



Wheathampstead History Society

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Latest news

- The Friends of St Helen's Church invite members of the History Society to a talk by Kris Lockyear on 'Before the Romans – Hertfordshire in the Iron Age' at 3.00 pm on Saturday 25 November in St Helen's School Hall. The talk will follow a short AGM. A small charge of £5 will be made to non-members of The Friends.
- If you missed Mike Smith's talk in January on *The Manor of Wheathampstead* and the field patterns in 1315, you can catch up with it on Friday 1 December when Mike will be speaking at Welwyn Archaeological Society: 7.45 for 8.00 at the United Reformed Church Hall, Church Road, Welwyn Garden City. Admission is free to members of Wheathampstead History Society.
- **Next meeting:** Wednesday 20 December. Don't miss our annual fish-and-chips supper party. Please bring an object of historical interest and tell us all about it.

Notes and Queries

Percy's Cross

The Hertfordshire Family History Society did a survey of the graves in St Helen's churchyard in the early 1990s and produced a book of the monumental inscriptions. It was felt that it was time for an update and Terry and I were asked to do it.



While doing the work, we were intrigued to find a large and elaborate iron cross lying across a totally unconnected grave. The cross is inscribed "Percy R Smith, died 30 October 1911, aged 12" but it was not listed in the original survey.

Who was Percy Smith? We eventually tracked him down to a single mother, Emily Smith, living in Catherine Street in St Albans with her five sons. Percy was her youngest. Emily was a washerwoman so the family must have been very poor. She was originally from Tyttenhanger Green so how did Percy get to Wheathampstead? We found him in the 1911 census living as a boarder with Mr. and Mrs Tomlin in Bridge cottages. These cottages now form part of the dining rooms at the Bull. Percy lived there with his older brother Harold and attended St Helen's School.

The school log book provided more details. In September 1911 Percy went down with diphtheria; he battled the disease for six weeks but died on 30 October. He had been a good student; only a month before his illness he won a prize for not missing a day off school in the year.

This is not the first time that we have come across young people from poor backgrounds in St Albans being taken into family homes in Wheathampstead. Perhaps the people of this village, which was slightly more affluent than some parts of St. Albans, had a reputation for helping those less fortunate than themselves while earning a little extra for their own families.

Whoever paid for poor Percy's cross gave him a costly memorial. It's a shame that we don't know where to put it back.

Margaret Pankhurst

Two questions from the Pubs Research Group

- The pub on Marford Road that many will remember as The Nelson (now L'Olivo restaurant) was originally called The Melbourne Arms. By 1871, it had become The Horse and Jockey. Does anyone know why this change was made?
- Does anyone know if there is a written or online history of Gustard Wood?