

# MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

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## **MINCHINHAMPTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP COMMITTEE 2000/2001**

Mr. John Cooper – Honorary President  
Mrs. Diana Wall – Chairman  
Dr. Hugh Kearsey – Vice Chairman  
Mrs. Ann Chew - Treasurer  
Mr. Stan Dyer  
Mr. Brian Keen  
Mrs. Sue Smith

### **PROGRAMME OF PAST EVENTS**

2000	November	A.G.M. & “Social Life c. 1910” - Mr. Howard Beard
2001	January	“The Minchinhampton Town Band” - Mr. Trevor Picken
	March	“The Minchinhampton Area in Roman and Saxon Times” - Mrs. Claire Forbes
	May	“Discovering Family History” - Dr. Hugh Kearsey
	July	Guided Walk Around Box - Mrs. Diana Wall
	September	“Our Commons?” - Mr. J. V. Smith
	October	Members Evening
	November	A.G.M. followed by “Gloucestershire’s Industrial Heritage” - Dr. R. Wilson

The Minchinhampton Local History Group has compiled a photographic record of life and places in the area in the year 2000. The intention is to make them available on CD ROM.

# Football in Minchinhampton

## by Stan Dyer



1957 Cup Winners, Stroud & District Football League Div III

*Standing - left to right:* Eric Perkins, Jock Armstrong, Norman Blick, Cyril Day, Kieth Coates, Michael Lawrence, Bob Weaver, Darryl Russell, Arthur White, Gordon Day, Barry Richards, Stan Doel, George Overbury

*Seated left to right:* Percy Doel, Harry Pollard, Peter Mills, Bertie Workman, Stan Dyer.

It would be wrong to call the following a history of Minchinhampton Football Club because it has become clear that there were periods when no club existed, and when football resumed it would have been a completely new set-up. For instance, when in 1912 the club withdrew from the Stroud League without completing its fixtures, a new club calling themselves Minchinhampton Rovers joined the league the following season. The change of name was probably to avoid inheriting debts incurred by the previous club. Also, a club calling itself Minchinhampton Athletic joined the Stroud League for season 1933-34 and left in 1935-36 without completing its fixtures, but continued playing in Dursley and Wotton League. It remained in this league for two more seasons, returning to the Stroud League in 1938. There was no club during the war years of course, but the club reformed in 1945 and joined the Stroud League. In 1952 the 1st XI moved to the expanded Gloucestershire Northern Senior League which was played in two sections, with the top half of each section forming DIV I for the following season. Minchinhampton finished bottom of their section and then bottom of

DIV II and the club folded at the end of the 1953-54 season, - the end of an era. Highlights of the previous half century were few but a number of successes can be listed as follows:

Winners of Stroud Charity Cup Section 13 in 1947-48 and again in 1948-49.

1907-08	Runners-up in Stroud League	Div I
1934-35	” ” ” ”	Div I
1905-06	” ” ” ”	Div II
1947-48	” ” ” ”	Div II
1921-22	” ” ” ”	Div IV

Minchinhampton never won a League Championship or a County Cup Championship. During the forgoing period the playing fields used were the Great Park, Box Lanes (Common Road), Christowe (Common), Tetbury Street (Mr Wilkins’ field), and Old Rectory field (now Stuart Playing Field). Changing rooms were mostly at the Baptist Church Institute (now the Church Centre) but also at the White Hart and Crown Hotel.

A Minchinhampton Youth Club team played in Stroud Youth League from 1949-1952 but were quite separate from the Senior club but this team continued as Minchinhampton in 1953 for a number of years, and inherited the shirts from the defunct Senior Club and also took over the Old Rectory field which they shared with Bill Waldron’s cows. Changing rooms were at the Crown Inn. All was well with this team but in 1956 a number of the stronger players were now too old for youth football and it was resolved to enter a team in Stroud League Div III. There was great enthusiasm in the club at this time and the team was raised entirely from Minchinhampton including, Gordon Day, Harry Pollard, Norman Blick, Stan Dyer, Eddie Lawrence, Michael Lawrence. Ron Sturmeay, Bertie Workman, Tony Smith, Peter Mills, Barry Richards, Percy Doel, Keith Coates and Darrell Russell. Committee members included Stan Dod (Chairman), W (Jock) Armstrong (Treasurer). Stan Dyer (Secretary), Eric Perkins, Arthur White. Cyril Day, Roger Pardoe and George Ellins.

This team won Div III and were Runners-up in Stroud Charity Cup Section B and again in 1960. They were Runners-up in Stroud League Div II in 1957-58 and Div I champions in 1959-60 and were accepted into the Northern Senior League the following season.

It was during this golden era that the Club built its own changing rooms on the Old Rectory field with the blessing of land owner Miss Enid Stuart and tenant farmer Bill Waldron and the active encouragement of Rear Admiral Sir Richard Bevan, the club President.

The main fund raising event was a fete at The Close, Well Hill, home of Dr Dale Roberts, as well as rummage sales etc. and the money was raised quite quickly as there was much goodwill for the club from the folk of Minchinhampton.

It so happened that RAF Aston Down was being closed as a station and we were able to purchase the NAAFI hut fairly cheaply and this was erected on a concrete base with piped water and drainage by A. Simmonds & Sons and was divided into two changing rooms with separate accommodation for the Referee and a tea bar. There was also a sunken bath with showers. For the period it was considered a first class facility. All this was achieved without any outside help from grants etc. though a generous donation was made by Miss Stuart who was anxious to see the ground become established as a sports field so as to keep the developers at bay. The Glebe estate “next door” was already established.

The 1st XI survived eight seasons in the Senior League, then spent four seasons in the Stroud League, They returned to the Senior League in 1972 and remained there seven years before being relegated once more to Stroud League. but regained Senior League status in the year 2000 by virtue of being League Champions of Stroud Div I. Alas, after an encouraging start, they fell away and were relegated after only one season.

It is worth recording that in the late 1950's and early 1960's the club was strong enough to run a number of money raising fetes, first at The Close, the home of Dr and Mrs Dale Roberts, then at Lammas Park and finally at the playing field. The last four included band contests which attracted bands from as far afield as Crewkerne, South Wales and Oxford, and on one occasion eleven bands took part and marched from the Market House to the Lammas to be judged for marching as well as playing on the bandstand. These contests were organised for the club by the late Mr Osmond D Stephens and were the forerunners of the Stroud Brass Band Festival which Mr Stephens instigated and ran for 30 years. It is still going strong.

While researching the foregoing brief history, I found very little local knowledge except for a few team photographs and I am therefore very grateful to the Gloucestershire F.A. historian, Mr Colin Timbrell of Dursley who very kindly supplied most of the information from his records.



Minchinhampton  
Football Team  
1904

## Christmas Journey

*Extract from 'Something More to Say' by 'Fay Inchfawn' (pseud), pub. Lutterworth, 1963, describing a visit to Minchinhampton in 1885, when the author was aged five and lived in Portishead, Somerset. Printed exactly as it appeared by kind permission of a descendant of the author.*

*The real name of Fay 'Inchfawn' was Elizabeth Rebecca Ward (née Daniels). After living in Bradford-on-Avon, Wiltshire, during the First World War, she moved with her husband, Atkinson Ward, to Freshford, Somerset, where she died on 16 April 1978. Her father was Gilbert Daniels, born in Stroud in 1851, who in 1877 married Mary Arundell Jones, born in Minchinhampton in 1855. Gilbert died on 14.4.1928 and Mary on 29.10.1948. They are both buried in Canford Cemetery, Bristol. 'Grandmother' (see text) was Elizabeth Daniels (née Ridler), born Minchinhampton May 1816, died 14.12.1902 at The Bourne.*

**T**HE year is 1885, the time is evening, but we are not preparing for bed. We are standing just inside the front door; my Father, my Mother, my sister and I, muffled up to the ears. A loud knock on the door makes my Mother jump. We all know who it is. The door is opened and there stands the old cabman with his cab and his old grey horse come to take us to the railway station. It is Christmas Eve and we are 'going to Grandpa's' for Christmas.

We are bundled into the cab so hurriedly there is scarcely time to notice that it is snowing. In those days it always snowed at Christmas. The train is waiting for us and soon we and our luggage are in it. The engine gives a great puff, the slow grind of wheels begins, and we are off upon our Christmas adventure, two of us at any rate prepared to enjoy every minute of it.

What a journey it was! Only fifty miles—but it took half a day to get there. The first stage brought us to Bristol Temple Meads. We were turned out on a crowded platform. Trains were hissing—porters were running here and there. Guards were shouting and waving flags, and people, men, women and children, were talking, screaming, and in some cases struggling. Trains puffed in and trains puffed out—it seemed a long time, but at last our train came in. The porter who had the care of our luggage rushed forward. Soon we were inside, and how smelly and close and smoky it was—but our belongings were in the rack, and we were sitting beneath it.

My Father had me on his knee with Lilian on his other side. The porter was leaving the carriage when my Mother handed him threepence saying: 'Get yourself a cup of coffee with this, and will you please bring a footwarmer?'

The man touched his cap. At that time threepence was quite a good tip. He returned

with a tin, flat on the top. and placed it under my Mother's feet just as the train began to move.

My poor Mother! How she hated this journey! The icy cold, the odour of cheap tobacco, and the dirty floor, in spite of a notice on the wall *No spitting!*—an injunction which obviously had not been heeded.

Why did not my Father put his foot down, and veto the project altogether? In view of my Mother's ill-health and her sensitive nostrils he would have been within his rights so to do.

I know now that he could not bring himself to the point, because he knew how greatly my Mother desired to be with her own people at Christmas. She had never quite got over the feeling of homesickness which assailed her when first she and my Father left her home town to settle at Portishead.

The only Christmas she had spent apart from her parents was the year when I was born. An event which took place a little later than was expected. She had everything mapped out, but had not reckoned on the possibility of herself not having recovered strength sufficiently to make journeying a practical proposition. Nor on the fact that the winter of 1880 was unusually frigid.

Although some things happened which sweetened the experience she had nevertheless taken it to heart. Knowing this, and that she would brave any discomfort to get there, my Father felt his part was to help her through whatever ills might be encountered without complicating matters by opposition.

With some fortitude he remained silent when she tucked up her skirt, which was rather more than ankle length. She cleared her throat and held her handkerchief to her nose just as the engine with a piercing shriek rushed into a tunnel—a sulphurous smell invaded the carriage before my Father could shut the windows. We emerged at last only to stop at the first station, Yate, where people climbed in and crowded the carriage to capacity. There was, of course, no corridor.

Soon the train began to crawl onwards again. It was very slow, stopping at every station. There was now only standing room. People carrying bundles of holly and mistletoe were forcing their way into our compartment, and would-be passengers were walking past the window unable to find seats. Every-one seemed to be going away for Christmas.

Sleepy children whimpering because of the cold were lifted in, and after a few stations lifted out again. The lamp in the ceiling flickered and seemed about to go out. At last we drew up. Porters were shouting: 'Stonehouse, and 'Change for Stroud!'

How we got out—how we staggered to a seat—how we crossed the line and went down a dimly lit covered way which led to the branch line for Nailsworth takes little time to tell. But it was a wearying and stumbling process. At last we were there, almost at journey's end—packed into a one-horse fly, still with the long climb from the Valley over ice and snow, round the Devil's Elbow and up-up-up to Minchinhampton Common.

During this hazardous ascent Lilian and I must have slept.. I was dimly conscious that my Father was walking—the driver, alternately admonishing and cajoling, walked beside the horse which climbed manfully, only now and then sliding backwards.

At last came the short trit-trot past the Old Bear Inn—down the West End and the swirl round the corner to Well Hill. Then the sudden standstill before an open door. I remember being lifted out of the cab and rushing into the brightly lighted house so warm and pleasant with the familiar smell of nice things cooking, and of gas from the small burner in the hall.

Wide awake now, there was first a wild rush around the house to discover Aunt Carrie in the kitchen still at work. In her hands were the preparations for the morrow. Home-making was her speciality. She was Grandmother's right hand, but she was also the ministering angel who stepped into all the domestic crises in the family. The whole house was for me a place of peace. My Mother was happy. Her bonnet and her coat taken upstairs for her, she sat with our grandparents in the parlour — a child at home.

The grandfather clock was tick-tacking on the stairs. Aunt Emily and the pretty Aunt Amelia escorting us to bed in the attic was an overweight of joy.

Anyone reading this narrative who has never slept in an attic will not even in memory experience the ecstasy Lilian and I felt as we stepped in. The great beam in the ceiling was in one part of the room so low a child could have bumped her head. The tiny window high up in the wall—and the big feather bed with curtains. An enchanted room, if ever there was one.

With the two aunts to assist us, and our prayers said, we were soon snuggling into the warmth of the curtained bed. Our stockings were hung over the bed rail and the soft closing of the door was the last sound I heard. It is curious that I remember so vividly the journey, but only dimly the various delights of being with the Grandparents at Christmas.

The pretty Auntie took us to church. The snow was crisp and crackled under our feet, and the bells were ringing from the tall church tower. I watched with rapture little boys clad in white issuing from the vestry singing "Hark! the herald angels sing".

The Christmas dinner! A sumptuous affair for which uncles and aunts and cousins had



arrived in traps and gigs, no one being farther away than Tetbury. But one Christmas party spent with the Grandparents was very much like another, and yet who would have liked to miss that gathering of the clans?

I remember it was an unwritten law that after midday dinner my Mother and her sisters went to Grandmother's bedroom to sit around a big fire. I think they met to hear and to tell secrets, and to talk over items of family news not to be aired in public. Children were not admitted, so it must have been something mysterious which even Lilian did not know.

On Boxing Day my Father took Lilian and me down to The Bourne to see his Mother and some of his other relations.

For this excursion my Mother dressed us with great care. Our coats were of pale cream material which I now suppose to have been some sort of fur fabric with a deep pile. The coats had little capes to make them doubly warm. It is remembered that I had, on the first time of wearing, discovered that if you began at the edges, you could pick it out—one short strand at a time till quite a gap appeared. I remember that my Father and Lilian were instructed to see that I did not engage in this fascinating occupation. As it happened I had not much opportunity.

Going down the narrow lanes to The Bourne the branches of trees on each side almost met, and here and there interlaced overhead. Icicles, looking like crystal pencils, hung from them. As a great treat my Father reached up, secured two of the longest, and gave them to Lilian and to me to suck. Was there ever such a walk with such a Father? Having finished the icicles we held his hands one on each side and he let us slide a good part of the way down the frozen hills.

When we reached The Bourne we went first to Grandmother's house. She lived next door to her eldest son, who, with his wife and two daughters, had undertaken to take care of her while allowing her the pleasure of her own domain.

My Father did not knock at the door. He turned the handle and walked into a room where an old lady was sitting beside a fire. She turned to look at him—but her eyes were so deeply set and apparently rather dim that she had to rise and peer into his face before she took his hand and called him by his name.

She was very small. She wore a black lace cap, and her face was so tiny and so thin she was rather like a brown bird. When my Father pushed us forward we stood staring at her. This Grandmother, who was a stranger to us, was talking to her son, and seemed not to notice that we were there, until the door opened again and Aunt Polly and the cousins from the next house came in.

They had seen us arrive and had come to say we must have dinner with them because

Grandmother was too old to have visitors for meals. Over this there was some altercation. At last it was arranged that they would supply the dinner, but we should eat it at Grandmother's table.

Then Lilian and I were taken into the next house so that Grandmother could have our Father all to herself till dinner time. Now, indeed, we were petted and feasted. How kindly everyone spoke to us—and looked at us. Cousin Nellie took off our little coats, admiring the style the material and the lining, and laying them carefully on the parlour sofa. Aunt Polly had one eye in the oven, so she said, and Emily was making mince-pies. We strayed from one to the other feeling very pleasantly entertained. 'Now,' said cousin Nellie, 'I have to go to the shop and get potatoes.'

To our surprise she took us through a door in the sitting room, and lo and behold there was a shop—all part of the house! Nellie drew up one of the blinds and took potatoes from a sack under the counter while we looked round. Bottles of sweets, cheese, all sorts of groceries were there. And would you believe it, we were allowed to play at shop just as we liked. At home we had a toy shop, so-called, in a box—a dolls' shop with tiny articles painted to look like sweets. But now we had real brass scales and proper things to weigh, and all the while admiring relatives were within call.

All too soon it was dinner time. We had reluctantly to leave the fascinating shop. The two grown-up cousins smoothed our ringlets and deposited us and our dinners at Grandmother's house. One thing I remember. It is the two china dogs on the mantelpiece and not being able to get on with my food because of their fascination. If they had moved their ears or wagged their tails, the desire to handle them could not have been greater.

The rest of the visit is only a blur. Early in the afternoon we had to begin the journey back to Minchinhampton. It was a long steady climb, and my Father had to support us most of the way. It was nearly dark when we left The Bourne, but as we ascended, the sky was lit with the last rays of the sun. When we emerged at last from the lanes it was sheer pleasure to slip down from my favourite place on my Father's shoulder and to take short runs with Lilian on the more level common road. On reaching the well-known door with its seven steps, we rushed once more into the warm well-lighted house just in time for tea and toasted muffins.

Although I recall the outward journey so vividly I cannot remember anything about our return to Portishead—to the house called Whitegates in the centre of the village, and the young maid Maria. But that the family pattern was printed indelibly upon the mind of a five-year-old there can be no doubt. That old house where my Mother's early memories lived so fervently: she always spoke of going there as 'going home'.

## Notes on the families mentioned in the above article.



The Jones family of Well Hill were important to Minchinhampton, in that William Arundell Jones was the Assistant Overseer and Registrar for the district. He was a coal merchant, and his son Charles carried on the business, whose name can still be seen on the wall of the brick building in Egypt Mill yard, the former station yard at Nailsworth. The 1881 Census enables a picture of the family relationships to be built up. At that time William and his wife Rebecca lived in Well Hill with two daughters: Caroline (27) and Emily (21), and two sons: Charles (18) and Fenning (13). The younger daughter did not marry, but became the proprietor of a fashionable haberdasher's business in Well Hill, and Emily is shown on the left in the photograph above, taken by her brother in 1905, outside her shop. In 1881 she is described as a milliner, as are her mother and sister, and the shop would seem to be an offshoot of that business.

In 1881 Charles would appear to be learning his father's business, as he is described as a clerk. Older residents remember his team of horses in the 1920s being watered and fed at Park Farm, which he then owned. In the local History Collection there is a scrapbook, compiled after 1913 of news cuttings relating to the family, including the obituary for William Jones. One wonders if the younger son was named after the well-known local schoolmaster Fenning Parke. F.E. Jones was later nicknamed "Funny" Jones, because of his appearances in local concert parties, and his mother, the grandmother in Well Hill visited that Christmas in 1885 was the sister of "Jolly" Nash a London music hall entertainer. William Jones had appeared in a concert to raise money for Minchinhampton Town Band in 1862, and both sons became part of the

Obijiway Minstrels, touring Gloucestershire in the 1890s. The Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Standard in 1899 writes of “Funny” Jones, “*His amusing examples of Gloucestershire drollery, the inimitable manner of his facial alterations, the style of his laughing songs. when he taxed the risible facilities of his audience to the utmost, should have been witnessed to be properly understood.*” Like his cousin “Fay Inchfawn” he wrote articles and poems — a truly artistic family.

“Fay Inchfawn” was Elizabeth Daniels, and her mother was born Mary Jones in 1856. It appears possible from the Census that Mary and two of her sisters married into the Daniels family of the Bourne. Grandma whom she visited on Boxing Day was another Elizabeth, living with her sister, and as the extract relates, with a son and his family next door. “Fay’s” uncle was another coal merchant – was this how the two families became so interlinked? A chance article with some reminiscences has led onto the trail of some prominent local tradesmen and their families.

## **The Nailsworth Ladder**

**Diana Wall**

If you study an Ordnance Survey map of this area it is easy to pick out the road known as the “W”, running from Nailsworth to the Halfway Inn. Looking more carefully, you can see a track, which takes the direct route up the gradient – this is “The Nailsworth Ladder”. On the ground, its lower end at “The Hollies” is often overgrown, and easy to miss, but each February it is the scene of a motoring trial with its roots in the first years of the last century.

Before the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were few roads of any permanence in this area, only tracks used by mules or horses and carts, whose route would vary according to the season. As one part became a quagmire, the carriers would move around it, or take a different track altogether. Routes came up from the valleys to the Common, and then down again on the other side, although the track from the Great Park towards Cirencester kept to the hill summit, along the line of the Old Common, later utilised for the turnpike road. The former Blue Boys Inn is aligned along this route, rather than the present-day road. The Ladder was one of the tracks up the hillside, from the scattered communities of Newmarket, Shortwood and Spring Hill. Similar routes included Ham Mill Lane, from the valley at Thrupp, Bownham Lane parallel to it, and Whips Lane at Amberley.

What was a suitable gradient for a horse or other pack animal was deemed too steep for carriages or coaches in the turnpike era. In his book “A History of Hampton Cars” Trevor Picken quotes a maximum gradient of 1 in 2½ for the Ladder, with nothing on the current track less than 1 in 5. In 1781 the Nailsworth Turnpike Trust discussed the

building of what is now the 'W'. This would link the newly constructed Gloucester to Bath Turnpike (now the A46) with Minchinhampton via Hampton Green. By going along the contours, albeit with the series of bends from which the road takes its name, they obtained a gradient of 1 in 9 at the bottom and 1 in 12 at the top. The stone for the surface would come from a quarry in Hazelwood, laid 12 inches deep in the middle decreasing to 6 inches at the sides, thus creating the camber necessary for drainage. The road was completed in six months and a toll-bar was erected at the bottom of the hill. Thus the Ladder became a bypassed track.

The concept of trials, for motorcycles and cars, has its origin in the early years of motoring. Just as now, manufacturers tried to show that their machines were superior to the others around. This might take the form of a long-distance road run, a high-speed timed trial or an ascent of a steep hill. In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the horse was still supreme, and many of the road surfaces were less than suitable for mechanical transport. The area around Stroud, with its many steep hills and relatively sparse population was an ideal location for the testing of machines both by manufacturers and individuals.

One of the earliest cars to climb the Ladder was a 10-horsepower Hampton, which was then built in Birmingham. This factory later moved to Dudbridge, where the Sainsbury supermarket now stands. In "A History of Hampton Cars" there are some publicity shots of an attempted climb in 1914, a few days after a formal manufacturers trial, when a Singer, Warren-Lambert and a Morgan were also successful. In the same way that high-speed trials evolved into grand-prix and endurance races in the post World War I period, so ascents of unsurfaced hills, linked by long-distance runs, developed into what are now known as "Classic Trials". Speed was of little importance (although you would wish to finish in daylight!) but the varying terrain tested the machines reliability, as did the mileage covered. The Motor Cycling Club, celebrating its centenary in 2001, ran events to Lands End and Exeter from starts all around the U.K. before 1910, although probably the routes did not come into the Stroud area. Trevor Picken notes that the annual "*Nailsworth Ladder August Event*" was very popular in the post-war years; Mrs. Lionel Martin was the first lady to make a clean climb in her husband's Aston Martin in 1920. "*10 – 16 H.P. Hampton, Complete - £520. The FIRST and ONLY car with 2, 3, and 4 passengers to climb the NAILSWORTH LADDER – a gradient of 1 in 2 ½. Can easily do 50 miles per hour.*" So ran a 1920s advertisement for Hampton Cars.

The hey-day of trialling was probably the 1930s. "*In the years immediately before the Second World War, which is the period of motor sport dealt with in this book, club racing .... was non-existent. Racing of any sort was confined to the old Brooklands track, the narrow parkland circuit at Donington, together with occasional forays at Crystal Palace. Because of this, the major pastime of the clubmen of those days was "Trials". Major trials events used to attract entries nearly as large as are today received for race meetings at Silverstone, Goodwood or Brands [Hatch]. Entries*



*usually consisted of only mildly modified (and up to 1938 "Knobbly tyre" equipped) versions of the small two-seater sports cars of the day". C.A.N. May wrote this in his book "Wheelspin" and also mentions that hills like Nailsworth Ladder and Ham Mill regularly attracted crowds of hundreds of spectators. In the early 1930s the M.G. Car Club ran "The Abingdon Trial", taking its name from the Morris Garages factory, which was both start and finish of the event. A lunch halt was made at the Bear of Rodborough. May attempted the local hills for the first time in an M.G. J2 in 1933. "Composure was regained slightly after a successful non-stop climb of Nailsworth Ladder, because "The Ladder" which runs up from just outside Nailsworth directly on to Rodborough [sic] Common, and is steep, with a very rough surface of rock outcrop, had quite a reputation." Such was the publicity generated that M.G. ran a works team for many years and the area would be used many times during the season, for both motorcycles and cars. These events were (and still are) totally different from a hill climb, which took place over a tarmac surface, against the clock, at venues like Prescott (north of Cheltenham) or Shelsley Walsh (Worcestershire). The Motor Cycling Club, now catering for cars as well as bikes, had also discovered the area as Peter Garnier notes in his history of the club: "For 1933 and 1934 the event (The Team Trial) again broke new ground, with the start in the Stroud Area - actually from the foot of the first section, Sandy Lane - and it was in this event that the names of well-known 'trials hills' began to appear: Sandy Lane itself, Bismore, Ferriscourt, Knapp, Nailsworth Ladder, and Catswood. The Ilkley and Birmingham M.C.C.s were the respective winners."*

Obviously World War II intervened, but trials were the first type of motor sport to resume in this country, and on February 23rd 1946 the Bristol Motorcycle and Light Car Club ran their "Feddon Trial" which used both Nailsworth Ladder and Bownham Lane. For two years many pre-war drivers and cars competed in a full round of trials, all over the country, but the restrictions on fuel, together with the age of many of the vehicles, led to a pause until 1950. It was in that year that the Stroud and District Motor Club was formed. Three good friends, Philip Ford, Peter Hewins and Bob Parker, with others who had expressed an interest, met at the Bear Pools Cafe on 5th June to adopt a constitution. All three had been interested in pre-war car trials, and since that date the Club has maintained its focus as a trials club. In looking for a symbol for the whole district it was decided to adopt a silhouette of Rodborough Fort as the Club Badge.

Many of the early trials organised by the Club were single-venue events, but in 1955 there are records of using Nailsworth Ladder and Fort near Dursley. Of course, other clubs continued to use the local hills. Competitive sports cars, such as Dellow's would be seen alongside family-owned Volkswagens and Singers. The premier event "The Cotswold Clouds" was first run in the early 1960s, using both pre-war hills and other venues such as Ebworth Woods. In 1962 *"Avening and the Ladder were too dry to claim many victims. Cakebread's TR2 bottomed twice on the Ladder, but Dive's Roche and Hadland's Skoda made fast easy climbs. There were many spectators on the Ladder, and two old-timers were heard to say "It were rougher'n this in the old days" "Ah! And a damn sight steeper too".* (Club Newsletter) It is this event in early February that still attracts car competitors from all over the country, and a great number of spectators to the top of Ham Mill, and along "the step" of the Ladder. It is the only event where cars are permitted to use these hills, (which still legally have the status of public roads) although motorcycles also climb them during the "March Hare Trial".

For most of the year the Ladder is a peaceful track, offering a steep climb to those walkers who enjoy the countryside above Nailsworth. The top section is now only a footpath, but once each year it is possible to participate in a spectacle little changed in seventy years. Long may its use continue!

## **REFERENCES:**

- A HISTORY OF HAMPTON CARS - Trevor Picken (1997)
- THE MOTOR CYCLING CLUB - 88 Years of Motor Sport - Peter Garnier (1989)
- THE Stroud and District Motor Club 1950 – 2000 - Various Authors (2000)
- WHEELSPIN - Competition Motoring from the Driver's Seat - C.A.N. May (1945)

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

This year two books of special interest to Minchinhampton residents have been published, and these are briefly reviewed below.

### **MINCHINHAMPTON AND NAILSWORTH VOICES**

**Katie Jarvis, Tempus Publishing Limited, price £10.99**

This is one of those books that you just cannot put down! Oral history is a compelling record of the past, and Katie has combined humour, pathos and excitement in her selection of memories. The contributors are many and varied, and their reminiscences are taken mainly from the first half of the last century, but are drawn together in exploring the themes of childhood, including the more difficult days, town life and the world of work, wartime and leisure. The photographs from private sources accentuate the personal accounts of people, of whom many are known to us. In collating and printing this information Katie has added significantly to the knowledge of life in this area in the past and this is a fascinating volume for anyone's bookshelf. The book is on sale at Minchinhampton Post Office.

### **WHERE THE COW IS KING –**

#### **The ancient royal Demesne of Minchinhampton**

**J.V. Smith, "Choirpress" (Gloucester), £9.95**

To the outsider the commons of Minchinhampton and Rodborough are what make this area unique. Residents may have become used to these wonderful areas, but would like to know more about their origins, "laws" and other peculiarities. This is the book that everyone needs! It traces the origins of the rights over the land, follows the history of occupation and clearance, but also notes how these fit into the twenty-first century. The research has been meticulously carried out, but where there is doubt the reader is presented with alternatives and allowed to make up his or her mind. But this is not just a history book; the author has spent many years recording the flowers and other plants on the commons, identifying the birdsong and collecting sayings and poems from the locality. There is a section on the sport of the commons – from Fives to Football (both codes), Cricket to Car Trials. It is the type of book that makes you want to get out and find out more for yourself, and walk some of the most beautiful hilltops in the country into the bargain! The book can be obtained through the Minchinhampton Local History Group.

If you are looking for a gift to sent to ex-Minchinhamptonites, then don't forget the two volumes "Minchinhampton Life and Times" published last year by the Local History Group, each volume priced £2.50 and available from the Chairman or Vice-Chairman.