

Memories Of Kirby Muxloe

We have been very fortunate to have been given access to many photographs and documents in the possession of the Wilshere family. In particular, Jonathan Wilshere accumulated quite a collection, which includes a newspaper cutting of an anonymous "letter to the editor" concerning memories of Kirby Muxloe. I think it was sent around 1933 and refers back to a period of time that spanned 1910, when the Barwell Road Primary School opened. I reproduce it here exactly as it was written. If anyone can add to it, or tell me who "Old School Boy" from Brazil Street was, I would be interested to hear from you.

Your contributor's article on Kirby Muxloe was certainly very interesting, but much more could have been added regarding the early days of the village.

The photograph is certainly a building in the old part of the village, but not in the main street.

As one who attended the school at the bottom end of the village, I should like to pay tribute to the work of Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, the school master and school mistress of my day. And also that of Mss Annie Everard, the assistant teacher.

I well remember the school master having erected a swing round-about called a giant stride in the school yard for our use, the first one, I think, in the district.

I also remember the training he gave us for the village school concerts which were attended by practically all the residents, both sides of the brook.

Mr. Holmes was the secretary of the first adult school in Kirby Muxloe.

After much difficulty, he got together the men, young and old, of the village and formed an evening school, and I remember the struggles of the students to do the right thing.

I also remember well a small piece of grass land upon which football and cricket were played, in the Back-lane.

Many a time the game had to be suspended while the ball was searched for in a nearby roadside hedge.

For small boys, of which I was one, a lady who used to live in the village and now lives in the city, Miss Robinson, commenced one of the first P.S.A. classes. The boys who attended those classes have all done well for themselves, some of them gave their lives for the country in the war.

I remember the Royal Mail which passed our house on the main road, every morning at 6 o'clock in all weathers and returned in the evening at 7 o'clock.

It became a common practice for the residents in the village to set their clocks by the Mail.

Then there were the flower shows which were a feature of the life of the village, also the Whitsuntide Odd Fellows' processions round the village headed by a band, which played for dancing in the evening.

No mention was made in the article of the activities of the first Women's Institute, organised by the ladies both sides of the brook, their leader being the late Mrs. R. R. Preston.

These ladies made all the costumes for the Gilbert and Sullivan operas which were performed in the village school by a good number of folk of all classes, the comedy parts of which were taken by the worthy doctor of the village.

The proceeds of these productions, flower shows and bazaars went towards the recasting of the church bells and the provision of a new organ.

Mention should be made of the first Band of Hope held in the old Free Church at the bottom of the village which was afterwards transferred to the new church at the other end.

Many thanks are due to the residents the other side of the brook for their activities in the cause of the enlightenment of the life of the residents of the village.

Well do I remember the scare that was caused when the majority of the school children were taken away with scarlet fever, when the first sewerage scheme was commenced, the writer being one of the victims.

Parties were organised by the parents of the children to the hospital. There were no motor-cars to convey them in those days, and they had to walk many miles to the Blaby Hospital. On occasions conveyances were requisitioned.

Much can be said of the fun the children of the village had round the old Castle, and I remember one winter when a boy more daring than the rest became possessed of an up-to-date sledge which was taken to the top of the hill at the back of the Castle.

After being pushed down, the sledge ended up in the brook, after which a procession was made to his home and the culprit left at the back door.

OLD SCHOOL BOY. Brazil-street. Leicester. MG

Mike Cooper

It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Mike Cooper recently. Many will remember him with fondness as a much respected teacher and Assistant Head at KM Primary School for many years. I remember a school project where the children created an historical timeline along the wall in a corridor. After it had been completed, some wag added, in the middle of the medieval period, I think, "Mike Cooper appointed Assistant Head"! He was much loved and will be missed by many. MG

A Request

In these days of electronic transactions, you may find that you no longer need those house deeds that are gathering dust in your house somewhere. Once your property is registered with the Land Registry, deeds are no longer needed for the sale and purchase of a house. Can we make a request - please don't throw them out! Contact a member of our Committee, or use our website email address, and we will come and collect them. They are useful for historical research - even modern houses. MG

Our thanks go to KM Parish Council for financial assistance with the production of these newsletters.

Due to the current Covid situation, it is looking increasingly unlikely that our first indoor meeting will be before September. Mike Gould (chair)



Newsletter No. 10 February 2021

Hi and welcome to our latest KMLHG Newsletter.

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

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

① We have now reached "The Towers", a large house built in the Victorian Gothic style that would eventually be demolished and replaced by new houses. The remains of one of its gateways would remain at the end of a new road, named Towers Drive. Throughout WWII, The Towers has been home to American airmen, who have been stationed in Braunstone Park. They will be remembered for their gifts of chewing gum, chocolate and silk stockings to some of the villagers, especially the children. They had a resident chef who was always resplendent in his very white and very tall chef's hat, called a toque. Food shortage was not an issue for the American airmen, as they always seemed to have plenty of good food to eat, whereas for many of the villagers, good food was not so easy to obtain. In future times, a number of village men who were boys around the early '40's, will recall when they hid in the trees that surrounded the house and "lifted" a large fruit cake from an open window in the kitchen on the ground floor. It is said that they ran back to the reccy as fast as they could before their misdemeanour was discovered. We must remember that such a cake had not been seen or eaten in years and so they sat on the ground in the reccy and ate every piece as quickly as possible. Very soon, the airmen will return to their homes in the U.S.A. and this impressive building will become a Leicestershire Corporation home for "retired gentlemen". By 1967, it will have been demolished to make way for the new housing development.

② We then reach Station Drive, which now in 1945 is the main walkway to reach the station platform. Sadly, trains will cease in 1962 and in 1964 the station itself will be demolished. In its heyday, the trains were carrying as many as 28,000 passenger per year. A track follows Station Drive, across the level crossing and up into the fields, where we find a substantial Victorian house named "The Links". It is a beautiful house, very tall and quite imposing. It has tremendous views across the golf course.

③ Continuing along the road we reach an area which will become Station Close. In around the early 1950's, a number of detached and semi-detached houses will be built on this land. Also a number of council owned retirement bungalows will be built to the rear of the houses. Next, the entrance to the Golf Course. To reach the Golf Course, we follow the track that goes under a bridge carrying the railway and arrive at the



Club House. Kirby Muxloe Golf Course was opened in 1895 and was initially a 9-hole course, which was extended in 1926, to become a full 18-hole course. During the last few years of the war, 30 acres of the land were taken over for the growing of vegetables, but now the war is over, the land will soon be returned to the golf club and the course re-set to its popular 18 holes. During the war, the Club house has played a large part in keeping people safe, especially during the bombing of 1940. After the bombing, many people who were not able to return to their homes, due to the damage caused, were taken to the Club House, where food and drink were supplied by the Women's Voluntary Service. Some people who were not able to be taken in by friends or relatives stayed at the Club house for some time, until alternative accommodation could be found for them.

After the entrance to the Golf Club, we pass a large area of grassland with a brook flowing through it. This is the brook that feeds Kirby Castle moat. In earlier times, this brook was referred to as the "River Jordan" and was viewed as a village divider, between Kirby Fields and the rest of the Kirby Muxloe. This area is renowned for flooding and has a boardwalk with white painted handrails to help people who wish to pass by without getting their feet wet. It is said that this area will never be built on, but in the next century, a drainage system will be installed and the road and land will no longer flood. We will then see the construction of "Wentworth Green", another development of large, detached houses.

④ As we move further up the road, we reach Princess Drive, where we find around seven houses. There is a house or track named "Regal Drive" where Cyril Edwards, the golf groundsman lives, and also a house named "Belmont" inhabited by Frederick Wise and his wife. Belmont is listed as a house on Lime Grove; Frederick records his occupation as a gardener. Soon this land between Princess Drive and Gullet Lane, which had previously been an orchard, will be home to a group of "pre-fabs". These will be built soon, in the 1950's, as a short-term answer to the housing shortage. The building

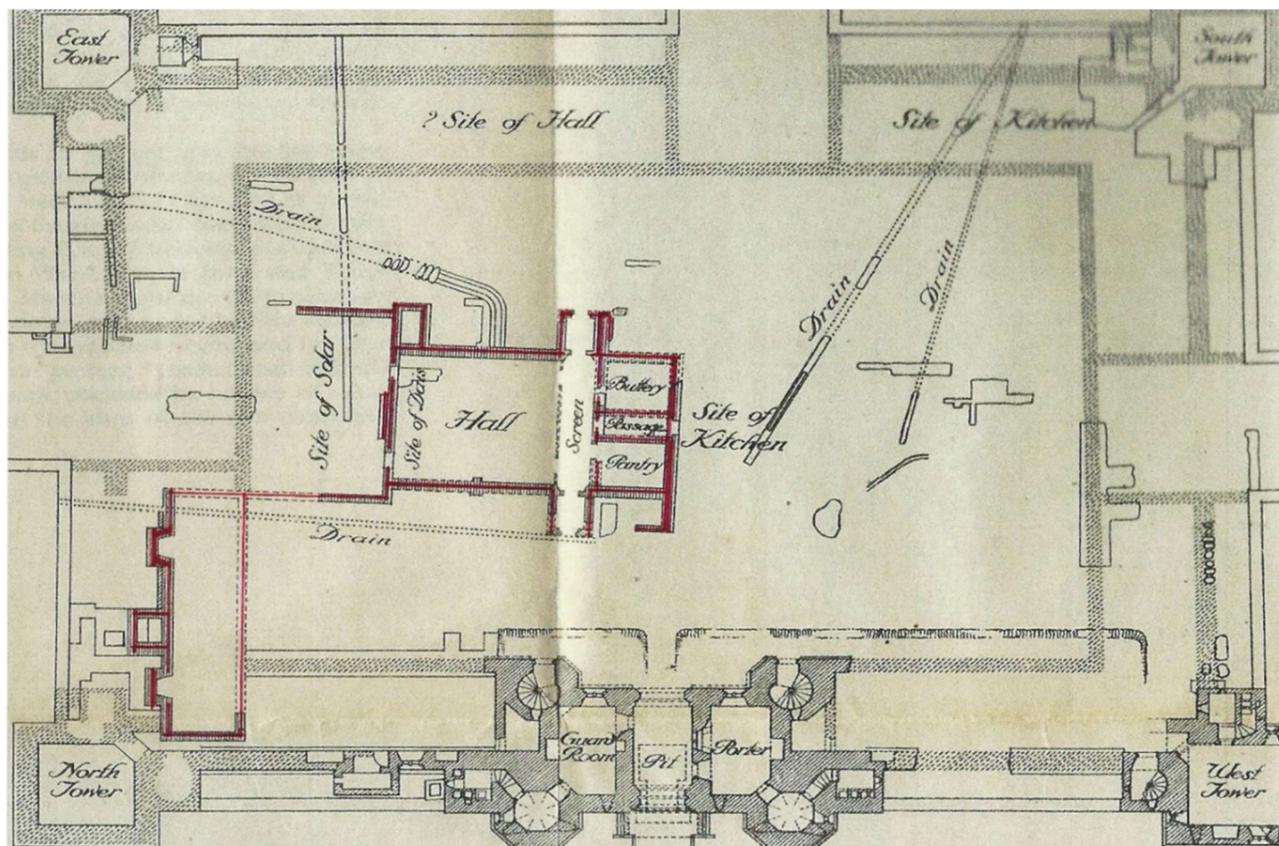
Continued inside

Who was Simon Pakeman?

Most of us who have visited Kirby Muxloe Castle will have heard of Simon Pakeman, who built the original manor house on the site before Kirby Castle was built by William, Lord Hastings in 1480, but who was he and what do we know about him?

The remains of Simon's manor house, which was a moated house approached through a gatehouse with a drawbridge, are described in the Kirby Muxloe Castle Official Guide published in 1917 by H.M. Office of Works. The buildings comprised a hall and north wing, containing the principal living rooms, which were incorporated into the new building in 1480. The guide suggests that the hall had two bays, with screens at the southwest end, which were entered through porches. The stone foundations of the buttery, pantry and passage to the kitchen can still be seen. The northeast wing plan of the old house shows two chimneys and the pit of a garderobe in between. These were incorporated into the later castle walls. The remains show that the manor house must have been an impressive building, showing the wealth and status of the Pakeman family in the 14th century. It is likely that the house was abandoned, however, by the end of the 14th century.

The outlines of Simon Pakeman's Manor House can be seen on the plan below, taken from the official guide to the castle.



Lines outlined in red show 14th Century walls.

Records tell us that the Pakeman family lived in Kirby (Kereby) from the early 13th century until 1391 and held substantial amounts of land here. Like many families of the time, they decided, with no consideration given to later historians, to give several children the name "Simon" over the generations. Here, we will refer to them as Simon (1), Simon (2), etc., with

Simon (1) being the first that we know of to be given that name in the Pakeman family.

The fortunes of the family changed between good and bad times but the building of this substantial manor house by Simon (1) Pakeman showed that he held a position of some importance in Leicestershire. Much of the land in the country in the 12th and 13th centuries was held by knights – usually men of noble birth who served the king or lord as mounted soldiers in armour.

Many of these knight became unable to maintain their economic status and had to mortgage or sell off much of their land to monasteries or to the increasing number of "gentry", who were improving their status by serving in local government. Such a man was Simon (1) Pakeman.

It is believed that Simon (1) Pakeman had been born in Kirby in the early 13th century. Some years later, Simon (2) Pakeman was born in Kirby about 1274 and died 24th July 1313. He had a son, Simon (3), who was born on 20th March 1306 in Kirby and died on 20th September 1376. This Simon also had a son, Simon (4), born about 1374 in Kirby and died 9th August 1391, bringing an end to the male line of the family.

Several records mentioning the Pakeman family are held in the National Archives, describing "Inquisitions Post

Mortem", which were enquiries into valuable properties in order to discover what income and rights were due to the crown and who the heir should be. For example, in the year 1234, it is documented that Simon (1) gave the majority of his holdings - a wood, an assart (land converted to arable land from woodland), some meadow and 3 virgates (around 90 acres of land) which

was attached to a manor to Garendon Abbey. These inquisitions show that the family was often in financial difficulties.

However, by the time the Pakeman family built the substantial manor house in Kirby, their status was much improved. Simon's career marked a watershed in the family's history. In previous years, the family had bought small pieces of land in and around Kirby, mainly woodland and meadow, from the knighted Herle family, who were absentee lords of the area. Two other families owned land in Kirby at this time – the Levere family and the Mayel family, and together with the Pakemans they had sufficient resources to lead village society in Kirby in the absence of a resident lord. This meant that these families were on the verge of "gentry status". Simon's early life is not well documented but his increasing social status led to him becoming an MP in 1334. It is probable that he had legal training, helped by Sir William Herle. He fast established himself as a popular lawyer, his legal clientele being from around Kirby, including the Ferrers family and Thomas Beauchamp, and in 1340, Henry, Earl of Lancaster, appointed him steward of Leicester Honor – an important administrative position carried out on behalf of the Earl, which he held until 1346. John of Gaunt reappointed him steward in 1362, until Simon retired in 1375 because of old age, but during this time he was influential. Whilst he was steward, he was appointed to every peace commission and on commissions in Northamptonshire, Rutland, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Cambridgeshire. He spent much time in London and was elected as MP in 1365 and 1368.

In 1374, Simon put much of his land in trust, but when he died in 1376, he left a son who was underage and when the son died in 1391 while still a minor, the estate was divided between his daughters, both of whom were married. Katherine had married Robert Digby, the heir to a large estate in Tilton and Joan had married Richard Vylers, with a family estate in Brooksby. It is clear that Simon's daughters' husbands were of a higher status than Pakeman and indicates the extent to which he had expanded the family's estate.

Simon (3) Pakeman appears to have had an exceptional ability which ensured that he became more than a local legal adviser, which would have been the most likely position for the son of a family such as the Pakemans. It is thought that because his rise was so rapid, he may have been unable to take full advantage of his position in a way that an official from a well-established gentry family would have found natural. Eventually, the Pakeman Manor House would be replaced by a Castle, built by William Lord Hastings, who also had a rise and fall in his life – but that's another story!

Sources:

H.M. Office of Works: Department of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings. Kirby Muxloe Castle near Leicester Official Guide 1917

Social Advancement through Seignorial Service? The case of Simon Pakeman. G.G. Astill LAHS Transcriptions. VK

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The Cresta Run

As we have just submitted an article in "Your Local" magazine about snow, slides and sledges, it seems as good a time as any to add to these memories from our residents.

One particular story that deserves a mention is John Cowling's tale of the "Cresta Run". When heavy snow had been falling overnight and the snow and ice were compacted on the icy road surface, it was time for a Cresta run. Early in the morning, when there was little or no traffic, Hedgerow Lane was just the place for a good outing on the sledge. This was usually done on a Sunday morning, when it was very quiet and so any approaching buses or cars could be heard. If a vehicle appeared, the lads just stood innocently at the roadside as they went by. John said "If only our parents knew!".

When John was 11 or 12 years old, he remembers one of the boys had been loaned a very "up-market" Swiss toboggan, which was very fast and also steerable. When conditions were right, they sped down Big Hill, flew through the air and landed in the soft snow and mud on the other side of the brook. He said "We flew through the air, hanging on to the toboggan like supermen, and miraculously we never got hurt, apart from the odd bruise!".

Another story comes to mind – this one is from Jan Timson. Many of us know that Jan's father, Fred Clarke, was a builder and master carpenter. When Jan was young, she actually had three sledges. The first one was possibly made by her grandfather, who was an engineer. It was much higher than any other sledge, constructed with a metal frame and wooden slats for seats. It would only go when the ground was well frozen and was nicknamed "The flying bedstead" by other sledgers. The next sledge was made by her father, Fred. Jan says that her father "didn't do dainty", so although it looked very good with its shiny runners, it was heavy. Her other sledge was made by an electrical engineer who had access to metal tubing. This sledge was silver, very light, very low and very fast. Jan says - "An abiding memory of its speed is the year my husband and I went to Old John in Bradgate Park. I was probably around 50 and as I stood watching others going down, I was planning my route. I saw some young lads looking at me, as if thinking "What's that old woman think she's going to do"? I waited until they were a distance down the hill, jumped onto my sledge and took great delight in observing the looks of disbelief as I overtook them! I still delight in the memory now, nearly 40 years on.

Do you have any memories of sledging in Kirby? JU

A Stroll around Kirby (continued from front page)

of these houses will be followed by a number of Council-owned retirement bungalows. In years to come, Lime Grove will be expanded and with the addition of Wilshere Close will become a substantial development of private detached houses. We then follow the road up until it reaches Gullet Lane. As we walk up this part of Station Road, we pass several houses which were probably built in the last 30 years.

If anyone remembers "Regal Drive" or the house named "Belmont" on Lime Grove please let us know. We are always ready to add information to our extensive archive of information on Kirby Muxloe. JU