's said the man rode back to Ratby facing backwards the whole way! There's an upstairs room used for events and the collection of rates, so we may see a queue of people on the spiral metal staircase outside. JU

To be continued. MG

## The Archaeology of Kirby Muxloe

The first written documentation for Kirby Muxloe is to be found in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book in 1086 but the history of the village began many thousands of years before this. Because no written evidence exists, this period is known as 'prehistory' and what we know of the village's history can only be demonstrated in the artefacts or objects that were left here by an earlier people – i.e. from its archaeology.

The earliest evidence of prehistoric people being in this area are objects made of flint which has been fashioned into tools, dating from around 4,000 years BC, which have been found in the village and its surrounding fields. At this time in the late Mesolithic period, life was based on gathering and hunting the herds of animals which roamed the country after the last Ice Age. The stone tools from this period that have been found here were probably made by these hunters following herds of bison, deer and other animals. At this time the country was covered by large expanses of forest which early Neolithic man began to clear, cultivate the land and keep domestic livestock. Many flint tools from this period have been found here. In 1983, four flints, including a knife and scraper were found near the castle and a scatter of flints in fields around the village. In 1891 a fine example of a Neolithic axe was found somewhere in Kirby Muxloe.

Below is a flint knife on the left and a flint scraper on the right, both found during fieldwalking in Kirby. These were made around 4,000 to 5,000 years ago and were probably lost or left behind when their owners moved from the area. The flint used may have been found locally or traded from other parts of the country.



No evidence of occupation of these early people has been found locally except for their tools and presently no remains of the round houses that they lived in or of their pottery have been found. Because the fields around Kirby have been farmed intensively for centuries it is likely that any such remains will have disintegrated due to ploughing.

During the Bronze Age, from 2000BC to 500BC the use of metal to make tools, weapons and other artefacts began and developed. Very little evidence of Bronze Age people exists in this area except for flint tools and an arrowhead found near Hinckley Road. Lately, excavations have taken place south east of Kirby Lodge where significant finds have indicated a large late Bronze Age occupation site with post-holes showing sites of round houses, fields, field systems and a large enclosure probably used for feasting.

Part 2 to follow – The Iron Age & Roman occupation in and around Kirby Muxloe – 500 BC to 450 AD. VK

### John Osband (1930 – 2020)



At the end of March it was with great sadness that we heard of the death of John Osband. John was one of the founder members of the Kirby Muxloe Local History Group and helped to establish it in 2006. He served as our first chairman and had supported the group ever since. The photograph above shows him cutting the cake at our 10-year anniversary.

John developed an interest in the history of the village and helped promote its history as part of several church anniversary events.

John and his wife Pauline moved to Kirby in 1968, living in the house which was built originally as the village 'National School' in 1858. John and Pauline renamed it "Parsons Farewell" after the English Folk Dance. Folk dancing has always been a huge part of John and Pauline's life and from 1985 until March this year they ran Glenfield Folk – a weekly dance class helping to promote interest and enjoyment in the origins and history of English Folk Dancing.

John, having been involved in so much of this village's life for the past 52 years, will be sadly missed, especially by members of Kirby Muxloe Local History Group who will always be grateful for his help and enthusiasm in researching and recording the history of the village.

## What's in a Name ?

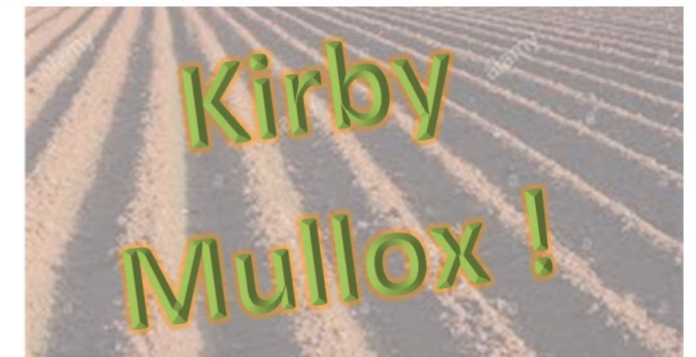
As far as the name "Kirby Muxloe" is concerned, quite a history, as it turns out.

Our village name has evolved through many variations over time, for reasons that are sometimes understandable and sometimes less so ! The Kirby part derives from a Dane named Caeri, who is shown in William the Conqueror's Domesday Book of 1086. The place owned by Caeri was called Carbi and by 1236, this has evolved into Kereby. So only a short hop, skip and a jump to get to today's Kirby. But the "Muxloe" is a little trickier.

Originally, there was no second part – we were simply Kereby, although with little standardisation of spelling, it's perhaps not surprising to see the name spelled variously as Chereneby, Chereby, Kirkby and Kirbey. However, at some point in time, it became necessary either to distinguish the village from another of a similar name or to divide it into two and name the two parts. The word "Muckle" was added, meaning "Greater", as in "Many a mickle makes a muckle" (lots of small things make a large thing). This should mean that somewhere there would have been a Kirby Mickle (Kirby the Smaller), but we've never found one. It is possible that our village name was intended to distinguish it from Kirkby Mallory, some six miles away, so perhaps the residents there didn't fancy being "the Smaller" to anyone and adapted their village name to be completely different !

There were several variants on Kirby Muckle. It's common to see Muckles and Muckless used. Then the name started to change. A Leicestershire map of 1645 showed the name as just "Kirby", but one from 1695 had "Kirby Mullox". Now this is not just a variation on Muckle – it has a different origin. The term Mullox refers to rubbish, refuse or dirt – basically, it means "muck". So when people use the derogatory term "Kirby Muckhole", they are inadvertently reverting to a historic form of our village name ! So was there any justification for the name Mullox actually getting as far as being used on maps? Well, probably, yes. Rippin, in his unpublished history of Kirby Muxloe, says that the name is easily accounted for from the stiff, sticky black soil and the low level of the land at the fords through the brooks.

In the years 1670 and 1680, an old Quaker book mentions Kirby Mucklow. This almost seems to be a halfway house between Muckles and Muxloe. At some point, and it's not clear when, the name "Muxloe" starts to appear. Is this an effort to get rid of the "Mullox" tag and replace it by something more neutral? At the front of the Parish Register that starts in 1703, it seems that a somewhat irate vicar has written "Kirby Muckless not Muxloe".



But Muckles and Muckless gradually vanish and we are left with a choice between the mucky Mullox and the apparent family name of Muxloe. Despite whatever opposition there may have been, the name Muxloe gradually took over and, by the mid eighteenth century, had become firmly established.

It has been suggested that a wealthy Muxloe or Muxlow family named the village as their own. Alternatively, it may be similar to the way in which the inhabitants of Padstow sometimes refer to their village as "Padstein", as celebrity chef Rick Stein has almost taken it over! If people referred to Kirby Muckles as Kirby Muxloe because more and more land was being bought up by members of the Muxloe family, then perhaps the family would not object to this new-found fame.

In 1687, Mr. Thomas Hartshorn of Leicester and Mrs. Emma Muxloe of Desford were married in Kirby. In the same year, Edward Muxloe of Desford and Katherine Styan of Kirby Frith were also married here. Nevertheless, it appears that no member of the Muxloe family lived in our village until some time after 1722. So the 1670 variant of "Mucklow" was probably nothing to do with the Muxloe family. Perhaps Muxloe eventually became a "lesser of evils" choice, by referring to a family name, instead of muck and mullox ! We may never know for sure.

MG

### Future KMLHG Meetings and Membership

At the time of writing, it is not clear when we will next be able to hold a meeting, or whether we will need to implement some form of social distancing when we do. Clearly, the Church Hall does not lend itself to this. We will continue to review the situation and post any announcements on our website, in Your Local magazine and in the Library. If you are currently a member, your membership will be extended automatically until May 2021 at no cost to you.

### Our Website and Email Address

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