



## News and events

- Our **next meeting** will be on **Wednesday 20 November** when Elizabeth Eastwood will introduce us to some of the **Highwaymen and highwaywomen of Hertfordshire**.
- The Links page of our website at [www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk](http://www.wheathampsteadheritage.org.uk) includes the web addresses of other History Societies in our area, many of which offer a programme of talks and events.

## Tommy Parsloe

A press cutting in the History Society archive dated 1 December 1932 describes Mrs Parsloe, the gamekeeper of Nomansland, as "a tall commanding figure of a woman carrying a stout stick or a gun on her shoulder". Three years later, she published her autobiography, "A Parson's Daughter". She had led a remarkable life.



Born Muriel Lucy Jardine in 1881 in Ravensfield, Yorkshire, where her father Charles was vicar, and known as "Tommy" from an early age, she preferred to wear boys' and men's clothes. She had a happy childhood in a series of vicarages and rectories in the South of England, spending most of her time outdoors with her pony and various pets, hunting and shooting. She learned to box and became an expert horse-breaker, as well as having a number of boyfriends. At the age of about 20 she took a job on a farm in Ireland, pretending to be her older brother John. She changed into boy's clothes on the train and held down the job for 14 months.

When her father had to resign his living in Bishops Stortford because of failing eyesight, Tommy took a job as a horse-breaker in Stansted Mountfitchet. When her employer sold up five years later, she took over his customers and set up her own business. In 1914, she was breaking horses for the Canadian armed forces.

She married Stanley Parsloe in 1915 and their daughter Pat was born in January 1917. Pat was riding and hunting at the age of three.

Having financial problems, they moved to Australia in 1922 to work on Stanley's brother's sheep farm and breaking horses. When Tommy's aunt died, they moved back to England expecting a substantial bequest. This did not materialise so Stanley got a job as a gamekeeper in Derbyshire. Their son Tony was born in 1923.

Stanley's cousin gave them £200 and they moved to Wiltshire, bought a 14-seater bus and started a local bus service. When a competitor set up a rival service, they sold up and moved to Canada as settlers on an assisted passage with a plot of land and a £300 loan. The farm near Winnipeg was seven miles from the nearest town. They farmed 25 acres of land with horses, cows and hens, sowed wheat, and snared and skinned wolves. The wood fire kept their hut warm in temperatures of minus 50 degrees in winter.

After two years, the farm was destroyed by fire and they returned to England, landing penniless in Plymouth. Tommy rented an eight-roomed furnished flat which she ran as a lodging house "on the q.t." Having saved £15 and won £50 on a bet on a horse, they returned to Bishops Stortford. Stanley got a job as forest keeper in Hatfield Forest and Tommy served teas to visitors. Three years later, Stanley got a job as gamekeeper on a large estate in Hertfordshire. Soon afterwards, the owner was killed when out hunting and Stanley lost the job.

After a short spell as bailiff on a farm near Wheathampstead in 1930, Stanley was made gamekeeper to John Reynolds of Hall Place in St Albans who had 1000 acres with shooting rights. They moved into a "tiny oak-beamed cottage on Nomansland" next door to The Three Oaks beerhouse. Tommy found a job as a groom.

When Stanley died in 1932 aged 45, Tommy asked "Mr J-R" to give her his job. He agreed but gave her notice after a few months. She worked as a dog-walker and jobbing gardener but by 1933 she was "on the panel" at 7/6 a week.

In 1939, she was living in Sussex with Tony, a fisherman, and had joined the Women's Land Army. She died aged 81 in 1962.