

MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

ANNUAL BULLETIN NUMBER 22

2005

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MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP COMMITTEE 2004/2005

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PROGRAMME OF PAST MEETINGS

2004	November	A.G.M. and “The Francis Frith Photographs” - Mr. Howard Beard
2005	January	“Old Roads” - Charlie Morriss
	February	“Hampton’s Boundaries, Past and Present” - Diana Wall
	March	“The Pinfold Family of Minchinhampton” - Claire Forbes
	May	“Woodchester Mansion” - Brian Woolaston
	July	“Historical Walk around Sheepscombe”
	September	“The Archaeology of Minchinhampton Common” - Toby Catchpole
	October	“Minchinhampton Windmill” - Hugh Kearsey
	November	A.G.M. and “Unknown Gloucestershire” - Philip Walmsley

An Old Prescription Book

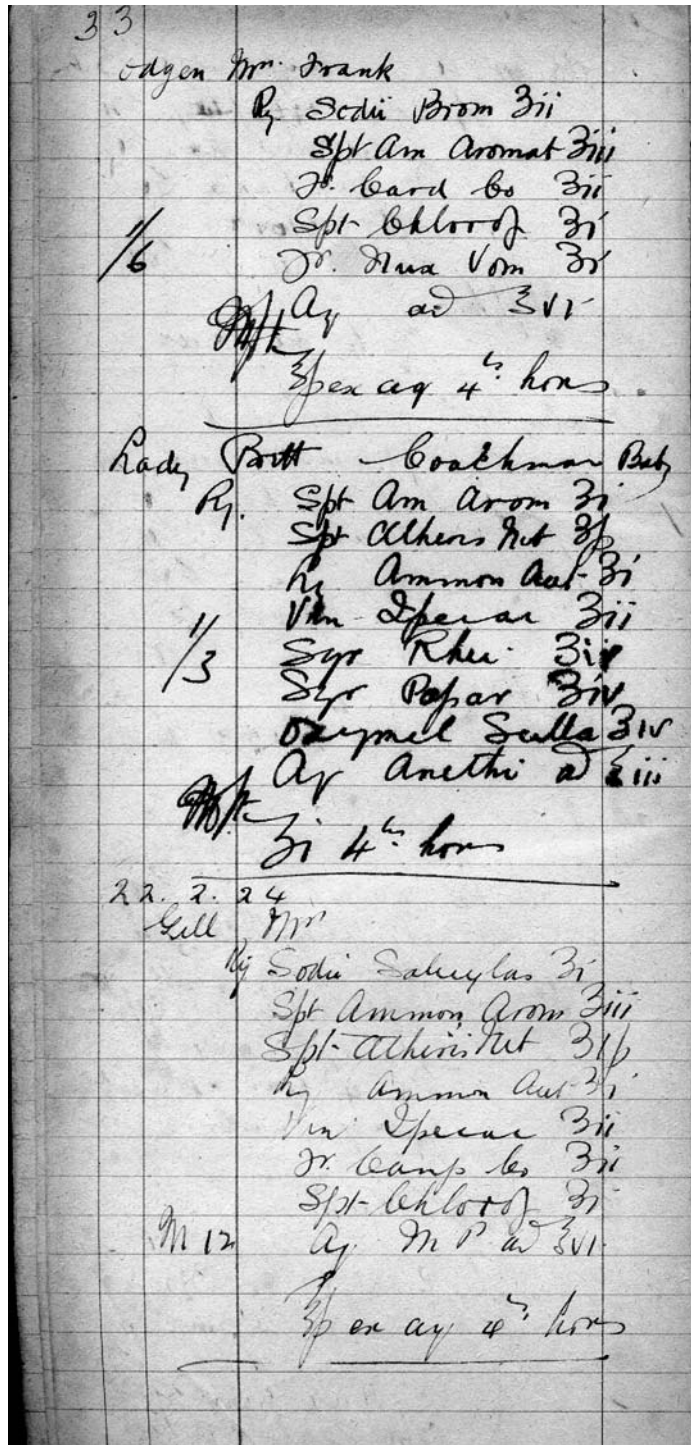
Mr. Frank Thorne, M.R.PHARM.S.

Last year, upon moving house, Mr. Frank Thorne deposited in the Local History Collection an old prescription book, together with this article he wrote in 1992. It reflects the changes that took place in pharmacy in the twentieth century.

This prescription book was a record of the medicines compounded and supplied by Mr. Viner from his drug store in Minchinhampton in the mid-twenties. Mr. Viner was not a qualified pharmacist so was not an "authorised seller of poisons" under the legislation then current, but he had worked, I believe, at Hampton's the Chemists in Gloucester and had acquired considerable skill in the making up of medicines for the treatment of everyday ailments. No doubt Mr. Viner gave comfort to many of the people of Minchinhampton in treating their coughs, colds, digestive disorders, skin complaints and by advising and supplying medication for their children's ailments.

We can observe from this prescription book the family names of the area and as I write in February 1992 after seventy years I am conscious that "Mrs. Blank's little boy" at the head of a formula for cough mixture is the old chap I meet, chat to and reminisce with in our retirement.

The choice of drugs available to Mr. Viner was limited because of his lack of a professional qualification



previously mentioned, although some of the records give me the feeling that the poison regulations were not always strictly observed!

Two samples, one from the winter months and one from the summer, were chosen from the book, each of thirty-seven mixtures, and these were examined for their content and for the number of times that the few drugs were repeated. Over half of them contained bicarbonate of soda, while two-thirds had sal volatile (*spt. ammon. aromat.*). Nearly half of the mixtures contained rhubarb in one form or another – tincture, syrup or powder. About forty active ingredients were used in these samples, but of these twelve were used only once, so that it will be observed that the greatest reliance was placed on a very limited number of tried and tested favourites. In the winter months Ipecac and Squills were frequently included, obviously for coughs and chills, but rhubarb was omni- seasonal.

Ry.	Spt Ammon Arom	3iii
	R. Burchona	3vi
	Spt. Chlord	3i
	Jr. Rhu Vom	3i
	Ay	3vi
	Sp ex ay ter du pc.	
<hr/>		
Anon		
Ry.	Sodu Bicarb	3ii
	Spt Am Arom	3iii
	Jr. Rhu Co	3vi
	Jr. Nux Vom	3i
	Ry Bismuth	3ii
	Syr Rhu	3vi
	Ay In P a	3vi
	Sp ter du pc	
<hr/>		
Summnd Mr Frank		
Ry.	Spt Ammon Arom	3iii
	Spt Athens Tut	3ii
	Jr. Rhu Co	3vi
	Spt. Chlord	3i
	Syr Rhu	3vi
	Ay In P. y	3vi
	Sp 4 hors	
<hr/>		
Browning Mrs V.		
Ry.	Spt Am Arom	3ii
	Spt Athens Tut	3ii
	Ry Ammon Aet	3i
	Jr. Camp Co	3ii
	Ay Camp	3vi
	Sp 1/2 hors	

The average charge for a bottle containing twelve doses was about one shilling and sixpence. This represented quite an outlay when we consider that a good wage for

a working man might be something between two and three pounds a week.

There were a few ointments, gargles and powders for external application, as well as the occasional embrocation. One gargle contained potassium chlorate, and a mouthwash contained both potassium chlorate and borax – these items would not be in a modern formulary.

Minchinhampton Apothecaries in the Eighteenth Century

Mrs. Jocelyn Blanshard

On October 1st 1652 Lord Windsor and others granted to “*James Witcombe of Minchinhampton, Apothecary, a messuage or tenement and the appurtenances heretofore in the possession of one Robert Chambers and William Harris wherein Richard Cambridge hath an estate for the term of his life*”. Although this is the earliest reference to an apothecary in the town, there is no record of his work, and it is in the C18th, as long ago as 1734, that the services of an apothecary were available to the residents of Minchinhampton. In April of that year an advertisement in the Gloucester Journal offers for sale “*The medicine and goods of an Apothecary’s Shop, late in the possession of Mr. Newman, deceased, ... standing in the middle of the Market Place in Minchinhampton ...*”

In the same period, over several years, the Overseer’s Accounts record “*payments to apothecary Samuel Keck for physic for Nathaniel Smith and William Baker*”. Perhaps he bought the shop in the Market Place, or at least rented premises in the town, for the same Samuel Keck, with an eye to expanding his business, inserted in the Gloucester Journal of 16th March 1735, “*This is to give notice that Samuel Keck, Apothecary at Minchinhampton in Gloucestershire, has lately erected an Elaboratory where all medicines, Galenical and Chymical are most faithfully prepared, sold wholesale and retail at the same prices as from London. Also physicians’ prescriptions genuinely dispensed at the lowest rates. Note: He has prepared a fresh quantity of Sir Walter Raleigh’s confection and the true Opodeldock.*” The Compact Oxford Dictionary defines Opodeldock as a medical plaster of various sorts, originating with Paracelsus, and the C18th recipe was called for 3 ounces of soft soap dissolved in a pint of alcohol, with an ounce of camphor and a drachm each of the oils of oregano and rosemary.

The unfortunate Samuel Keck was unable to prescribe a cure for his own complaint, for the 17th May 1737 issue of the Gloucester Journal contains the following “*That Samuel Keck, Apothecary in Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, being rendered by the gout not able to attend to his business as is necessary, is willing to give all suitable encouragement to a sober, regular bred Apothecary,*

who has a mind to engage as a partner, or buy the whole i.e. the medicines, drugs, utensils etc. N.B. No letters will be received unless post-paid nor any treated with, except the Principal in Person.” Two months later the same newspaper advertised: “*TO BE SOLD a very good strong built house in the town of Minchinhampton, Glos. adjoining to the side of the Crown, containing three shops, all facing the street, one of which is, or hath been, an Apothecary’s Shop for above 40 years.*” Further research should indicate whether there were two premises regarded as apothecary’s shops, or whether, as seems likely from the date coincidences, just one.



Early C20th Photograph of the premises adjoining the Crown. The three shops mentioned in the 1737 advertisement are probably those either side of the arch (now Arden Cottage and Arden House) and the bay window with the stone tiles.

The Apothecary’s house and business was again in the advertising columns of the Gloucester Journal, on 19th May 1741: “*To be lett immediately, or at Midsummer next, at Minchinhampton in the County of Gloucester, a good house near the Market Place now in the possession of an Apothecary. Likewise to be sold all the pots, bottles, drawers and utensils belonging to the shop, together with the drugs and medicines. The said shop was new fitted up about 4 years ago, and is now as compleat as any Apothecary’s shop in England, having 260 drawers of different sizes made with the best mahogany wood. For particulars enquire of Mr. John Holliday at the Crown in Minchinhampton, or at the said shop.*” Had Mr. Keck soldiered on for another four years, had he found someone to work as a partner, or did another Apothecary set up elsewhere?

In the Overseers Accounts for 1738 Benjamin Haywood was “*paid for medicine for the poor*”, evidence that another Apothecary was certainly working in the area. An advertisement two years later states “*Mrs. Stephens’ medicines for the Stone and Gravel are truly prepared and sold by Benjamin Haywood, Apothecary in Minchinhampton*”. This Benjamin Haywood was in the same line of business forty years later, for it is known that on 1st April 1781 he joined with Surgeon Robert Brown, and together they took over Box House to care for the Parish poor. The Vestry gave them £20 for those “*needing attention for the smallpox.*” This disease was the most greatly feared of the time, and led to the setting up of a Dispensary in the town in the early years of the C19th – and another chapter in the history of medicine in Minchinhampton.

A CANADIAN SCANDAL

Information from George Sykes in Winnipeg, Canada

The most celebrated jailbreak in early Manitoba history was that of an Anglican clergyman, Rev. Griffith Owen Corbett, a native of Amberley, a “*contentious, difficult individual*” in many eyes, but a hero to his followers. He was the kind of charismatic religious leader able to attract fanatic loyalties, even in the face of evidence that he might be a scoundrel.

The background to the jailbreak, and the scandal which preceded it, is the unrest in the colony in the 1850s. The interests of Protestant Upper Canada (Ontario) and Great Britain were growing in the Red River area to the south of Lake Winnipeg, but this was bringing these “country-born” into conflict with the Catholic, French-speaking Métis, who were also moving into the wilderness from Lower Canada (Quebec), under the auspices of the Hudson’s Bay Company.

Corbett was born on March 30th 1827 at Littleworth, and on August 27th 1851 he was married, at Amberley, to Abigail Bubb of Woodchester, who was a schoolmistress in Henley on Thames at the time. Soon after the marriage the Colonial Church and School Society posted them to Canada, although they returned briefly to England in the years 1855 – 1857, when Corbett undertook some medical studies. Holy Trinity Church, Headingly, in Rupert’s Land was to become their Canadian home.

Corbett had a nose for contention and in his few years at Red River he managed to alienate both the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Catholics of the colony. When in London in 1857 he spoke to a House of Commons sub-committee against

the renewal of the Hudson's Bay Company's exclusive trading license. Later he became an active petitioner for Crown Colony status for Rupert's Land and made the local priest so angry that there was a threat to withhold the sacrament from anyone who attended Corbett's school.

In December 1862, Corbett was arrested at his church in Headingly on the complaint of the father of his hired servant girl. The subsequent trial determined the married preacher has forced himself numerous times on the young Maria Thomas. When she became pregnant, Corbett sought "*through administering to her noxious drugs and employing crude instruments to promote a miscarriage*". When that failed, he forced the hapless girl to sign a letter stating that they had never been intimate. He was stripped of his clerical rights by the embarrassed Anglican Church, and sentenced to six months in jail. Such was the state of things in Red River that many in the colony were only too glad to see Corbett fall, but his protestations of innocence and accusations of a Company conspiracy were believed by the country-born. Many were convinced that Maria Thomas' father was in the Company's pay and five hundred citizens signed a petition pressing for Corbett's immediate release and vindication.

When the petition failed the only alternative was for the country-born to take the law into their own hands. On April 21st 1858 a group led by James Stewart, a schoolmaster knocked down the jailer and freed the prisoner. Two days later they freed Stewart, who had been imprisoned for his efforts in the Corbett jailbreak. The anti-Corbett faction were persecuted in every area of the settlement, and the racial, linguistic and religious tensions became exacerbated. The authority of the Hudson's Bay Company was sadly lacking, and its prestige so low that many chose to believe Corbett had been framed, even though all evidence seemed to the contrary. Griffith Corbett fled the territories, leaving his wife and family to support themselves, amid much privation. Maria Thomas had a daughter, who grew up with her mother's family. It was reported that a large group of citizens volunteered to recapture the villain, but he had fled the North-West Territory. It might have been that the public outcry was so raucous that the authorities meekly dropped any pursuit of Corbett or his liberators.

By 1864, largely because of Corbett, the country-born were certain of their identity. Three years later a new Dominion of Canada was formed, a British Colony, with the power of the Hudson's Bay Company broken, and in 1870 Manitoba joined the Confederation. Abigail remained in Canada, dying in 1917 in Saskatchewan. Corbett returned to England in June 1864, studied medicine for a further time before short periods as a curate in various parishes in the south of England. In 1896 he was found "*in a miserable state of poverty and sickness, and on the verge of seeking refuge in the Workhouse*" and admitted to The Homes of St. Barnabas (a charity helping distressed clergy) for varying periods. He was

finally discharged in February 1902 but returned to the house “*drunk and incapable*”; the records showing “*Mr. Corbett has received most lenient treatment by the Council in past cases of misconduct but all to no purpose.*” He finally died in 1909.

MINCHINHAMPTON WORKHOUSE

by Claire Forbes

In 1727, Samuel Sheppard, clothier, a gentleman of unblemished integrity and Lord of the Manor of Minchinhampton, built a workhouse on a piece of land to the south of the town of Minchinhampton, called Dean's Lease.

In 1723 the Government passed legislation to allow the setting up of parish workhouses. Between 1723 and 1776 nearly 2,000 workhouses were built in England to house “*those who were unable or unwilling to support themselves*”. Living in the workhouse was grim, with husbands, wives and children being separated from each other, overcrowding, infestation, no heating, little furniture, a meager diet and often a brutal governor. We do not have precise details as to how paupers were treated in Minchinhampton workhouse, but the following account taken from church records shows that it was a pretty grim place.

Minchinhampton workhouse was funded and administered by the parish vestry. A tax called the Poor Rate was collected from Minchinhampton residents to support its poor either in their homes or in the workhouse.

A governor was put in charge of the workhouse and its resident paupers, and included Noah Ferrers in 1736, Samuel Aldridge in 1740, John Chambers in 1745 and James Vaughan who was “*immediately removed*” in 1761. After his “*removal*” Matthew Furley was appointed and he was still in office in 1791.

Matthew Furley was ordered by the vestry representatives to ensure the workhouse garden was used to its full capacity in the growing of fruit and vegetables. He also had to keep paupers in the house “*cleaned, washed and mended*” and to check that the paupers' clothing was properly mended. Tailor John Baker's bill for “*making clothes for the poor*” was 3/10 (around 20p) for the year 1735.

Paupers had to work 14 hours a day, six days a week in the summer, and 12 hours a day winter with an hour's break for breakfast and one hour break at dinner. They had to attend church at least once every Sunday and were ordered to wash themselves with cold water from the water pump situated in the workhouse

courtyard every morning and they had to comb their hair before they began work. Any paupers who “*wantonly spoiled or embezzled their work*” were punished by being banned from their dinner.

Food was strictly rationed and by 1790 the workhouse ruled that children were to receive no less than lib bread per day and 1 lb good meat, weighed into the pot, on Thursdays and Sundays. Adults were allowed 2 pints of table beer daily and children were given beer in proportion to their age.

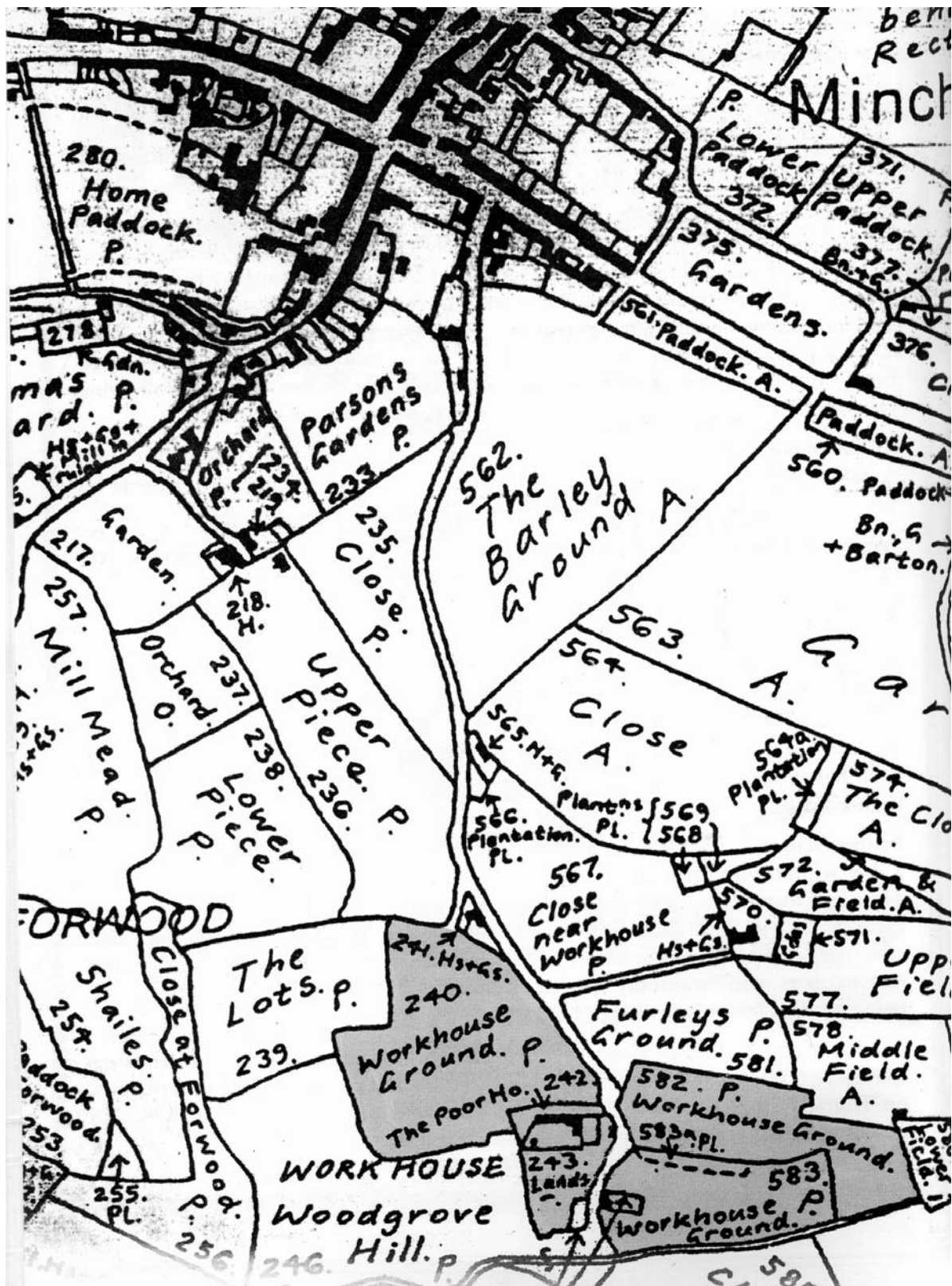
Although the present building is smaller than the original, in 1780 there were 100 inmates which must have meant there was severe overcrowding. Paupers were separated into classes by age, sex, infirmity and incapacity to work. The young were to be housed in a separate apartment as “*a guard against the immoral conversation they will daily hear or the indecent conduct they will witness*”.

To lessen the burden of severely poor parents in the parish who were not resident in the workhouse, their children were taken into the workhouse. Although this would have eased the pressure on the family it must have had devastating consequences for the children and their parents.

In 1816 the numbers of resident paupers were down to 40. In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed by the Government with the effect of taking the poor rate out of the hands of the parish and so ending the parish's care for the poor. Workhouses were taken over by the Poor Law Unions which grouped parishes into districts with one workhouse for the whole of each district. Minchinhampton was amalgamated into the Stroud Poor-Law Union along with 14 other parishes.

By 1839 John Rudge was renting the workhouse as a private dwelling and in 1867 it was sold to Henry David Ricardo for 30/- The sale papers instructed:
“*A dwelling house and outbuildings together with one acre of land used as a garden ground and situated ¼ of a mile from Minchinhampton, now in occupation of John Rudge.*”

The Tithe Map of Minchinhampton shows the situation of the workhouse house and its land at the time of the sale in 1867. Some of the fields belonging to the house known as Workhouse Grounds appear to have been sold off prior to this date.



Press Bias in the early Twentieth Century

Mrs. Diana Wall

A few months ago, whilst leafing through the scrapbook compiled by C.M. Jones from 1913, I came across two reports of a dispute between the National Trust and the Commoners. Apart from echoes of more recent times, as the dispute concerned the erection of banks, which prevented people from using what they considered to be ancient rights of way, there was an excellent example of the political bias of the two newspapers printing the reports. On June 12th 1914 two papers, the Daily Chronicle, and the Stroud News published reports of a case at Nailsworth Police Court when William Albert Philpotts, a jobbing gardener of Jacob's Knowle was brought before the magistrates, chaired by Mr. A. T. Playne, charged that he did "*unlawfully injure a certain structure, to wit a fence or mound, put up by the National Trust on Minchinhampton Common ...*". The following day the Stroud Journal published a report, identical in every respect, leading to the supposition that the details were taken from the official court record. Eventually the magistrates decided they had no jurisdiction over the case, but it led to a heated public meeting the following Monday in the Market House, and it is the reports of this that show two totally opposing viewpoints.

Before Victorian times some news items from this area were included in the Gloucester Journal but the earliest truly local newspaper was the Stroud Free Press, launched in 1850 by Benjamin Bucknell. Four years later F.W. Harmer, who was another Stroud printer and bookseller, launched the Stroud Journal. It had eight pages, twice the number of the Free Press, which collapsed in 1856. The Journal had a bias towards the Liberal Party, which had always had a strong following in the Five Valleys, and it was first printed on the corner of King Street and High Street, but moved into "*newly-built premises*" in Lansdown in 1868. In 1867 however another rival emerged in the form of the Stroud News, launched as a Conservative weekly newspaper. Instrumental in this were George Holloway and John Dorrington of Lypiatt Park, both well-known in Tory circles. The offices and print works were in the old cloth hall, which stood in or near Kendrick Street. It was not until 1957 that the two papers amalgamated to create today's Stroud News and Journal, in the Lansdown premises.

Returning to the meeting held in June 1914. The Stroud News headline reads "*Minchinhampton Common – The National Trust and Roadways – Protest Meeting: Important Resolutions*", whilst that for the Stroud Journal "*Infringement of Rights of Way*" – the former is already making the point on behalf of the working man, describing the "*packed attendance at the Market House*" and that "*the meeting was a very enthusiastic one, and the various resolutions passed were the signal for considerable cheering*". Its rival takes a more paternalistic approach, "*Never*

probably has the old Market House at Minchinhampton been crowded by an audience of so determined a character as that which was gathered there on Monday evening.” A hint of censure perhaps?

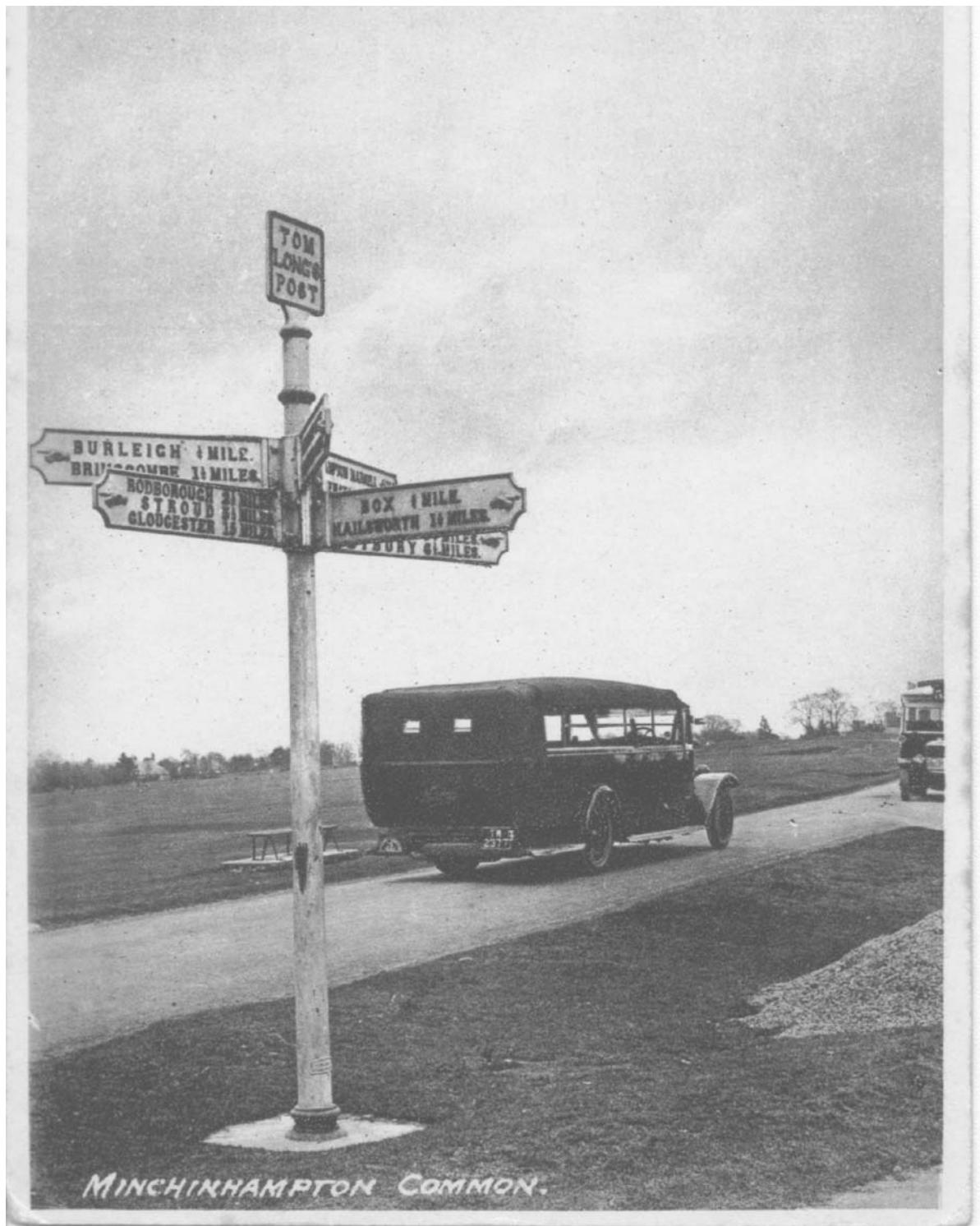
The Stroud News Article is by far the longer of the two, running to 65 column inches. Much of this is in setting the scene, creating a “them and us situation” by reporting verbatim a correspondence between the National Trust officers in London and the local representatives of the Commoners. These were read out at the meeting, and some eyelids must surely have been drooping at this point! It then reports “*the complaint was that they had treated the Commoners in a rough, shoddy manner, and something like children who were told to go this way or that way without any regard to the real rights of way. They as Commoners wished to settle the matter amicably and in a perfectly friendly way ...*”. By contrast, the Stroud Journal devotes one paragraph to the correspondence, summing up with the Chairman’s (Mr. F. Gwynne Evans of Over Butterrow) statement “*they desired to live in peace with their neighbours ... and he wished the matter to be amicably settled.*” The Journal always uses lower case letters when referring to the commoners.

The Public Meeting then heard a report of the previous Court action, which the News suggested was when “*the Committee (of Management) thought they were acting in the interests of the Commoners, that they were as a matter of fact committing a great blunder.*” The Journal however, mentions merely a “*want of tact*” in summarising the same report. Those present were asked not to remove any further banks until the dispute had been aired – the News suggests this was greeted with applause, the Journal cries of dissent!

The Resolution was passed that “*This meeting of Commoners of Minchinhampton Common emphatically protest against the action of the Management Committee in placing obstructions upon the Common in interference with rights of way and call for their immediate removal*” according to the News. The Journal, apart from the lower case already mentioned, substitutes National Trust for Management Committee, perhaps in an effort to distance local men from the decision, as there was heated debate reported in the News alleging blame on certain individuals, and that unless the Committee of Commoners was chosen by the ratepayers they “*would lose their birthright*”. None of this is reported in the Journal.

Finally the meeting concluded with the usual votes of thanks, and “*the Chairman said he hoped, and might say he was sure, that the meeting would be successful in achieving the object for which it was called.*” (Stroud News) The Journal was far less upbeat “*they would inquire into the whole matter in dispute and report to a subsequent meeting.*” Within a few months far greater events on the world stage would eclipse this local dispute, and the pages of both newspapers would report the same people as they answered the call to arms and left the district, some never to

return.



REPORT RELATING TO MINCHINHAMPTON COMMON

This a complete copy of the original report in the Local History Collection.

Presented at a Meeting of Commoners on July the 24th. 1875, by C. R. Baynes, Esq., Chairman of Common Committee.

By desire of the Commoners and Committee. I have extracted from the Records connected with the Common a summary account of the transactions which appear therein relating to Minchinhampton Common. It would seem that a very lax system formerly obtained in regard to the Common.

The practice appears to have been for parties to encroach, and take their chance of detection. If found out, they were made to pay. It is probable that the Common suffered very greatly under this system.

As far as can be made out from the old accounts, there was received prior to 1839 "for encroachments" £239. 4s. 3d. Of this sum .£150 appears to have been expended in the purchase of Three Acres of land known as "George's Field".

The expenses are put at £84. 19s. 9d. And the balance £5. 2s. 6d was paid to a Mr. George Wathen.

A break of 20 years then occurs, viz., from 1839 to 1859, during which nothing seems to have been done.

About 1859 a sum of £20. 12s. was received "for encroachments" and it is stated to have been expended.

This may be termed the Ancient. We have now to turn to the Modern History of the Common.

In 1862 a new and enlarged Committee was appointed, and for what has since been done, its Members must be blamed, or praised, according as it may be thought they have rightly or wrongly advised the Parishioners and Commoners.

The transactions in which the Committee were first engaged consisted solely of EXCHANGES, which the Committee, after investigation, recommended, and which on receiving the sanction of the Commoners and of the Lord of the Manor, were carried into effect.

On the 10th September 1863, Mr Lancaster was allowed to enclose 16 perches near his Lodge Gate on throwing out 32 perches at the Box. On May 4th 1865, Mr. Lancaster was further allowed to enclose 5a. 2r. 3p. near his house (Bownham) on condition of flinging out 7a 0r. 31p., and also constructing a pool 60 feet in diameter.

On the 7th of September in the same year Mr Whitehead was allowed to take in the rough Bank immediately below his stables on condition of throwing out the plot of land No. 833 (20 perches) on the map, together with the trees thereon - the said trees to be left standing for the benefit of the Commoners.

On the 21st of September in the same year Mr Frith was authorised, in straightening his wall on the Nailsworth hill, to take in 25 perches on condition of throwing out 18¾, and also constructing a pool on the said hill.

Under resolutions of 8th December 1868, and 8th December 1870, Mrs Frith was authorised to take in 3a. 2r. 14p. near her house "Highlands" on condition of throwing out 5 acres near the Windmill and making a road 14 feet wide from the "Halfway House" to "Tom Long's Post"; and also contributing £10 towards the construction of the Littleworth road over the Common.

On the 2nd of September 1870, Mr W. W. Kearsey was allowed to enclose 3a. 0r. 10p. on condition of throwing out 3a. 0r. 25p. and constructing a pool at Besbury.

At this time an important resolution was carried, after much consideration, which has been the basis of all subsequent transactions, and which was felt to be necessary in order to enable parties of smaller means and requirements to be accommodated, as well as those having portions of land to exchange for land. It was to the following effect: "In reference to applications for enclosure the committee be allowed to put a money value on the land asked for, and allow the enclosures on such money value being paid, to be expended on the purchase of other land not less in value, and to throw the same open to the Common - each case to be subject to the approval of the Lord of the Manor".

Under this system sales have been effected and lands purchased according to the accounts appended to this report, which show that while 19a. 3r. 27½p. Have been taken in, 16a. 3r. 6¾p. Have been thrown out - giving a present loss of area 3a. 0r. 20¾p. but that the balance of cash in hand available for the purchase of land is £473. 1s. 6d.

With this sum arrangements have been made for the purchase on the 29th of September of 5 acres, so that the actual increase of area is 1a. 3r. 19½p. or nearly 2 acres.

These are, however, but the bare facts of the case, and by no means adequately express the real advantages which have been secured for the Common in the period under review. A New Map has been prepared, boundary stones fixed, four pools constructed, various roads made, good lands acquired in room of bad, and useless got rid of, fences improved and repaired, and in short, the Common, regarded as a property beneficial to the Commoners, rendered more valuable.

In conclusion, I must express a hope that the painstaking labours of the Committee will be considered as having produced satisfactory results. I may perhaps be excused if, as its chairman, I take this opportunity of expressing my obligation to its members for the attention they have invariably given to the business, - often at much sacrifice of time and convenience, and especially to its Secretary, Mr W. A. Jones, to whose assistance I am mainly indebted for the power of placing this statement so clearly before the Commoners.

C. R. Baynes Chairman of the Common Committee.

Extract proceedings of Adjourned Meeting held in the Vestry Room, Minchinhampton, July 24th, 1875, C. R. Baynes Esq., in the Chair.

On the above Report being read by the Chairman, it was moved by Mr. Jehu Shipway, seconded by Mr. John Hughes, and carried unanimously "That the Report now read be received and approved, and that the thanks of the Meeting be given to the Chairman and Members of the Common Committee for their services as shewn therein".

The Chairman after returning thanks for the Committee proposed that the Committee be authorised, out of funds now available in their hands for general purposes, to present Mr. W. A. Jones with a donation of five Guineas, in acknowledgement of his gratitude and most useful services as Secretary in connection with the business of the Common Committee. This proposition being seconded by Mr Jehu Shipway was carried unanimously.

True extract. C. R. Baynes. Chairman.

A FEARFUL BOX

by Cyril Turk

In early March 1854, the inhabitants of Box were anxious and fearful. Children had been roundly ordered not to go over the Common, women would not go out alone at night and even the men were watchful. There was a good reason for this, for three soldiers of the Scots Fusilier Guards stationed at Croydon had deserted in November and now were hiding on the Common living, said the Stroud Press, “*more like wild men than men accustomed to a civilised state*”. In spite of the wild winter weather, they slept in the open or in a sheltered hollow, so Box people were afraid that they might become violent in their search for food.

But help was coming. On the 17th March, Sergeants Millard and Barton, with Constable White and Merriman, disguised themselves and took up separate stations on the Common. At 5 o'clock a suspected party of three entered the Old Lodge. Sergeant Barton cornered them in the kitchen and attempted to arrest one. A fierce fight ensued - “*tables were overturned and cups and saucers smashed*”. The Sergeant was saved by the arrival of the two Constables, and one deserter was captured and taken to Hampton. The other two escaped but at 11 o'clock were seen near the Bear Inn. One was caught, the other ran off pursued by Sergeant Millard who eventually closed sufficiently to deliver a blow to fell the final deserter. All three pleaded desperately for release, saying they would prefer suicide rather than return to their regiment (? a reflection on army life and punishment for deserters).

The account does not say what happened to them, but Box could now go back to its former even tenor of life, broken only by family tragedies and the occasional fracas.

