

MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

ANNUAL BULLETIN NUMBER 24

2007

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MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP COMMITTEE 2006/2007

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PROGRAMME OF PAST MEETINGS

2006	November	A. G. M. and “Local Commons and the National Trust” - Richard Evans
2006	January	“The History of Allotments” - John Loosley
	February	“Whiteway Colony” - Joy Thacker
	March	“What the Visitors Thought - A light-hearted look at Cheltenham since 1780” - Dr. Steven Blake
	May	“Rodmarton Manor” - Simon Biddulph
	July	A visit to Stroud with Ian Mackintosh
	September	“Charles Richardson, Brunel’s Engineer” - Peter Griffin
	October	“Local Pubs and Beerhouses” - Diana Wall
	November	A. G. M. and film “Stroud before Traffic Lights” - Geoff and Bet King

Twentieth Century Gardens From Barnsley to Beardshaw

Diana Wall

Although previous centuries had seen great changes in garden design, from mediaeval formality to the landscape movement of the eighteenth century and then a reversion in Victorian times to a geometric approach, these modifications were the preserve of the landed classes, with the capital and workforce to undertake such work. It is only in the twentieth century that gardening as a pastime, rather than for the provision of food, became the obsession of a large proportion of the population of England. The sub-title indicates the range of the twentieth century developments, starting with the architect-gardener Ernest Barnsley, but concluding with television gardeners such as Chris Beardshaw.

During the Edwardian era in Gloucestershire large gardens were still being laid out along the principles of former years – parterres, straight paths and drives and a profusion of garden urns and statuary. However, in the Home Counties the Arts and Crafts Movement had gained in popularity, and when the Sapperton group of craftsmen set up in this area, with a parallel group in Chipping Campden, the ideas they brought with them gradually spread into the surrounding countryside. Timothy Mowl describes the “*Gardens of stone and outdoor rooms – Cotswold Arts and Crafts.*”¹

William Morris was the first to publicise this type of gardening, in keeping with the romantic idea of mediaeval England of the Pre-Raphaelites. The garden “*should be well fenced from the outside world. It should by no means imitate either the wilfulness or the wildness of nature, but should look like a thing never to be seen except near a house.*”² At Snowhill Manor the gardens laid out by Charles Wade reflect his nostalgia for the past, but it is the series of terraces he created, walled with the mellow local stone, that epitomise William Morris’s vision.

The Cotswolds were an ideal location for a style of gardening that relied heavily on walls for the structure and outline of the design. In the early twentieth century many local quarries were open, and even after the carnage of World War I masons could be found to carry out the work. The use of local labour and materials fitted perfectly with the Arts and Crafts ideal, and at Rodmarton Manor Earnest Barnsley was able to source these from within the estate when building both house and garden. Walls had long provided some shelter from the extremes of winter weather on the plateaux, and at Rodmarton the “rooms” become less formal as one moves away from the house. The many quarries around Minchinhampton provided stone for the garden features found locally. Thomas Falconer

¹ Historic Gardens of Gloucestershire – Timothy Mowl, 2002

² Hopes and Fears for Art – William Morris 1882

designed the house known as Little Greendown in Butt Street in the typical Arts and Crafts style and its garden walls make it “*well fenced from the outside world*”.

Details of Twentieth Century Garden Design – 1

The Use of Stone



Rodmarton Manor



Little Greendown, Butt Street

Hedges to define “Rooms”



Hidcote Manor



Hedged gardens – Blue Boys Park

At Hidcote Manor in the north Cotswolds Laurence Johnston and his mother used hedges to define their “rooms” within the garden. These were often planted with yew, holly or beech, in keeping with the ideas of “*olde England*”. In Minchinhampton, on the north side of the Great Park are the gabled houses Frome Top, Highfield, Greystones “*probably by*

Jewson ... a more refined version of Highfield” and Upmead, “*in much more spacious grounds, 1925 by Falconer, Baker and Campbell for Miss Hartley, the jam heiress.*”³. All of these retain hedging in some form, often nowadays defining the drive and alongside the boundary fences. From Tom Longs Post it is possible to see clearly the yew outline of the garden “rooms” at Westfield. In the 1950’s ten new houses were built in Blue Boys Park. The gardens of these, about a third of an acre in extent, were hedged with beech – creating for each its own room, separated from the neighbours and even today giving a large degree of privacy – although a lot of work in keeping them trimmed!

The Victorians had imitated the great parterres of Europe in carpet bedding, with blocks of often-vivid colour forming large-scale patterns surrounded by grass. At the beginning of the twentieth century Gertrude Jekyll revolutionised the use of colour and form in her designs for herbaceous borders, favouring a gradual change from cool colours like blue and lilac to the “hotter” reds and yellows; large groups of plants imitate a subtle impressionist painting. At Hidcote Manor several of the borders reflect this, although the famous red borders are more flamboyant, similar to the work of another female gardener – Vita Sackville West. A plan with details of possible planting exists for a house at Besbury (as yet unidentified) that reflects Jekyll’s ideas, as do the borders at Lammas Park. Although plots are much smaller now, many would recognise similar subtleties in their own planting.

A further development of the use of yew, and later in the century box, bay, eleagnus and other shrubs was in simple forms of topiary. The Arts and Crafts movement was supposed to be a return to simple values, but ironically early in the twentieth century large sums of money were necessary to employ the craftsmen and labourers who could create and maintain the houses and gardens. After World War I the labour force was greatly reduced in number, and the unskilled amateur could create geometric shapes. By the last quarter of the century the availability of power tools enabled gardeners to recreate in a few hours the designs a team of men would have worked on for days fifty years earlier. Nor were the Arts and Crafts houses small cottages; they were detached not terraced, surrounded by gardens not opening directly onto the street; only in the architectural materials and details like gables did they reflect the vernacular Cotswold style. The plots, however, were smaller than those of the previous centuries and a device was employed to give an impression of owning a large stretch of land. Vistas were created through gateways, breaks in the hedges, or even above the boundary walls that “borrowed” the surrounding landscape, and took the eye beyond the confines of the immediate garden. This is a technique that is still in use today, with many of the garden makeover programmes on television advocating the use of the surroundings, or even a mirror, to create the impression of space.

³ D. Verey and A. Brooks “The Buildings of England, Gloucestershire 1 – The Cotswolds” 1999

Details of Twentieth Century Garden Design – 2

Topiary as a Garden Feature



Cotswold Farm, Duntisbourne



High Broadways, Blue Boys Park

Vistas using Borrowed Landscape



Snowhill Manor



Gateway to the Great Park

The development of garden design in the twentieth century halted completely during World War II and the immediate post-war years. Production of food was the target for gardeners, with campaigns such as “Dig For Victory”. Many lawns, flower gardens and municipal parks were used to grow vegetables for the war effort; locally this extended to Stratford Park, the grounds at Marling School and parts of Gatcombe Park and Aston Down airfield.

By the 1950s reconstruction of England's devastated cities was well under way, and the increasing use of concrete as a decorative, as well as functional, material had an impact on garden design. The site of the Festival of Britain on the south bank of the Thames was enlivened with geometric concrete planters, filled with one-colour plantings in bright colours – a foil perhaps to the austerity of the time. Anyone who has visited the centre of Coventry or Plymouth, both rebuilt at the time, or the new towns of Harlow or Stevenage, will be able to visualise the rectangular raised beds or inverted conical planters that characterised this phase in design. Nearer to home, the Kings Square redevelopment in Gloucester although not commenced until 1971, used similar containers and bedding styles. In the housing areas of cities, the trend was for high-rise blocks, with communal areas of open space, but much of it paved or grassed. Into this would be placed a further feature of the time – the small specimen tree such as a flowering cherry, rhus or maple, all of which were imported species.

Minchinhampton saw its own housing boom in the late 1950s and 1960s. Land was becoming increasingly expensive, and the first phase of local authority building on the Glebe Estate saw terraced houses, with small individual front and rear gardens. When the private sector developed Beacon Park, Besbury Park and Cambridge Way the front gardens were “open plan”, with no hedges or walls, a reflection of the national fashion at the time. The streetscape then led the eye towards the distance, avoiding any impression of high density, and many of the gardens were planted with a specimen tree in an island bed, surrounded by a lawn. Though homeowners would refute this, uniformity was the order of the day, at least for the front garden, although not regularity, for the lines of drives, paths and borders laid out by the builders were invariably curved and irregular.

In a rural area, with plentiful supplies of stone it was unlikely that any large-scale use of concrete would be employed. However, several firms took up the challenge of creating a reconstituted stone, which would eventually find its way into almost every garden in Britain. Hampton Stone is one such firm, and as well as the architectural mouldings for which they became world famous, they produced paving and walling materials which blended with the colours of the natural landscape. The Arts and Crafts gardens had been a very successful style for the Cotswolds, and perhaps this also contributed to their lasting appeal, and as Timothy Mowl states in his chapter on late twentieth century gardens “*When in doubt, look backwards*”⁴. Many rear plots became cottage-type gardens, the style of which could be readily adapted for the smaller spaces available in a crowded island. Here in an echo of the earlier potager, vegetables and flowers could exist side by side.

As the century passed, prosperity and home ownership increased, as did leisure time. From 1970 to 1990 consumer spending on gardens in this country rose from £119 million a year to £1,435 million⁵. Much of this was due to the proliferation of garden centres, replacing

⁴ Historic Gardens of Gloucestershire –Timothy Mowl, 2002

⁵ Gardens through Time, Jane Owen and Diarmuid Gavin, 2004

the specialist nursery or seedsman and hardware store. Plastic was used for plant pots, and containerisation took away some of the risk of root failure. Individuals became obsessed with the range of plants available from all over the world, in much the same way as the Victorian landowners, and borders were planted with reference to form and foliage, as well as colour. Holidays abroad meant that many people had seen the vegetation of Mediterranean regions, and herbs, shrubs and grasses added their scent to this exotic mixture. Additionally, outdoor living again came into fashion, with timber decking, barbeques and pergolas being fitted into the smallest plots. Bedding plants were again seen in gardens, but now in containers, (made of terracotta elsewhere in Britain, although the Cotswolds clung to the stone-like materials) and with successional planting these could provide a show all year round. Hanging baskets make a wonderful show in the Conservation Area of Minchinhampton each summer, now supplemented by the planted containers around the War Memorial.

The rapid spread of garden design ideas was largely due to broadcasting. The earliest gardener on television had appeared before World War II, dressed in a suit, with waistcoat and bow tie!⁶ However, from the 1970s the number of programmes steadily increased, some technical and some offering the instant gratification of a makeover. Restoration of former large gardens, such as that at Westbury Court, Painswick Rococo Garden or Heligan in Cornwall also captured the imagination of the viewing public. Garden open days in aid of charity, including many smaller gardens such as the Lammis, Hyams and Derhams in Minchinhampton during the 1980s also encouraged the spread of ideas – but tempered with a great deal of nostalgia. Money and time permitted millions of Britons to develop their own gardens, aided by power tools, prefabricated greenhouses and other structures, water features and hard landscaping materials in a wide variety of finishes.

Even in the cooler, wetter west of Britain the effects of global warming have been felt, and the latter years of the last century saw a succession of drier summers. The last trend in garden design to be adopted is that of planting for these new conditions, with drought resistant plants, interspersed with cobbles or bark mulch to conserve water, and gravel drifts replacing the lawn in some gardens. If you take a quick walk around Minchinhampton, it is possible to find examples of all the features of the last twenty-five years on a small, personal scale.

The twentieth century, therefore, saw massive changes in garden design, but above all as the century progressed these changes became the preserve not of a landed few, but of many. Anyone could aspire to be a Barnsley, developing his or her own ideas to suit both inclination and purse, and should that fail, then there was always Beardshaw to put one back on the right track.

⁶ Ibid.

Details of Twentieth Century Garden Design – 3



Structure in the garden in winter



Lead Planter on the War Memorial



Nostalgia for the Cottage Garden



Restoration at Westbury Court



Planting for Drier Summers

The History of the organ in Minchinhampton Parish Church

Jim Portbury

The first reference to an organ in Minchinhampton Church appears in the Parish records for 1836. It is recorded against an entry dated 30th September, 1836, that nineteen subscribers donated £112.18.0. to provide an organ - these subscribers included the Rector (ten guineas) and David Ricardo (son of the famous classical economist and Lord of the Manor). On 5th January, 1837, the nineteen subscribers signed a deed of covenant stating, inter alia, "... or any part of the surplus fund be appropriated to any other purpose - excepting it shall seem good hereafter to the Parish to place a larger Organ in the Church...". There is no reference to the specification of this instruments all that is known of this organ was that it was placed in the "Singing Gallery" at the west end of the building.

In 1842 the Nave was rebuilt. With a larger building, the need for a "larger Organ" became greater, and in 1851 it was decided to buy a "new organ". The Vestry Minutes for 5th June, 1851, record that it was resolved that "the purchasing and putting up of Mr. Allen's organ be left entirely in the Rector's hands". The choice of words and date (i.e. the same year as the Great Exhibition) coupled with recent discoveries, suggest that the "new organ" was in fact an existing two manual instrument dating from the early nineteenth century, if not earlier; indeed, much of its pipework was made in the eighteenth century, and there is some evidence that some of the pipework is of seventeenth century origin ascribed to "Father" Smith. It has not been possible to trace the Mr. Allen referred to, but Professor Sumner believes this to be Charles Allen of Soho, a builder who specialised in conserving old pipework, not necessarily for its intrinsic value, but to save expense to his clients!

There is no record of the specification of this instrument, but like its predecessor, it was placed in the west end of the church. In 1873, the then Rector paid for the removal of the organ and the provision of the new choir stalls (no longer the "Singing Seats") in the chancel. The eastern migration of the choir and organ was in keeping with the liturgical movement of the period. Church music had recently received a fillip, and many parishes were introducing robed choirs (no point in having these out of sight at the back of the congregation, and where the choir is, there is the organ also), Mattins and Evensong were sung daily in Minchinhampton Church at the turn of the century, and it may well be that this custom took its origin from this period.

The organ was rebuilt in 1887 by Nicholson and Lord, of Walsall, with a three-manual console and pedals, and the present south aspect case erected. The Pedal Organ consisting of two 16 foot ranks was added at this time; a Choir Organ of six stops was planned, but not constructed - the Dulciana, was placed on the Great in place of the Gamba specified, and the lowest twelve pipes of the Gamba, which form part of the second rank show pipes, were left as dummies. Fortunately, most of the old pipework was retained unaltered in this

rebuild, Mr. Nicholson knowing “well the value of such treasures, and incorporating them in the specification. Those of rarest beauty and mellowed with age” - an interesting comment - “are the Great Diapasons, Stopped and Open (now Nos. 2 and 3 on the Great)”. This quotation is from an article in the Parish Magazine for December 1887 by the Rev. H.E. Hodson, who advised the church authorities on the rebuild.

In 1893, Nicholson and Lord quoted £104 to provide the Choir Organ, and to place it to the left of the console - originally it was to be placed to the right of the console. The change in siting was apparently in an attempt to improve the aspect of the north aisle archway. The Rev. H.E. Hodson, in the December 1887 magazine stated: “Some exception may be taken, as you say, to the surface panelling of the north screen, it does not look workmanlike; yet it is difficult to suggest a better way...it is an acoustic question”. Nothing came of the 1893 proposal, and it was not until 1904 that further moves were made to provide the Choir Organ and to extend the Pedal Organ, as by that time, the defects in the latter's resources *vis-a-vis* the chorus on the manuals had become apparent. The Rev. H.E. Hodson was again consulted by the Churchwardens, and he advised them - “I would urge the realisation of the Choir Organ . . . this should not be omitted in any schemes of improvement and reconstruction. The same may be said of the proposed extension of the Pedal Department”. However, he doubted whether the money could be raised, so in the end, it was decided to opt for the least work necessary to keep the organ working. £89 were spent on overhauling the action damaged by a gas heater being placed inside the organ; no pipework was added.

In 1914, Mr. G.H. Bird, F.R.C.O., who had recently been appointed organist, took up the question of providing the missing stops on the Great and Swell, together with the provision of a Great to Pedal “on and off” pedal. The great War, however, intervened, and it was not until 1921 that he was able to open negotiations with Messrs. Nicholson and Lord; in the meantime, the cost of the proposed work had trebled. This firm went into voluntary liquidation, and in 1922, the work was entrusted to Messrs. Hill, Norman and Beard. They cleaned the organ, reset the speech of the flue stops, revoiced the Viol d'Amour as a Celestes, added the Viole d'Orchestre to the Swell, revoiced the Oboe, and added the Great Trumpet and Swell Cornopean. These reed stops were an important addition to the tone of the organ as they provided a timbre to the ensemble which was previously lacking. The Tremulant and the Great to Pedal poppit were added to the mechanical accessories of the instruments the cost of all this work was £258.10.0. The Choir Organ was left as a dumb manual.

It was not until 1937, that is after five attempts spanning fifty years, that the Choir Organ was eventually added to the instrument by Messrs. Hill, Norman and Beard. The stops were not, however as in the original specification, and contrary to the original scheme, the Choir was totally enclosed - originally, only the Clarinet was to be in an expression box. The reason for these changes was the perennial problem of lack of funds. It had also been intended at this time to add a Flute 8' to the Pedal, but as this proved to be more expensive

than anticipated, it was sacrificed on the altar of expediency. In practice, the Choir Organ had two drawbacks; firstly, the stops did not provide a chorus, but merely a collection of solo stops of little liturgical value and completely out of character with the two classical choruses of the Great and Swell, and secondly, the Expression box, which opened eastwards, together with the backcloth of the new screen added at the same time, blocked the egress of sound from out of the north aisle arch so that the Choir Organ and Pedal Bourdon were permanently muffled, and there was no direct access of sound into the nave.

The organ was overhauled again in 1956 as it was found to be infected by woodworm; - the side and top of the Swell box were renewed and tuning slides fitted. The three keyboards were covered with ivory. By 1963, however, the pneumatic action to the Pedal Organ had become unreliable; certain notes did not work and it was not possible to use both Pedal stops simultaneously. The Parochial Church Council were advised that maintenance work was urgently required if the organ was to continue to function, but they were undecided as to what work, if any, should be done. An overhaul of this magnitude would afford an opportunity to augment the resources of the Peal Organ - recommended in 1904. - and to rectify the shortcomings of the 1937 work: a chance that the church should not lightly throw away. By Easter 1968, the Pedal Organ was virtually not functioning, and cyphers were frequent on the manuals. The P.C.C. were finally convinced as a matter of policy to repair the organ (it had been voted to remove the instrument and replace it with an electronic organ) and awarded the contract for the refurbishing and total revision of the instrument to John Coulson of Bristol. As on previous occasions, raising the money posed problems, especially as the P.C.C. were committed to Stewardship, and this, they considered, debarred them from making a public appeal for the organ. However, on this occasion, the organist resolved that there should be no repetition of the parsimony of previous overhauls with their unsatisfactory compromises, and undertook to raise the money privately for the tonal revision whilst the church only had to pay for the overhaul of the action and the additions to the Pedal Organ. This tonal revision was as follows:-

(1) The Salicional on the Choir was placed on the Swell in full compass in place of the Viole d'Orchestre, which ran to Tenor C and had a shared bass with the Stopped Diapason.

(2) The Harmonic Flute on the Great was replaced by a Suabe Flute; this was an early Vowles stop and came from a disused church in Bristol.

(3) The Dulciana on the Great was removed to the Choir, and the slide was replaced by a Twelfth, the pipework of which was of secondhand material from various sources, and prepared by John Coulson.

(4) The Choir was completely redesigned as an unenclosed Positive speaking directly through the north aisle arch into the nave. The ranks were provided as follows: the Gedeckt from the Swell Lieblich Bourdon moved up an octave, the Dulciana from the Great, the Prinzipal, a Spitzprinzipal, is new, the Nasat from the Lieblich Flute, the Octav

from the Piccolo remouthed and revoiced. The Rauschquint is new, and was added in June 1972.

(5) The Principal and Fifteenth on the Pedal Organ is provided by a unit on electric action: the pipework comes from a dismantled Hunter Organ at Plumstead.

The work was begun in January, 1969, and was completed, except for the Rauschquint, in August, 1969: the total cost, including the Ruaschquint, was £1914, of which £730 was raised privately as a gift to the church.

The instrument was re-dedicated on Sunday, 21st September, 1969, and the inaugural recital given on 27th September, 1969, by the Rev. Edgar Landen, B.A., B.Mus., PRCO (Chm), Organist of Cirencester Parish Church. The first recital on the completed organ (i.e. with the Choir Rauschquint) was given by Malcolm Foster, Sub-Organist of Pershore Abbey on 24th August, 1972. Both recitals have been recorded.

It is difficult to describe adequately the tonal resources of this instrument. Beauty is very much a subjective quality, or a question of taste. However, it cannot be denied that this organ is a fine example of the English classical organ such as would be familiar to eighteenth organists as John Stanley. In this respect, we are fortunate in having so much original eighteenth century pipework intact; we were also fortunate in securing the services of such a skilled artist and craftsman as John Coulson to carry out the work of restoration. He has produced an instrument of character and quality that has been admired as an exceptional and outstanding example of the best in the English tradition of organ tonal design; but the organ must speak for itself where words finish; “Si probationem requiris, audi”.



More on the Minchinhampton Windmill Vanishing Weights and Measures

by John V Smith

In the Autumn edition of TOM LONGS POST [*also in "Minchinhampton Life and Times - Part 2 Places, School, Organisations and People"*] Hugh Kearsey wrote a fascinating article on the Minchinhampton windmill that was once owned by his forebears and stood on land he used to own at the top of Windmill Road near Tom Longs Post itself.

He quoted from the Gloucester Journal of the 12th December 1812 advertising the sale of the windmill claiming that it was "capable of grinding 700 bushels per week". I wonder how many now know just what that means ?

First let us discuss the qualifications. "Capable of means that to get those figures there would have to be continuous wind of the highest speed the windmill could tolerate and the grain would have to be of as low a moisture content as possible and certainly not higher than 16% moisture. Then we have the time factor "per week". Probably we are talking about a six day week, and if in summertime then a 12 hour day with a total of 72 hours in the week. Finally "700 bushels".

This is where we come to the title "vanishing weights and measures". A bushel being a volumetric measurement will vary according to the type of grain and to the actual weight produced. Quality and moisture content within the same grain will also produce differing weights. Still confused ?

Good quality dry wheat averages 631bs, barley 561bs, and oats 421bs per bushel. When I first returned to Stroud 53 years ago to enter the corn trade, grain was still occasionally being sold by the quarter and although linked to the bushel it was the most confusing of all. It was not a quarter of a ton or hundredweight; this was a measure of eight bushels. Fortunately grain was being handled in sacks and locally Gopsill Brown and West of England Sack Contractors were the hirers of grain sacks and they were of the same measurements for all grain.

You could get 2 and a quarter cwts of wheat (252 lbs), 2 cwts of barley (224 lbs), and 1 and a half cwts of oats (168 lbs) in each sack and if you get your calculator out you will see how these figures line up with the bushel weights at the beginning of this paragraph. Remember we didn't have calculators in the immediate post WW2 days but I don't recall seeing any merchant use his fingers or pencil and paper. You had to be good at mental arithmetic, and you can therefore see that a sack of grain would hold four bushels.

So 700 bushels per week at the Minchinhampton windmill would have been about 19 tons 14cwts wheat, and 17 tons 10 cwts barley. As there were two pairs of stones working at the windmill then each pair would have produced 9 tons 17 cwts wheat and 8 tons 15 cwts barley in the week.

When I took over Ebley Oil Mill in 1954 the two pair of flat stones turned by two undershot water wheels were still in operation and I decided to modernize and electrify the whole mill. I employed Jim Terrett of F.H.Terrett, Ltd of Wotton under Edge to carry out the work. Together we checked out the production capability of every machine in the mill and the grinding capacity was just 8 cwts per hour for 9 hours producing 3 tons 12 cwts each day. Over a week of 48 hours that meant 19 tons 4 cwts barley. To compare that with the windmill we would have had to operate a 72 hour week and that would have produced 28 tons 16cwts.

That was an increase in production of about 65% but over a period of 140 years. However there is always a flow of water in the River Frome whereas there isn't always wind on the Common. The other problem that couldn't long have been answered in 1954 was that a wheelwright was required annually to repair and reset the waterwheels, and a millwright to cut and level the stones, so the old system just had to end.

In the same way hired sacks ended and it was all bulk handling, and weights are now in tonnes and kilograms. Grain traders now sit behind computers.

The Demise of the Windmill

by Hugh Kearsy

Following the advertisement referred to in the above article in 1814, it appears that my great great grandfather bought the Windmill. He appeared to have made a good living from the Windmill - perhaps augmented by other means. However, the sequel to the overestimation of the capabilities of Windmill by the advertisement was recorded in this extract from an article in the "Stroud News" of 6th August 1919 by James W. Price.

It was at the time of the Franco-Prussian War, I remember that my eldest brother William, arrived home at Nailsworth from his wanderings, and, having a knowledge of the trade, made the acquaintance of the owner, Mr. Samuel Kearsy. The latter was a very old man, known as "Old Kearsy" and a very shrewd man too, and it would have taken a very clever person indeed to have got the better of him in a deal. The old mill was worshipped by him, and he boasted of the fortune he had made from it, and told how another fortune was waiting for the next tenant. (It had been then closed for years). How the driving power was free, whereas steam power consumed all the profits and left by way of the chimney. The mill too was in good working order, for, did he not hold a certificate, signed by two



local men, to this effect? These and other inducements were trotted out to my brother and mother, and listened to by me, to show the value of the undertaking. Yes, my brother could have the mill and make his fortune too, conditionally on my mother, who owned a little property, becoming responsible for the rent. With hopes of prosperity in view, the mill was taken, and I left my situation to assist my brother in the business, being 17 years of age at the time.

The following document which I hold, will be of interest by showing the contents of the mill:-

"Inventory of movables at windmill taken September 28th, 1870, by Thos. Smith. In the ground floor: sack cart, step ladder, old desk, flour scales, 2 flour bins, 5 half cwt., 1 quarter, 1 14lb., 1 7lb., 1 2lb., and 1 lb. weights. First floor: stone staff and two wedges, double block and line, old baulter, two pairs of stone hoppers, and one hopper in bad condition, dreping machine, jumper, two new wires, two new straps, two new cranks, and crowbar. Outside: sails and sheets in good condition."

There was one notable fact in particular, that the old man did not mention, viz.:- that for days together no wind prevailed to turn the sails, and, Macawber-like, it was a case of "waiting for something to turn up", and many weary days were spent in idleness when people were waiting for their meal.

There was no automatic steering gear for keeping the sails to the wind, and no apparatus on the sails to regulate the wind pressure. In the former, it was a case of winding the top round by hand, and the latter of applying the brake, stopping the mill, and unfurling or taking in the sail-cloth, no light labour in bad weather.

The driving power was from a large oak pillar from the top of the first floor and, with age, this was cracked in places, which made it a little "elastic", so when the mill was going at full speed, what with the creaking of the timbers and the rattle of the machinery, the noise inside was most alarming, especially to a stranger.

I remember one day the sails were flying round at a rapid rate, and the millstones were making up lost time, that "Old Kearsy" sent his housekeeper, Mary Maisey, [the census gives her name as Mary ADEY] to tell "that man" he would have the mill down. "Tell the old buffer", was the reply, "to mind his own business" and, to annoy the old man more, my brother stood in view of him laughing, for there was no love lost between them. I can call to mind also, the long hours I was left in charge during the long cold winter evenings, whilst my brother enjoyed company elsewhere.

We did at this time, work for Mr. Samuel Fowler, farmer, and the late Richard Townsend, corn dealer, Stroud, and others, but owing to the uncertainty of being supplied, some left us, and our trade gradually fell off. Early in the year my brother began to tire of this work, and left the district abruptly, thus leaving me to carry on the grinding as best I could.

I might here mention, to explain what follows, that "Old Kearsy" had an inventory of everything on his premises, all duly numbered and ticketed in various lots, and Mary often told me that she had strict orders that, if anything happened to him (the old man) she was to communicate at once with Segt. Muggeridge, of Minchinhampton. The latter often called there, "Old Kearsy's" house was close to the mill and, in a large cellar had 3 large barrels of cider. I must confess that the old man was very partial to me, and would often send his housekeeper, when my brother was away, to tell "the young man" to bring the jar for some more cider. I never liked it, but the roadmen were only too pleased to come into the mill by the back-way and drink it, sour as it was.

I come now to the most important part of the story. One Sunday afternoon I was showing my companions over the mill when Mary, who had evidently seen us, came running across to me and said "the old man has just gone" and would I go for the sergeant. I don't think I did, but I know printed on the wall inside at the time "Old Kearsy died on Sunday, March the 12th, at 10 min to 3, 1871". The funeral took place, I think, on the Wednesday following, and when perched up the rigging of a sail, I saw the funeral cortege passing

from the place which would know him no more, towards Tom Long's Post, presumably for Amberley Church for burial. [In fact it took place at Rodborough]

The sale of the old man's effects took place soon after the funeral, but was sparsely attended, perhaps owing to the locality. However, there was plenty of fun going on and jokes made at the late owner's expense. The chief feature of the sale was the large variety of bed-linen offered, particularly sheets. One wag suggested that they had been taken from tenants in lieu of rent. No doubt these goods had been laid aside for years, and were faded a little, but people said they were bargains and were practically given away. What a "field day" a similar sale would be for the present day bargain-hunters.

Our business had fallen off very much of late months, and what corn came to hand I managed to deal with pretty well. This state of affairs continued till one day in July, and when the mill was working smoothly before a fair breeze, I heard a loud rumbling noise and crash from outside. On running out to find the cause, I was startled to find a large portion of the stonework towards the top of the mill had fallen to the ground. I applied the brake, and the mill was stopped for the last time, for to continue was out of the question.

I lost no time in informing the late Mr. W. W. Kearsey (the old man's son) known as "Lawyer Kearsey" who lived at Burleigh Court of the facts. It was finally arranged with my mother that we should vacate the mill at once, with a view of its demolition, which took place shortly afterwards, and he (Mr. Kearsey) would allow a few weeks rent for the purpose. Below are copies of receipts for rent for the windmill:-

"Received, the 3rd April, 1871, of Mrs. Elizabeth Price, the sum of Seven Pounds, Ten Shillings, as under, for half a years rent for the windmill, due 25th ult.

	£	s	d
Memorandum . . .	5	0	0
Property Tax..		5	4
Cash	2	4	8

			7 10 0

Signed, Thos. Smith, for the Executors of S. Kearsey"

"Received, the 27th October, 1871, by Post Office Order, of Mrs. Elizabeth Price, sum of Five Pounds, Six Shillings, for rent for the windmill to the 1st August last. Signed. Thos. Smith, for the Executors of Samuel Kearsey."

And so it happened that I was the last person to superintend any grinding in the old windmill, but when the mill was first erected, and who the person was that saw the first grind will never be known.

2007 marked the centenary of the Scout Movement, and it seems appropriate to reproduce in the Bulletin part of a history of the movement in Minchinhampton, originally written for a reunion in 1990. This extract concentrates on the period up to World War II.

“To Do My Duty ...”

“There has been of late, throughout the country, an excellent movement amongst our young men and lads, known as the “Boys’ Scouts” which originated by the initiative of that famous African hero, General Baden Powell. Last summer we were visited by a contingent of these Scouts from Gloucester, who encamped for some days in the Park, and excited much interest by their smart bearing and excellent behaviour. This good example called forth, some five months ago, a spirit of emulation to go and do likewise here. We have now amongst us a body of 26 “Boys’ Scouts” of whom Mr. W.T. Excell has proved himself an excellent Scout Master. They attend once a week at Longfords, for drill and exercise, learning the art of first aid, signalling and knot tying, and their attendance has been excellent.” So it was that the Parish Magazine, in 1910 reported the birth of Scouting in the town of Minchinhampton, a mere three years after the first camp on Brownsea Island in Dorset.



Forwood Grange, home to some of the Playne family – was this the scene of the fire in 1913?

The troop was certainly still in existence three years later, albeit with a different scoutmaster, as the Stroud Journal carried a report of a fire at Forwood, the residence of Mr. F.G. Playne when “*many willing persons, including Mr. Geoffrey Pavey-Smith (Captain of the Nailsworth Fire Brigade) and the Minchinhampton Patrol of Boy Scouts (under Scout Master Leonard Humphries) were engaged in removing valuable furniture from the lower rooms to a place of safety.*” The clouds of war were gathering over Europe, and there is no record of how many of the former scouts enlisted in Kitchener’s Army, or how valuable they found their former training. In Minchinhampton Scouting ceased during the Great War, but a troop was formed in 1919 with the Rev. Stanley King as Scoutmaster. He was the curate and had taken a small group of boys to camp in the Forest of Dean; these boys became the patrol leaders. Among the Scouts of that time were Matt and Bob Kirby, D.J. Newman, E.J. Hall, J. Pond, S. Hathaway, L. Wall, and P. Ponting. At least two of these can be seen on a photograph of the dedication of the War Memorial, carrying Scout staves. Dr. King did not wear uniform but correct clerical dress, and began the close link between Anglican Church and the Minchinhampton Scouts, which lasted until World War II. The meeting place was the Gymnasium in the High Street, to the rear of what is now the Cotswold Club.



Detail from postcard showing Scouts at the dedication of the War Memorial in 1920

In 1924 Minchinhampton Scouts spent some days in London camping at the Wembley Scout Jamboree, and were privileged to see the Chief Scout, Baden-Powell. At other camps in the twenties some boys even persuaded their sisters to come along and act as camp cooks! In the early days travel to camp, even within the county of Gloucestershire, was a true adventure. On one occasion the Scouts took the trek cart down to Nailsworth Station and there boarded the train. Several changes later they alighted at Coleford in the Forest of Dean then pulled the cart several miles to Staunton, where they camped in a clearing close to the Buckstone.

A brief announcement in the Parish Magazine for February 1930 is the first indication that the younger boys of the parish had finally joined the Scout movement: "*Miss Hardie (sic.) from the Box, has started a Pack of Wolf Cubs and with Miss Ashmore to help her it looks like being a Good Show.*" Minchinhampton had now become a Group, with more than one section. At the same time there were others in the immediate area, at Rodborough, Brimscombe, Avening and Amberley. Box, too, had its own Scout Troop for a time. A film of the 1929 Jamboree was shown at Nailsworth Subscription Rooms, and the Scouts and Wolf Cubs went to see it.

After the St. George's Day service at Holy Trinity the Scouts held a social, to which the younger boys were invited. Two jumble sales held at the Ragged Cot in May raised funds for uniforms for the Wolf Cubs. In line with the new status Minchinhampton appointed the first Group Scoutmaster, Mr. A. Trotman. The headquarters for the Monday and Thursday Troop meetings was the Gymnasium, and boys who were free were encouraged to come to the Day Schools on a Sunday afternoon. The subscription was 2d a week, and the cost of camp was approximately 1s per boy, per day. A donation of £5 in 1931 enabled the Group to purchase two new tents.

By 1932 both the Cubs and the Scouts attended the West of England Rally on Whit Monday near Bath where the salute was taken by Baden-Powell "*That was something to remember – the great horseshoe formed by hundreds of Cubs who gave him the Grand Howl – then the rush in of the Scouts with their flags and pennons, shouting their Troop Call, and beyond and above on the hill, the crowd of onlookers, with a mass of Guides over on one side, who had come to greet their Chief, for we had them both side-by-side on a raised platform presently, the Chief Scout and the Chief Guide.*"

Camp was still the yearly highlight for the Troop, but other scouting activities included "*the performance of the old English Mumming Play. Produced and costumed by the boys (and their mothers and sisters) the mummers toured the 'big' houses just before Christmas. We returned to the Gym carrying a full load of cakes and lemonade, plus suitable rewards in the collecting box.*" Life in Minchinhampton was far from easy for many of the boys, but the impression given from reading their reminiscences is that they really enjoyed their time in Scouting.

The Troop and the Pack continued throughout the 1930s. Numbers fluctuated, leaders changed but the movement remained strong. By 1936 ominous noises were emanating from Germany and Scouts in Britain saw their organisation snuffed out in Eastern Europe. International events again dominated life, the “great times” were brought to a close and in 1939 the decision was taken to discontinue Troop meetings. The Troop did not reform until 1950 – but that is another story.



Camp Field at the time of the first camp by Gloucester Scouts

The Local History Collection

The Collection belonging to the Local History Group is housed in the basement of the Trap House by kind permission of Minchinhampton Parish Council which owns the building. Access, of course, has to be limited due to the security of the Parish Office, and the Collection is therefore open for research on the first Monday of each month (unless that is a Bank Holiday, in which case the second Monday) from 2.30 to 4.00 p.m. On these afternoons at least two members of the committee are on hand to offer help. However, members and visitors who wish to carry out research can do so at other times by making an appointment with the Chairman (who is also the Parish Clerk), either by phone on 01453-731186 or email minchparish@btconnect.com

Diana Wall

Bob Petersen – An Appreciation

Bob was a valued member of the committee of the Local History Group for over five years, ever since he and Doreen returned to Minchinhampton to live in Cecily Court. Always willing to devote time and energy to setting up, stewarding and dismantling the biennial exhibitions, Bob's presence was a catalyst, both in getting people to visit but also, most importantly, to recount their memories of life in the area. In February 2006 he enthralled the audience at his talk on "Farming Locally", and was willing to share these memories in written form for the "At Work and Play" Exhibition.

Late last year it became apparent that the Local History Group would have to move the venue for the monthly talks; Bob suggested, and masterminded, the move to Cecily Court Lounge, which has proved to be a most comfortable and popular venue for both speakers and members. He encouraged residents of Cecily Court to come and listen to talks and the committee would always find the room ready and a warm welcome at the door.

His untimely death just after Christmas has left a void in Minchinhampton which will not be filled, as few people find as much time to share with others, or such a love of place as Bob Petersen. We all sadly miss him.

Diana Wall