

Toc H

The article that I would have liked to write would have been about the Kirby Muxloe branch of Toc H, for there used to be one. My problem is that I know nothing about it, which is a bit of a disadvantage when it comes to writing an article! So I will have to content myself with writing about the organisation itself, but if anyone can tell me anything about the KM branch, I would be delighted to hear about it.

I will come back to the rather odd name, Toc H, in a minute, but let's start with a story. In 1915, an army chaplain was sent to France and then on to the town of Poperinge in Belgium. It was a few miles from the trenches around Ypres and so there were plenty of soldiers going to and from the battlefields of Flanders. The Reverend Phillip Byard (Tubby) Clayton, for that was the chaplain's name, had been instructed by his senior chaplain, Neville Talbot, to set up some sort of rest house for the troops. Clayton, universally known as Tubby, found a hop merchant's house that had been temporarily vacated by its owner, so he decided to set up an "Everyman's House" there. He named it Talbot House, in honour of Gilbert Talbot (Neville's brother) who had been killed earlier in the year. It opened on 11th Dec 1915. Now soldiers, then as now, can never resist using initials to talk about anything and everything, so Talbot House soon became TH, and then, in the radio signallers' language of the day, as Toc H.

Tubby ensured the house was open to men and officers alike. It was Christian, but non-denominational. It included a library where soldiers could check-out a book by leaving their cap behind as a ticket. Tubby was a shrewd man and knew that no soldier would dare report for duty without a cap, so he always got his books back. There was a large kitchen where much tea was consumed, a beautiful walled garden where men could sit and forget about the war for a while, and eventually, in the attic hop loft, a chapel where regular services were held. It was this that became a focal point for many and was known as the "heart" of the House. Some had their confirmation here and many attended their first communion in this special place. Sadly, for many, their last communion would also be here. For most of WWI, Talbot House offered an oasis of peace to the men passing through Poperinge. Not only could they socialise but Tubby also organised debates and concerts. Men could post messages for their missing comrades and hope they too might stop at the house and see them. What became clear was that Talbot House created a special feeling of fellowship for those who passed through its doors.

When peace came, Tubby returned to England and the rather different routines of post-war life. But Talbot House was still in his mind and in his heart. He knew that he had created something special and was reluctant to give it up. He gathered around him many of the men who had passed through Talbot House during the war and also invited some women to join the founding group. They decided to drop the name Talbot House, as there was already a place in London by that name, so they adopted the soldier's nickname of Toc H as the new name for their movement. They started by acquiring a house in Queensgate Place, Knightsbridge, as a hostel for men coming to London for work and having nowhere to stay.



Talbot House, Poperinge

When the house proved too small, they moved to a larger house in Queensgate Gardens, which they named, in true army fashion, Talbot House Mark 1. By early 1921, there were three "Marks", as they were now called. As men left them and departed for other areas of the country, they in turn set up new Marks, and so the process evolved. As each new group was set up, it went through a probation period, following which it was given full branch status, which was indicated by the award of a Toc-H lamp. The aims of the movement remained as Tubby had envisaged them and were eventually expressed in words as "Four Points of the Compass":

1. FRIENDSHIP: To love widely. To provide members with opportunities to develop a spirit of understanding and reconciliation.
2. SERVICE: To build bravely. To enable members, with their varying gifts, to serve their fellows.
3. FAIRMINDEDNESS: To think fairly. To bring to members the knowledge and experience of others.
4. THE KINGDOM OF GOD: To witness humbly.

Although the movement grew over time and was very successful in the 1940s and 1950s, it struggled a little to attract the younger generation. So in the late fifties, the Project scheme was begun. This asked branches to establish a series of short (weekend) and longer residential projects to which young people could be invited to volunteer. So began another golden period with hundreds of Toc H projects being delivered each year. It included environmental work and other manual projects; play schemes; and work with the elderly, blind, disabled, carers, deaf, those with mental health problems, disadvantaged children and others through existing institutions and organisations or by providing holidays. The Leicester branch set up "Toc H Volunteers", which consisted of young men and women who took part in these types of activity. I will finish with one final story. In 1973, a young man at a meeting of this group spotted a rather pretty young lady with long auburn hair across the room. He asked her out and romance blossomed.



A Toc-H Lamp

How does the story end? Well, it hasn't yet. My better half and I celebrated our 46th wedding anniversary last year!

MG

With thanks to:
www.toch-uk.org.uk/history-of-toch



Newsletter No. 9 January 2021

Hi and welcome to our KMLHG Newsletter. We are very pleased to announce that KM Parish Council have agreed to our request for funding to support these Newsletters - we thank them for helping us.

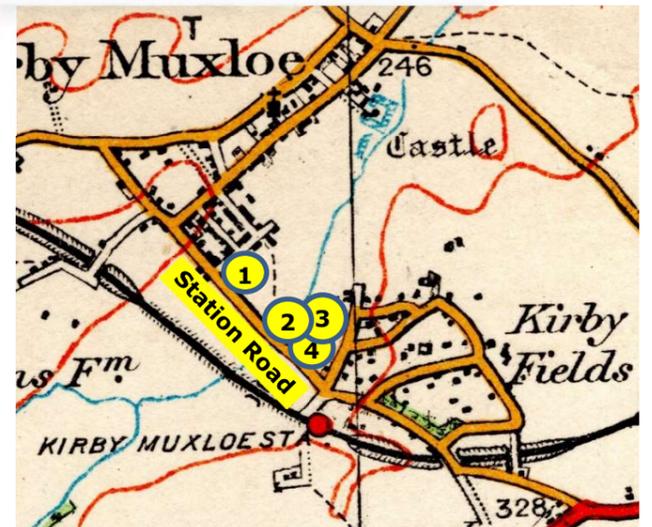
Mike Gould (Chair) Val Knott (Secretary)
Kate Traill (Treasurer) Judith Upton (Archivist)
Kerry Burdett

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

① As we cross the entrance to Barwell Road we come to numbers 10 and 12, a pair of stylish semi-detached houses. The first of the two houses, at number 10, is named Lyndene. It is now home to Harold and Molly Donne. Molly is the daughter of John and Amy Hughes who had been gifted the house by John Hughes' father, George Henry Hughes of Highfield, Kirby Fields, on the occasion of their marriage in 1912. Molly was born at Lyndene in 1913, and lived there with her parents for a number of years. After the death of G.H. Hughes in 1937, John Hughes bought Highfield from his father's estate and moved in with his wife Amy and their daughter Molly. Lyndene was then rented out until Molly married John Donne in 1939, when the house was given to them as a wedding gift. Soon afterwards, Harold Donne, who was a Staff Officer with the Civil Defence in Melton Mowbray, was posted to Melton for the duration of the war. Now in 1945, we see them returned to their home and this year we will see Molly give birth to a daughter Sally, at Newland's Nursing Home. In 2 years' time, Harold, Molly and their daughter Sally will move to live with Sally's grandparents at Highfield and Lyndene will be sold.

The house next door at number 12 is called Ivydene and in 1939, it was the home of George Upton and family. At the time, George was the Steward at K.M. Golf Course, however in 1943, George became landlord of the Royal Oak public house. It is thought that he moved with his family to live on the premises at that time. He will stay as publican until his retirement in 1963. Now we approach a group of council houses. They are thought to have been built in the 1930's and range from number 14 to the last house at number 52. The Percy family live here and Colin, one of the children, is 16 years old. In the years to come, many of us will remember Colin Percy as a founder member of the village History Group. He will become an excellent raconteur, always with an amusing tale to tell about village life. As time goes by, many of the houses will be sold off to their existing tenants, especially during the Thatcher government of 1975-1990.

② We now reach the Memorial Gates. The Gates were erected to commemorate the men of the village who perished in the First World War. They were created by Joseph Morcom (sculptor) and John Russell and the unveiling took place on 10th June 1923. The Stone of Remembrance was first dedicated in 1933. Now at the end of WWII, we will soon see more names added to the



Memorial in remembrance of the men of the village who fell whilst serving their country between 1938 and 1945. The Memorial Gardens will be redesigned in 1995. The "Reccy", as most of us will refer to the large grassy area behind the Memorial gardens, was gifted to the village by Henry Swain Bennett in 1920, to be used as "public pleasure grounds". Mr Bennet lived at Holmwood on Kirby Fields and was a very generous benefactor to numerous causes. He was involved in the original set-up of the grounds but sadly he died in 1927. In the last 5/6 years, during war time, the ground has been used for cattle grazing, especially in the winter, and also a large piece of land has been used for vegetable growing.

③ Now, at the end of wartime, thoughts are turning to new ventures. The village is badly in need of a large hall where various events can be held. Up until now, most plays and productions have been held in St Bart's Church Hall on Main Street, but often the venue is too small. Fundraising activities are now in hand to raise the necessary money to build a village Community Centre. This will be situated on the ground just to the side of the reccy. During the next few years, a large amount will be raised and building will commence in 1948.

④ Moving on again we reach "Fernleigh" and "Ashleigh", Victorian semi-detached houses which bear a date stone for 1880. Next comes "Inglewood" and "Heatherlea", another pair of substantial semi-detached houses, date stoned 1881. "Inglwood" has been the home to our well regarded Dr Garfit, who has lived in the house since 1899, until the present day (1945). He will continue to live in the house until his death in 1955. Dr Garfit will always be remembered as the doctor who often arrived at his house calls on horseback. He would tether his horse to a lamppost, tie up his hunting dogs in the same way and then visit his patients. When all calls had been made, he would go off to join the hunt.

Next time we follow Station Road back along the opposite side.

JU

Fond Memories : Colin Percy (1929 - 2016)

I first met Colin when I was researching the first of our four books. I will always remember such a lovely kind man, who had so many stories to tell. Invited into his sitting room, we would make ourselves comfortable and then he would recount some of his amazing stories. Colin was the youngest of four children and his father had passed away in 1938, so his mother, who he described as a "little woman", worked very hard to keep the family fed. He also talked about his wife Maureen, who had died in 2006, and it was quite obvious that he missed her terribly. Colin's sitting room was full of beautiful pictures of the two of them together.

We talked about Kirby Muxloe Primary School, of which he had very fond memories. His links with the school went right back to 1910, when Barwell Road School first opened. His father, Ernest Cecil, had been a pupil at the school at that time. Colin's first teacher was Mrs Cooper and he could still remember sitting in little chairs and looking at pictures on the wall with words like "the cat sat on the mat". He said that was how reading was taught to the class. Moving on to Miss Hubbard's class was quite different, he said. That was when the learning really began. They were required to recite their times tables up to twelve times in front of the whole class. They were also taught poetry. Colin said that Miss Hubbard was very strict and punishment was very swift if you misbehaved. At seven years old, he moved into Miss McKenny's class.

When he was nine years old, his father died, at the young age of 42. That made a very big difference in his life and into his mother's life too, with five children to care and provide for. At ten years old, he joined Mr Jarvis's class and Colin remembered that he was a brilliant teacher and also the Headmaster at the time. After taking the eleven plus, he won a place at Grammar school, but unfortunately, was not able to take up his place due to the cost. This did happen in the 1940's and 50's when less well-off families just could not afford to buy the uniform and other items required for attendance at a grammar school. Colin went on to attend South Wigston Intermediate School, leaving at the age of fourteen and finding work in an engineering factory.

Colin often recounted his memories of the bombing of the village. That night, he was sitting at home, which at the time was the last council house on Station Road, just before the entrance to the Reccy. Suddenly they heard a big band and went outside to see what was happening. They could see a search light in the sky and actually thought it was all quite exciting. He said "it was a bit of a novelty". They then went down Barwell Road to the air raid shelter in the school grounds. This was a type of Anderson shelter, half underground, very damp but with a heater and electric lights. When they heard the "all clear" siren, they went home. Walking along Barwell Road, they could see tiles and slates all over the road, but didn't really realise the extent of the damage until the next morning. As school was closed the next day, Colin, together with a group of friends, walked up towards the Free Church to take a look. All they could see was destruction with glass and debris all over the road. They busied themselves collecting pieces of shrapnel and lengths of green parachute cord as they went along. He recounted that there was a brisk trade in these items of memorabilia in the school yard, when school re-opened

the next day. Colin said that his grandfather's house on Barwell Road was badly damaged and so his grandfather came to live with their family for a while. His grandmother and aunt went to live with a family on Kirby Fields.

After two years of National Service in the army, when he said he had quite an easy time, he met and married his wife Maureen. Colin and Maureen married in 1956 and produced two boys, Michael and Duncan, who also attended Kirby School. Michael and Duncan's children attended Kirby School as well, and so that made four generations of the family - a fact of which Colin was very proud! Colin worked at T.I. Tubes, Desford, for thirty-seven years and said it was the best job he ever had. He retired at the age of sixty-one.

JU

Strolling down Station Road in 1945

In December's issue of our newsletter, the article entitled *Strolling down Station Road* mentioned that a large bomb dropped into the garden of a house named "The Chalet" and that the house was saved by an external chimney stack, which took much of the blast. It seemed strange that the house would have survived such a blast even with such a strong chimney.

Since the December newsletter, we have now learned that the front of the house was blown off and one of the bedrooms could clearly be seen from the road. We are told that the sheets on the bed were flapping in the breeze.

The house was listed in the 1911 census and so that confirmed my thoughts that it was built in the Edwardian era. It looks like an Edwardian house. So, how did it survive? The answer is - it didn't. The house was demolished after the bombing and then rebuilt in exactly the same design. So, we have a house which certainly looks to be Edwardian but was actually rebuilt in around 1945.

My grateful thanks to Peter and Pam Cooper, who have at last solved the mystery. Peter tells us that he stood and watched them rebuild the house and couldn't believe that it was an exact carbon copy of the original.

Much of our research is based on information that has been passed to us in the last 11 years. If you have additional tales to tell or information to pass on, we are always most grateful to receive your memories. Although we don't always use the information immediately, we record it in our archive and then use it at a later date. Without your help, our archive would be much smaller and not contain the wealth of information that we have about our village.

JU

With the latest covid restrictions and the problems associated with the new variant of the virus, it is looking increasingly likely that our first indoor meeting will be in September, although we are not ruling out May just yet. Mike Gould (Chair)

Christmas Quiz - Answers

How did you fare with our Christmas Quiz in the December Newsletter? Here are the answers:

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|--|
| 1 | 12 Days of Christmas | 31 | Slade |
| 2 | Four | 32 | Raymond Briggs |
| 3 | Christian Bishop St Nicholas | 33 | Victorian postmen were called Robins due to red uniforms |
| 4 | The Snowman | 34 | 3 - Dasher, Dancer & Donner |
| 5 | Blitzen | 35 | East Anglia |
| 6 | Six | 36 | An Invisible Cloak |
| 7 | The Salvation Army | 37 | Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come |
| 8 | The Druids | 38 | Oliver Cromwell |
| 9 | A Kind of Mulled Wine | 39 | Turkey |
| 10 | Babes in the Wood | 40 | Parson Brown |
| 11 | Tom Smith - London Sweetshop owner | 41 | Panettone |
| 12 | 19th (1848) | 42 | Pacific and Indian Oceans |
| 13 | Home Alone | 43 | The tradition of Wishing Neighbours a Long Life |
| 14 | The Romans | 44 | 16th Century (1526) |
| 15 | 11 Pipers Piping | 45 | God Rest ye Merry Gentlemen |
| 16 | Underneath the Mistletoe | 46 | Rudyard Kipling |
| 17 | Jacob Marley | 47 | A Sixpence |
| 18 | James | 48 | An Air Rifle |
| 19 | 1843 by John Callcott Horsley | 49 | Jingle Bells |
| 20 | 1958 | 50 | Ukraine |
| 21 | A Dip in the Serpentine | 51 | A Magician's Hat |
| 22 | Merry Wives of Windsor | 52 | Mexico |
| 23 | Touches his Nose, Smiles and Nods | 53 | EastEnders |
| 24 | 364 | 54 | Roger Hargreaves |
| 25 | Toy soldiers | 55 | Cheese |
| 26 | Showaddywaddy | 56 | Germany (Hamburg 1902) |
| 27 | The Stone of Scone | 57 | Maids a Milking |
| 28 | King George V - in 1932 | 58 | The Snow Queen |
| 29 | A Lump of Coal | 59 | Irving Berlin |
| 30 | A Close Shave | 60 | We wish you a Merry Christmas |

KT

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:

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