

# **GOOD HISTORY**

**Journal  
of the  
Eynsham Junior  
History Group**



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## The Journal of the Eynsham Junior History Group

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**Front Cover:** Eynsham from the air 1965

Thanks to the members of the group who have contributed to this edition of the journal and to the others who attend the group and added to the discussion and acting.

### EDITORIAL

During this term we have been doing some preparatory work for our celebration of the thousand years since Eynsham Abbey received its Foundation Charter in 1005. Looking a little forward we have taken note of the visit of Henry II to Eynsham to hold a Council in 1186 when Hugh of Avalon was chosen Bishop of Lincoln. We have also considered Henry II's quarrels with Thomas Becket which led to Thomas's murder and subsequent sainthood. We will present our version of events at a School Assembly in December. Our contribution to the 2005 celebrations will take place in St. Leonard's Church on March 3<sup>rd</sup> as a presentation to the Eynsham History Group. Our subject is Aelfric, the Abbot of Eynsham, renowned scholar and teacher.

We were again asked to take part in the Service of Remembrance and this year we thought of those in our own families, whose deaths we discovered while researching into family history.

In the very first issue of *Good History* we featured the Lau and Law family business with research by Allen, Darren and Roland Law, into how they came to be at Eynsham schools and part of the Eynsham community, their grandfather having come from Hong Kong in 1968. In this issue we learn about the Nayee family who have come to join us.

In 2001 we presented some of our historical research to the Day Centre in the form of a dramatic presentation. From that time we have maintained a connection with them and when Sandra Jones retired from being the organiser of the Day Centre she presented Thomas Sutherland with some scrap books. The contents of these books had been collected by Mrs Molly Chapman and we found them so interesting that we decided that perhaps a more permanent record should be made of some of the information. A visit was made to see her surviving husband, Mr Victor Chapman, to supplement our knowledge of this very interesting lady. He readily gave us permission to use the material we had discovered and gave us some more biographical information.

Pamela Richards, Editor

## **WE WILL REMEMBER**

This year members of the History Group again took part in the Remembrance Service on November 14<sup>th</sup> this being the nearest Sunday to November 11<sup>th</sup>, the day on which the First World War stopped.

Last year we drew attention to some of the names that were read out on the Roll of Honour but this year we turned our attention to our own families, feeling that we would like to remember them especially on Remembrance Sunday.

First we thought of those who died in the First World War 1914-1918:

Sergeant Henry John Porter who was with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Gloucester Regiment died on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1915. His body was never found. He was never to know the six grandchildren he had.

Private John Matheison of the Seaforth Highlanders died of his wounds after having his leg amputated on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1916 at the Battle of the Somme.

Private Joseph Matheison who also served with the Seaforth Highlanders died fighting on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 1917.

Private Percy J. Edgington had worked for Oxford University Press. He enlisted with the Coldstream Guards in December 1916, was posted to France in December 1917 and was killed in action near Moyenville, on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1918.

Of those in the Second World War 1939-1945:

Trooper Albert James Jefferies of the Royal Armoured Corps was killed in action on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1942 while serving in the Middle East. Before the war he had worked for the Swan Bakery in Oxford.

Gunner Edwin George Webb, of the Royal Artillery, died aged 36, on 8th March 1943 in a Japanese Prisoner of War Camp. He had been an inspiration to his fellow prisoners, carving a chess set and teaching others to play. His grave is in the Yokohama War Cemetery which is kept by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



The Yokohama War Cemetery was constructed in 1945. There are about 1,500 burials in the cemetery which comprises four main separate sections, commemorating the dead from the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and India. The graves are marked by semi-recumbent bronze plaques. Deaths came from many causes especially from pneumonia in the severe winters.

Private Ronald Walter Parslow of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Oxfordshire & Buckingham Light Infantry, who was killed in action on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1944 serving in Burma. He was 31 years old. There is no known grave.

Wing Commander Tommy Moseley (Matthew Mark's great uncle) was the First Pilot of the Sunderland flying boat which was carrying George, Duke of Kent, the King's brother, and fourteen others on a journey to Iceland. It was on the first stage of its journey when the plane crashed into a 900 ft. hillside in the North of Scotland, just 60 miles from its base. It is believed that the plane was caught in an air pocket at 800ft, bounced off the mountain and turned upside down when the sole survivor, the rear gunner was catapulted out onto some heather. This happened on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1942. His wife Joan, now 95, has been widowed for 62 years and their son Mike, aged 2 at the time, grew up never really knowing his father.

We think of these men with thanks for their service

[Those reading on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2004: Luke Maskell, Matthew Marks, Lily Page, David Richardson and Abigail Sutherland. Research done by Matthew Marks, Abigail & Thomas Sutherland and the Editor]

## THE DOUGLAS FAMILY – A LUCKY FAMILY! By Luke Maskell

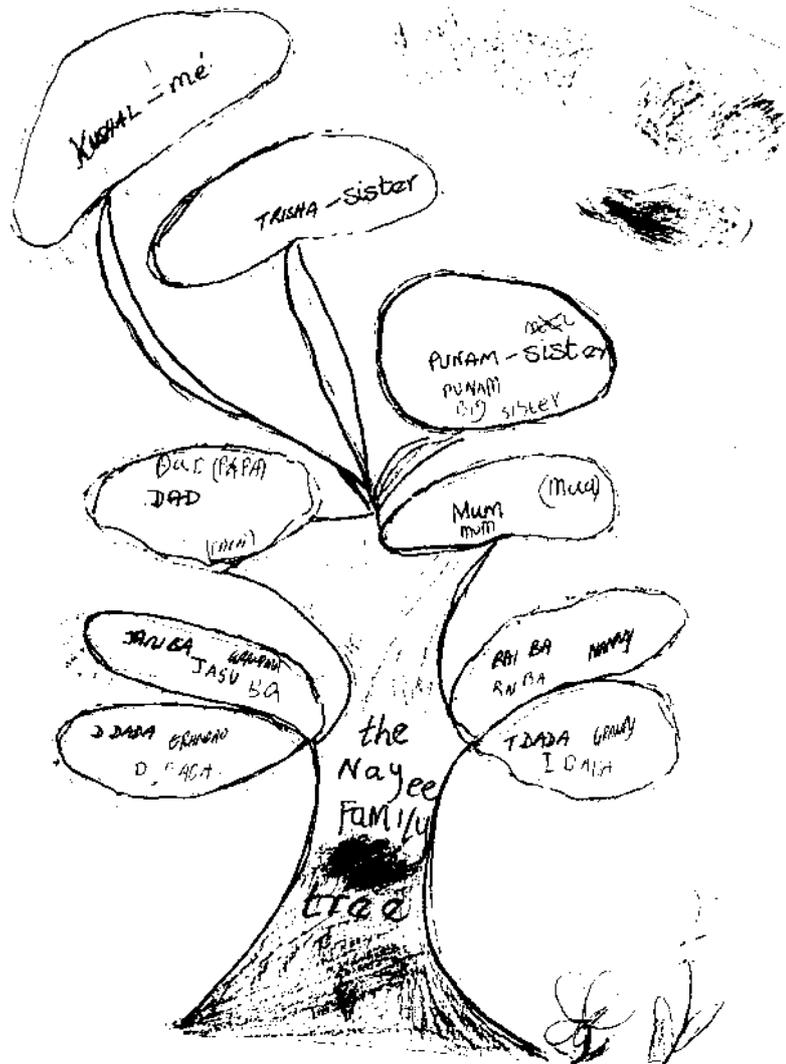
My great-great uncles, Percy, Richard, Frank, Ernest and Kenneth all fought in the First World War and amazingly all came home safely. Well nearly.

Percy actually got shot in the head and had to have a silver plate inserted into his skull. He served in the Berks/Bucks/Oxon 6<sup>th</sup> Berkshire Regiment. Sadly Percy died in 1930 aged only 40. Many parents with only one son or more lost their children, so for all five to come home safely was very lucky.

But my story doesn't end there. Richard had one son also called Richard and he came home safely from the Second World War and Frank had three sons, Stanley, Leslie and Anthony. Leslie, an aircraftman, came home safely, as did Anthony who was in the Marines and so did Stanley a Sergeant Pilot. So all nine: fathers and sons came home safely from two wars. Surely that was lucky!

## MY FAMILY by Kushal Nayee

We all came to Eynsham in August 2002, when I was 5 years old. We are my Mum and Dad, my two sisters and me. We moved from Crawley in West Sussex. My Mum and Dad were brought up in Zambia in Africa. My Grandfather and Grandmother are still there and we visit them when we can. My two sisters go to Bartholomew School and I go to Eynsham Primary School. I am in Year 3 in Miss Lemmer's Class. My Mum and Dad run Eynsham Post Office.





The bravery shown by the firemen was something Londoners will not easily forget. In September 1940 more than a thousand enemy aircraft attacked the Port of London. This was the beginning of 57 consecutive nights of bombing.



In December of that year 3,000 fire bombs rained down on London in one night.



However, Victor was able to get away to Oxford for the occasional weekend and it was on one of those that he took Molly for a little row on the river. They both enjoyed rowing so went as far as Eynsham where Victor presented her with an engagement ring.

They were married on 22<sup>n</sup>d September 1941, Molly's birthday. Molly insisted that Vic wore his uniform and she was smartly dressed in a costume in a style which was fashionable at the time. The problem of clothing coupons prevented most wartime brides from having the kind of dresses young girls might have dreamt of.

Molly enrolled as a Fire Guard for Godstow Road in 1943. These Guards were also known as Fire Wardens and had the responsibility of alerting the Fire Brigade and people in the area if there was an outbreak of fire. It could well mean that a guard would have to go without sleep if he or she was on duty.

Another enthusiasm of Molly's was music. She enjoyed singing, could play the piano and the violin. In 1949 she received a certificate from the Salvation Army which registered her as a Songster. Victor also sang with the Salvation Army.

Her connection with the Salvation Army continued until long after her move from Wolvercote. In 1950 she became a Fund Secretary and in 1951 she was made a Primary Sergeant. In 1956 she was a Sun-Beam Leader of the Life-Saving Brigade.

She also joined the Civil Defence Corps in 1953 and was still keeping up her First Aid qualifications with the St. John Ambulance and Civil Defence in 1964. She was awarded a Certificate for her diligence with National Savings, but unfortunately this was not actually sent on to her until 1977!

This already seems like a busy life, but it was only part of her interests. All her life, she had a great interest in missionary work, which is shown from the newspaper and magazine cuttings which were found in her scrap books. Among her papers we found a letter signed, but undated, by W.E. Sangster which had been passed on to Molly after an occasion when Sangster had preached in Reading.

*So our fellowship will not end with the Benediction,  
now next week, nor next year.... nor even in eternity.*

*Truly your friend,  
W.E. Sangster*

COUNTY BOROUGH OF OXFORD  
CIVIL DEFENCE DEPT.

FIRE GUARD

This is to Certify that Fire Guard No. D/1067

MRS. MAHEL CHAPMAN, .....

103, Godstow Road, .....

Post. D42/15 ..... Area. D .....

National Registration No. DXCJ/285/3 .....  
is a member of a fire-fighting party organised by the Oxford County Borough Council, and may enter and if necessary break into any premises or place in which a fire has or is reasonably supposed to have broken out, or any premises or place which it is necessary to enter for the purpose of extinguishing a fire, without the consent of the owner or occupier thereof, and may do all such acts and things as he may deem necessary for extinguishing fire or for protecting from fire any such premises or place or rescuing any person or property therein.

Date. 13th January 1943

.....  
Controller of Air Raid Precautions

Signature of Holder..... *Mabel Chapman*

**William Edwin Sangster** had been introduced to Christianity at a London Methodist Mission at the age of twelve. He went on to be one of the most influential preachers in the Second World War. At the outbreak of the war he was senior minister at Westminster Central Hall, the 'cathedral' of Methodism. The Hall seated 3,000 people and was full morning and evening for the next sixteen years. He also turned over the basement to become an air-raid shelter as soon as the attacks began. There was a degree of panic on the first night as thousands squeezed in but Sangster soon had the place organised, with sandbagged 'streets' to afford minimal privacy to those who needed it. He continued with his Sunday services. If the sirens went a red light would come on in the pulpit as a warning. Often he would ignore it, but would invite 'those of a nervous disposition to leave' and then he would continue with the service. He and his family more or less lived on the premises for the duration, sleeping in the men's washroom in order to be on hand to help those who had need. By the war's end 450,000 people had found refuge in the church-basement.

Sangster had strong ecumenical tendencies which made him respected by many. He died on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1960 after a brave fight against progressive muscular atrophy.

Another person that Molly greatly admired was **Gladys Aylward**, the missionary who is known to many through the film that was made of her trek over the mountains with a group of children to escape from the Japanese in the Second World War. The film was called *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness* and was taken from the book by Alan Burgess, *The Small Woman*. The part of Gladys was played by Ingrid Bergman. It is perhaps not surprising, given the character of Gladys Aylward, that she did not like the film as she did not consider herself any sort of heroine.

She had been born in London about 1904. Her first employment was as a parlourmaid, but an attendance at a revivalist meeting changed her life. She became convinced that she was being called to go to China to act as a missionary. Sadly her poor education prevented her from passing the exams required by the Mission Centre but undeterred Gladys worked and saved all the money she could, particularly, after she heard that a 73-year old missionary called Mrs Jeannie Lawson was in need of an assistant. She obtained a passport and in 1930 set off on the overland route to China with her tickets and £2. 0s. 9d. After what must have been a gruelling journey she reached Yangchen which is situated in the mountainous region a little south of Peking (Beijing). Apart from Mrs Lawson the residents had seen no other Europeans and were very suspicious of these foreigners.

Yangchen was an overnight stop for mule caravans that carried coal, raw cotton, pots and iron goods on six-week or three-month journeys. The two women had the idea that a way to reach these people with their preaching was to set up an inn. The building in which they were living had at one time been an inn and it took only a bit of work to turn it back to its original purpose. They laid in a supply of food for the mules and the men and waited for the next caravan to come. Gladys had no intention of missing potential customers so rushed out, grabbing the leading mule and turning it into the courtyard. The rest of the mules and the men followed. They found the food was good, the place was clean and there was the entertainment of stories – all about a man called Jesus. Word got around about this very good stop-over and things went well, with Gladys improving her Chinese all the time, until one day Mrs Lawson had

a fatal fall. Gladys was determined to carry on with the aid of her Chinese cook. About the same time Gladys met the Mandarin of Yangchen. He was in need of a foot inspector. It had been the practice of the Chinese among the upper and middle classes to bind up women's feet to keep them small. This meant, of course, that the women could only walk with slow tottering steps. This had been thought graceful, completely disregarding the pain and suffering of the women. The Government had at last decreed that this practice should be stopped and to enforce this new regulation the Mandarin needed someone who could enter the women's quarters without offence and could move around easily. Gladys was the ideal candidate and she also saw the opportunities it would give her to continue telling her stories.

During her second year in Yangchen the Mandarin once more summoned Gladys. A riot had broken out in the men's prison; and he felt that this was again a time when Gladys could help him as she had always proclaimed that Christians had to be fearless. Much to everyone's surprise Gladys did quell the riot by walking into the prison yard and calling to the men to be quiet and for one or two of them to come to speak with her. The prisoners responded and Gladys then went to the Warden and told him that she was unsurprised by the riot as the conditions under which the men were living were appalling. She persuaded the Warden to give the men work by which they could earn some money with which they could then buy proper food. Her idea worked and there was no more trouble. It was from that time that the locals gave her the name "Ai-weh-deh" which means "Virtuous One".



It was not long after this that she saw a woman begging in the street with a very sick-looking child with her. Gladys realised that the child was only being used to create sympathy so she offered to buy the child. She paid ninepence for the child and it became the child's name. A year later "Ninepence" turned up with another child in tow saying that she would eat less if Gladys would take him in as well. "Less" became Gladys's second orphaned child and slowly her family began to grow. She maintained her contact with the Mandarin and in 1936 became a Chinese citizen. She also adopted the Chinese style of dress, as did other missionaries in the area.

The war came in the spring of 1938 when Japanese planes bombed the city of Yangcheng, killing many and causing others to flee into the mountains. Five days later the Japanese Army started their occupation of Yangcheng. Once again the Mandarin turned to Gladys for advice. What was he to do with the convicts in jail? Should he behead them as was the tradition? Again Gladys produced a civilised solution. Relatives and friends of the convicts were to post a bond guaranteeing their good behaviour so that the men could be set free. The plan worked. During this time Gladys had met and become friends with a Roman Catholic priest from Europe who under the name of "General Ley" had formed a guerrilla group to fight against the Japanese. Gladys had hoped to remain in Yangcheng but finally she received a note from General Ley telling her that there was a price on her head.

Gladys realised that she would have to go, so she gathered up her children, about a hundred in number, and set out for the government orphanage in Sian. With the children in tow, she walked for twelve days, some nights finding shelter with friendly locals but other nights staying in the open. On the twelfth day, they arrived at the Yellow River. There seemed no way to cross as boat traffic had ceased with civilian boats being hidden to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy. In response to the children's questions about how they were going to cross she told them to pray. Enthusiastically, they prayed and sang. Their singing was heard by a Chinese Officer in a patrol boat Impressed with their story he commandeered a boat and they were able to cross and reach the orphanage at Sian. The journey had taken much out of Gladys and on reaching her goal, knowing the children were safe, she collapsed with typhus fever and sank into delirium for several days.

She continued to work in China until deteriorating health forced her to return to England in 1947. She continued to preach and help children until her death in January 1970.

Another missionary Molly admired was **Mildred Dibden** who was managing an orphanage 21 miles from Hong Kong at the outbreak of the Second World War. Against all odds she struggled to look after the children in her care but finally ill-health forced her to return to England but only until she could return to "her children". Once again problems arose and Miss Dibden decided the best thing to do was to return to England and take her "family" with her. This she did, settling her girls in Southsea and introducing them to English education. Sadly, the cuttings in Molly Chapman's scrap book only tell half the story but we believe that at some time Molly was in touch with Mildred Dibden, no doubt prompted by her great interest in children.

In the 1970s Molly took part in productions of Dorothy L. Sayers's "*The Man Born to Be King*" which was put on in St. Aloysius Church in Woodstock Road, Oxford. The play was first produced in 1972 and was again put on in 1973, 1974 and 1976 with Molly named in the cast list. The 1976 version of the programme shows that those taking part in the play came from a number of Oxford churches with Molly representing Eynsham Baptist Church.



Easter Play 1976  
 St. Aloysius Players  
 present  
 a scene from  
*The Man Born To Be King.*  
 by Dorothy L. Sayers

[The editor remembers that at one time this play was a regular production on the B.B.C. in preparation for Easter but has not heard it produced recently.]

Molly was also very interested in the Royal family and most of one of the scrap books is devoted to events involving the Royal family. She seemed particularly interested in the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and we wondered if she had been especially struck by the Abdication of Edward VIII in December 1936. Molly was

also interested in the future and the possible exploration of space. She was particularly impressed with the spirit of Gargarin, the first Russian astronaut and the reactions of his family and among her collection of newspaper cuttings we found several photographs. She also admired the progress in flight as demonstrated by the Concorde. Molly also collected pictures of birds, particularly garden birds and showed an appreciation of gardens.

When Victor Chapman retired, he and Molly went to live in Farmoor, and from that time attended Eynsham Baptist Church. Victor was struck by the friendly atmosphere of Eynsham and when he is feeling well enough Victor is still a member of the congregation.

**Cards from France** Among Mabel Chapman's souvenirs were some special silk embroidered cards which were of the kind sent home from France in the First World War. The editor remembers seeing one in the collection of her family's keepsakes which was sent home by her maternal grandfather.



**Plea from the editor:** The scrap books which Mabel Chapman has made are of considerable interest, with newspaper cuttings of almost forgotten events which could help a researcher. However, there are two things which must be recommended to others making such a useful collection. Make sure that any cuttings from newspapers are dated. Events are of their time and should be noted as such. Secondly, try to keep your collection in a way that does not damage the article or photographs, remembering that newspaper deteriorates quickly and sticky tapes can damage and discolour. Also please remember to identify and date photographs which may be of places, events or people. Everyone must have many photographs in old family albums which become a mystery as time goes on. Who is that smiling face standing next to Aunty Amy? Try to make sure that collections don't add to the detective work that has to be done by historians whether family, local or national.