

## Parham Annual Local History Recorder's Report, 2020

The year started normally enough, despite media rumblings about a deadly virus emerging in Wuhan, a place most parishioners had never heard of. In January, Andy Nicholson resigned as **chairman of the Parish Council** and Mike Gray took on the role. Sarah Davies, a member of the first all-female crew to sail around the world in the Whitbread Race, gave a talk in the village hall on January 11th. On the 19th, the barometer registered 1043, the highest January reading since 1950.

On 7th March, the church coffee morning raised £737.30; this was to be the last big event held in the village hall for over a year and a half, once the official **lockdown** began at the end of March. The population in general took the first lockdown very seriously and people remarked that the roads were as quiet as they had been sixty years ago. Because of COVID restrictions, no services were held at St. Mary the Virgin between March and August, a historical record. Parishioners were able to participate in a weekly church service on Zoom, a weekly service organised for the benefice on Zoom, although few availed themselves of the opportunity. Under John Bradfield's admirable direction, church services finally resumed at St. Mary's on 30 August 2020, although only at one of the churches in the benefice each Sunday. To the best of our knowledge, Parham has been very fortunate throughout the pandemic, with no COVID deaths in 2020.

In August 2020, groundwork started opposite Willoughby Close on Orwell Housing's new in-fill **housing development** for six affordable rented homes and four shared ownership houses for people with a local connection. In October the Parish Council called for name suggestions and selected Flaxen Fields and Corrance Close for the two roads into the site. Although originally planned to be complete by summer 2021, by the 2020 Christmas break work had ground to a halt due to difficulties draining the higher than expected water levels. By the end of 2020, Orwell Housing reported that the engineering design was being reassessed, to a chorus of "I told you so" from those in the village who have seen the bottom of those meadows flood annually. Indeed, the field name was recorded in the 1839 Tithe Survey as Writing Pit Meadow, probably a corruption of Retting Pit Meadow, which indicates this was a site where the hemp or flax harvest was processed in a pit that filled with water to rot off the outer stems.



DRONE PHOTO: PHILIP JAY

Two of Parham's **listed buildings**, both on North Green, received consent for major works: Home Farm house for major renovation/rebuilding and an extension; and conversion of the old cattle barn in the meadow behind Elm Farm.



PHOTO: ROD MACFADYEN

On the morning of Thursday 13th August, villagers witnessed a huge pall of black smoke fill the sky, with those nearby reporting explosions, later understood to have been gas bottles. More than 50 firefighters in 13 engines from around the county were needed to tackle the fire that had broken out at Hatcher's fibreglass mouldings factory on Parham aerodrome. Fortunately no-one was injured, but very little was left of the large (50mx80m) building except charred and twisted frame pieces. In mid-September in broad daylight at 9:30 in the morning,

thieves made off with an estimated £10,000 to £15,000 worth of tools having broken into one of the Moat Hall industrial units.

With the death of **Malcolm MacNicol** on 31st October, the parish lost a remarkable man who gave his all to the community in the thirty-plus years that he lived here. Parish local history recorder, fundraiser, organist, host extraordinaire, he was a frequent contributor to the parish magazine, the December 2020 issue of which has a good write-up about him. Malcolm had amazing energy until his death at age 93 and was also modest; few parishioners realised that he was Lieutenant Colonel of the 4/5 Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment, of which Winston Churchill was honorary colonel. In Churchill's funeral procession, it was Malcolm who barked the command for the march to begin.

On 30th November, public consultation prior to a formal planning application started on a proposed 50MW **solar farm**. It would cover 77 hectares partly around the existing one in Great Glemham but extending over most of the Parham part of the airfield and northward onto farmland. Documents submitted to planners at East Suffolk Council said that 67% of those who responded were in favour, based on both written responses and the on-line consultation shown here.



b17/solarfarm.commonplace.is

**Parham Airfield Museum** featured as the source of much of the material in a [12-minute documentary on Joe Kennedy](#), the elder brother of JFK, who some expected to be the next US President. He volunteered for a secret mission that some consider as the advent of drone technology. He was flying a stripped out plane filled with explosives, intending to bale as it approached a Nazi bomb store in France. However, he died when his plane exploded over Blythburgh. Also, the museum barrack room was used as a location set where the introduction to a new play about the **women of the Air Transport Auxiliary** was filmed. The ATA delivered warplanes from the factories to operational airfields. The play was presented by 'Theatre on the Coast' in Southwold (streamed, not live due to the pandemic).

Celebrations of the 75th anniversary of VE Day were rather muted due to the pandemic, but the airfield museum did still muster some activities. Despite the pandemic, work continued throughout 2020 on the **new exhibition hall** to house the only museum in the UK dedicated to the **British Resistance Organisation**, or "Britain's Secret Army". It was named The Kindred Building to acknowledge: Percy Kindred, "father" of the 390th, auxiliary, corporal and a founder of the museum; Herman Kindred, auxiliary sergeant; Charles Kindred, auxiliary radio operator; and Peter Kindred, the current Airfield Museum President, who led the building project. Due to the continuing pandemic, the museum shop started selling online via eBay in October, and republication of WW2 archives in the online newsletter continued unabated. The museum web site is at <http://www.parhamairfieldmuseum.co.uk/>

The **harvest** was the worst for at least thirty years. Wheat yields were the least affected, but the long dry spell in Spring hit yields of barley and sugar beet, with oil-seed rape and field beans most badly affected. The year also saw obstacles appear in many field gateways in an attempt to deter illegal hare coursing, which is conducted in conjunction with online gambling from trucks that descend on a field with the dogs and video streaming equipment inside.

Throughout 2020, the [Parham Facebook group](#) continued to attract numerous photos of the village in past times. Just two are selected here; the members of the Parham & Hacheston Rifle Club in May 1910; and the fete at the vicarage on 11th July 1905



In May 2020, the **Parham Millennium Parish Scan** also moved online. The Scan was a huge project undertaken by over fifty contributors to record every aspect of the village, past present and future. At the time of the millennium, every

household and local libraries received a hard-backed copy, but it is now available to anyone worldwide. And for faster access to all this wonderful Internet material, the residents of North Green set up a Community Interest Company to coordinate free installation of fibre broadband direct to their homes, courtesy of a government voucher scheme. The service went live in early September 2020.

*John Adams & Bob Briscoe*

*Local History Recorders for the parish of Parham*