

The History of Kings Bromley Historians

How we started by Ivy Butcher (additions in italics by Allan Howard)

Quite a few years before the Historians was formed David [*Butcher, Ivy's husband*] and I used to keep bits of village information as it came to hand. Our interest was strengthened by the fact that some of our pupils at The Richard Crosse School came to ask about the life of the village when they were doing their special projects. This is how it was until 1979.

As we know The Kings Bromley Historians was founded in 1979. This came about by Ross White coming to ask us about the village for his school work. On his second visit he happened to say that his father was also interested in the history of the village and so it was that our first meeting took place at the Old Vicarage, the home of Alan and Ena White and their two sons Ross and Niall. A suitable notice was put, I think, in the Village News and the two shops, and about 10 or 12 people turned up at the Old Vicarage, which incidentally became our 'home' for many years by kind permission of Ena and Alan. It was a very informal 'get together' with people talking about various aspects of village life and village people, and there were one or two hiccoughs to start with, but no damage was done. It became apparent that there was enough interest to start a group to research the social history of the village. That having been done we then decided that we would be a working group with the members taking on specific areas for research and recording it. We also decided we must ask for guidance on the best way to conduct our research and this is how we met Dr. Dudley Fowkes who was the archivist at the Stafford Record Office. [I should mention that Mr. F. Stitt was the Archivist when we first started]. I cannot stress the welcome we received from the Record Office and its staff and happily this remains today. We were all volunteers eager to get going. We thought that the first important place for research was the church chest. We approached the Rev. Arthur Turner, Priest in charge of All Saints and the Parochial Church Council for permission to search the chest. This was freely given. It happened to be during the winter months that we started. Alan, David and I made a start on a very cold morning. There were no heating facilities in the vestry, but we had taken gloves! These visits were short and sweet. Other members started on census, baptisms, marriages and burials, electoral rolls etc.

We also decided that we must interview the older residents in the village and get their stories, also ask for any photographs which they could loan to us for copying. At first some people were a little reluctant in giving us photographs but in time that fear had gone. David and I were given the task of interviewing our old residents. The stories I could tell and the fun we had at the various interviews is never ending. Needless to say the tapes had to be very discreetly edited and the Historians copies are still preserved.

Our first speaker was Norman Stubbs who had recently published his history of Alrewas. Later on we invited Fred Johnson who was an expert on map reading and field work. The Stafford Record Office also visited us on more than one occasion, and the Lichfield Record Office was also a good source of information. It was here that we studied the local newspapers, electoral rolls and numerous books on social history and which included Kings Bromley of course.

Visits were made to various sites and we took part in exhibitions with similar societies. There was a lot of interest in the Lane family who by this time had left the village but there were still many villagers who had been employed by the family. Gwen Osborne, who lived in Silver Thatch cottage in Manor Road, was in touch with Miss Grace Lane [*The last Lord of the Manor, JHHV Lane had seven children, Jane b. 1903, Grace b. 1904, Thomas b. 1905, Katherine b. 1908 (known as Withy), Richard b. 1908, Lettice b. 1911, Dorothy b. 1913*] and she passed on her telephone number to us (Silver Thatch Cottage was owned by Mrs Bromley Davenport who regarded it as her little bit of Kings Bromley). It was left to me to ring Miss Grace and try and fix an interview with her. I was a bit apprehensive about this, but I had to do it. As soon as Miss Grace heard my voice she shouted 'Fraser's daughter' (my mother, Annie Fraser, was lady's maid to the Hon Mrs G Lane, Grace's mother). She was so excited and a meeting was readily arranged. About five of our members set out to go to Fawley near Henley. We took a packed lunch, and plenty of note paper. This was the beginning of a friendship that lasted until Grace died in 1985. [*Grace's sister Lettice had married twice but was now living in Henley and worked in a dress shop while Grace lived in the tiny Fawley house, after Grace died she went to live with her daughter Giana in Ireland.*]

Our first exhibition was put on at the Village Hall. We mounted many displays of work we had done, that was the first part of the evening and the hall was packed. The second part was made up of a display of copies of old photographs on slides. This was hilarious, it brought back so many people known to the audience!

Our next big adventure was the production of our 1851 story. The Community Council had sponsorship from the Shell Oil Company, which was given for projects such as this. Not only did we win a prize of £100 and a copy of the Shell Road Directory, but the ITV Team came to the village and took modern pictures to match some of the old ones. This is, of course, in our records. The final to this was that there was a day exhibition in London at the Caxton Hall for the finalists of this competition. There were speakers, Mr. Heseltine for one, and our M.P. of the day Mr. John Heddle. He sent for his photographer from the House to take our photograph - that is also in the collection. I should mention that 1851 was chosen because it was the year of the first complete and detailed census.

["Our Village 1851" was published in 1983, and contained a history of the state of England at the time, the state of Kings Bromley, sections on the Church Register, the Lane family, a matching of the census details with a map of the village, a review of the poor law relief, a section on the newly built railway, extracts from 'The Staffordshire Advertiser 1851', a section on the schools and human interest stories on a farmer's record, a villager transported to Australia and a transcription of a villager's will. Contributors were: Alan White, Dorothy and Jim Fox, Eileen and Keith Day, Jennie Marshall & Mavis Crockett, Ivy and David Butcher, Ken France, Margaret Walker, Mike Till, Sandra Bowdler and Veronica Weselby]

It was something of a surprise to learn that the Lane vault was under the vestry and the organ. Dry rot was found in this area which meant that the floor had to be completely renewed. The organ was dismantled and stored in the pews in the north aisle, and the floor replaced with concrete with a trap door which was finally sealed. (The Rev. Arthur Turner also went into the crypt and got stuck in the trap door). Before this happened David was allowed to go into the crypt and photograph the coffins and take a record of the transcriptions. This is in our records. Whilst this was happening, the chest from the vestry was moved to the belfry (since changed) and we found the burial records and were able to find the Lane records.

For our tenth anniversary we staged a show in the Village Hall. All our members were in costume and mounted their work on suitable stands (plaster board). We were supported with displays from the Record Office and Community Council. For a period before this Mrs. Amy Harrison approached us suggesting that she would make a video of the village for us. We gladly accepted this kind offer and in the billiard room we showed these tapes. There were many copies made and sold for the benefit of the Historians. *[This video has now been transferred onto DVD and is once again available for sale]*. I should mention here that we were allowed to copy 'My Mother's Sketch Book' and copies were sold of the various watercolours for the benefit of our funds.

David and I visited Miss Grace and Miss Lettice at Fawley on several occasions. On one of these visits Lettice asked if we would be interested in looking at her mother's Sketch Book. We were most interested and the book was produced and to our amazement it was a history of Kings Bromley in water colours by Susan Anne Lane who would be Lettice and Grace's grandmother. Permission was freely given for us to copy the whole book and the book was returned to Lettice. When Lettice (who went to live with her daughter in Ireland) died, her ashes were brought to Kings Bromley by her daughter Giana and interred in the family grave. I asked Giana if I could borrow the book again so that a book could be produced; this became 'Kings Bromley, the Artist's View'. We had our Christmas party at the Old Vicarage for many years. Games were planned, food was provided and Dudley always accepted our invitation. They were good evenings.

Another exciting lecture was given by Losco Bradley. He was doing his Masters degree at Nottingham University on The Trent Vale. He brought photos of his work which included parts of our village. We have a Neolithic site at Kings Bromley and numerous post holes.

We were advised by Dudley to try and get a copy of 'The Local Historian's Encyclopaedia'. We eventually found this at W.H. Smiths in Stafford and were surprised to find that our name was in it under Organisations and Societies. I think it was termed "The Green Bible".

There were many visits covering a wide range of subjects. One that comes to mind is Capestone Hall in Cheshire. This was the home of the Bromley Davenports (nothing to do with our Bromley). Lilian Lane married a Bromley Davenport and this was their home. Lilian later became a Dame for her work with the Cheshire Council and our vicar the Rev Griffith Williams Jones and one or two of the older villagers attended her funeral.

Miss Grace Lane donated to Shugborough a special linen table cloth and a bedspread which had the story of the escape of King Charles II woven into the border, also a bedspread with the Lane monogram embroidered in each corner. The tablecloth and bedspread were borrowed from Shugborough and displayed at the Historian's open day on 10th November 2012. She also donated four brass candlesticks to our church (they belonged to her father) and they are regularly in use.

Mavis, David and I visited Stafford Record Office for one day a week for some time (car parking was 50p. for the day). Work continued although there were changes in membership.

Going on now to 1993. Our first blow. David died, and within two years we had lost Jim Fox and Ken France.

Allan Howard writes:

There are six significant deposits of manuscripts held by Staffordshire Record Office pertaining to Kings Bromley which contain invaluable information:

D1344 'Papers of the Newton Family' - This collection was purchased in 1973 and it seems that when it was catalogued it was assumed it was part of the Phillips MSS. Phillips is Sir Thomas Phillips who was a collector (on a national scale) of manuscripts. Parts of his collection have been coming on the market for the last hundred years. Apparently documents from his collection are marked in a particular way, but it seems that these documents are not marked but bear the characteristics of his collection.

D357 'Lane Papers deposit 1' and 'D802 Lane Papers deposit 2'. These were deposited at SRO at the same time as the Goldsmiths' Company deposited the first part of MS 523 'The Newton Papers' to Senate House London, i.e. 1969. They are the papers collected by Thomas Lane, clerk of the Goldsmiths company who inherited the East part of Kings Bromley and Newtons plantation in 1794 from Elizabeth Newton. The second deposit to MS523 was purchased in 1976 by Senate House and contains early records of the Newtons plantation - this once again was purchased from the Phillips collection and appears to be a companion to SRO D1344 - SRO buying the part referring to Kings Bromley, Senate House buying the part referring to Barbados.

D6584 'Lane Papers deposit 3'. Deposited by Jane Lane granddaughter of JHHV Lane (Jane and Thomas were the children of Thomas Lane son of JHHV Lane)

D5657 'Kings Bromley Manorial Records'. Deposited by Thomas Lane.

D6179 ' Maps of Kings Bromley'. Deposited by Thomas Lane

D6702 ' The Letter Book of Samuel Barnett & Co 1796 -1803'

D7286 When Jane Lane, Thomas Lane's daughter and the last in the line of the Kings Bromley Lane's died on 5th April 2013, she left a set of documents for archiving at the Stafford Record Office which are catalogued as 'D7286 – The Jane Lane Papers'. In addition she gave Kings Bromley Historians

The acquisition of D6584, D5657, D6179 and D6702 by SRO involved KB Historians.

With respect to D6584 Ivy writes:

It was by accident that I knew of the papers from Jane Lane. The person who had been appointed as Power of Attorney to Jane Lane arrived at Stafford Record Office with a car load of papers referring to the Lanes. Thea (*Randall, SRO archivist*) rang me to tell me and asked if I would like to meet the family who had brought the papers -

which, of course, I did and they were Mr. and Mrs. Kirkham (*who were unrelated to Jane Lane, but were looking after her and had given power of attorney by her*) and their young son. I was able to learn of Jane's health and we kept in touch for a while through email. Dudley did occasional work at SRO and he undertook to catalogue these papers. The catalogue is now complete; *little research has yet been done using this valuable resource.*

With respect to D5657 and D6179 Ivy writes:

Ivy & David met Thomas and Jane, Tommy's children at Grace Lane's funeral in ?1985 at Fawley. Thomas said that he had found two albums of photographs (those mentioned in Albert Turner's letters as being at Treworgan) which he had sent to KB by rail to Burton and then by taxi to KB. David photographed all of these photos, they are the ones in the archives labelled with a white number on a black background like this:



It took a while for Ivy and David to identify anyone on these photos. David kept a record of all of his photography which is in an exercise book with an orange cover - find it.

Thomas Lane (*grandson of JHHV Lane*) sent to David and me a tin box of books and papers, together with a special container for maps which we held for some time. We persuaded Thomas to deposit the maps at Stafford as their condition was not good (D6179). To this he agreed. The documents in the tin box I held until his death in 2004 when they were put into SRO under D6557.

The Simnetts Photographs (2000)

Ivy and David had of herself as a by Simnetts of them to find that of 32 old plates of made prints of to Kings Bromley Ivy was tied into



noticed that a picture they baby in a chair was taken Burton. They contacted they still had a collection Kings Bromley. They these and presented them Historians. The chair that was still in the studio.

With respect to D6702, Ken Bowcock writes:

In 2007 the Historians funded half of the costs incurred by the Staffordshire Archives Service in acquiring 'The Letter Book of Samuel Barnett, Tinplate Manufacturer, Kings Bromley'. The book contains a copy of all the outgoing letters of Samuel Barnett over the period 1796 to 1803. Members of the Historians undertook a project to photograph all the pages of the book, then to transcribe them and produce a

CD containing both the photographs and the transcription. A copy of this CD is held locally and a copy was presented to Stafford Record Office (SRO ref. D6702).

Allan Howard writes:

In addition, the Historians have been responsible for depositing Kings Bromley school records D5959, Church records, Horticultural Society records D4130, records from the church chest D4051, KB parish magazine D6190 and others. In our own archive there are many records, including many photographs, that exist nowhere else.

Recent Research on the Barbados Connection:

While it had been clear for many years that the wealth of the Newton family, which had been passed on to the Lane brothers in 1794

The Archive:

The Archive was opened in a room on the first floor of the Village Hall on 13th April 2016. The materials were purchased with the generous assistance of Councillor Martyn Tittley and the Staffordshire Community Fund, Kings Bromley Show Society, Kings Bromley Parish Council and a number of private donors. It was constructed by Dennis O’Dea whose labour was donated free of charge. The Archive room also contains the Parish Council records, and may in future contain the records of other village organisations.

Items in the Historians Archive can be viewed by Kings Bromley Parishioners. The Archive catalogue, and contact details for obtaining access can be found on the Historians’ website.

Publications List:

Kings Bromley Historians’ Publications

1. Our Village 1. (1981)
2. Our Village 2. “ Kings Bromley in1851. (1983)
3. Our Village 3. “A Few Cameos of Interesting Local History”. (1985)
4. Our Village 4. 10th Anniversary Edition. (1989)
5. Village Trail 1. (1986)
6. Village Trail 2. (1987)
7. A Walk Along the Town Street. (1999)

8. Kings Bromley at the Time of the Lane Family. (2004)
9. 250 Years of Kings Bromley Schools. (2004)
10. Perambulation of the Bounds. The Parish Boundary Walk. (2006, updated 2014)
11. The Lane Inheritance: Kings Bromley and Barbados. (2011)
12. A Portrait of Dean Lane. (2012)
13. A History of Almshouses in Kings Bromley. (2012)
14. The Scandalous Divorce of John Newton. (2012)
15. The Life and Times of Agnes, the Little Queen of Kings Bromley. (2015)

Ivy Butcher's Books

1. King's Bromley: A Century of Photographs. (2000)
2. Snippets from the History of King's Bromley. (2001)
3. King's Bromley – the Artist's View. (2004)
4. There's More to King's Bromley. (2006)
5. Ivy Butcher – Her Book. (2008)
6. Hark Back. (2015)

OTHER SIGNIFICANT WORKS (not published):

The Parish Register Project, 1984. Baptisms , marriages and deaths from 1663 to 1920.
 All Saints Church Plan of Churchyard, 1982. Updated Alison Howard 2008
 Stories of the Churchyard: Interesting Inscriptions. Alison Howard 2008
 The Tinsplate Industry in Staffordshire. Catherine Cartwright. 2010
 Catalogue of Kings Bromley Historians Archive. Ken Bowcock, Ian Martin (ongoing)
 History of the Kings Bromley Charities by Glen Wright

VIDEOS:

Ivy Butcher's Historical Tour of Kings Bromley, 1979 - now available as DVD
 History of Kings Bromley Church. 1,2,3 & 4

IVY BUTCHER'S OWN PUBLICATIONS:

Kings Bromley: A century of photographs.	Lichfield Press, 2000.
Snippets from the history of Kings Bromley.	Lichfield Press, 2001.
Kings Bromley - the artist's view.	Lichfield Press, 2004.
There's More to Kings Bromley.	Lichfield Press, 2006.
Ivy Alexandra Butcher - Her Book.	Lichfield Press, 2008.

Allan Howard Writes:

This note provides the background to new research by the Historians. Publications in the pipeline include a history of the almshouses, an account of John(2) Newton's divorce and his houses in Bath and Spettisbury and, following the village purchase of his portrait, a background paper on Dean Lane. Further work on the link with Barbados, the oral history of the village and the postwar development of the village and the fabric of the Hall is planned.

April 2012