

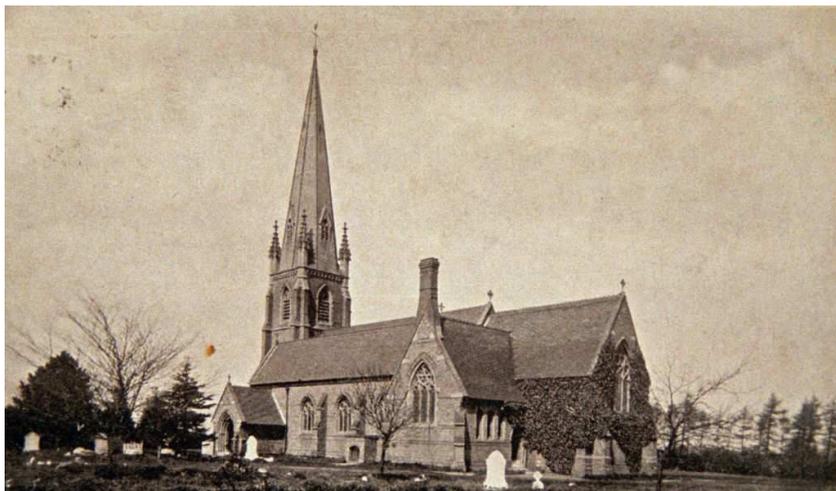
# PAST TIMES

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## GALLEYWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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**St. Michael's and All Angels' Church, Galleywood.**

### **THE 140<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ST MICHAEL'S PARISH.**

For those of you that live in Galleywood, it will not have passed your notice that this September marked the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Parish. This splendid and elegant church in yellow brick and stone with its tower and slender spire (a combined height of 131 feet), has been a landmark in the village and the surrounding countryside for all those years since; the church steeple rising above the trees even appears on the village sign.

This Church owes its very existence to Arthur Pryor, the then owner of Hylands House. Although it might be more accurate to say that it was Arthur's wife – Elizabeth Sophia – who was really responsible for the Church being built. She was a Christian lady with a very strong faith and had expressed her belief and concern that the spiritual needs of Galleywood were not being adequately met by the Chapel-at-Ease near the *Eagle Inn* and

the small Methodist Chapel in *Well Lane*. She managed to persuade her husband to finance the building of a church on Galleywood Common. Back in 1861 he had also funded the rebuilding of St Mary's Church at Widford.

Arthur Pryor once again engaged the services of the celebrated London architect, James Piers St Aubyn, who had previously designed the new church in Widford. On the afternoon of 18<sup>th</sup> June 1872 the Pryors attended the laying of the foundation stone. The church would be unique in as much it was built within the bounds of an active racecourse. The building of the church was in the hands of Messrs. Putnam and Forthingham of London and quite remarkably the Company completed the building in just 364 days! The cost of construction was said to be £6,300.

The Church was consecrated on Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September 1873 by the Bishop of Rochester. The Pryors attended the Service along with another seven hundred and fifty people. After the ceremony Mrs Pryor kindly provided a substantial meal for 'the poor of the parish' in the nearby school and the Pryor family also funded a meal in the *Eagle Inn* for the fourteen bell ringers that had travelled from Benington, Hertfordshire. Later in the week the Clerk of Works, Mr Neale, along with all the stone masons and labourers engaged on the building work were provided with a dinner in the *Blue Lion Inn*; I would venture that they thoroughly deserved their meal considering their speed of the construction!

By an Order of Council dated 20<sup>th</sup> October 1874 the formation of the ecclesiastical parish was duly constituted and it is four square miles in area, taking in parts of four other parishes - Moulsham, Great Baddow, West Hanningfield and Orsett Hamlet; the boundary is marked by ten stones each bearing the letters 'G.C.St.M.C.C.' (Galleywood Common St. Michael's Consolidated Chapelry). Of course Galleywood did not become a Civil parish until April 1987.

The churchyard is a most peaceful place, surrounded by trees, meadows and the Common; it too was part of Arthur Pryor's gift. As indeed was the Vicarage in *Stock Road*. The first Vicar to take up residence in the Vicarage in 1873 was the Rev. H. G. de Lisle, who had been a Curate in Romford since 1866; in fact his daughter, Marion Angela, is the first recorded baptism at the church in December 1974. He remained in the parish until 1907 and then he retired to Guernsey where he died four years later aged 76.

I can think of no better way to conclude this brief account of our lovely and peaceful church and churchyard than to quote from Arthur Mee's *The King's England: Essex*, which was first published in 1942: "This modern

church stands on a wonderful gorse carpet...Eight bells ring merrily in the steeple, which looks down on a churchyard beautiful with trees and flowers."

### **Our Next Meeting**

**Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014 8pm at Keene Hall:**

### **THE HOME FRONT: ESSEX 1914 – 1918.**

**By William Tyler, MBE.**

William Tyler lives in Witham and has spent his whole professional life working in adult education. He was awarded the MBE in 2009 in recognition of his services to adult education. He now enjoys a freelance career – lecturing, public speaking, writing and consultancy work.

With all the TV programmes and media coverage this year on the WWI in France/Belgium and life in the trenches, it will be most interesting to hear how things were on the Home Front, especially that relating to Essex.

### **And, of course, our brief Annual General Meeting.**

Enclosed are membership renewal forms and it would greatly help our Treasurer, Ken Edwards, if you could complete and forward them to Ken before the meeting, this will help to make your entry to the meeting that much quicker. At the present moment we have 100 members including 9 honorary, which is slightly down on previous years; so perhaps you could persuade a friend or friends to join the Society.

### **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**11<sup>th</sup> March, 10<sup>th</sup> June and 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015.**

Enclosed is a leaflet listing our talks programme for the above dates and I think that you will agree it covers a broad selection of subjects.

### **NEWS FROM THE HERIAGE CENTRE.**

Following on the theme of the WW1 the Galleywood Heritage Centre is holding an Exhibition to commemorate the centenary of **THE GREAT WAR** on **Saturday and Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> November** between 10am and 4pm on both days. Entry to the Exhibition is free and refreshments will be available. The Wall of Remembrance has about 20 brave individuals remembered thereon. Back on 16<sup>th</sup> September Chris & Les Whybro gave a talk about the Saxon burial at Broomfield, which was so well-received that by popular demand they are repeating their talk on **18<sup>th</sup> November**. It should also be noted that the Heritage Room will be closed between 16<sup>th</sup> December and 6<sup>th</sup> January.

### **THE VILLAGE'S LINK WITH A FAMOUS VICTORIAN JOCKEY.**

The village has a link, if a little tenuous and somewhat macabre, with the celebrated Victorian jockey, Frederick James "Fred" Archer (1857 – 1886), who was also known by the nickname 'The Tin Man'; he was once described as "the best all-round jockey that the turf has ever seen". Fred Archer was champion jockey for 13 consecutive years from 1874 to 1886 and rode 2,748 winners in total including 21 classic races and the Epsom Derby five times.

The *Chelmsford Chronicle* of 19<sup>th</sup> September 1879 reported "Fred Archer, age 21, rode the horse 'Plaisante' for his brother Charles, age 19 at the Chelmsford Autumn Handicap at the Chelmsford Races on Galleywood racecourse on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September 1879. His horse came in second place."

Another newspaper The *Essex Newsman* of 13<sup>th</sup> November 1886 records the strange and macabre link he had with Galleywood:

"There is a curious story embodying a gypsy's prophecy of Fred Archer's end. It was at the Chelmsford meeting in 1879 that while he was walking across the course he was accosted by a gypsy woman, who asked the jockey, not knowing who he was, to cross her hand with silver. He laughingly did so, and the crone muttering to herself the while, glanced at his palm, and dropped it saying "A sudden end young gentleman, and by your own hand." It would appear that Fred just smiled and went on his way.

But sadly on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1886 Fred Archer committed suicide by shooting himself, he was only 29 years old. He had been suffering from a long and deep bout of depression since the death of his wife just two years earlier. He left a large fortune to his only daughter – over £66,000 (or about £6 million today). Many of his effects are on display at the National Horseracing Museum and several books have been written on his life.

I am indebted to our President and 'Racecourse expert' Ted Hawkins, for the above information.

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### **GALLEYWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

President Ted Hawkins

Chairman: Graham Mundy. Vice Chairman: Graham Smith.

Secretary: Gillian Parker. Treasurer: Ken Edwards.

Programme Director: Ted Hawkins.

Committee: Alex Gilbert & Geraldine Willden.

Comments or contributions to this Newsletter would be welcomed by the editor: Graham Smith  
28 Russell Gardens, Chelmsford, CM2 8DB Email: [grahamsmith99@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:grahamsmith99@hotmail.co.uk)

