

The
Hildersham
Issue VIII **Express**
September 2005

AUGUST 30TH 2005

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WW2



AUGUST 30TH 1944

**THE LOSS OF LANCASTER FLIGHT LM479
MORE IMPORTANTLY THE TRAGIC LOSS OF
FORMER HILDERSHAM SCHOOLBOY**

SERGEANT GEORGE FREDERICK GIBSON

FLIGHT ENGINEER - 1896098

ROYAL AIR FORCE VOLUNTEER RESERVE

SERGEANT GEORGE FREDERICK GIBSON

Recently I received an e-mail from Chris Jakes, the Chief Librarian at the Cambridgeshire Collection, requesting help with an enquiry he had received from Canada, about a member of a Lancaster Bomber Crew that had crashed in Denmark in August 1944. The request had come from **John Chambers**, as his then 23-year-old uncle *Flight Sergeant Alfred Reid Chambers* had been the Navigator aboard Lancaster Flight LM479, along with *Flight Engineer George Frederick Gibson*. From the information listed on the Commonwealth War Graves (CWG) website, John was able to ascertain that George was born in Hildersham.



Well following some research of my own I can now tell you a little about George's early family history. Our part of the story begins here in Hildersham and the surrounding villages, where the Gibson family name goes back to when the Parish Registers first began in the 16th century. The Hildersham Baptismal Records, record that **George Frederick Gibson** was baptised at Hildersham on the 28th May 1911, he was 5 years old at the time and was the son of *George Frederick & Christina Jane Gibson*. The register additionally records that his father was a London Police Officer. The CWG website also states that before he joined the RAF, George was married to *Ann Gibson*, but so far we have found no record of that.

George's Grandfather, was born in Linton in 1851, he was also a *George* and a Police Officer in Stoke Newington, London. By 1901, he and his wife *Clara* (b.1856, ST. LUKE'S, CHELSEA) are living in Paddington, where he is a Night Watchman and by 1904, they had taken over the licence of the Pear Tree 'Beerhouse' at Hildersham. As extracts from Linton Magistrate Court state, in a February 1904 edition of the **CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE**, that *George Gibson* took over the licence of the Pear Tree, Hildersham from *Frederick Peters*. Yet by the middle of the month, George Gibson was dead, he was buried at Hildersham on the 15th February 1904, aged 54. By the September 1904 edition of **KELLY'S DIRECTORY** his widow *Clara Gibson* is recorded as the 'Beer Retailer'. Was this the reason why between 1906 & 1911 George's father and mother moved to Hildersham to live, to help George's widowed Grandma run the Beerhouse? Then 27 years later, as the **CAMBRIDGE CHRONICLE** of February 11th 1931 records from Linton Petty Sessions

**"GIBSON'S LOST 'OFF LICENCE' BEERHOUSE LICENCE AT HILDERSHAM";
'Full licence' granted for "Pear Tree" from
George Frederick Gibson to Thomas Andrews**

Was this also the actual Transfer of the Licence & Trade from the old "Pear Tree" (Pear Tree Cottage) to the new Pear Tree Inn we all know and love today? Using the Internet I have managed to find that George's parents George Frederick Gibson and his wife Christina Jane were married in 1907 in Orsett, Essex and Christina's Maiden name was Clark, our George Frederick's birth was also recorded there. George the ex-landlord of the Pear Tree was buried in Hildersham aged 70 in 1951, while Christina Jane was buried here in 1973 at the Grand old age of 91.

Many of the older residents will have memories of George, Christina, and their son George Frederick and their time at the Pear Tree and afterwards. I would love to find out some more details about them, in order to bring this story more to life, please contact me if you can help!

Canadian, John Chambers, has worked for many years researching the story of this Lancaster and with his very kind permission; I can now bring you the story of that fateful night of 29th August 1944.

"At 2130 hours on August 29, 1944, Avro Lancaster bomber number LM479 lifted off from the airfield at Ludford Magna in England, some 20 kilometres northeast of Lincoln and about the same distance west of the North Sea coast. Aboard the aircraft was a crew of eight, four from the RAF, and four Canadians from the RCAF. The bomber was one of 403 Lancaster's on a bombing mission to Stettin, Germany, a supply port city about 55 kilometers south of the Baltic Sea at Pomeranian Bay. Stettin was also the site of shipbuilding yards, an oil refinery, and a rubber factory. Likely, all these made the city a target for bombing raids.



Lancaster LM479, built by A. V. Roe & Co. Ltd. in Yeadon, Yorkshire, was from the Royal Air Force 101 Squadron, formed as a bomber squadron in 1917 during the First World War. Their Motto, *"Mens Agitat Molem"* translates as *"Mind Over Matter."* The squadron is still active today, with a long and distinguished military history, it saw active service in both Afghanistan & more recently Iraq.

On the return flight from Germany, sometime after midnight in the early hours of August 30, 1944 their Lancaster was shot down over western Denmark by a German night fighter near the town of Dejbjerg (pronounced Dy-bee-ah). None of the crew of the Lancaster LM479 ever returned, one of 12 Lancaster's brought down that night. It was one of those coded **"ABC"** for Airborne Cigar. The ABC designation was used to identify such aircraft as being specially equipped with three receiving antenna and one transmitter to jam German aircraft radio messages. In order to use the ABC equipment, an eighth crewmember, who could speak German, was added to the normal complement of seven. The special equipment operator was 20-year old *P/O Cyril Cousin* of the RAF, the youngest of the crew". The average age of a bomber crew was only 22.

FLIGHT LM479 BRITISH CREW

RANK	TASK	NAME	AGE	WHERE FROM
SERGEANT	FLIGHT ENGINEER	GEORGE F. GIBSON	36	HILDERSHAM
WARRANT OFFICER	AIR GUNNER	WILLIAM OWEN	27	SUNDERLAND
SERGEANT	AIR GUNNER	ANDREW STEWART	38	DUNDEE
PILOT OFFICER	SPECIAL EQUIP. OFFICER	CYRIL COUSIN	20	HACKNEY

FLIGHT LM479 CANADIAN CREW

RANK	TASK	NAME	AGE	WHERE FROM
FLT SERGEANT	NAVIGATOR	ALFRED R CHALMERS	23	MANITOBA
FLYING OFFICER	PILOT	TOM FOSTER	21	SASKATCHEWAN
PILOT OFFICER	WIRELESS OPERATOR & AIR GUNNER	HUBERT LINN	-	-
FLYING OFFICER	AIR BOMBER	SAMUEL MACKENZIE	-	-

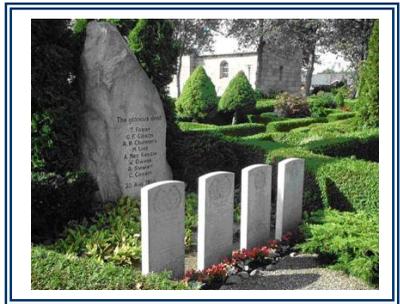
The bravery surrounding Lancaster LM479 certainly did not stop with the death of its crew. In 1992, John's father wrote to the town of Dejbjerg and received a response from *Erik Engholm*, who provided some of the details of what happened after the crash and the bravery shown by a little Danish village who had absolutely no idea who these men even were: -



"The crew of the Lancaster were buried by occupying German forces near the crash site, but this was not acceptable to the Danes. Two weeks later, on September 14 1944, they defied German orders, held a proper funeral at the Dejbjerg church, and re-interred the flyers two to a coffin in the cemetery beside the church.

In a show of support and remembrance, some 400-500 people came out to attend the funeral for the flyers, the largest one ever seen in the town. Many had learned about it in a BBC radio broadcast from London. Following the funeral, the church minister, **Hans Pedersen**, and two members of the parish council, **Laurids Sandager** and **Jeppe Kongensholm**, were arrested by German forces, then released after two or three days without further punishment.

A huge stone, some seven feet high, was moved from near the crash site to become a monument bearing the names of all the flyers. On Christmas Day, 1945 the crew of the Lancaster were honoured again with the unveiling of that monument. About 1950, Great Britain provided four standard military headstones for the gravesite. Each stone bears two names, one of the RCAF and one of the RAF, plus the crests of the two air forces."



It is a Danish custom, if a burial plot is not used within 30 years, the headstones are removed and placed on display at the side of the cemetery, and the plots are then re-used. In the case of the eight airmen, local people have decided to ignore this and care for the graves in perpetuity. In a land far from home, eight brave airmen who made the supreme sacrifice for their countries sixty-one years ago rest in a land where they will never be forgotten.



The airplane's base at Ludford Magna, sometimes referred to as "Mudford Magna" due to its muddy runways, closed in 1963. RAF Squadron 101 survived the war, even though it suffered the highest number of casualties of any squadron, and Bomber Command itself suffered huge losses. The average number of missions flown by a Lancaster was 21, and LM479 had

logged only 256 hours by the time it was brought down. The Lancaster's have flown into history, but the men, who flew them, like the aircraft, are not forgotten. Far from home, the names of four RAF and four RCAF servicemen of Lancaster LM479 will always be remembered in the cemetery of a small town in Denmark. Of the 7,377 Lancaster bombers built during World War II, only 26 remain and of those, only two are in flying condition. One is in Canada at the **Canadian War Plane Heritage Museum** at the Hamilton International Airport. The other belongs to the **Battle of Britain Memorial Flight** and can regularly be seen flying over Hildersham.

The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's **Lancaster B1 (PA474)** was obtained in 1973 from RAF 44 Squadron. It had been built in early 1945 for the fight against Japan, but the war ended before it could see active service in WW2; instead it saw operations in South Africa & India, flying photographic reconnaissance missions, before returning home to begin the new role of 101 Squadron as an air-to-air refuelling group. After being equipped with various aircraft, today the squadron is based at Brize Norton and flies Vickers VC-10s still carrying out air-to-air refuelling duties.

Since 2000, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's Lancaster has been painted in the markings originally worn by **Lancaster III EE176 'QR-M'** ('Mickey the Moocher') of 61 Squadron, based at Skellingthorpe. EE176 was one of only 35 Lancaster Centurions - aircraft that flew and survived in excess of 100 missions. 'Mickey' is believed to have flown between 115 and 128 missions against targets including Berlin (15 missions), Cologne, Dortmund, Brunswick, and the breakout at Caen. The nose art features '**Mickey the Mouse**' pulling a bomb trolley and 112 bomb symbols as shown on a wartime photograph of EE176. Three poppy symbols have been added denoting PA474's poppy-drop flights to commemorate the 50th anniversary of VE-Day and VJ-Day in 1995 and the poppy-drop conducted in 2004 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of D-Day. So next time you look up & see a Lancaster spare a thought for the crew of Flight LM479.



I hope you have enjoyed reading this story, there is much more to find out about **Sergeant George Frederick Gibson** and why he isn't included on Hildersham's Second World War memorial. John is trying to locate his wife Ann, if she is still alive to tell her the story, he has managed to track down his uncle's fiancé, **Ann MacDonald**, & she is a sprightly 83 year old. If you would like to read more of the story, see more photos, more stories of Lancaster's, why not visit John's excellent website, devoted to his research: <http://members.shaw.ca/johnchalmers/LM479/>

THE HISTORY OF HILDERSHAM CHURCH BELLS

According to an account of Hildersham Church by Canon Phillips dated 1914: -

"There is accommodation for five Bells, although there seem never to have been more than three. Three beautiful Bells hung in the Tower in 1581, & the smallest weighed 7cwt. 16 lbs. Here they remained unmolested for two hundred & twenty two years, but on September 12th 1803, two of them were taken away & sold, in order to assist the Churchwardens with repairs of the Church; the buyer, however, absconded without paying for them"

The following entries in an old Churchwardens' Account Book will give some indication of how the Church Officers discharged their duties here 112 years ago: -

OCTOBER 9TH 1802	BOUGHT A NEW LOCK FOR THE BELLFRY PREVENTING BOYS GOEING IN 1s. Od.
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This outlay would perhaps have been a more profitable one, if it had kept out the **CHURCHWARDENS** as well as the **BOYS**, as will be seen by the following entries: -

JULY 18TH 1803	PAID FOR VICTUALS & BEER TWO CARPENTERS FOR PULLING THE LEAD OFF THE CHURCH 2s. Od.
JULY 19TH 1803	(i) CARRIAGE OF 44 CWT. 20 LBS. LEAD TO LINTON 10s. Od. (ii) FOR LOADING THE BELLS 2s. 6d. (iii) PAID MR. CHAPPELL LEAD OF DO.....4s. Od.
SEPT. 12TH 1803	A JOURNEY WITH WAGON & FOUR HORSES TO HERTFORD TO CARRY THE BELLS & BROUGHT A LOAD OF SLATE BACK £2 12s. 6d.

This is the finale of a period of work, as between **24th June & 16th July 1803**, the **SOUTH BUSTLER CHAPEL** had been pulled down and the rubble sold. The men were paid 1s 9d per day and the total cost for **28 men days** was **£2. 9s 0d**. The carriage of materials to Linton probably used the wagon & horses belonging to **RICHARD MABBUTT** one of the village's farmers, he was a Churchwarden for 21 years from 1794 to 1815, during some of the poorest years of our Church. In 1801, the **REVD. JAMES GOODWIN** bought the 'Advowson' from **REVD THOMAS SALT** for **£1945** (c.£85,000 today), when he died in 1806; his brother the **REVD. CHARLES GOODWIN** started the recovery, in 1847 his son the **REVD ROBERT GOODWIN** succeeded him and by 1895 in less than 100 years had overseen the complete transformation & beautification of our Parish Church.

Bell ropes were a heavy item of cost between the years 1765 and 1797; it amounted to **£2 5s. 2d**. Antiquarian's record that the Worthy Man who served the Office of Churchwarden considered the Bell Ropes as the perquisite of that Office & acted accordingly, hence perhaps this extravagance. Other items refer to **"SHOOTING YE BELLROPE"** that is the splicing & mending of them in their weakest parts; a task all New Churchwardens have to learn to do!!

The three present Bells were cast at the foundry of **MESSRS. TAYLOR & CO OF LOUGHBOROUGH**, in the year 1880, the last remaining 1581 bell was used in casting the new ones. Their total weight is **24 cwt. 2 qrs. 1 lb.** & the cost **£223 13s. 9d.** – with **£28 6s. 8d.** allowed for the old Bell.

In an article written in the Cambridge Daily News on the 5th October 1927, entitled **HILDERSHAM FIFTY YEARS AGO - THE MAYOR AND HILDERSHAM AS HE KNEW IT**. It



describes how the then Mayor of Cambridge **ALDERMAN JOHN SAMUEL CONDER** returned to Hildersham to talk to a packed Recreation Hut, as this is where he was born in 1865 in Pear Tree Cottage. His father **SAMUEL CONDER** ran a Carpentry & Building firm, in premises that stood next door to the Pear Tree; he also was a Beer Retailer at the Pear Tree Inn.

(See Gibson Article Earlier)

The article describes that John Samuel Conder recalls that in 1877 (50 years ago):-

"ABOUT THE TIME ALSO THEY HAD ONLY ONE BELL IN THE CHURCH AND THAT ONE, FROM BEING CONTINUOUSLY RUNG IN THE SAME WAY, WAS CRACKED. NEW BELLS WERE PROVIDED BY THE RECTOR AND HIS SISTERS¹ AND THE SPEAKER² WORKED WITH THE MAN WHO FIXED THEM³. AFTER THEY WERE FIXED A MAN NAMED GEORGE DAVEY⁴ COMPOSED A WONDERFUL PEAL WHICH THEY USED TO RING NEARLY EVERY NIGHT, CAUSING PEOPLE FROM LINTON & ABINGTON TO MAKE FUN AT THEM. ANYWAY IT WAS GOOD EXERCISE, CONCLUDED THE MAYOR".

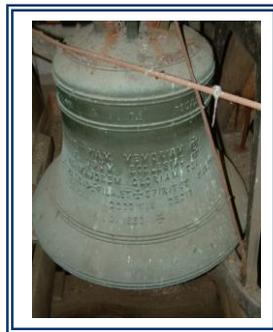
1: Revd. Robert Goodwin, Elizabeth Hemington-Goodwin, Sarah & Frances Goodwin **2:** Alderman John Samuel Conder
3. John Taylor & Co. of Loughborough **4.** Parish Sexton & Rectory Gardener

The new 1880 bells are all dedicated to the Revd. Robert Goodwin's three sisters, **ELIZABETH** (10cwt 3qrs 4lbs), **SARAH** (7cwt 2qrs 16lbs) & **FRANCES** (6cwt 0qrs 9lbs). They all carry similar inscriptions:

JOHN TAYLOR & C^o FOUNDERS
 LOUGHBOROUGH 1880
 IN PIAM MEMORIAM ✱
 IN USUM ECCLESIAE ✱
 IN MAJOREM GLORIAM DEI
 ✱ PATRIS ✱ FILII, ET ✱ SPIRITUS SANCTI ✱
 SARAH GOODWIN DEDIT A.D. 1880 ✱

Roughly Translated as:

JOHN TAYLOR & CO FOUNDERS LOUGHBOROUGH 1880
 IN PIOUS MEMORY ✱ ACCORDING TO THE ✱ GREATER GLORY OF GOD THE ✱
 FATHER ✱ SON AND ✱ HOLY GHOST ✱
 SARAH GOODWIN - LEFT THIS BELL - A.D. 1880 ✱



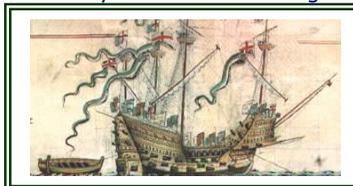
The man who is still regarded as the leading authority on the History of Church Bells in East Anglia is the **REVD. JOHN RAVEN** (1833-1906), in 1869 he published the first edition of "**CAMBRIDGESHIRE CHURCH BELLS**", in this Hildersham is described as: -

*“having ‘Pits’ for three bells, but only one bell remained,
 dated 1581 and said to resemble the ‘Treble’ at Cotton”*

Raven, later returned just after the new bells were installed. It is recorded that our original 1581 Bells were founded by the Master Bell-Founder from Cotton and that they were cast on site in Hildersham in open bell-pits in Dovehouse Meadow, this must have made quite a scene and must have been the focal point of much village attention, noise and activity.

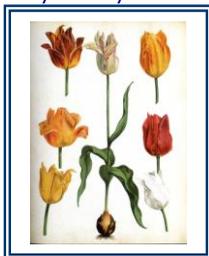
Diary For A Very Busy September of Education, Entertainment & Thanksgiving

Well as the summer months draw to a close, it is the time of year for the meetings of the Linton and District Historical Society to recommence. The first meeting of the new season is on Tuesday, September 20th at 7.30pm in Linton Village Hall. Our first talk is by an old favourite of ours **BRIAN SUTTON**, telling us all about:



“The Raising of the Mary Rose”

The start of the new season, is an ideal opportunity to join the Linton and District Historical Society, meetings are held as described earlier in Linton Village Hall at 7.30 pm on the third Tuesday of each month from September to May. So why not come and join us, and have a great evening amongst friends, there is always lots of news of what is happening locally in the history world and a chance to discuss your project be it Family, House or Local History with the experts. Membership is still only a mere £8 per year and there is only a very small charge of just £2 for visitors.



Also starting on Tuesday the 20th September, at Linton Village Hall between 10am and 11.30am is the autumn term of the Linton Workers Educational Association (WEA). This term the course should appeal to a wide range of people including both people interested in history, as well as avid Gardeners. As our tutor, this term is **PETER WHITE** and his subject is: -

🌷 “THE PLANT HUNTERS” 🌷

An exploration of the story of the Plants that lend Interest and Beauty to our Gardens. The 10-week course describes the

Contribution of the Plant Hunter, Nurseries, Botanic Gardens & Botanic Artists to the story of the Garden Trees, Shrubs and Flowers of Today. Most of the flowers and plants that we all love, including the humble Tulip, have had such an adventurous journey on their way to our back gardens, and Peter White is one of the country's leading experts on this subject. This again is far more than just a morning learning about plants, it is a chance to turn off "Trisha" (perish the thought), throw the 'Sudoku' in the bin and come and meet a great bunch of neighbours and friends alike, in a very positive and caring environment. The full fees for 10 weeks are £33, with £25 for concessions. So Why not come along to the first few sessions to see how you get on, it is a step I can assure you, you will not regret.

TO BOOK YOUR PLACE CONTACT: LESLIE ALISON ON 01223 891 154.

**OTHER SEPTEMBER DATES THAT HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED BEFORE,
BUT ARE TOO GOOD TO BE MISSED AND STILL NOT TOO LATE TO GET INVOLVED IN ARE: -
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 10TH:**

CAMBRIDGESHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES BICYCLE RIDE:

For this event, I have been asked to look after the Linton Deanery group of 21 churches covering an area from Castle Camps to Wood Ditton. As a sponsorship idea, I am going to see how many of the 21 Churches I can visit & Photograph one of their Stained Glass windows on the day. If anyone would like to Sponsor me, remember half the money comes back to Hildersham Church in any case. I will however, let you into a secret as the thought of me on a bicycle, would not be a pleasant sight to see, as Deanery Organiser I shall be going by car, as I have made a commitment to try and visit every church this year. For more details about entering yourself, give me a ring for a sponsorship form.

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 18TH:

HILDERSHAM & BALSAM CHURCHES 25TH CROSS-COUNTRY RIDE:

As detailed in last months "Parish Focus" we want to try and make this year's Ride the Best Yet. If you could possibly help on the day as a Marshall or help the two weekends before building jumps and the course, we could really do with your help to keep this vibrant and fun joint community fundraising day flourishing. Please Contact: **NEIL MORTON** (894739) for details.

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 24TH

"THE BLOOMING HILDERSHAM BARN DANCE & HOG ROAST":

with the group - 'Kelly's Eye' - 7.30pm 'till Midnight in the Old Barn, Manor Farm, Hildersham. Tickets £12.50 from the Diane Jamieson at the Pear Tree, Cheryl Wise, Chime Cottage (892088) or Jenny Logan, Mabbutts (891897)

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 25TH:

HILDERSHAM HARVEST FESTIVAL

Followed later in the day by a **BRING & SHARE SUPPER & AUCTION.**

To Celebrate and give Thanks to God and our Local Farmers for all their hard work in another Harvest Safely Gathered In.

NB: A Pair of Expensive Gucci reading Glasses in a Black Leather cases have been left in the Church, if anyone has any idea of whom they might belong to, Please contact Ruth Moore.

Question: Has anyone any idea just How much the Hildersham Road Bridge cost when it was originally built in 1886?

For all Editorial & Advertising issues Contact Andrew Westwood-Bate – 01223 892430
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