

MINCHINHAMPTON

LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

ANNUAL BULLETIN

NUMBER 1

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CHAIRMAN' S REPORT

Mr C. Turk

During the course of this century interest in local history has grown rapidly and many towns and parishes have their own Local History Society. Now Minchinhampton has its own Local History Group, formed early last year with the help of the Minchinhampton Society, with the aim of fostering an interest in Minchinhampton's history. You have here the Group's first bulletin - We hope the precursor of many future bulletins recording the activities of the Group and the research done by some of our members.

The first public meeting, organised by the founder members in order to judge the interest in the idea of a local history group, was held in the Vestry Room on April 28th last year, when a large attendance heard Mr. Brian Jerrard of the Community Council describe the kind of work that might be done on Minchinhampton's history. The interest shown was sufficient to justify the formation of a Minchinhampton Local History Group which was officially founded on July 9th when a meeting in the Library agreed upon a constitution and appointed a committee.

Since then regular public meetings have been held, addressed by speakers interested in local history, not always Minchinhampton's, and various members have begun research into aspects of the town which interest them.

The Group aims to meet for a talk every second month, and to foster not only individual but also group projects. Three such which we hope to get going this year are: a record of the traditional barns of Minchinhampton; a survey of the churchyard pinpointing the gravestones and memorial inscriptions; and a record of life in the parish in the early years of this century as remembered by our older inhabitants. (If you can tape the memories of your older acquaintances this most valuable record could be stored in the Library, where, with the willing cooperation of Miss Fraser, we are gradually building up a collection of records relating to the parish, and would welcome any old records or photographs you may have.)

Minchinhampton has a long and interesting history, but as yet only the bare bones have been uncovered. If you are interested in the past of our parish, join us. You may discover some sides of the town's past about which you would like to find out more. There is no reason to hold back, fearing that you have had no training in reading old documents, for many aspects of our recent history can be traced from easily available newspapers, from talking to people who have lived through these years, from old letters and from photographs. Some such aspects could be: Civil Defence in Minchinhampton during the last War, the coming of gas and electricity, the growth of the town . . .

There is much to know about our town.

PROGRAMME OF PAST EVENTS

Mrs S Wood

1983	April	B. Jerrard	Ideas for Research
	July	C. Turk	1750's Rate Revolt
	Sept	R. Smout	Sources available in the Record Office
	Oct		Visit to Gloucestershire Collection in County library
	Nov		Informal Members Get Together.
1984	Feb.	L. Padin & S. Gardiner	A Look at Vintage Local Transport
	March	C. Turk	Aspects of Local Rates
	May	N. Lambert	Researching and Writing a Local History
	July		Guided visit to Church.
	Oct.	A.G.M.	P. Pinnel Local History Projects in Schools

COMMITTEE MEMBERS 1983-4

Mr. Cyril Turk	Chairman
Mrs. Sue A Wood	Secretary
Mrs. Diana Wall	Treasurer
Mrs. Pat Hopkins	
Mr. Chris Brown	
Mr. Fred Masham	

THE HISTORY OF BUTT STREET

Mr. F. Masham

Butt Street, which enters Minchinhampton from the north and extends from the Blue Boys Dairy on the Cirencester Road to the Market House, appears to have had some houses built on its eastern side from at least the 17th Century; the western side, on the other hand, apart from the older houses in the narrow part at the southern end, was not built up until quite recently.

The actual line of the road itself, with its curve towards the Market House and High Street at the southern end and its shallow curve at the other end towards the Blue Boys, is interesting and invites speculation regarding the original layout of the 'town beside the Church and Manor House and the possibility that at one time there may have been a village green on the ground between Friday Street, Tetbury Street and High Street.

Be that as it may, by the 17th Century Butt Street certainly existed since it is

mentioned in a Church terrier (a list of Church property) dated 1677, now at the Gloucester Record Office. A deed dated 1651 conveys two cottages, one on either side of a little plot of waste ground leading from the highway to the parson's ground called the lyes. It is interesting that these two cottages were, according to this deed, owned by a Samuel Butt (mercator). The width of the *little plot* is given as 19 feet and it so happens that the present day width of the driveway leading from Butt Street to Stuart House (which used to be the old rectory) is about 19 feet. Thus, although the deed does not mention Butt Street by name, it seems reasonable to assume that the highway referred to is in fact Butt Street. It follows from this that the lyes mentioned in Church terriers dated 1584, 1677 and 1704 is the ground on which the rectory was built in the 18th Century. Moreover, the area of the *lyes* is given in the terrier of 1584 which refers to *two other drye leases called or known by the name or names of the lyes containing by estimation 12 acres.*

However it seems that this and other Church ground was not built upon until the 17th Century since the first mention of houses is in the Hampton terrier of 1635 where seven houses (and their tenants) are listed. By 1677 this had increased to nineteen and by 1704 to about forty two. Not all of these, of course, were built on the lyes; of those that were, some would presumably be fronting on Butt Street, since the lyes appears to have extended as far as that.

As regards the dates of building of the present day houses some have date stones in their external walls although, of course, these may only refer to rebuilding dates, or new buildings on cleared sites. A lot more research needs to be done on Land Tax and Other records at the Gloucestershire Record Office and Gloucester City Library in order to link the names of proprietors and tenants recorded in the Rate Book of 1830 with the Land Tax returns of the same year, so that the owners and tenants of, if possible, every house in the street can be traced year by year back to 1780, which is the date of the earliest Land Tax record available at Gloucester. The hope would then be to link the ownership in 1780 with the earlier information from the Church Terriers dated 1704, 167?, 1635 and 1584 which were mentioned above.

Sources

Church Terriers	Glos. Record Office
1830 Rate Book	Minchinhampton Lib.
1830 Land Tax	Minchinhampton Lib.
Other Land Tax Assessments	Glos. Record Office

THE FIRST MINCHINHAMPTON PARISH COUNCIL - Mr. C. Turk

December 7th 1890. There was mounting excitement in Minchinhampton. Everywhere small groups were in discussion and argument; names were being mentioned; tactics decided. By early evening men in twos and threes were converging on the Market Hall, and soon several hundred were gathered in the Square. As papers were-passed round from hand to hand, heated conversation sometimes broke out, but in general the crowd was in good humour, anxious mainly as to whether all would be able to get into the hall. The time given for the meeting neared and local leaders began to arrive particularly Edward Playne, P. J. Evans, Howard Ferrabee, the Rev. Wicks, and the crowd pressed urgently towards the doors. When these opened a little before 8 p.m. as many as could poured into the Hall, to take their seats on the benches laid across its width.

What was the reason for this gathering and this excitement?

For centuries English parishes had been administered by Vestries. In origin these were meetings of ratepayers to discuss Church affairs. Given the leading position of the Church in each parish, it was natural for the Vestry to assume responsibility for parish affairs. It was equally natural that the monthly meetings of the Vestry were attended only by a few of the richer and more powerful parishioners. Hence two forms of Vestry developed; the closed Vestry, self-perpetuating and nominating its own members and the open Vestry, small in numbers attending, but open to any ratepayer. Minchinhampton was an open Vestry, meeting (until 1818 when the building now known as the Vestry Room was bought) in the Crown Inn, with an attendance usually of only six or so, but rising to a dozen or more when some matter of concern arose, as when many parishioners refused to pay rates in 1755.

During the 19th Century the extension of the franchise for the election of Members of Parliament led to a demand for its extension to local affairs. The Act of 1888 partly met this demand by setting up elected County Councils, but since poor men were most unlikely to gain a seat on these councils, control was still in the hands of the same class as had run the former Quarter Sessions.

The demand for elected councils now moved to the parishes. There was strong support for this from the Nonconformists who saw the Vestries as being run by the local clergy and large landowners. These latter, of course, fought equally strongly to retain their privileged position. So when H. H. Fowler introduced the Local Government Act in 1894 popularly known as the Parish Councils Act there was fierce opposition, told at some length in the weekly edition of the Stroud Journal. The Commons discussed the Bill on thirty-nine days, the Lords returned it to the Commons three times, but eventually, with a number of amendments, chiefly one limiting parish council spending to a three penny rate, it passed on 1st March 1894,

to come into force at the end of the year.

Minchinhampton reflected the national picture at local level. On March 31st 1893 the usual Annual Vestry Meeting was held in the Church with the Rev. F. Mather chairing it. The Stroud Journal reported it as *likely to be the last Vestry meeting in Minchinhampton* and referred to small groups of men wending across the Common before 10 o'clock and to the large gathering outside the Church door at the appointed time. The meeting seems to have been orderly; overseers were appointed, the state of the roads discussed *they shake you nearly to pieces when you ride about*; though one comment by a parishioner was symptomatic for the future *we shall soon be able to elect our own men*.

Who these men should be was the talking point of the next autumn. At the end of October 1894 there was a lively meeting of Liberal electors in the Baptist schoolroom with H. Evans in the chair. He pointed out the difficulty of submitting names which would satisfy all, and said that a compromise had been worked out with twenty Liberals to meet twenty Conservatives to decide on the allocation of the thirteen seats. This was violently opposed with shouts of *we won't have it, no compromise, can you guarantee we should have seven?* Rev. Wicks thought it would be deplorable if thirteen of either side were elected. Eventually thirteen names were put forward for nomination: Rev. Wicks, W. Excell, J. Daniels, L. Smith, A Shipway, M. Day, G. Davies, H. Ferrabee, G. Shaylor, Richards, R. Dangerfield, H. Evans and W. Jeffries. A questioner asked about the cost of a poll if one was demanded, and was told that a penny rate would bring in £64 and the poll shouldn't cost that much. Finally Matthew Day told the meeting that if there were an election *they must put their shoulders to the wheel, sink their differences and go for the ones to serve best*.

By the time of the next meeting in early November feelings had hardened. A Liberal group had met a Conservative one for nearly two hours to find them flatly refuse any compromise, especially the one favoured by the Liberals of six Liberals, six Conservatives and a Unionist Chairman. So the meeting approved the thirteen nominations and prepared for action.

Now at 8.00 p.m. on December 7th 1894 discussion and argument were over and the time for action had come. Some 260 men were in the Hall. (The Act said that women could vote for a parish councillor if they were on the parochial list, and even, a signpost for the future, become a parish councillor, but there is no reference to women at the meeting.) On the platform were the two overseers, James Thompson and W. Paul Niblett who had the responsibility of arranging the meeting (not to be in a place where alcoholic drinks were served) and seeing that all in the Hall were parochial electors and there were 700 or more such in the parish. The Assistant Overseer, W.H. Jones opened the meeting by calling for nominations for Chairman. Two names were submitted, Edward Playne and P. J. Evans, with the former elected to the chair at 8.10 by 137 votes to 122.

Mr. Playne called for nomination papers. These had been issued by the overseers, received back by them and then checked. He now told the meeting of the procedure to be followed: each candidate's name would be announced in alphabetical order voting would be by show of hands with no anti vote being counted; each elector could vote thirteen times; if a poll were demanded this must be supported by at least five of the parochial electors present. He then announced the first name, that of Charles Cole Baglin, a stone cutter of Burleigh, and voting commenced with A. J. Evans counting the votes. The proceedings took just over an hour with a total of 3348 votes cast.

Shortly after 9 o'clock Mr. Playne read out, again in alphabetical order, the number of votes cast for each candidate. These ranged from 156 to 99, with 139 being the lowest given for a successful candidate. As the list proceeded down to Edwin Young, blacksmith of Park Terrace, it became obvious that all elected men were Conservatives with the nearest Liberal at 119. The Conservatives refusal to compromise had given them all the seats. W, H. Ferrabee, a mill manager, for the Liberals, immediately demanded a poll.

A week later the Conservatives put out a manifesto. They would make every endeavour to keep down the rates, they would distribute the Charities to all in the parish irrespective of religion or politics (this had been a sore point for years), they would foster Clothing Clubs and they would endeavour to provide allotments for all who desired one (this was a new power given to Parish Councils).

A further week and the poll was declared:

J. Harman, farmer, 408

F. S. Critchley, pin manufacturer of Brimscombe

W. Smith, brewer of Brimscombe, 399

C. C. Baglin, stone cutter, 389

J. Chamberlain, farmer of Box, 385

W. P. Niblett, builder of Littleworth, 383

W. J. Ogden, draper at the Cross, 382

W. G. Hill, baker of West End, 372

J. Hunt, publican of Amberley, 370

T. Blake, timberyard foreman at the Dye House Mills, 369

A. E. Philpott, timber merchant of Brimscombe, 360

E. Young, blacksmith, 359

H. Millford, gentleman of Box, 354

These were the same thirteen elected by show of hands a fortnight earlier. Reviewing the results in local parishes the Stroud Journal commented "It is evident that the government of the parishes of Gloucestershire is to pass from Vestrydom to councils which in an overwhelming degree will consist of working members" - a comment which is hardly true of Minchinhampton; but since the last year's minutes of the old Vestry are lost (unless they are still preserved but unrecognised in some family records) we cannot know whether the new councillors had been regular

attenders at the Vestry.

The new Council which met on January 1st 1895 showed some of the characteristics of Vestrydom by electing Rev. F. Mather to the Chair. Their first business was to decide that since the Vestry purchased the building in 1818, therefore, as successors, it was now theirs. So the Vestry Room remains the Parish government's meeting place, and by its name commemorates the old Vestry. The clerk, W. A. Jones, was instructed to make an inventory of all belonging to the parish; 6d was to be paid for fires to keep the room warm; the Church Vestry could continue to use the room at a payment of 5 shillings a year, and true to the manifesto promise, a committee was formed to inquire into the availability of land for allotments.

The elected Parish Council for Minchinhampton was on its way.

Sources

Stroud Journal 1894	News & Journal
Parish Council Minutes	Glos. Record Off.
Minutes of the A.G.M.	Parish Council

THE HAMPTON CAR

Mr. S. Gardiner

After the First World War, a number of small car manufacturers set up in the Stroud area. One of these was the Hampton Car, not named after Minchinhampton as you might think, but from the district in Birmingham where it was first built. The company moved the factory to that now occupied by Cope Chats soon after the end of World War I as far as I have been able to ascertain,

The chassis were built there and the assembly and finishing shops were also there. Some, if not all, of the bodywork, at least for a few years was built in the old Chalford Mill, where the Severn Trent pumping station now is, (just in Minchinhampton parish). This building had a few years earlier been owned (or rented) by Charles Apperley, who was in business as a woollen manufacturer at Dudbridge Mill, and as Cope Chat's is part of this complex perhaps that is how Hampton Cars came to use both premises so comparatively widely separated. The engines used in the cars were of Meadows manufacture which, frankly, at the moment means nothing to me.

From copies of old photographs I have, it seems that the chassis were first built, then suspension, steering wheels and engine fitted. These mobile chassis were then fitted with literally a wooden box to act as a seat and taken out on road test. Presumably if they passed, then it was back to the works, or to Chalford, to have

the body fitted.

Hampton cars had a very distinctive radiator, something like the old Riley one in shape, but the upper portion in front of cap was shaped like a drooping nose - something like Punch's nose. What the maximum h.p. car made was I have not yet discovered, but I have photos of a 1931 14 h.p. saloon which looks very elegant for the period.

Perhaps some of you can remember the Hampton car regularly driven around Stroud some 25 - 30 years ago. It was owned by a young lady, living in the Tetbury area I believe, and was in mint condition. The story of how it came into the young lady's possession is interesting. It appears that it was entered in a Car Auction Sale held in the open air. Just before it was to come under the hammer the heavens opened in a deluge and most bidders raced for shelter. The young lady was determined to buy the Hampton and although soaked stood her ground so that when the car was put up for auction she was the sole bidder and purchased it for £30!

THE SALUTATION INN

S. Francis & D. Wall

Why the Salutation Inn as a topic for research? An obvious choice really, as we had both lived there (but at different times). Both of us had some idea about the history of the building, and were interested to find out further details. The premises in Tetbury St. were a public house for at least 250 years, keeping the same name all that time. In 1966 it was converted into an electrical shop. The final spur to progress was the decision to use the history of the building as the basis for a window display in the 1984 Country Fayre.

The deeds are always a good place to start any investigation, and proved very easy to obtain in this case. The sale of the unlicensed Salutation necessitated many searches, including a detailed account of West Country Breweries, formerly Stroud Breweries, as the vendor. Also listed was "a bundle of old deeds" which upon unwrapping proved to be a continuous record of owners since 1743. The conveyance of that date was between a Mary Twemlow of Dursley (who put her mark 'M') and Thomas Earle, a maltster of Minchinhampton. This first deed also refers back to some earlier owners, although sadly without dates. In 1803 the "messuage, tenement and Inn commonly known or called by the name of the Salutation, with the brewhouse, stable and appertences" were conveyed to William Neale, described first as a victualler of the town, but later as an innkeeper. Thomas Earle is described as "getting on in years" but there is some confusion in the early C19th as it appears William Neale held the property in trust for his mother-in-law, Rosannah Cosburn, who received £15 annually from the property. In 1817, still in trust, it passed to Samuel Holder, only to be sold, finally "free of encumbrances" four years later to Joseph Pitt of Eastcourt, Wilts.

Inns at this time must have been a profitable investment, as there is a long period of outside ownership. The Salutation passed to Joseph Cripps, wool stapler and banker, of Cirencester in 1829, for the sum of £15!. Cripps and Company are listed in the 1830 rate returns as the owners of the George Inn on the High Street. The Salutation was sold to William Gorton, an engineer of Stroud, and on his death his widow and other testators decided to sell to Thomas May of Amberley who described himself as a coachman.

A second set of deeds then appear. These relate to a cottage *pulled down by Thomas May and the site thrown into the Salutation Yard* sometime after 1866. Various letters, marriage certificates and wills are in this group, and could be the basis of a separate study, as they appear to have close connections with the once owners of the Post Office. This cottage was bought at public auction and the Sale Notice still exists. Another set of papers relates to a dispute between May and Samuel Marling, the Stroud clothier, over an alleged 5s. ground rent owing on the cottage.

In 1875 the now enlarged premises were purchased by Messers Halliwell, Biddle and Stanton “partners and common brewers of Stroud” who later became directors of the Stroud Brewery Company, and held title until the purchase by Frank Wall in 1966.

The owners of this property provide only half the story, however, the other half being the occupiers or tenants. Directories such as Kelly’s and other trade directories are a good source of information when the property being researched is a commercial one, although sometimes there may be omissions. Census returns also provided occupiers names, as sometimes do the deeds.

In 1743 Benjamin Morse is mentioned as a tenant in the first deed in the bundle, but then there is quite a large gap in our present information until the Gell & Bradshaw Directory of 1820 in Stroud Library gives Harriet Wells as victualler at the Salutation Inn. The 1830 rate return stated William Woodward as occupying the premises listed as Salutation Inn and stable. The name Woodward turns up again in the 1851 Census where Ann Woodward, Widow and Innkeeper, aged 72 is listed as living in Tetbury Street; we shall, of course, be looking for the link here. By 1858 Nathaniel Wording is at the Inn according to Slater’s Royal, National and Commercial Directory and he is still there in 1861 with his wife Hannah according to the Census.

In 1865 and 1867 Robert Browning is mentioned as occupant in Morris Directories of those dates, and in the latter Nathaniel Wording has moved to the Crown. More information on Robert Browning appears in the 1871 Census. In this year, at 80 years of age, he is innkeeper and head of the household, which consists of himself, his wife Caroline aged 62, and Miss Hannah N. Greening, their niece, a scholar aged 10. By 1876 Mrs. Caroline Browning has taken over the Salutation according

to Kelly's Directory, and is still there in 1881, when the Census lists her as head of the household, a widow and innkeeper, although now apparently only three years older than in the last Census return! Her niece still lives with her as an unmarried servant. Mrs. Browning is still in charge in 1889 (Kelly's) but in 1897 Miss Mary Greening (presumably the niece) has taken over.

Stroud Library has a copy of *A List of licensed Houses in the County of Gloucester 1903* which was prepared by order of the Quarter Session Court, in which Mary Greening is given as licensee with a seven day licence, a closing time of 10 p.m. and an estimated rental of £16.

From various directories we know that Thomas Ball was in occupation in 1919, 1923 and 1931, Henry Jas. Andrews in 1939, and from personal knowledge my father Horace T. Harmer was landlord from. 1947 to 1964.

The search for information has been fascinating and uncovered many avenues for further research, Extracts from the Gloucester Journal include four notices of sale from the 1730s and 1740's. The first, 1731, refers to *a freehold inn and the leasehold new building thereunto adjoining* which may help to explain some of the problems encountered in the deeds. By 1739 it is now in *very good custom* and it appears to have been owned by a Hampton schoolmaster, Giles Farr in 1742.

The study of early wills should enable us to take the history even further back in time. Hopefully, Church records may enable us to find out more about the people who lived in the building at various times. Even since starting to write this short account, a copy of a will in Minchinhampton Library has yielded the name of the owner in 1695, Mrs. Ann Guy, whose grandson Gyles Farr is bequeathed her best bed. Perhaps even more interesting is the inventory taken at her death in 1718 detailing the furniture and goods found in the Salutation. There is still, we're sure much more information to come to light, and our research continues.

Sources

Deeds to 4 Tetbury St.	F. A. Wall
Census Returns	Glos. City Library
Various Directories	Stroud Library
	Glos. City Library
1830 Rate Book	Minchinhampton Lib,
Extracts from Glos. Journal 1722 to 1747	Minchinhampton Lib.
Copies of Wills and Inventories to 1722	Minchinhampton Lib.

A SHORT HISTORY OF ASTON DOWN AIRFIELD

This airfield was planned and built as an aircraft storage unit, on the same site as the 1914 - 18 Minchinhampton aerodrome. The admin. and technical site was in the north-west corner of the airfield, supplemented by eight large dome roofed storage hangers dispersed around the station. Situated in glorious countryside it was opened on 12th October 1938, becoming 20 Maintenance Unit just five days later.

First used for equipment storage, aircraft started to arrive in February 1939, and on 6th September twelve Wellingtons landed without warning, following dispersal orders. They left the next day, however, and the MU found one of its main tanks was the preparation of Blenheims for Yugoslavia and Rumania.

Meanwhile, Fighter Command decided that Aston Down would make a good training base and using Harvards, Gladiators and Blenheims gave intermediate training to pilots being posted to Group squadrons. The numbers posted in when the war started outstripped the accommodation, and some officers were billeted at the George Hotel, Nailsworth where the proprietor provided four meals a day for six shillings (30p). A month later Fighter Command took over the airfield, the MU remaining as a lodger. It clung onto its buildings, however; the station HQ being established in a barrack hut until new accommodation was ready in December.

In 1940 one of the Spitfires shot down a JU.88 on 25th July. Further development of the station began that September and many new sites were available for occupation two months later such was the pace of wartime activity. On 1st Nov. Aston Down became 55 OTU but the task was just the same, the rapid output of new crews for the Hurricane day and Blenheim night fighter squadrons.

Runway construction commenced in 1941, but progress was slow due to the weather and the number of aircraft movements. On 29th March the Q site at Horsley was bombed, but the runways 3 were completed without hindrance from the Luftwaffe. The Air Transport Auxilliary took over the ferrying of aircraft, some of their pilots causing a stir, for they were women.

Many units were to use the airfield in the later years of the war, but the best known was probably 52 OTU. The Masters and Spitfires of this OTU flew hard, and were involved in some spectacular accidents both on and off the field. Air ambulances came, as did a mobile group living under canvas at the south of the field. These moved out as airfields became available in France and were replaced by Typhoons, Hurricanes and Masters. One Typhoon crashed on to a dispersal hut near 20 MU on 25th March 1945 and burst into flames, trapping WAAFs and airmen.

Meanwhile, the MU were busy with Spitfires and Typhoons, these being superceded in 1944 by the preparation of Canadian Lancaster 10s for service and

the conversion of Albermarles for glider towing.

With the end of the war, 550TU was disbanded. The satellites were closing down and many of the dispersal fields were handed back to their owners, resulting in over 1000 aircraft being herded together on the airfield. In July 20 MU again took control of the field, which continued to house an aircraft ferrying unit. The No. 83 Gliding School arrived from Moreton Vallenge in 1946 but the main task of Aston Down was the reduction of the vast stock of aircraft in storage. Experiments were also carried out in cocooning, aircraft as large as the Lincoln being covered in a plastic skin and left out in the elements. Although effective in keeping the weather out, it also trapped moisture in, and the airframe deteriorated almost as quickly as when left in open storage.

Aston Down quietly plodded along until 20 MU was closed in September 1960. The hangers were over by 5 MU at Kemble and in more recent years the airfield was used by the Central Flying School. It is now the home of the Cotswold Gliding Club. The storage facilities were taken over by the Ministry of Aviation in 1963 and the main site remains in pristine condition as a Procurement Executive Stores Depot. The wheel has come full circle.