

MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

ANNUAL BULLETIN NUMBER 13

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PROGRAMME OF PAST EVENTS

1995 Nov. Stroud Museum - Dr. K. Southgate

1996 Jan. The History of Minchinhampton Baptist Church
 - Mr. O. Powell

 March History of Westonbirt Arboretum
 - Mr. A. Russell

 May History from old Newspapers - Mr. P. Griffin

 July Outing to Crickley Hill

 Sept. Local W.I. Markets - Mrs. H. Miller

ONE MAN'S WAR

Iris and Stan Dyer

In 1914, at the tender age of 17, George Ellins, a native of Minchinhampton, lied about his age and applied fourteen times to Join the army, before he was finally accepted into the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment. After training he was sent to France to fight in the trenches - and over the top. In 1917 he received injuries to his face and back, but after regaining his health and strength(?) he returned to the Front.

He was again wounded, this time in his left leg and was taken prisoner. George never complained about being wounded or being taken prisoner - after all it was war - but he never forgave the German soldier who robbed him of his last packet of fags whilst lying wounded in no-mans-land. He was taken to a prisoner of war camp in Stendal, Germany, where unfortunately, the leg wound turned gangrenous so he was taken with some urgency to the camp M.O. The following day, the Canadian N.C.O. in charge of the billet gave George the bad news that his leg was to be amputated, to which he replied, Why didn't they take the blooming thing off whilst I was up there? Because we have to build your strength up first replied the N.C.O. So it was that George lived like a king for a few days on eggs and meat etc. before the inevitable operation. As it was clear that he was no longer suitable for gun-fodder, George was repatriated in an exchange of prisoners deal, set up by the Red Cross.

On arrival back in Britain he sold his kit, reported it stolen and got away with that! He should have gone to a hospital in Liverpool, but he swapped identity papers with another casualty who was due to go to Frenchay. He got away with that too, blaming what must have been an administrative error!

Years later when someone remarked that he must have gone through the mill he declared that he enjoyed the adventure, and he probably did being George Ellins! His brother Frederick lost his life in the fighting whilst other brother Johnnie was awarded the Military Medal for his gallantry.

George never bore any malice towards the Germans and was grateful to the M.O. for making a good job of his amputation, but the rotter who stole his packet of Woodbines was never forgiven. Despite his handicap, George later married Minnie Cosling, had two daughters, Poppy and Iris, and lived life to the full. Despite being almost a chain-smoker he lived until his 87th year. R.I.P.

MINCHINHAMPTON AT WAR

1914 TO 1918

Mrs. Sue Smith

The Rector wrote in a letter to the Parish in September 1914 *That he deplored th state of unreadiness we found ourselves in - but it could have been worse. Do not store food or rush out and take all your money out of the bank. It is very probable that the outrages we have heard about the Germans are exaggerated and so don't let us be anxious. about any wounded or prisoners who may fall into their hands. By October, however, unfortunately fuller knowledge now shows Germany waging war with ferocity towards Belgium and France and the same condition. would prevail here if we do not have victory.*

By the middle of 1915 the Basses in the choir were slowly being depleted as the men continued to be called up. Every month the dead were listed in a Roll of Honour and muffled peal of bells was always rung when death was announced.

Food quickly became scarce and lessons were given in cooking, gardening, keeping goats and bees, and making something useful out of waste material. The Parish Council bought a potato sprayer which could be hired. An order went out later that men employed in keeping lawns and pleasure grounds trimmed must please help with the harvest!

Insuring the Church against air attack cost 12.10s. per year and a special collection was taken towards this amount. By 1918 there were restrictions on fuel for heating and lighting in the Church, so only half would be lit, at this time, of course, lighting was by gas.

Collecting and fundraising towards the war effort must have taken up all the parishioners spare time and energy. The Minchinhampton Patriotic Fund was formed in October 1914 and continued raising money throughout wartime. Parcels were sent centrally through the Red Cross, but others were sent to every local man. Parcels contained socks, shirts, belt, pins, bootlaces, buttons, pencils, paper, rubber pillow and at Christmas a book and a card. During the four years parcels were sent to 1549 men, and a further 1151 articles of clothing.

The Voluntary Aid Detachments of Minchinhampton and Nailsworth were combined. The Chestnuts at Balls Green was turned into a hospital and every week hampers of food were collected at the Gables on Well Hill and sent down to the 17 wounded. The school children also collected for this cause, and the Sunday school gave up their prizes and the money was used to buy comforts for the troops.

As part of the National Egg Collection, Mr. Hughes of the High Street arranged to pack and despatch any eggs on Friday and send them to London. The gassed men needed the eggs, which could also be left at the Gables. Working parties met twice a week to make slippers from old carpet and felt and these were sent to France and Serbia as well as to hospitals in England. By the end of the war 3160 slippers had been made. Mrs. Bateman was pleased to receive any scraps of kid or soft leather, as there was a use for old leather gloves, making windproof waistcoats for airmen and other defenders exposed to severe weather.

At Longfords Mrs. Playne very kindly gave two rooms which became the Longfords War Hospital Supply Depot. Meetings were held twice a week. Goods were sent to London and then on to France, Flanders, Malta and Egypt. By the end of March 1916 the articles dispatched included:

4790 roller bandages

2720 gauze sponges

32 limb pillows

The Rev. Sears actually went to war to run a YMCA for the troops and he wrote regularly during his year on active service. He describes action by Fritz, bombing, searchlights and anti-aircraft guns, admitting on such nights that quiet Minchinhampton had its points of advantage. He was criticised in the Parish for taking a year out but wrote a very strong letter to his parishioners saying he felt this was the best way he could help the war effort.

In 1918 the Rector writes St. Martin's Day 1918 will rank as one of the great days in history. Names were still being added to the Roll of Honour, and the men of Minchinhampton received the following awards:

3 Distinguished Service Order

4 Military Cross

4 Mentioned in Despatches

1 R.A.F. Medal

3 Military Medal

By 1921 the War Memorials in the Parish had been completed and are as follows:

The old font was restored by Mr. & Mrs. Johnson of Hyde in memory of their oldest son who fell at Gallipoli. The Calvary in the Churchyard was offered by Mrs Lawrence in memory of both her sons, and all the men who fell from Minchinhampton and Box.

The Rood Screen in the Church cost 500 pounds, raised as a memorial by Church members.

The Town War Memorial was built at a cost of 1236.13s.3d. , a huge sum of money in 1921. Some of this was donated by the Australians who had been stationed in the Town.

REFERENCE

All information obtained from copies of the Parish Magazine.



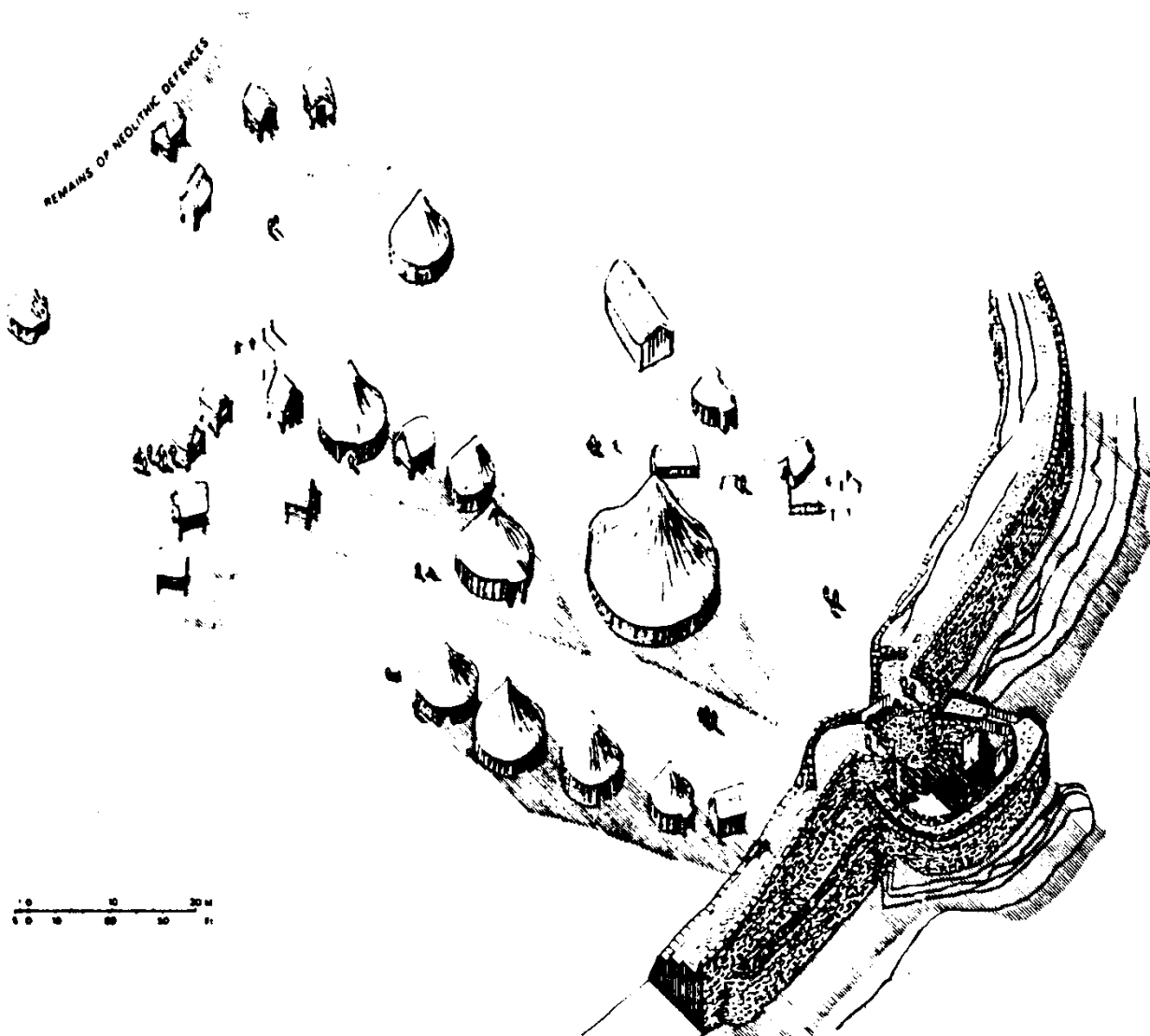
**AN EARLY PHOTOGRAPH OF THE WAR MEMORIAL
A WHITSUNTIDE PROCESSION**

CRICKLEY HILL

Mrs. Diana Wall

The summer outing in 1996 was to Crickley Hill, overlooking the Vale of Gloucester. It is a site with a very long history - it was first occupied in the Neolithic Period. It is a promontory of roughly triangular shape, composed of Oolitic or Cotswold Limestone, which has weathered to give steep cliffs on three sides. All early man had to do for fortifications was to build a bank, ditch or palisade across the narrow neck of land to the east.

Extensive excavations have yielded evidence of the early site, with hints of a battle, a period of disuse and then the Iron Age Hill Fort. Within these later defences, dating from about 650 BC were houses, marked now by posts on the ground, and the evidence of a considerable settlement. This too appears to have been overrun, but on a sunny evening in July it seemed a place of peace, only shattered by the traffic noise from the A417 below.



Crickley Hill, Coberley. Reconstruction of the round-house period of occupation.
[Drawing: Philip Dixon]

THE 1851 CENSUS RETURN

MINCHINHAMPTON PARISH

Mrs. Jocelyn Blanshard

In April our Local History Group acquired the 1881 Census Index fiche for Gloucestershire, the 1891 Census fiche for the Parish of Minchinhampton and a print-out of the 1851 Census for Minchinhampton. The latter contains the names of 4466 residents, which needed to be indexed alphabetically. This task was completed by three members, Sue Smith, Hilda Martin and Jocelyn Blanshard, and now provides an invaluable reference for genealogists and postal enquiries.

During the indexing, it became evident that a piece of social history of the parish was contained in those 4466 entries. Three aspects were selected as an initial study: the place of birth of residents, their occupations and any unusual Christian names.

Place of Birth of Residents

Out of the 4466 entries in the 1851 Census for Minchinhampton, 400 were born outside Gloucestershire, as follows:

Bedford		Northants.	1
Berks.	25	Northumberland	1
Bucks.	11	Notts.	2
Cheshire	1	Oxon.	18
Derbyshire	7	Shropshire	1
Devon	5	Somerset	43
Dorset	2	Staffs.	3
Essex	2	Suffolk	1
Hants.	14	Surrey	9
Herefds.	4	Sussex	5
Kent	3	Warwickshire	2
Leicester	3	Wiltshire	130
Middlesex	44	Worcs.	25

Of the remaining residents, 7 were born in Wales, 6 each in Scotland and Ireland, 3 each in Canada and Germany, and 1 from each of U.S.A., France, India, West Indies, Van Diemens Land (Tasmania), Demarice(?), and 2 were born at sea, one on the Atlantic Ocean and the other not specified!

The distances travelled and modes of transport one and a half centuries ago provides much food for thought!

Occupations

The local woollen mills provided the main workplace, accounting for 25% of the adults of the parish. These occupations were named as:

Dyer	List sewer	Racker	Burler
Drawer	Cloth picker	Scourer	Opener
Weaver	Quill winder	Dresser	Linter
Spinner	Teazle picker	Presser	Sorter
Beater	& clipper	Warper	Rower
Fuller	Cleaner	Washer	Shearman
Cutter	Lath cleaner	Joiner	Spooler Drier
Feeder			

A high proportion of people were employed as general labourers and agricultural labourers, 293 in total, and

because of the many wealthy families in the area there was ample scope for the 185 adults who were listed as servants. The various quarries in the parish provided employment for 51 stonemasons. There were 27 bakers and 22 boot/shoe workers but there were only 3 barbers/hairdressers. It is not surprising to find the occupations for the females in Minchinhampton included dressmaker (66), laundress (38), silk worker (35), charwoman (30) and straw bonnet maker/milliner (12).

What is surprising, perhaps, is that the number of scholars was 755, and to oversee them 27 teachers. The Census showed several private schools and Dame schools in the parish, whose pupils were mainly from counties other than Gloucestershire. Minchinhampton housed 18 Chelsea/Greenwich pensioners and other occupations noted of special interest included:-

Travelling Elder in the Church of the Latter Day Saints

12 Travellers of Earthenware

2 Inland Revenue Officers

Watchman in the Night

Engraver

Varnisher of Penholders

Boat Builder

Railway Messenger

Gunsmith

Pianoforte Maker

Saddler

Music Teacher

Vet

Wesleyan Preacher

Tollgate Keeper

Marine Store Dealer

Glove Maker

Collector of Rags

Paper Maker

Stone Dust Seller

What is a List sewer?, a List winder? a Millard? a Nailer?

The Census form provided a space for the Enumerator to record any person with a handicap and it was noted that out of the 4468 only 8 were recorded, 5 blind (4 were over 70 years of age), 1 deaf and dumb, 1 cripple and 1 invalid.

Unusual Christian Names

Minchinhampton, like most other parishes in England in 1851, yielded a preponderance of the names Mary, Ann, Elizabeth, Sarah, John, George, Thomas and William, so it was refreshing to discover some surprises among the less common ones listed:

Abner	Caleb	Georgeanna	Penniah
Abraham	Celier	Hephzibah	Pheola
Albin	Clarissa	Herodias	Rubin
Albion	Comfort	Hiram	Salome
Amasiah	Dareus	Huain	Septimus
Annora	De Bonmot	Jarvis	Seymour
Atholuida	Spencer	Keizita	Shadrach
Augustus	Decima	Lessingham	Silas
Author	Diania	Levy	Silvanus
Azubah	Emanuel	Lewin	Stiles
Barsillai	Enoch	Lucinda	Swindaniah
Bata	Enos	Margram	Thuza
Benedida	Ezekial	Moses	Tidda
Bethia	Felix	Nkodemus	Unice
Blakley	F6nnirig	Obed	Worth
Briton	Foust	Pamloe	

Allowance should be made for the fact that many householders were uncertain how to spell the names given to their offspring, so AUTHOR could have been ARTHUR, BETHIA could be BERTHA, BATA could be BEATA, CELIFR could be CELIA and PAMLOE could be PAMELA. Likewise records show that a child has been given its Mother's surname as a Christian name, and this could be so in the above list. BLAKELY, BRITON, FENNING, LESSINGHAM, SEYMOUR and STILES.

There is plenty of information still waiting to be uncovered in the Census records.