

**MINCHINHAMPTON
LOCAL HISTORY GROUP**

**ANNUAL BULLETIN
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**MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP
COMMITTEE 1992/3**

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PROGRAMME OF PAST EVENTS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 1992 Nov. | The Regiments of Gloucestershire Museum - Christine Berresford |
| 1993 Jan. | Views of Old Minchinhampton |
| March | Delve into Education |
| May | Aspects of Shopping |
| June | Local History Days Minchinhampton Library |
| July | Walk round Minchinhampton Common - John Cooper |
| Sept. | Minchinhampton District in the Great War - Sue Smith |

LET THERE BE LIGHT! GAS STREET LIGHTING IN MINCHINHAMPTON

DIANA WALL

Every evening, at dusk, the photo-electric cells on the lamp standards switch on the yellow sodium street lights. Minchinhampton is no different from any other town in Gloucestershire, and in the last decade of the twentieth century we take somewhat for granted the safety that lighted roads will bring. It has not always been like this, of course, and the purpose of this essay is to unravel the history of pre-electric street lighting in the Town.

“At a Meeting held in the Vestry Room on Friday evening the Sixth day of February 1857

It was proposed : That it is highly desirable that the streets of the Town should be lighted.” Thus the first entry in the Gas Accounts for Minchinhampton¹. Without more ado a committee was formed to collect subscriptions and to seek tenders for 14 lamps to be lit in the winter months. Such was the enthusiasm of those present that £10.2s.6d. was promised by the end of the meeting. The committee consisted of Mr. C. Turner, Mr. J. Fardon, Mr. J. Matthews and Mr. E. Hill. It seems likely that word of the intentions of the meeting had already spread, because a week later two tenders had been received, and it was resolved that *“Mr. S. Hill be employed to put up two specimen Lamps the one to burn oil the other naptha (sic) The one Lamp to be placed against the Crown, the other upon Mr. Pearce’s House in Butt St., such lamps to be continued for one week.”*

The trial period was successful and Solomon Hill was instructed to put up seven lamps, for which he had tendered at 23s. each. There were to be two in West End, one each in Well Hill, the Cross, Tetbury Street and on the Market House and Mr. Simpkins’ house (possibly on the corner of King Street and Well Hill). It is not clear whether the two original

lamps were to be left in position. Naptha was the chosen fuel, and the charge for the winter of 1857/8 was 3d. per lamp per night. By the following winter a further lamp in Butt Street was installed.

Other towns in the locality were being lit by gas, and as early as 1858 hopes were expressed that this might soon be the fuel for Minchinhampton. A parish meeting was held in the Vestry Room on 27th September 1859, with the Rector, Charles Whately, in the chair, when it was unanimously agreed *That it is expedient that the Town of Minchinhampton should be lighted with Gas*. A new committee was formed, with full powers to put this into effect, as the Stroud Gas Light and Coke Company had extended its operations to the town. The lamps would be in the same places as before, and the cost still borne by public subscription.

The first three years of gas lighting went smoothly enough. All inhabitants of the town felt the benefits, and the funds remained in credit, although Mr. C. Baynes, charged with collecting the subscriptions, suggested it entailed *“much unpleasant work”* with *“objections brought against it which are certainly of great weight.”* Most of the original subscribers continued to fund the lighting, but it was felt that the expenses ought to be more evenly distributed, i.e. a rate should be levied.

At this time in England there were many moves afoot to improve social conditions. Acts receiving Royal Assent set standards for drainage, education and the relief of the poor. An Act had been passed in 1834 that laid down the provisions for lighting parishes, and the funding of such lamps.² Under the Act a Lighting District could be set up and a rate levied on properties within this area.

A Public Meeting was called for 9th October 1862, when the options were explored. It appeared that three courses were open:

“1st. That those who have already subscribed should increase these subscriptions, which they cannot be expected to do.

MINCHINHAMPTON TOWN GAS FUND; FOR 1860.

C. R. BAYNES, TREASURER, IN ACCOUNT WITH THE MINCHINHAMPTON GAS FUND.

| Dr. | £ | s | d | Cr. | £ | s | d |
|--------------------|------|----|----|-----------------------------------|------|----|----|
| Subscriptions..... | 25 | 14 | 0 | Paid balance due Solomon Hill, on | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Donations..... | 1 | 5 | 0 | Account of Old Lighting Fund } | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Miscellaneous..... | 2 | 10 | 2½ | Printed Receipt Book..... | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Interest..... | 0 | 1 | 10 | Account Book..... | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| | | | | Gas Company's Bill for Lighting | | | |
| | | | | 14 Street Lamps from December | 18 | 13 | 4 |
| | | | | to March..... | | | |
| | | | | Cash in hand..... | 6 | 9 | 8½ |
| | £ 29 | 11 | 0½ | | £ 29 | 11 | 0½ |

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND DONATIONS FOR 1860.

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|----|---|----------------------------|------|----|----|
| Avery, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Newman, Mr. W. | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Baker, Mr. | 0 | 5 | 0 | Nicholls, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Baldwin, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Ogden, Mr. | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Baynes, Mr. C. B. | 3 | 0 | 0 | Parke, Mr. | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Browne, Miss | 0 | 5 | 0 | Perrin, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Bruton, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Playne, Mr. W. | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Chalk, Mr. | 1 | 0 | 0 | Playne, Mr. G. | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Chandler, Mr. | 0 | 10 | 0 | Sandling, Mr. | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Clutterbuck, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Sargeant, Mr. | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Coultas, Mr. | 1 | 0 | 0 | Scuse, Mr. G. | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Daniels, Miss | 0 | 2 | 6 | Simpkins, Mr. J. | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Daniels, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Simpkins, Mr. W. | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Drinkwater, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Stockham, Mr. | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| Eliot, Rev. W. | 1 | 0 | 0 | Sutton, Mr. J. | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Fardon, Mr. | 1 | 0 | 0 | Turner, Dr. C. W. | 1 | 10 | 0 |
| Fewster, Mr. A. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Whately, Rev. C. | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Grant, Mr. | 0 | 1 | 6 | Whiting, Mr. | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Green, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Wording, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 |
| Hall, Mr. | 0 | 5 | 0 | | | | |
| Harman, Mr. J. | 0 | 5 | 0 | Total Subscriptions | £ 25 | 14 | 0 |
| Hasluck, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | DONATIONS. | | | |
| Hayes, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Bowstead, Mr. J. | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Hill, Mr. S. | 0 | 5 | 0 | Knight, Mr. J. | 0 | 5 | 0 |
| Hill, Mr. W. | 0 | 5 | 0 | MISCELLANEOUS RECEIPTS. | | | |
| Holbrook, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Balance of Old Lamp Fund | 1 | 18 | 8½ |
| Jobbins, Mr. | 0 | 2 | 6 | Sale—Proceeds of Old Lamps | 0 | 13 | 6 |
| Jones, Mr. C. | 0 | 10 | 0 | | | | |
| Jones, Mr. W. | 0 | 10 | 0 | Interest | 2 | 10 | 2½ |
| Lewis, Mr. J. | 1 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 1 | 10 |
| Mathews, Mr. | 1 | 0 | 0 | Total Receipts | £ 29 | 11 | 0½ |

"2nd. That the expense should be defrayed" by the introduction of a Gas Rate.

"3rd. That the Town be left in darkness."

When the proposal was voted upon, a majority were in favour of the second option, which was adopted.

The Town was lit by gas in the winter of 1862/3, after a levy of 9d. was collected from the Lighting District. However, it soon became apparent that not everyone was prepared to pay up, and that some would prefer to stay in darkness. The Churchwardens, H.D. Ricardo and George Playne, who less than twelve months previously had been unanimously elected as Inspectors under the Lighting Act, were forced to report on 12th September 1863, *that so much dissatisfaction has been expressed at the method of lighting by Rate and so much difficulty experienced in the collection, that they must decline, tho with regret being further concerned in the matter.*" Those attending the meeting on that date were greatly in favour of the rate, and expressed themselves so in public. A group of five, Fenning Parke, Joseph Lewis, James Thompson, J. Sargeant and John Chandler requested a Public Meeting at which the whole issue could be aired. This meeting, a week after the first, failed to produce the necessary majority in favour of the Act, so a full poll of the ratepayers was held on the 15th and 16th of October. 141 votes were cast for the Act, 41 against, and the Churchwardens at last issued the notices of Rate. The Inspectors finally elected were C.R. Baynes, Joseph Fardon and C.W. Turner.

The Lighting District set up in 1863 lasted for many years, and clearly delimits the Town as it existed at that time. *"A Boundary commencing at the house and premises now occupied by George Clark in the road called the West End and including the Park Terrace and the Box Row to the left and right of the said road respectively and so on to the Cross. And from the said Cross down the Well Hill, to the right taking in King Street and the Shard and continuing as far as the house and premises*

occupied by George Playne Esq. and known as Forwood Brewery and the house and premises occupied by Mr. John Jackson and known as Forwood. And again from the aforesaid cross, up Tetbury Street to the end thereof including Tithing Lane as far as the house belonging to Mr. Chambers and known as Field House. And again from the aforesaid Cross along the High Street including Bell Lane and so on up Butt Street including Friday Street, the Rectory House, the Quoins and Parsons Court and as far as the cottages belonging to Mr. Lambert Esq. on the road to the Blue Boys Inn."

One final advantage of the adoption of a rating system was that the financial burden was removed from the original subscribers. Many of the same people would dig deep into their pockets in the years 1866 - 1869 as they became subscribers to the new parochial school.

The people of Minchinhampton were able to enjoy their street lights during the winter months, but as was the case in those days, it was not felt necessary to light lamps during the summer. People's lives were governed by the hours of natural daylight and retired to bed fairly early by today's standards. An entry in the Gas Accounts for 1886 suggests that by that time there were 19 lamps, lit "*from the 18th September to the 18th April less six days at the full of each moon during the period, viz. 3 nights before the full, one night of the full and 2 nights after to cease lighting*" for which the Gas Company would be paid the rate of £2 per lamp. If the nights near the full moon were cloudy, then the Town was dark.

In February 1893 a case was brought before the Nailsworth Police Petty Sessions³ when 6 parishioners were summoned for the non-payment of the lighting rate. Mr. W. Excell was the first to be heard, and a report of the case appears overleaf. His main objection was that parts of the town, notably the top of Friday Street, Parsons Court and Forwood were not properly lit, and that therefore the rate was excessive. All defendants had to pay, but Mr. Excell continued to press for cheaper rates at the meeting

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1893

NAILSWORTH POLICE.

YESTERDAY:—Before Messrs. A. T. Playne (in the chair), Charles Playne, and W. Leigh.

MINCHINHAMPTON AND THE LIGHTING.

William Excell, was summoned for the non-payment of his lighting rate—10/8—for the part of the parish of Minchinhampton.

Mr. Heelas defended, also appearing for five other persons similarly summoned.

W. A. Jones, assistant overseer for the parish of Minchinhampton, said he received a precept from the lighting inspectors for the collection of £50 in rates. The area was defined about 30 years ago.

By the Chairman: It was settled at a vestry meeting. All the requirements were carried out at the time. Mr. Excell's premises were within the area. He has always paid his rate up to two years ago. The last time was in farthings. (Laughter). It will not be taken like that again. (Laughter).

Mr. Excell: I wish I had all that was owing to me paid in farthings. (Laughter.)

Continuing the witness said Mr. Excell was rated for 5/4 a year. They claimed for two years. When the annual meeting was held defendant was sent a letter stating that it was to be held.

Mr. Excell: Oh, yes sir. Very convenient time, half-past ten o'clock.

Defendant had refused to pay the rate. All the formalities of the act were complied with. When the district was formed it was fought tooth and nail by different persons. We had a poll of the parish at the time, and the rate was upheld by the Horsley magistrates. It has gone on for 30 years, the same every year. Defendant has not appealed against the rate.

Mr. Heelas raised an objection that the Bench had not before them strict proof of the adoption of the act by the parish, and also that all the formalities to make a legal rate had not been complied with. He thought that it was advisable that the magistrates should have strict documentary proof before them, which they were entitled to require in their discretion, and asked for an adjournment of the case in order that such evidence should be given on behalf of the churchwardens and overseers.

Mr. Jones: All this has been before the Bench before.

Mr. Heelas in answer to the chairman said he could not say that the rate was a nullity, but the Bench was not protected against an action of trespass if the rate was not good.

Mr. Jones handed in notices, convening the meetings, which were posted on the church door.

The Chairman said it seemed to him that it was a matter of common knowledge that the rate was a perfectly legal one.

Mr. Heelas: A person has the right of appeal against the rate, and also against the decision of the Bench.

Mr. Heelas then proceeded with his cross-examination. Mr. Jones said the Act was adopted in '63. The first rate was a lower rate than at present. It had not increased by half during the past few years. There had been an annual meeting of the inspectors; the notices of which had been published on the church doors. It is very likely that there was as many as fifty who did not pay their rates. Some were excused. The treasurer was Mr. Sergeant now.

Mr. Jones said he asked for an order if defendant did not pay the money, and that it might not be paid in farthings.

Mr. Excell: Will threepenny pieces do?

The Bench thought there was no defence to the action, and made the order.

Thomas Tuck, George Eskins, James Noble, Thomas Clack, and William Whiting were defended by Mr. Heelas, who consented to a similar judgment.

Mr. Excell said they did not mind paying a fair rate if others did so as well. They would go to the Vestry.

The following were similarly summoned:—Charles Latham, William Ponting, and G. Latham.

of the Lighting Inspectors later in the year. He wished all lights to be extinguished earlier, to save money. Enquiries suggested that it cost the Gas Company well in excess of £2 per lamp, and it was felt best not to push matters any further.

Mr. Excell was elected an Inspector, and continued as such until 1899.

The Parish Council took over the duties of the Vestry from 1894, but the Account Book continues to record the minutes of the Lighting Inspectors held each November. For many years at the turn of the century the sum of £40.00 was collected from the Lighting District, and proved sufficient to pay the gas Company. At times there were complaints about the quality of the gas, especially in Forwood, very close to the gasometer. Further lights were installed in Butt Street and at the entrance to Park Terrace. It was felt that the light was still insufficient, and among the improvements suggested were bigger mains more incandescent lamps, and a double burner at the Cross. The latter was implemented, and in 1909 this lamp was lit every night during the winter. Three years later, all lamps were lit, irrespective of the phases of the moon, from 1st October to 1st April.

The outbreak of the Great War in 1914 brought many changes to the Town. Large numbers of young men volunteered in the first few months of hostilities, and women took over some of the roles previously allocated to males. Gradually life took on a different meaning, as those left behind coped with food shortages, voluntary work providing clothing and comforts for the troops as well as work in the munition factories of the valleys. On February 11th 1916 a special meeting of the Inspectors was held *“to consider the advisability of not lighting the Street Lamps owing to the probable Air Raids by German Aircrafts”* (sic). Dr. Alfred Brown was in the Chair, and after reading an order issued by Stroud District Council (sic) about street lighting proposed *“that all the Street Lighting be dis-continued at once with the exception of the Lamp at the Cross, but this to be used shaded.”* The motion was carried unanimously,

but, as ever with the lighting of the Town, financial considerations surfaced, as the Inspectors asked the Gas Company for a rebate on the costs! The reduced lighting was continued for three years, and must have helped to conserve supplies of coal in Great Britain. In 1917 the Stroud Gas Light and Coke Company were having great difficulties in ensuring a supply to Minchinhampton - the Parish Church used only half its lights for the last years of the War.

Peace eventually returned and an entry in the Gas Accounts for October 27th 1919 records *“A Parish Meeting held this day of Lighting Area when it was resolved the Parish Council should adopt the Lighting Act now carried out by the Inspectors and that 2 lamps be lighted viz, at Market House and The Cross to be paid out of existing balance in Bank to the A/c of Gas Inspectors.”* This was duly done and the account for £11. 6s. paid, leaving a balance of 12s. 9d. to be transferred to Parish funds.

Few entries are now made in the Gas Account Book, which passed to the Parish Council. Items referring to lighting are contained in the minutes of the Council, and the Lighting Rate became part of the Parish Precept. However, from time to time a major change was proposed to the Lighting Area, and reports of these have been noted. A report in the Stroud News⁴ on 14th March 1924 states *The question of the extension of the lighting area of Minchinhampton was discussed at considerable length. Quite a number of new houses have been built since the boundary of the area was decided forty years ago. The Council thought the time had come for some alteration to be made. A resolution was proposed by Mr. Hall, seconded by Mr. Marmont and unanimously carried “That the lighting area be extended from a point in Butt Street across the Park to the house in Windmill Road known as Cristow, then down to Wellfield and turning south to Box Lane”. The matter is to be brought before a parish meeting to be held in the Market House.* However, it seems that many of the people living in the extended area, who would now have to pay a rate towards the lights of Minchinhampton, objected to the extra

expense, and managed to prevent the new area being adopted. They continued to obtain the benefits free!

It was another four years before the area was officially extended.

*“From Cross, whole of West End to Hillfield, Windmill Rd. and
Box Lane to Derhams*

Do. the Well Hill to the Grange, Forwood

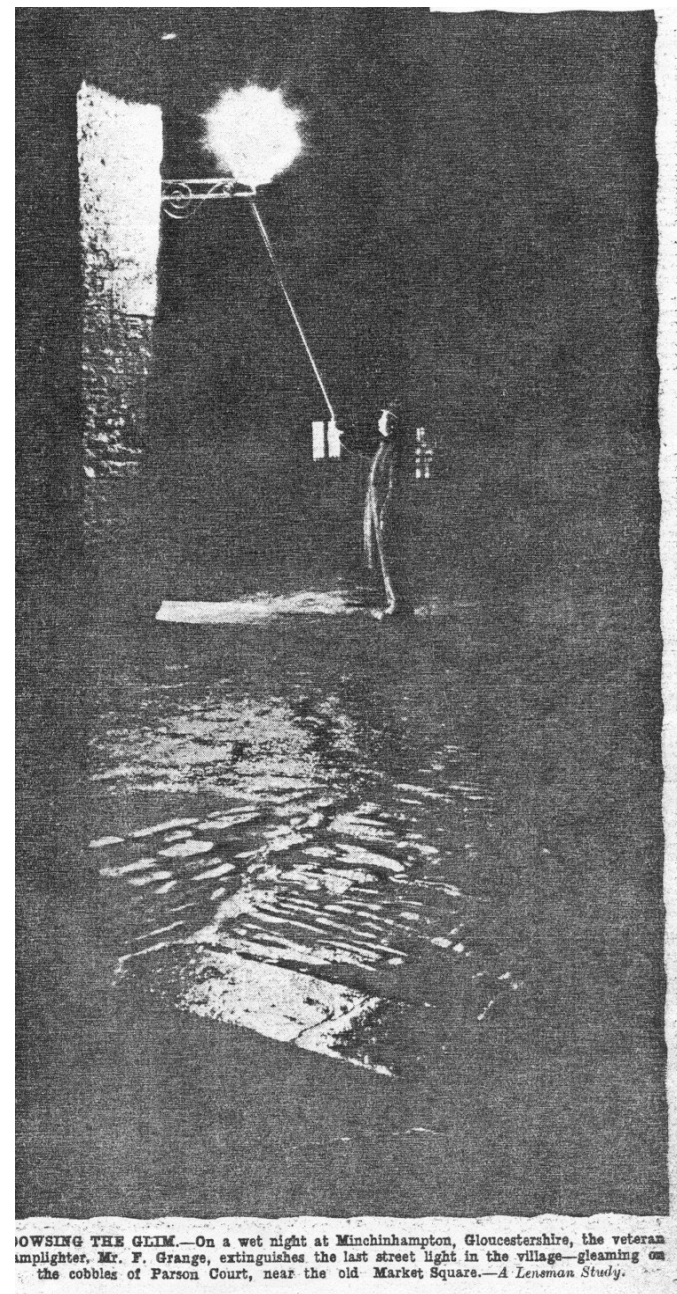
Do. Tetbury Street to top Council House and Friday Street

*Do. High St., Market Sq., Butt Street to top house occupied by Mr.
Excell, Bell Lane to School House up through Park taking in
Windrush, Camp Field and Kalaria on road to West End”⁵*

Events meandered along at a slow pace in the Town. Other parts of the district were already receiving the benefits of electric light. As early as 1924 Stonehouse Parish Council had noted *“the advent of the Electric Power Co. The company would soon be due to be coming through Stonehouse and they would then be in a position to set that off against the Gas Co.”*⁶ There was to be no such luxury for Minchinhampton however, as although some few domestic properties were linked to the electric supply in the early 1930s the main power source remained gas.

The romance of gas lighting was captured forever in the camera lens of a photographer in the thirties. The study “Dowsing the Glim” showing the last lamplighter Mr. F. Grange with the lamp on the Market House, was published nationally in “The Daily Mirror” in 1935. Already it was a scene that had passed into memory in some parts of Britain.

Whatever the plans for updating street lighting might have been, everything was put on hold at the outbreak of World War II. The blackout was again enforced, and although the War Book for Minchinhampton⁷ lists all manner of information for use in an invasion, there is no mention of lights or gas supplies. Presumably, the Gas Company in Stroud were under their own Emergency Orders and all



DOWSING THE GLIM.—On a wet night at Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire, the veteran lamplighter, Mr. F. Grange, extinguishes the last street light in the village—gleaming on the cobbles of Parson Court, near the old Market Square.—*A Lensman Study.*

decisions would be taken by them. There are no references to the restoration of lighting at the cessation of hostilities either; other more pressing needs were paramount.

There remain two pieces in the jigsaw amongst correspondence of the Parish Council. A signed and completed Agreement, between the South Western Gas Board and Minchinhampton Parish Council, confirms the lighting of the Parish in 1952 by gas power. However, in December the following year estimates were received from the Gas Board, for lighting for the next twelve months. Costs have been split to reveal the amounts of gas already used, and the duplicate copy, on which the Clerk was to sign his acceptance of future costs, remains in pristine condition with the original.

Was a decision taken in December 1953 to pay the outstanding account, and to transfer the street lighting to electricity? The balance of probability suggests that this was the demise of gas lighting in Minchinhampton. The responsibility now passed to the Midlands Electricity Board, who continue the lighting authority to this day.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Manuscript Book, held by the Parish Council.
- 2 Statute 3 & 4 William IV Cap.90 - An Act to repeal an Act of the eleventh year of his late Majesty King George the Fourth for the lighting and watching of Parishes in England and Wales and to make other provisions in lieu thereof.
- 3 Stroud Journal, Friday February 3rd 1893
- 4 Original cutting pinned into Gas Accounts
- 5 Parish Meeting held 8th September 1928

- 6 Stroud News, 4th April 1924
- 7 Minchinhampton Invasion Committee 1942

GRANDMA AND THE FAMILY TREE

This light-hearted look at researching family history was found in an American Genealogical Magazine by Mrs. J. Blanshard. It will strike a chord with anyone who has spent hours in the Record Office!

There's been a change in Grandma,
We've noticed her of late;
She's always reading history
Or jotting down some date.
She's tracing back the family,
We'll all have pedigrees
Oh, Grandma's got a hobby,
She's climbing Family Trees.

She has not time to babysit,
The curtains are a fright,
No buttons left on Grandpa's shirt,
The flower beds a sight.
She's given up her club work
The serials on TV.
The only thing she does nowadays
Is climb the Family Tree.

She goes down to the courthouse
And studies ancient lore,
We know more about our forebears
Than we ever knew before.
The books are old and dusty
They make poor Grandma sneeze,
A minor irritation
When you're climbing Family Trees.

Now some folks came from Scotland,

And some from Galway Bay,
Some were French as pastry
Some German all the way.
Some went on West to stake their claim,
Some stayed near to the sea,
Grandma hopes to find them all
As she climbs the Family Tree.

She wanders through the graveyard
In search of date or name.
The rich, the poor, the inbetween
All sleeping there the same.
She pauses now and then to rest
Fanned by a gentle breeze,
That blows above the fathers
Of all our Family Trees.

There were pioneers and patriots
Mixed in our kith and kin
Who blazed the paths of wilderness
And fought through thick and thin.
But none more staunch than Grandma,
Whose eyes light up with glee
Each time she finds a missing branch
For the Family Tree.

Their skills were wide and varied
From carpenter to cook,
And one, alas, the record shows
Was hopelessly a crook.
Blacksmith, weaver, farmer, judge,
Some tutored for a fee,
Long lost in time, now all
Recorded, on the Family Tree.

To some its just a hobby,
To Grandma it's much more;
She knows the joys and heartaches
Of those who went before.
They loved, they lost, they laughed, they wept,
And now for you and me,
They live again in spirit
Around the Family Tree.

At last she's nearly finished,
And we are each exposed.
Life will be the same again
This we all supposed!
Grandma will cook and sew,
Serve cookies with our tea,
We'll all, be fat, just as before
That wretched Family Tree

Sad to relate, the Preacher called
And visited for a spell.
We talked about the Gospel
And other things as well.
The heathen folk, the poor, and then -
Twas Fate, it had to be
Somehow the conversation turned
To Grandma and the Family Tree.

We tried to change the subject
We talked of everything!
But then in Grandmas voice we heard
That old familiar ring.
She told him all about the past.
And soon was plain to see
The Preacher too was neatly snared

By Grandma and the Family Tree.

He never knew his Grandpa.
His mothers name was Clark.
He and Grandma talked and talked,
Outside it grew quite dark.
We'd hoped our fears were groundless.
But just like some disease,
Grandma's become an addict -
She's hooked on Family Trees!

Our souls were filled with sorrow,
Our hearts sank with dismay,
Our ears could scarce believe the words
We heard our Grandma say.
"It sure is a lucky thing
That you have come to me,
I know exactly how its done
I'll climb your Family Tree!"

E.M. KELLEY

DR. JAMES BRADLEY

It is three hundred years since the birth of Dr. James Bradley, who was buried in Minchinhampton churchyard. It is appropriate to reproduce part of the work by A.T. Playne which outlines his life.

By far the most distinguished man who lies buried at Minchinhampton is Dr. James Bradley, in memory of whom there is this inscription, translated from the original Latin, engraved on a brass-plate in the south transept, formerly in the churchyard:

“Here lies buried James Bradley D.D., a member of the Royal Societies of London, Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg, Astronomer Royal, Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. A man highly esteemed for his knowledge of Physical Science and principally in the elucidation of the most abstruse points; so successfully diligent, and of such great wisdom, that all those who devoted themselves to these pursuits freely owned his superiority; and at the same time of such modesty that he alone seemed ignorant of the high reputation in which he was held by those most competent to Judge. He died July 12th, 1762, aged 70.”

Dr. Bradley was born at Sherborne, Gloucestershire in March 1693, and took holy orders in 1719, but resigned his ecclesiastical preferments on being appointed Savilian Professor of Astronomy at Oxford. He had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1718, and was appointed Astronomer Royal in 1742, succeeding the celebrated Edmund Halley. After a most distinguished career, he retired on a crown pension of £250 a year, and died in broken health at Chalford, within the parish of Minchinhampton. Dr. Bradley’s mother and sister are also buried at Minchinhampton.”

Much of Dr. Bradley’s work as the third Astronomer Royal was concerned with careful observation and recording of the heavens. He worked on the passage of light and also the axis of the Earth, and his theories are sometimes referred to as *a corner-stone of astronomical science*. He based his measurements on a meridian at Greenwich, passing through the room at the Observatory where his telescope can still be seen. Bradley’s meridian is about 19 feet west of the present Greenwich Meridian, but was the one in use in the early C19th, when the first accurate maps of Britain were being drawn by the Ordnance Survey. As a consequence, all the triangulations were based on the Bradley Meridian, and the grid lines on all O.S. maps to this day have this as their datum point.

Three hundred years after his birth, Bradley remains an important influence on modern science.