

PAST TIMES

GALLEYWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Number 60 March 2018. www.essexinfo.galleywoodhistorical.society.

TWO NOTABLE GALLEYWOOD RESIDENTS.

The two people described below, both featured in the 'Galleywood Quiz' in our last 'Past Times', so I thought it to be most appropriate to look at their times in Galleywood in greater detail.

1. Mrs Lavinia Clarissa Keene.

Lavinia Clarissa Keene (nee Stevens) was born at Mile End in 1864. In 1888 she married John Henry Keene, who had been born in Stepney. He was the Secretary of *the Pearl Life Assurance & Investment Company* and he later became a Director of the Company. They first lived in Leyton but in August 1901 they moved to Galleywood after purchasing Carlton House in *Beehive Lane* and the Home Farm that went with the property.

Sadly John Keene died at Carlton House in September 1931; his estate was valued at over £1.1 million (which would be about £39 million today!). It was only after his death that Lavinia Keene's boundless generosity became so evident, so much so that she became known as '*the Lady Bountiful*'. In 1932 she donated £20,000 to Chelmsford Cathedral and in the following year she financed the building of twenty-eight houses for elderly widows in *Springfield Road*, which became known as the Keene Memorials Homes. Then in 1935 she financed the cost of the erection of two new classrooms at the Church School in *The Street*.

But her lasting memorial to the village is The Keene Hall for which she provided the plot of land on the corner of *Watchouse Road* and The Street and furthermore she financed to erection of a large brick building. The Keene Hall was formally opened by Mrs Keene on Saturday 19th February 1938. In the evening there was a concert and dance. Mrs Keene left The Keene Hall in trust to the parishioners of Galleywood.

Mrs Lavinia Keene died on 24th May 1949 and 86 years and she had lived in Galleywood for forty-eight years and there were no children of the marriage. She left an estate of £1,347,000 but the death duties amounted to £937,663; hence the newspaper's comment below!

The Essex Chronicle recorded her death as "So the lady bountiful from the large house in Galleywood has gone. But she left behind happiness for many people, a headache for her solicitors and a fortune for the Chancellor of the Exchequer." Perhaps no single Galleywood resident has left such a fine legacy to the village.

2. Monte Rey.

Monte Rey was a most celebrated and popular singer in the 1930/1950s. He might well be called the 'Tom Jones' of his time. His signature song was 'Donkey Serenade'.

James Montgomery Fyfe was born in Chryston, Lanarkshire, Scotland in October 1900; Monte Rey was his stage name. He later trained as a classical tenor in both Italy and Germany and sang in Society concerts under James Montgomery Fyffe, for some reason adding an additional 'f'! In 1934 he joined the celebrated Geraldo Orchestra as Monte Rey. By 1937 he was living in Galleywood in lodgings with the Stroud family in *Well Lane*, along with his road manager & chauffeur, Sammy Smith. It is not known why he came to Galleywood; perhaps the rural atmosphere reminded him of his small Scottish village, where he was born, On Saturday 19^h February, 1938 he sang in the concert on the opening of The Keene Hall. He was the thirteenth and last on the programme.

In 1938 he joined the Joe Loss band and toured with them, especially singing to the troops during WWII. In 1940 he married Maisie Jones.

In 1951 he along with Maisie and her father moved into Ponds Farm in Galleywood, where Daphne Whybro was the housekeeper; the Whybro family became close friends. It is thought that he worked at Marconi's at Great Baddow as he had retired from singing in 1952. They had become home sick of Scotland and left to live on the Isle of Arran. Later they longed to be back in Galleywood, so they returned in 1971 and found accommodation in the recently opened Cottley

House in *Watchouse Road*. After the death of Maisie in 1976, Monte returned to the Isle of Arran, where he died in 1982.

Over his career he made over two hundred records and one can still buy at least three CDs of his songs all these years later. It does seem a great shame that there is no memorial to record his time in Galleywood. I would like to thank Wendy Cummin & Susan Wilson for their help on this piece.

NEXT MEETING.

Wednesday, 7th March 8 p.m. at The Keene Hall.

A talk by Adrian Wright on ‘Essex Railways in Victorian Times’.

Adrian Wright was born in Norfolk and from a small boy he has been fascinated with railways. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and since his retirement from teaching, he has given many talks throughout south-east England on railway and geographical subjects. Since 1996 Adrian has lived in *Watchouse Road*.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

13th June 2018.

A talk on ‘Galleywood’s Street Names’ by Ken Edwards. Please note that this talk will take place at 2.30 pm in St Michael’s Church as part of the Galleywood Festival.

Ken is, of course, a member of the Society’s Committee.

Then in the evening at 8.00 pm in The Keene Hall - A talk ‘Rose by any other Name’ by Julian Whybra.

12th September

A talk on ‘The History of Lodgr’s Coaches and the Village of High Easter’ by Robert Lodge.

SOCIETY NEWS.

Since the last ‘*Past Times*’ sadly there has been a slight fall in membership – **85 (including 8 Honorary members)**. However, the Society’ funds have increased to a very healthy **£2,455.00**. This state of affairs is mainly due to a reduction in the number of copies

required to be printed and posted, that is because twenty-five members have asked to receive their copy of ‘*Past Times*’ by email.

THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

At the present time the team has completed **thirty-two** interviews with **thirty-five** persons on their list to be interviewed. With effect from **5th March** most of these interviews can be listened to at The Ted Hawkins Archives Room in The Heritage Centre. As spring is approaching may I suggest a visit to the Galleywood Listening Bench in the grounds of The Heritage Centre, where “*You are Hear: sound and a sense of place*”.

GALLEYWOOD GOOD NEIGHBOURS.

The next Coffee Morning will be held on 9th March and as you are aware they all take place at The Keene Hall on the second Friday in the month from 10.00 – 12.00 am. The later dates are 13th April, 11th May and 8th June.

NEWS FROM THE HERITAGE CENTRE.

On **6th March** I will be giving an illustrated talk on ‘**Essex-by-the-Sea.**’. There will be other talks during March to May – **20th March** – ‘**Vicky, English Princess & German Empress**’ by Margaret Mills. **24th April** – ‘**Family History Revealed**’ by Eric Probert **8th May** - ‘**Some Aspects of the Petre Family in Essex**’ by Lord Petre. All the talks take place on Tuesday afternoons at 1.30 for 2.00 p.m. The admission tickets are £3.00.

On Sunday 13th May, There is an exhibition of ‘A variety of collections held by local people’. It will take place between 10 a.m. & 4.00 p.m. Admission is free & refreshments will be available.

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GALLEYWORD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

President: David Stacy .

Chairman: Graham Mundy. Vice-Chairman: Graham Smith.

Secretary & Programme Director: Gillian Parker.

Treasurer: Geraldine Willden.

Committee: Alex Gilbert, Ken Edwards & Stephanie Troop.

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

