

## Sarratt Local History Society

Next time you make a cheese and pickle sandwich, ponder a moment that the Blackwell name on the jar of Branston's originated in Watford way back in 1547 and has links all around this area, including Sarratt, almost to the present day.

At our March meeting, Mary Nobbs from Chipperfield gave us a fascinating and detailed history of the Blackwell family, who were Lords of the Manor at Chipperfield. In the early years they were upholsterers, saddlers and grocers, and prospered, opening shops in The Strand and Oxford Street in London. By the 1700s they were marrying into the "gentry" – Charles Blackwell married Harriet Finch of Red Heath (now York House School) and their third son, Samuel, was only a year old when his father died. Young Sam was apprenticed as a saddler in London, and eventually married another of the Finch family, Ann, whose mother was the sister of Ralph Day of Sarratt – hence the Sarratt connection. The couple lived at Great Sarratt Hall Farm, and Ralph Day trusted the young man enough to make him executor of his will, and when he died in 1831 left him the farm and £500 for his pains.

Sam's brother, Thomas, founded the pickle company with Edmund Crosse, which became Crosse and Blackwells. This began in 1830 based in Soho Square, and catered for wealthy clients. By 1900 it had a world wide reputation, and the name is still in use to this day. Another brother, Robert, inherited the Manor of Chipperfield from his godfather, John Parsley. The Blackwells were great benefactors to Chipperfield, giving the Common for public use, and building the Working Men's Club which is still in use today and recently renamed as Blackwells in their honour. The family remained at the Manor House until 1936 when it was sold. An interesting story, showing the interweaving of family fortunes in this area.

*On Tuesday 22 May Dr Jill Barber from Hatfield*