

[121 The History of Newlands Corner by Trevor Brook for RSHS September 2023.mp3](#)

There is also a set of 187 slides accompanying this talk.

In 1908 Eric Parker wrote:

"Pewley Hill is dull enough in itself, when the down grass has gone and the bricks are multiplying, but it leads to one of the wildest and oldest and sweetest of all scenes in the county.

"The downs by Newlands Comer, above Albury and Chilworth, are the loveliest spot in Surrey."

Newlands Corner is famous for its views.

St. Martha's, crowned by the church, is on the right with Hindhead and Blackdown beyond. Sheep grazing is not something you see here nowadays!

This 1930s postcard claims:

"The Black Cottage, over 200 years old.

"The first building to be erected at Newlands Corner"....

And this is how it looked in 1976.

1873 maps show woodlands named The Roughts.

To the north, Guildford Race Course on Merrow Downs is already marked as disused.

Racing at Merrow lost out to Ascot and Epsom, both of which had closer train stations.

Guildford Races ran for 169 years till 1870.

In Victorian times, the Roughts was notable for areas featuring 'Ancient Yews'.

The cattle trade saw droves of five hundred small black cattle from Wales passing through to Dorking or Horsham.

By 1916, Ordnance Survey marked the trackway along the ridge as Drove Road.

Now the North Downs Way, another old name was The Tin Way, as a route from the Cornwall tin mines.

Just north of the trackway, there is a bowl barrow, dating from around 2000 BC.

The mound, covering burials, is 19m in diameter and 1.3m high, with a large central hollow following disturbance by antiquarian excavation.

The only recorded excavation was by General Lane Fox/Pitt-Rivers, who lived at Uplands, in Boxgrove, Merrow.

He found the Newlands Corner Barrow already damaged and spent no more more time on it.

An extensive cemetery with Romano-British urns was discovered nearby in 1895.

In 1890, St Loe and Amy Strachey rented Newlands House from Lord Onslow: *"No post, no water and no noise"*.

The Strachey's then purchased two adjacent acres.

"The best view in England.

"I built Newlands Corner, a Saturday-to-Monday cottage, which was close to the Arthur Russells' house..."

The Ridgeway, in Hook Lane, Shere.

"It became a fixed habit to descend from our Downs every Sunday and walk by delightful bridle-paths to The Ridgeway for tea - a serious institution in a family where there were two girls and four boys. When re-enforced by Lady Sligo, who had also settled in Surrey, one heard talk such as I have never known bettered."

Cyclist regiments were once a thing:

"St. Loe Strachey has his home on the downs, and Newlands Corner, the centre of the rifle-clubs of Surrey, has been the scene of assaults and counter-attacks made by Volunteer cyclists against defending bands of riflemen.

"The riflemen have held their own under the severest fire."

In 1911, with around 200 living in the hills, the Stracheys complained:

"Something must be done about the gipsy problem if we would re-pristiniate that gold of beauty which is the rightful heritage of the Surrey Uplands."

The Strachey's notepaper has no telephone, of course, but at the top left is: Station – Clandon; London and South Western Railway.

In 1913, Police Constable Edwin Lawty was awarded the Police Medal for Gallantry after arresting a housebreaker at Newlands Corner.

"During the severe and prolonged struggle the Constable was injured by being struck by a golf club."

These drawings on the notepaper in 1913 were by 26 year old architect Harry Stuart Goodhart-Rendel, of nearby Hatchlands Park in East Clandon.

Goodhart-Rendel became a writer and pioneer in the appreciation of 19th century architecture.

There is an intriguing inscription: *"Sketches to amuse Amabel"*... and Amabel was the Strachey's 19 year old daughter.

Here she is, riding her horse at Newlands Corner.

Amabel's father, St Loe Strachey, was editor of The Spectator.

Lytton Strachey visited: *"A most gorgeous scarlet motor car took us to and from the station and St Loe insisted on my wearing one of his numerous fur coats, so I felt very grand.*

"In the evening we all went to the Parish room, where Amy Strachey's 'Masque of Empire' was performed by village boys and girls.

"Amabel was Britannia, the leading part. She looked nice but her acting was too much in the regular affected 'recitation' style.

"I can't imagine anyone acting so by the light of nature.

"Amy was most affable and not at all prononcée. When I left she insisted on my taking away the Masque to suggest any improvements that might occur to me.

"The chief blot is at the end when Britannia and all the Colonies and Dependencies fall on their knees, repeating Rudyard Kipling's poem 'Lest we Forget' and praying for mercy,..."

This is a performance for Empire Day 1909, at Gaskyns in Rudgwick.

Yet another performance, in 1914 with Violet Frank as Britannia, was at Jolesfield House in Partridge Green.

Six years later, Amabel Strachey is in her wedding dress with her father St Loe, at Newlands...

before the ceremony at St Martha's Church...

where she married another family friend who was an architect: Clough Williams-Ellis.

St Martha's register shows Clough Williams-Ellis as a Lieutenant in the Welsh Guards, aged 32. Amabel was 21 and the Rector of Albury, Reverend H F Crowley, officiated.

Their wedding received international press coverage.

The Sketch had: *"Pleasantly and picturesquely unconventional was the recent wedding of Miss Strachey.*

"The ceremony took place at 8.30 a.m. in the ancient Norman Chapel of St Martha, on the old Pilgrim's Way, the approach to which is so steep that no conveyance can climb the last half-mile of the hill.

"The bride had to walk to the church.

The Surrey and Hants had a different angle: *"Bride Runs Away From Press Photographers"*, declaring the marriage...

"probably the most interesting ever witnessed at St Martha's Chapel. Despite the early hour there was a large attendance of people, many of whom had walked from Guildford. Among the well-wishers were members of Shere and Albury Red Cross, of which Mrs. Strachey is commandant, whilst the men's detachment formed a guard of honour at the chapel door.

"Miss Strachey herself has been most assiduous as a Red Cross nurse at her parents' delightful residence, which is now a military hospital. She recently recovered from an illness contracted whilst nursing wounded soldiers."

After the ceremony: *"There was a totally unexpected climax. The photographers once more began to get busy, and the bride, with the object of escaping their attentions, started running down the hill, closely followed by her husband.*

"The photographers gave chase, and one of them failed to notice a rabbit's hole, with the result that he had an awkward fall.

"The bride and groom ran the whole of the way to the road where they boarded Mr Strachey's car en route for London."

They then travelled on to the Williams-Ellis family home of Plas Brondanw [Brondanno] in Wales.

I discovered this sepia photograph with its Tennyson poem had originally been colour washed...

... and here is a crude idea of how Clough and Amabel walking into a golden future had looked, before 105 years of daylight in Wales faded its colours.

The Military Hospital mentioned at the Strachey's house had an open-air ward and *"patients suffering from gas poisoning."*

The Surrey Advertiser reported: *"Newlands Corner auxiliary hospital opened with 22 beds. This number rapidly increased... with the aid of outside shelters.*

"Tents were used for open air treatment through the summer, but as these were hardly suitable for the winter, the generosity of friends of the hospital was called upon. Mr. Strachey had since installed electric light in the shelters to minimise the works of the night nurse.

"The dining-room became insufficient, and a gift of £100 was most generously made from the Lord Lieutenant's Fund towards the cost of a new dining room.

"Mr. Strachey said that many people would ask how it was that the hospital could not manage on the Government grant. It was due to the isolated position of Newlands.

"From the economical side it was not an ideal place, since it was four miles from most places, and two miles from anywhere. The workers were not within walking distance, in the sense that they were in the towns, and could not go home to their meals. Therefore, there was the expense of housing and feeding the staff. They were delighted that should be done, but it put more expense on the hospital.

"The hospital was installed with a system of massage and electrical treatment, with the result that very special cases were received, and special cases meant special expense.

"He pointed out that the accounts did not include altering the drainage system, doubling the electric light supply, and the hot water supply. The meeting closed with vote of thanks."

In the centre is the house owner, Mrs Amy Strachey

"Four and a half years is a long time to be out of one's house. It is a still longer time in which to turn your home into an institution and yourself into a matron. Altogether some eight or nine hundred men passed through the hospital.

Newlands air and Newlands care were excellent things for difficult and anxious cases."

In the centre of this group is the Strachey's daughter Amabel, now Mrs Williams-Ellis.

But most extraordinary in that 1915 photograph is the black nurse. There is no clue yet to her name. In the Surrey Advertiser: *"The Newlands Corner Hospital begs to thank the Rev W. E. Peters for his generous gift of eggs, and the anonymous donor of a large box of collar studs for her exceedingly useful gift, with which the Quartermaster's department is delighted."*

In the 1916 Annual Report Amy Strachey states: *"A second certified masseuse has been added to the staff, and apparatus for electrical and radiant heat treatment more than doubled,"*

while Amabel's bridesmaid: *"Miss Brock continues her excellent services as Head Masseuse."*

Down the hill at Clandon Park, Lord Onslow had advised his wife, Violet, not to turn their own hospital into a convalescent home: *"as the men would get into awful trouble with the women". "I should pass on as many cases ... as fast as you can – they are only a nuisance and get the girls in the family way".*

In October 1915 soldiers are sitting outside the newly constructed dining room extension, designed by Clough Williams-Ellis. There is a pile of soil to the left and the wall was built, with help from the convalescents, in pisé, or rammed earth. You can see its rough texture at the right hand part of the wall, where there is no white wooden shuttering.

House owner St Loe Strachey, standing in the left hand doorway, wrote: *"A most successful dining-room, designed by Clough, was built as an addition. The ground was found to be quite suitable for ramming, and in a very short time I had a delightful dining-room for the patients."*

"My position in the hospital with the men was a strange one. They soon saw that I played the game and if I saw them breaking rules, met them, when I was riding, out of bounds, or discovered them at any other of their wicked tricks, I never told tales, or got them into trouble, or evoked any disciplinary reprisals. This intensive cultivation of the blind eye raised me to the position of a friendly neutral and gained for me their confidence. Besides, I believe it soothed them to think that I, too, had to endure the regiment of women to which they were exposed. They suspected that I also quailed, as they must, before "the Sister-in-charge."

"They were as wicked as demons and as mischievous as monkeys and just like schoolboys, but they observed the schoolboy law. Quarrel they might, and dislike each other, as they often did, very bitterly, they never told tales of each other. The Belgians, of whom we had some at the beginning, were different. Though often excellent fellows, they tended to give each other away, and even complained of each other to the Commandant. But, as one of our men said to me in excuse for the strange behaviour of the Germans, "They was never taught any better. They hadn't the training we've had"."

Edith Balfour Brock here was Amabel's bridesmaid and Head Masseuse. She was awarded MBE in 1920.

There were excitements. This German zeppelin, L13, passed overhead on October 13th 1915, a beautifully clear night. There was a message from Effingham that a Zeppelin was moving towards Guildford; by 10.05pm it was over Newlands Corner, and by 10.10pm it was hovering over the borough. Eye witness, William Harvey, said: *"it was quite low when it first appeared over the town, but rose rapidly to a great height after it dropped the first flare."*

The Zeppelin moved towards Wood Street, turned, headed back to Guildford, dropped more flares and bombs and disappeared over St Catherine's towards Shalford to Reigate, Redhill and Croydon.

After the war, here are Clough and Amabel in 1920 with their children, on the south lawn of Newlands Corner.

In 1925, Clough Williams-Ellis had a local commission for the Duke of Northumberland, designing the Half Moon pond at Albury Park...

which is in front of this tunnel through Silver Wood.

Building with rammed earth became a talking point and its revival started with this apple store at Newlands Corner by ramming earth between shuttering.

Clough William-Ellis designed the structure and St Loe Strachey financed its construction.

It was completed with a roof of peat blocks on rough boarding.

This project was followed by a so-called Cottage of Clay *“with work done by an invalided-out R.A.M.C. sergeant and his son.*

“The whole work of extracting and building took just under a month – 400 man-hours, both men received a shilling an hour as unskilled labourers.”

This is the pisé bungalow at Newlands Corner, designed and built by Clough Williams-Ellis... for £101.

The house featured in articles and books promoting pisé construction for economical post war housing.

This is White Cottage in August 1976.

Rammed earth was not satisfactory in the long term though...

By 1985 the bungalow had been rebuilt in brick.

Beech Cottage next door, with tile hanging, does still survive in pisé.

A pisé Wagon-house was also built at Newlands Corner, with plastering on hurdles fixed to the wall. Without plastic waterproofing at the time, I suspect the damp of the British climate made rammed earth problematic for houses.

Rammed earth at Newlands was not the ‘clay’ headlined in that newspaper, but rather chalk-based soil.

Newlands Corner, marked with the red spot, shows as chalk in the geological map.

And is on the summit of the North Downs where it narrows towards the west and the Wey valley gap at Guildford.

Geology used to be of general public interest.

Here are men and women on a Geologists’ Association field trip to Newlands Corner in June 1914.

The abrupt chalk to sand transition going south from Newlands Corner was exploited.

Albury Downs Chalk Pit in Water Lane is just 500 metres away from Water Lane Sand Pit.

This is Albury sand pit in 1912...

And the gravel quarry.

Edgar Tunnell said: *“I remember large flintstones were dug up at Newlands Corner and gravel was graded through a grill with varying sizes of mesh.*

“In those days workmen took a pride in their work, and the flints were stacked about one foot high in a rectangle, the sides and top were very straight and level. Fossil hunters used to come from miles around to inspect those piles...”

"My Father showed us what to look for in the shape of Shepherd's Crowns.

"Stones were spread on the roads and pressed into the surface with heavy steamrollers, which used to be parked by the pond in Merrow, where they sucked up water for the boiler.

"The driver would put the hose on a shovel to prevent taking any mud in with the water."

Newlands Corner appears on John Rocque's map of 1762.

The origin of the name is claimed to be highwayman Robert Newland.

A sign at the Bull's Head in West Clandon, which is listed as circa 1500 and was once two cottages, states that Newland slept there.

By 1921, there were both local buses and coach tours from London to Newlands Corner, excitingly also featuring Leatherhead, Dorking and East Clandon!

In 1925, the Stracheys built themselves a new house, further back from the road...

designed by Clough Williams-Ellis and called Harrowhill Copse.

It received a 3 page spread in Country Life's 'Lesser Country Houses of Today' feature.

They then sold their original home...

to Roper Spyers, who opened it as Newlands Corner Hotel.

The hotel initially kept the building's fine library, here around 1930.

Now as a hotel, this is that same window by the south lawn where Clough and Amabel had been sitting with their children in the 1920 photograph.

Newland's most enduring story is the disappearance of Agatha Christie, in December 1926.

Her car was found abandoned 'in a hedge,' with the lights left on, at the chalk quarry down Water Lane.

Agatha had left her husband...

Colonel Archibald Christie RFC, and 7 year old daughter Rosalind at home, The Styles in Sunningdale, at 10pm on Friday 3rd December.

She left a note to her secretary that *"I must get away. I cannot stay here in Sunningdale much longer."*

"Hatless and Coatless at 6am

"Husband's Three Theories."

At 6:15am, a gravel pit worker from Merrow, Edward McAllister, on his way to work was asked by a hatless lady without a motor-coat to start a motor car 50 yards from the Newlands Corner crossroads.

It then proceeded slowly towards Merrow and away from Newlands Corner. It was still dark, but McAllister saw the woman in the light of the headlamps and, from his description, the police were satisfied that she was Mrs Christie.

At 8am, George Best, a gypsy boy who had walked up from Albury encountered Mrs Christie's two seater Morris Cowley coupe 300 yards from the Corner on the greensward, with its bonnet stuck in a hedge the front wheels actually overhanging the edge of the chalk pit.

This 1912 glass plate shows a geological visit at Water Lane chalk pit.

"Only thick hedge growth prevented it from plunging into the pit."

Shortly afterwards, Frederick Dore, a car mechanic, arrived and found the battery flat, the gears in neutral and the brakes left off, as though: *"the car had been allowed to run down the hill."*

He walked up to the refreshment kiosk run by Mr Alfred Luland, who was given charge of the car while Dore went to Newlands Corner Hotel to telephone the police...

A gypsy girl had heard a car at about midnight being driven along the top of Newlands Corner. Police dredged both the mill race approaching Albury Mill...

And Postford Pond by the gunpowder works.

A poison bottle was found at Stapledown where Amabel Strachey wrote her novels.

Divers explored the Silent Pool and over 40 square miles of the Downs were examined during the week.

A massive public search ensued.

Authors Dorothy L Sayers and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle joined the hunt. Conan Doyle contacted a medium.

Constables from Berkshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex joined the search.

Colonel Christie was suspected of murdering his wife. A note found in a hedge 20 yards from the car, turned out to be a hoax.

The Home Secretary pressured police to do whatever it took to find her.

Over one thousand police and fifteen thousand volunteers searched.

"Thousands arrived by bus, charabanc and cycle, possibly inspired by the £100 reward from one of the dailies. The line of vehicles stretched for miles along the road.

"A dozen dog packs including Airedales, bloodhounds from Sussex and St Albans and beagles joined in the hunt for the missing lady who was aged 35 and 5ft 7in tall.

"Flares were found necessary at Newlands Corner to guide searchers who had lost their bearings in the mist."

These searchers taking a break are on a charabanc from Reigate.

A tractor crushed down the undergrowth and two aeroplanes combed the district from above.

One villager said: *"A dead rabbit could not have remained undiscovered."*

Eleven days after her disappearance, variously reported as a banjo player or a maid, identified Agatha Christie staying at the Swan Hydropathic Hotel in Harrogate.

She had checked in as a South African, Mrs. Theresa Neele of Capetown, recuperating after losing a child - copying the surname of Nancy Neele, her husband's mistress.

With only one small case, she was a popular guest at the hotel, sang, enjoyed the dances, played billiards... and was a diligent reader of the newspapers.

Colonel Christie travelled to Harrogate and stated that his wife was suffering from *"a complete loss of memory and does not know who she is after concussion.*

"Three years have dropped out of her life. She recognises me, but does not recall our child Rosalind. It is a terrible tragedy."

The New York Times carried the story on its front page.

The Daily Express concluded:

"The joke was on the police, who argued that she was lying dead near Newlands Corner, the willing crowds who tramped the downs in search, and the good people who saw her at various irreconcilable times and places."

Afterwards, Surrey Police sent a bill for £25 to Colonel Christie, as the cost of sandwiches and drinks for police searchers.

Perhaps Agatha Christie had walked to Chilworth and Albury Station, the nearest to her abandoned car, to begin her journey to Harrogate.

Or, possibly as newspapers thought, to the tourists' main station: Gomshall.

Or Clandon. Or Guildford Station. It was never explained.

In 2000, in the Guardian, the daughter of Nan Watts, Mrs Christie's sister-in-law, said Mrs Christie was secretly hidden by Mrs Watts at her Chelsea home, before she kitted her out at the Army and Navy store, gave her money, and put her on a train to Harrogate the following afternoon.

[Guardian 27 October 2000 Author's 'revenge' on erring husband by John Ezard]

In 1929:

"NEWLANDS CORNER TIDY FOR WHITSUN

WOMEN CRUSADERS HAND OVER TO WARDEN HALF A TON OF LITTER

"Combustible rubbish being burnt. Bottles dumped in gravel pit.

"The newly appointed commons keeper tended the bonfire – "This is our final effort here", said Miss Bray."

In 1932, Flora Russell, who lived at East Hills in Farley Green, complained to the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England about motorists littering Newlands Corner, suggesting an AA scout be employed to solve the problem.

Car parking was originally beside the hotel and Roper Spyers applied for permission to erect three petrol pumps in the car park at Newlands Corner...

Which was: *"to be improved, with an attendant in charge and a keeper to be appointed to prevent the disfigurement of the Common by picnic parties leaving litter.*

"Petrol pumps would be for the convenience of users of the park, and a steel shelter erected so cars could be given any attention necessary."

Asked if there had been any difference in the numbers of motorists using the park since the charge was made, Mr. Martin said that: *"there had actually been an increase.*

"Before, people picnicked on the downs, making a terrible litter. Now there is a full time man to stop them making any mess.

"The fee has enabled us to plan a decent car park with proper amenities. We are going to install a power plant to flood-light the whole park and the tea gardens.

"Some of the unsightly wooden buildings will come down, and in the centre there will be a bandstand, for we hope to have moonlight dancing in summer time.

"When the alterations are complete we shall have a really beautiful tea garden here.

"The petrol pumps and the shelter will not be easily visible from the road, and will not spoil the natural beauty of the Corner."

Since motorists were forbidden to park their cars on the greensward at the Corner, the field used as a car park was no longer free.

A charge of sixpence was made.

This was the hotel Colonade, with the tea gardens beyond.

In letters to the editor:

"Sir, A charge of 6d. is now levied on any motorist who wishes to park his car. Surely the powers who have turned off the motorists should, in fair play, provide a free parking area.

"I would also point out that the beautiful walk from the corner towards Guildford is now quite spoilt by the mad charging of horses under very doubtful control, which scatter mud and turf over the pedestrians. The beautiful turf is turned, and another haven of peace departed.

Yours. etc., A LOVER OF SURREY"

This is the Newlands Corner Reserve Garden.

The Surrey Advertiser warned:

"Much will doubtless depend upon the manner in which the proposed developments of the pleasure gardens are carried out."

This snapshot of hotel staff and guests in 1939 is fascinating.

The Hotel Proprietor, Roper Spyers, is MA Oxon and a Barrister-at-Law. There are a Manageress, a Bookkeeper, two General Labourers, Chambermaids, Waitress, Chef, Porter and a Night Porter.

Guests included a Certified Midwife, two Farmers, Secretary to the Congregation of a London Church, George Sansom a Diplomat, Anne Knowles a Childrens' Nurse, Ernest Jacklin an Advertising Sales Representative for Punch magazine, Agnes Brooke with General Duties in Running a Bridge Club and Arthur Barker, a BBC Overseas News Editor.

This was Newlands Corner Tea Gardens...

... and the Old Farm House tea garden in 1928

This postcard's sender wrote:

*"My Dear,
Claud and I have just walked up to this spot – there is a gorgeous view –*

*"about 40 minutes walk from "Willoughby."
- which is Willoughby at No.13 Albury Road in Guildford.*

The place really did become quite crowded.

Clearly, it was time to get out the pocket flask.

Fairyland was the name given to the area of ancient yews...

Beneath one of them, William Watson wrote *The Father of the Forest* with these opening lines : —
*Old emperor Yew, fantastic sire,
Girt with thy guard of dotard kings, —
What ages hast thou seen retire
Into the dusk of alien things?*

The yew motif was used in John Armstrong's 1932 advertisement for Shell petrol:

"Everywhere you go you can be sure of Shell."

"The oldest cohort of yews originates about the time of the Norman invasion, about 950 years old..."

"There also appears to be a "Black Death" cohort after 1348. These yews are about 670 years old. Not as old as the 2,000 years guessed by some authors, nevertheless all of these are yews of international standing."

This stretch of road up from Shere was not metalled until 1910 and got its own name as well:
The Sweeps.

What is astonishing is the lack of trees compared with nowadays

There had been huge demand for wood and charcoal by the Chilworth Gunpowder Company along the valley...

Here's a birds eye view in 1891 described as a portion of the Chilworth Gunpowder Factory.

The Sweeps were still seen as an exciting stretch of road in the 1960s

In the 1930s, this RAC box was installed at the junction with Trodds Lane, which used to be the A25...

And a No Parking sign appeared on a small post where Water Lane goes off to the left

In 1933, Surrey Red Cross Commandant, Mrs Strachey OBE and Mentioned in Despatches, offered her fields at Harrowhill for a British Hospitals' Air Pageant...

with 16 aircraft in 20 thrilling events and *"air liners to fly at 250 miles per hour."*
Trees were cut down along the north side of her field so that planes could take off.
Imperial Airways donated a return ticket to Paris to be auctioned during the day.
The Mayor opened the display and declared that...

"He anticipated the opportunity of flying over the town would be of guidance to any who had thoughts of the establishment of an airport near Guildford.

"The Mayor believed that sooner or later such an amenity would come."

An astonishing 15,000 people paid to attend.

"The pride of the Surrey Red Cross Society is an air ambulance, which was on view at Newlands Corner."

Another show, for King George Vth's Jubilee, took place at Harrowhill on Easter Monday, 1935, inviting you to fly with Lieutenant Owen Cathcart Jones or in T Campbell Black's machine, from 3/6.

Here is Tom Campbell Black, nonchalantly approaching the Avro 540 Cadet he displayed in.

Flyers performed spins, loops and rolls.

There were synchronised parachute jumps, formation flying, wing walking, upside down flying and tricks where a paper streamer released high up in the air was cut repeatedly by aircraft as it descended.

The Jubilee was also celebrated at Newlands Corner with this huge bonfire being constructed with the help of Alfred Weller's coal lorry from Shere.

In 1939, war was declared.

St Loe Strachey had died in 1927 but his widow, Amy, at Harrowhill, took evacuees from London in Operation Pied Piper.

"THE CHILDREN ARRIVE September 1st 1939; 6 p.m.

"Even tea-time was over when at last there was a shout, "Here are the cars!"

"I had been promised no boys, and six girls of about 9 "plus," which is the slang of the London County Council for "and upwards".

"Car doors opened on both sides and out tumbled eight little beings, none of them more than knee-high and half of them boys.

"Well, there they were, and they had to be made the best of. A tangle of gas-masks, knapsacks, tiny great-coats, tumbled all over the floor of the hall, and tins of condensed milk rolled about gaily. The children were hot, dirty, and tired. "Baths and bed!" cried I. Then there arose a united shout: "BUT WE HAVEN'T HAD OUR TEA!" The train dust had to be washed off, however, and a very large and composite meal was given them in bed.

"The children were absurdly small, a little elfin being with big eyes was only five. There was only one case of tears. But the emotional disturbance was there, for when morning came a proportion of the children had wetted their beds.

"Morning sunshine brought reassurance. The woods and fields, full of great beds of rose bay, of which the children could make bunches, stilled their anxiety. As the weeks went by, the routine of school, meals, and a free weekend was gradually established.

"It is the first day of February, five months to the day since the loaded motors drove up to the door. A great shout outside the window reveals the road to school is blocked by deep snowdrifts; but here, in the fields, the children are running about in a white snow to which they are quite unaccustomed. "I never saw anything like it in all my life," says the youngest but one. He is just six years old."

The 1939 Register for Lower Lodge, Upper Lodge and Harrow Hill Copse itself shows Amy Strachey as a JP and ARP serving under the Evacuation Scheme, along with the staff of her estate.

Edward Parrott is an ARP on Decontamination work, with his wife, Ellen Parrott, helping with evacuated children.

Sydney Raven is Mrs Strachey's gardener and chauffeur.

All the teachers and pupils from St Michael's School in Southfields, south London, were billeted around Albury, with eight of the children at Harrowhill Copse.

Toni Savage described army lorries driving over Newlands Corner in the middle of the night disturbing their sleep and the highlight of going to a little shop in Albury to buy sweets.

They walked through the countryside to their makeshift school at Cooks Place...

the Catholic Apostolic vicarage in Albury. *"School dinners were served and the washing up done by a rota of ladies from the village.*

"We would walk for miles and had the freedom of woods and fields to play in. The war had little effect except to prevent us from going home.

"We discovered strange objects had appeared, like tank traps and pill boxes, which the boys were more interested in than the girls. On our way to school, we stopped in amazement at a double row of chunky stone pyramids with the tops cut off. They stretched as far as the eye could see, across the valley. They looked like rows of giant teeth."

On 30th December 1940, WVS organiser Helen Lloyd wrote:

"Had to take two of Mrs Strachey's children to Warren Road Hospital with impetigo – and nits!"

By 31st January:

"A child admitted to Warren Road for impetigo has measles there; a second child of Mrs Strachey's has scarlet fever though the school doctor pronounces it to be nothing.

"The evacuee children are now a much-loved part of the family and it is no longer a sacrifice, but the most natural thing in the world, to give up the before-dinner bath and a glass of sherry for the sake of telling their children a bedtime story.

3rd May 1941: *"Rung up at 8.30 to hear Mrs. Strachey's house was on fire, made hasty arrangements for billeting the children.*

"The fire was in the roof thatch and no-one was hurt.."

Mrs Strachey had always asked Canadian soldiers camped there...

...if there ever was a fire, to rescue an ancient Virgin Mary statue in the hall.

8th July: *"Lunch with Mrs Strachey and talked about fuel. The new rationing order which limits all householders to one ton of fuel a month will mean we shall never be able to get more anthracite and consequently will never again get hot water!"*

Harrowhill has anti-blast tape on all the windows and its original Clough Williams-Ellis thatched roof. Two of those looking after evacuees are, on the left, 45 year old cook and housekeeper Flora Bailey who, when she was 21 in 1915, had been a kitchen maid at the Strachey's Newlands Corner Hospital. On the right is 38 year old governess Mrs Ella Samuel, who was German, with her 8 year old son Ralph.

Ella Samuel's certificate states: 'Female Enemy Alien – Exemption From Internment – Refugee'. Her normal occupation is child's gymnast instructor and she does NOT desire to be repatriated.

Ella Samuel became naturalised British in August 1947, while at 26 Lincoln Road in Guildford, which had this 4,000 year lease.

She subsequently bought the house outright.

Here is Ella Samuel at Harrowhill with her son Ralph.

In the evenings the children would sit around Mrs Strachey's rocking chair in the grand parlour while she read Dickens or Rudyard Kipling's Just So stories, from signed copies.

Kipling used to stay with the Stracheys.

With its red J for Jew stamp, this is 7 year old Ralph Samuel's 'Permit To Leave Germany'.

Ralph flew to Croydon Airport in a DC3 on 6 January 1939.

He was alone, with a cardboard sign made by his mother around his neck.

Ralph recalled how his mother arrived from Dresden three months later, while his father remained in Germany.

Ralph had polio when he was 4. After the war, his mother had a copy of a German therapeutic machine made for children at her clinic in Guildford who were suffering from polio or rickets due to malnutrition.

Until Ralph's father was killed at Auschwitz, 25 word letters arrived via the Red Cross in High Street, Guildford. This was his final letter:

"My dearest great boy. Proud of school progress.

"Aunt Mata stayed, husband went." That is code for the husband was sent to the gas chambers.

"We're moving into wood houses." Which is code for going to a camp.

"Love to Mummy and you,

"signed Daddy."

This Stolpersteine pavement plaque on Regensburger Strasse in Dresden reads:

Here lived

HERBERT SAMUEL

Born 1894

Interned 1942

HELLERBERG

Deported 1943

Murdered in

Auschwitz

Ralph went on to Woking Grammar School, then worked for estate agent Chas. Osenton in Guildford, followed by the London School of Economics and now lives in the USA.

Five of the evacuees held a reunion in 1998.

They lunched at The Withies, stayed at the Drummond Arms and were welcome visitors at Harrowhill, where they had spent five years of their lives.

Gerhard Höfner, one of a hundred Czech refugees in Albury after the Munich takeover of their country, remembered:

"All the pillboxes were camouflaged, usually made to look like haystacks or small barns. This was done with wooden frames covered with canvas and painted, some with thatched roofs.

"One looked like an old castle.

"At the weakest point, where the A25 climbs steeply up from Silent Pool and through a defile, concrete cylinders with lifting hooks at the top, were left beside the road ready to block it.

"Italian prisoners of war from Merrow Work Camp 57 came to help"

Southfields evacuee Derek Keens recalled: *"We used to go and watch them and help eat their baked beans – delicious at the time."*

Gerhard Höfner continues: *"A pillbox protected the defile and concrete dragons' teeth were placed in a line each side of the road.*

“A pillbox was built beside the road and made to look like a filling station with a thatched roof and wood canvas side painted to look like the office. There were even real petrol pumps outside. “After the war, the road was straightened and the pillbox removed.”

The army camp had around 50 Nissen huts, these white rectangles, near Trodds Lane and the Newlands Corner Hotel.

Evacuee Derek Keens said...

“We spent many an hour, the real attraction at the camp was free chocolate and spearmint gum.” Farley Green and Albury held events for the troops. Treetops Holiday Camp organised several dances. Lasting friendships and one marriage resulted.

A rota of women went weekly to the hotel to run a canteen for Canadian soldiers.

Robert Weir recalled: *“Towards the end of the war, troops started gathering in large numbers on the downs – ideal for scrounging!! There was always a welcome when we visited, the soldiers were very keen to chat to us, there were plenty of doughnuts and other goodies.*

“They were mainly Canadians with a few English units. They showed us photos of their families (many of similar age to ourselves). Little did we know what was in store for those poor fellows, they were so cheerful and would wave us off as we left. We never saw the same faces twice!!

“Aircraft were flying over us on a very frequent basis, both day and night, many of them were damaged and would land at the airstrip”...

And Merrow Flying Field was another exciting place for children.

It was simply this 40 acre hilltop field west of the Newlands Corner woods, with nothing more than a wind sock.

[Inspired by Thomas Charlie White, a mounted division of the Home Guard also operated from the same farm.]

This postcard depicts the public mingling with Canadian troops and their camouflage-painted armoured car in a way that is difficult to imagine nowadays.

Many of these Canadians perished in Operation Jubilee, the Dieppe Raid of August 1942.

There was a tragedy with a mortar shell in 1943:

“The bomb was found on an artillery range near ALFRISTON, Sussex, put into a lorry and taken to NEWLANDS CORNER.

“Two men of the Royal Canadian Artillery were killed as a result of the bomb exploding whilst being handled.”

A couple of Canadian soldiers were photographed at Harrowhill with the women looking after the evacuees.

The soldier on the left is Scoop, with Peggy Parrot, Ellen Samuel, Mrs Parrot and Flora Bailey.

An armoured car drives through Albury, where Helen Lloyd noted:

1 July 1940: *“The great excitement is the new anti-tank trench which is to form part of our third line of defence from Reigate to Guildford. Decided that when the war is over, the anti-tank trench would probably be turned into the much debated east and west road.”*

6 July: *“I am told that Shere is suffering sadly from the French Canadians and their immorality is rife.*

Walter Moir was one of 10,000 Canadian soldiers who came to Albury Heath from their camps to be addressed by Field Marshal Montgomery, who arrived in a Rolls Royce.

They were told they would be under his command but not that they were going to France.

The Montgomery Memorial commemorates his review of troops in May 1944, prior to the D Day landings.

After D Day, prisoners of war who were Soviet citizens were moved into those now-vacant Nissen huts.

The Last Secret of 1973 revealed how those people were forcibly repatriated under the Yalta Agreement.

Aware that these Cossacks would almost certainly be shot upon delivery to Stalin, a local Latvian woman, Anna Child, saved three Latvians she found at Newlands Corner Camp whom she told to go to their legation in Eaton Place, London.

The subject of several books and plays, in 1978, Nicholas Bethell proposed a memorial to the tragedy should be erected at Newlands Corner.

After the war, tourists returned.

This was the transport café on the route to Dover, advertising: "*Breakfast, Hot Meals and Lyons Maid ice cream*"...

Soil taken by Dragon Plant Hire from the A25 when it was widened in 1967...

was used to reshape Waterloo Pond's reed beds at Vale End in Albury.
Unusual plants still grow there.

The Barn Tea Rooms & Snack Bar in the 1950s...

And in 1976...

By 1985, the Tasty Burger Bar had appeared.

Following the opening of the M25 and the end of the A25 over Newlands Corner as a long distance route, the transport café became Carlo's Trattoria in 1986.

Under P.J. Davies in the '90s, Newlands Corner Hotel was called The Manor, later becoming part of the Best Western chain.

This century, under different ownership again, it became Guildford Manor, re-styled as a hotel and spa.

The hunt gathered at Newlands Corner on Boxing Day, here in 1991.

Newlands Corner's signpost featured on A Walk Through Surrey in 1939...

While by 1955, you needed to buy a Land Rover, which: "*makes light work of heavy duty*".

Apparently showing heather, this is entitled 'Newlands Corner looking towards Guildford', by W.H. Durham.

Where was this painted from, in those treeless days of 1914?

Even in 1926, some photographs were completely fraudulent.

The amazing prominence of St Martha's is simply ludicrous in this postcard!

More authentically, this is looking towards St Martha's hill.

Water Lane, as it was in 1961...

And a little earlier...

And earlier still, with no trace at all of hedges.

Peacefully, in 1949, here is Hindhead Common from Newlands Corner.

The freedom to exploit the countryside was not always welcomed.
In philosopher and Brains Trust panellist Professor Joad's extraordinarily titled book...

'The Untutored Townsman's Invasion Of The Country,' he wrote:
"Cities should not be allowed to surround themselves with an uncouth fringe of villas, reinforced by petrol stations, advertisement hoardings, shacks and cafes."

An outcry ensued in 1946 when Guildford Rural District Council planned housing on a cornfield on rising ground in full view of Newlands Corner.
By 2015, half a million visitors and 120,000 vehicles came to Newlands Corner each year.
Despite that popularity,...

Surrey Wildlife Trust, managing the countryside for Surrey County Council, proposed a large visitor centre and a coach park with other attractions on the hilltop.
Over 10,000 people signed a petition of objection.

So, let's end by celebrating that, happily, the cornfield remains untouched and to quote Professor Joad:
"There is nothing better than a high, beautiful place with a view, such as Newlands Corner."