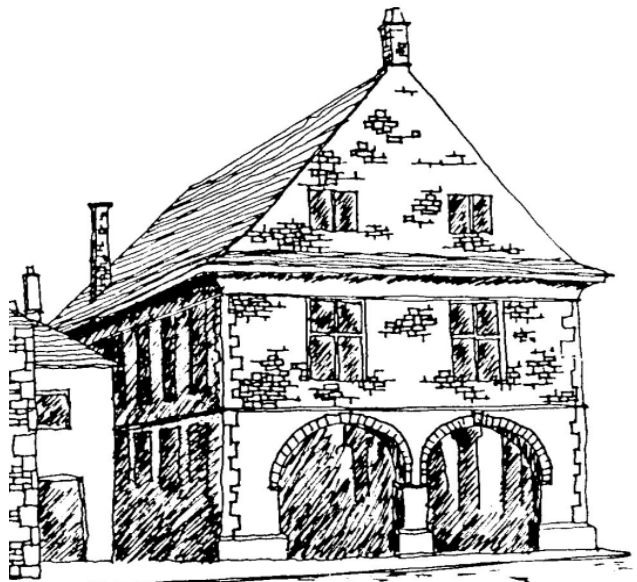


Minchinhampton

Life and Times

Part 4: Reminiscences



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Preface

The Local History Group are proud to present Part 4 (Reminiscences) of the series "Minchinhampton Life and Times", coinciding with the "Friends and Neighbours" Exhibition of October 2004. It is over twenty years since the Group was formed, meeting on a cold evening in an even colder Vestry Room, and this volume draws on material first printed in our Annual Bulletins, alongside previously unpublished accounts deposited in the Local History Collection. The latter has found a permanent home in the basement of the new Parish Centre at the Trap House in West End, and now we are able to open regularly for research the hope is that there will be a plentiful flow of material for further volumes of "Life and Times"! Whether you have bought all the previous booklets, or this is your first, we hope you enjoy these personal glimpses into Minchinhampton's past.

Diana Wall, Chairman,
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Minchinhampton Life and Time: Part 4: Reminiscences
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The Trap House

Harry Morle's memories of his childhood in Minchinhampton

In the 20's and 30's Holy Trinity Church was the focal point in the life of the community, together with the Baptist Chapel in Tetbury Street.



Holy Trinity Church



Baptist Chapel

The position of the Church, standing above the High Street and adjacent lanes reminded me of the mother hen guarding her brood, the cottages and cottagers. Attendance at both Church and Chapel was traditional, the former holding regular Sunday services both morning and evening. For us as choirboys attendance was quasi-compulsory, and it was not unheard of for as many as five services, including Sunday School, to gather us in. The Rector, a lovable, caring man, was very fond of horse-riding, and it was quite common for him to exercise both his animal and himself in the Park before service. How did we know? We spotted his riding boots and breeches as he knelt at the altar. The choir, under a most excellent choirmaster G. H. Bird F.R.C.O. was well known and well served by both men and boys, the outstanding of whom were Jack Newman (bass), Bob Bashford (tenor) and Ernest Llewellyn (treble). Practices took place on Wednesday evenings, and Friday afternoons (boys only). Christmas, Easter and Whitsun were special for it was then that we sang anthems. Good Friday meant that shops were shut and a three-hour service was held. As a small incentive the choirboys were paid quarterly the princely sum of two shillings, the seniors collecting three. On 'pay night' the money soon evaporated - fish and chips being the celebratory diet.

Social life in the village revolved around the Market House (Hall), the chief activity being in the hands of the Dramatic Society, two of whose leading actors were Messrs. Bashford and Newman, both of whom had clear resonant voices. "And so to bed" was one of their triumphs. The Market House had also attracted

touring players, and the writer remembers thespians staying at his home in Butt Street. A well-known play of theirs was "Maria Martin, or, Murder in the Red Barn." Occasional dances also took place in the winter. Local sports clubs catering for soccer and cricket had their headquarters off Tetbury Street, later in the Park and on the Common, while in the inns darts, quoits, table skittles, cribbage, 'five card down', whist and dominos figured largely. The British Legion H.Q. housed billiards and snooker tables, table tennis, while the Boy Scout troop used the facilities lying behind it.

Gardening, as might be expected, was a favorite occupation both as a hobby and for the excellence of its produce. Two large fields, one off Tetbury Street, the other alongside Dr. Brown's Road, had for many years exercised both men and boys. For some obscure reason the season began on Good Friday morning, when the men would assemble, tools on shoulder, to do battle with weeds and couch grass. From then on it was common to see fires smouldering in the late evening air, the smoke drifting away, all in the same direction.

Minchinhampton was a quiet 'grey town' not ordinarily given to scandal. Neighbours mostly got on well and were mutually helpful, the Great War having had much to do with it. Extra marital affairs were unknown, though there was one case of incest and suicide. Memories of the war were too fresh and the village had an ample reminder in the sight of the local postman (David Newman), chapel caretaker (George Ellins) and Reg. Graham (blacksmith, legion caretaker). All three were magnificent in coping with their problem -each had lost a leg in war action — and David walked several miles daily delivering mail, while Reg rode a motor cycle combination. George was invariably cheerful. At the annual ex-servicemen's parade all would take part lined up with the rest from the legion to the war memorial. The ensuing service, in an overflowing church, would be highly emotional.

Every village has its characters and notabilities, and Minchinhampton was no exception. A much loved G.P. was Dr. Brown after whom his road was named. Mr. T. E. Sanders was editor of the "Stroud News". Miss Baynes, a charming old lady who lived at The Lammass, and Miss Mabel Trollope, a tall most elegant gentlewoman, always seen in the High Street with her Pekingese in tow. Others there were who lived locally including retired senior Army officers, occasionally seen at church and on the Armistice parade.

For us children life was simply led, a regular routine characterized most of it, with standards and discipline uppermost, stemming almost certainly from paternal experiences in war. Not that we suffered in any real way. Home was still 'sweet home', and our mothers made the necessary sacrifices. School and the library box, the nature study ramble for juniors and the weekly gardening lesson for the seniors was our present world, while the church, its bells and its teaching prepared

us for the next.

On the corner of Butt Street and the Cirencester Road stood what we called the Blue Boys, formerly a coaching post for the Gloucester-London stage coach. In our youth it seemed a little decrepit but still held our imagination as much as Tom Long's Post where Tom the highwayman is supposed to have met his end. Proceeding towards the Market Place one came to Harry Smith's. He had been a wheelwright, and this writer distinctly remembers going to the house to read to his ailing daughter who was bedridden in a darkened room. On the corner of the Market Place was the Rectory and opposite it the stables and garage. The next house, same side, was inhabited by the Fisher family one of whose sons took part in motor cycle hill climbs, notably on a Velocette or Scott Squirrel. Opposite again lay The Ram Inn, next to the Market House, occasionally scene of hucksters' sales. The Lait family ran a fine bakery adjoining. Across the way and beyond the war memorial stood a part-time office of Lloyds Bank, the only one in the village and next door one entered The Crown Hotel. Proceeding southward towards the Cross stood Hughes the grocer and the British Legion H.Q., and next to it Miss Trollope's very imposing Georgian house topped by finials. Across the street at this point to the chemist Mr. Viner, a lovely man, next to him the fishmonger and Amor the butcher whose shop could only be entered by means of a downwards step or two.

Across again, this time to Walker's cycle shop, and then to Walker's Stores (no relation). Now at the Cross, turning right one came to Banner's, a small general



Walker's Garage, High Street

store, and next to it the Police Station, rumoured to have a lock-up. We children knew it had a policeman with a painful stick, wielded at 9 p.m. if we were out on the street. Further along in West End was to be found our favourite sweetshop run by two old ladies. Aniseed balls, at twenty to one penny, rolls of liquorice and fountains of sherbet were our favourite, to be replaced later by Mars bars.. On the bend stood the Cooperative Stores, managed by dapper Mr. Pond. In the 20's the shop found favour with most ordinary residents as it offered a quarterly discount of so much in the pound, and every penny counted. The last shop in the West End was Hooper's, another sweetshop. Returning to the Cross one passed the "Trumpet" Inn before arriving at the "Swan", at an entrance (tradesman's) to The Lammas. Then came the newsagent's, run by the Doel family, where we bought our copies of "Beano", "Comic Cuts" and other publications calculated to divert the child mind. Close by stood the local builder's shop and yard. Messrs. Simmonds was well known in the neighbourhood and beyond for the quality of its work. Almost on the Cross reigned Taylor the butcher and next door Ogden the outfitter and milliner. Across the road at the top of Well Hill a Mr. Serjent educated us boys with his marvelous models illustrating phases of the moon and the eclipse, which he would place in his window for all to see. The Cross Stores, diagonally opposite Ogden's, catered for all. Proceeding now up Tetbury Street, one came firstly to the smithy where we boys would sometimes gather to witness the shoeing, the cooling shoe and the burning of the hoof. Later, Reg Graham cobbled shoes of another sort in the same building. The Post Office lay next to the Salutation Inn, roughly opposite the smithy. Half way up the street stood Hall's bakery, and at the top the Baptist Chapel and Institute where ever-cheerful George Ellins was employed.

Milk was delivered by Mr. Hillier from across the Park, often by his daughter Mabel. The familiar sight was of Mr. Hillier in his horse and float, standing behind two large churns of milk from which hung ladles ready for action. He had a habit of flicking flies from the horse with his long whip, and on one occasion playfully 'geed up' the writer who was late for school, having just left Viner's after a dressing for a head wound caused by dragging a coping stone from a wall. The writer was about five at the time.. Among his earliest memories of school life were those of learning tables by rote, reading aloud to the teacher, and knitting, which we loved. Admirable for teaching digital skills. Later, the atlas and geography revealed to us the extent of Empire which we all celebrated on Empire Day when we were visited by the Lord of the Manor, Colonel G. H. Ricardo, D.S.O. of Gatcombe Park, who gave us each an orange and a bun, in return for which we sang patriotic hymns on the school steps.

The German field gun which stood on concrete within protective railings must have gone for scrap during the 1939-45 war. It was facing the top of Bell Lane, some two hundred yards into the Park. It was next to it that the annual George Roger's Fair was held each Whitsun. On the Tuesday the children were each

given a free ride on the roundabout, following the Monday parade through the village.

I recollect no school trips outside the immediate locality, but the Sunday School had a regular annual trip to Cirencester Park where we ate buns, drank lemonade and ran in races. As a church school we usually went to Weston-super-Mare for the day.

July 1997

Blueboys School

An Account by a Former Pupil

Gladys Beale, who came from a family associated with education, founded Blueboys School in 1942. Her great-aunt was Dorethea Beale, the famous



The Yews

headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies College, who established that school's reputation for excellence and an aunt ran a girls' boarding school in nearby Bussage.

Miss Beale had already taught in various boys' prep schools for eleven years, before returning home to The Yews to be with her mother, as her father had died. She needed to find something to do. Some local parents, whose children had previously been taught by governesses, were looking for a future school.

Blueboys School started in September 1942 with nine children on the register. The children suggested the name, as it was opposite the Blueboys Dairy, once a coaching inn with a sign, now in the Museum in the Park, of two boys stirring a pot of blue dye for cloth made locally.¹ The classroom was the dining room of the house, and Miss Beale taught all subjects. This arrangement continued for two years, then as the school expanded the family decided to move out of the house and into Little Court; Mrs. Beale did not wish to continue living with children swarming in all directions!

The whole of the ground floor was then turned into four classrooms and two cloakrooms. There was plenty of space in which to play, with a courtyard and a large garden. Tall horse chestnut trees marked the end perimeter; giving hours of pleasure for conker fights, den making etc. The number of pupils grew as many people were evacuated to Minchinhampton from cities during the war. The Education Committee were very helpful and a school attendance officer came from time to time.

Fairly soon after starting the school, Miss Beale was called up. At the Labour Exchange she was asked to drive a milk float, to which she replied that she imagined she could but, she went on to explain, she was in a reserved occupation and surely doing more good teaching than delivering milk. The woman in charge disregarded this answer, but fortunately the Education Committee reacted differently and decided that educating (by that time) thirty children was more valuable work!

During World War II there was always the chance of being bombed, as the school was only two miles from Aston Down, the pilot training and maintenance centre. An underground shelter was built with seats down the side, but fortunately there were never any raids during the daytime.

The school's reputation went from strength to strength. Some children came from as far away as Fairford; the Americans who were based there after 1945, were prepared to drive sixteen miles and back again, as they had such a good opinion of the school. Rather than using their own school at the base, some even took the opportunity to rent the top floor flat above the school, so that it was more convenient for them!

¹ Minchinhampton Life and Times, Volume 3 "Landmarks"

Greater numbers of staff were now employed: Mrs. Bentley a trained kindergarten teacher who lived locally, Mrs. Pawson, a highly qualified art teacher, who was also a parent, and several others.

The day started with prayers and continued with all the normal curriculum subjects, but emphasis was always upon the three Rs. Every child was able to read by the time he or she was seven years old. The children also knew their tables backwards. Handwriting lessons were important, as good presentation of work was essential. Miss Beale travelled widely during the holidays, so the children learnt first hand about many places. French was taught by native speakers, giving the children an enormous advantage when they went on to their next school.

Drama lessons were taken seriously. Narrative poems such as "*The Pied Piper of Hamelin*" were learnt by heart and recited by the whole class. Books with an historical background such as "*The Children of the New Forest*" and "*The Eagle of the Ninth*" were read aloud and enjoyed, and writing of poems and stories by the children was also encouraged. A nativity play was always produced at Christmas; one of the best was written by Vincent Keyte, headmaster of Beaudesert School.

In summer plays were performed in the garden, where a raised lawn lent itself perfectly for a natural stage. During one performance of "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*" there was, without warning, a dramatic thunderstorm in the middle of the play. Everyone had to go inside for tea and wait for the weather to clear. Eventually it stopped, the chairs were dried and the play was able to resume – however, the children had been slightly distracted!

Whenever a play was going to be produced, a letter was written to the Commanding Officer at R.A.F. Aston Down, to ask him not to fly his planes over the school on such and such a day, as the children would be acting outside. They were always very kind, and agreed to send their planes somewhere else on those days.

Lunch was originally cooked for the children by Miss Beale's sister, although local children would often go home for lunch. Mrs. Payne, who lived in Box, cooked at one time. Then, Mrs. Merrett, who lived down the road, cooked the food in her house and brought it up to the school in a covered pram. Although it was a slightly "Heath Robinson" arrangement, all the children who stayed to lunch were well fed.

Extra staff came in to teach P.E., netball and country dancing. In the summer the children were lucky enough to have swimming lessons in the open-air pool belonging to Geoffrey Bass of Burleigh. No one complained about the lack of

heating. Later lessons took place at Burleigh Court.

When the school first started pupils either walked, came by bus or rode their bicycles to school. Unlike today, nobody worried about children being harmed on their way to or from school. There was one incident, however, when the local policeman informed the school that an “unsuitable” man was in the area, and a rota of parents was organised to be with the children walking over the common. Eventually, it transpired that this man offering sweets was a complete fabrication. Two girls, who attended Amberley School, had invented the story as they were late one day, and in fear of their headmistress! As time went by, pupils came from further afield, so mostly travelled by car. Blue Boys Corner became quite hazardous, as however much the public were flagged down, few took any notice.

The boys left at eight years old and went on to preparatory schools, often to Beaudesert. The girls usually stayed until they were eleven or twelve, when they either went away to school, or to Stroud High School. There was a great change in the local population after the end of the war, so there never seemed to be a lack



Beaudesert School

of pupils. By the end of the 1960s some pupils were second generation. Many children went on to do well; girls often became nurses or teachers – one even a royal cook! The boys have become doctors, architects, solicitors and some have gone into each of the services.

By the end of her headship Miss Beale had sixty-eight children on the register,

and six hundred children had been to the school. She retired in 1977, feeling that it was time for someone younger to lead the school into the future. Luckily, one of her staff was ready to do this, and Mrs. Elspeth Bland took over the house and school, and Miss Beale went to live in Well Hill in the town, continuing to take great pleasure from seeing old boys and girls.

A big reunion was held at Blueboys when the school was forty years old. Advertisements in the local press and "*The Telegraph*" ensured that a large number of former pupils came. Another successful reunion was held in August 1996 for those past pupils who were over forty themselves.

Miss Beale feels it would be difficult to run a school under current conditions. "*Children like to know where they are, they like the lines to be laid down and if they think the rules are fair they are prepared to keep to them*". She gave us the rules and we certainly obeyed, but I am sure her pupils remember her with enormous respect and affection.

Every one of those six hundred children has been given a secure foundation on which to flourish. Miss Beale's no-nonsense approach, combined with the well-structured day, proved to be so many children's excellent start in life.

Reminiscences of Burleigh

Elizabeth Smith

My parents moved to Burleigh on the edge of Minchinhampton Common when I was a year old. We lived next door to my mother's parents, Wilfred and Alice Fanny EVERS-SWINDELL, who by then had moved from the larger Bownham Grange to Burleigh Tower, which really did have a tower.



Burleigh Tower 2004

In those pre WW2 days, the coal was delivered by horse and cart, a second horse being hitched on the front, to help pull up the very steep Brimscombe Hill. The greengrocer brought the vegetables round in a covered four wheel float like a market stall, drawn by a cobby bay mare called Topsy, and the fishman too, came across the common at a spanking trot in a trap behind an iron grey pony called Kitty. I can see both tradesmen but not remember their names! The insurance agent, Mr HOLBROOK, used a bicycle for his weekly round. He was a dapper little man with a waxed moustache just like Hercule Poirot! There was a lane that came along the bottom of the properties, but everyone came across the Common.

There was a small general shop in Burleigh, also a Post Office, the latter a dark little place where I would take the accumulator from my gran's newly acquired wireless set to be recharged, having to be very careful not to spill the acid. No battery or electric radios then!



Deliveries in Burleigh

I remember the Mayday Fair held in Minchinhampton Park each year, which in those pre-war days had not yet had its iron railings taken away to make guns and ammunition. Daisies always covered the Common as we walked up there, and invariably the weather was warm and sunny and new summer dresses abounded.

I was married in Minchinhampton church by Canon Rex HODSON. He rode round his parish on his bay pony, and often took his services with his boots and spurs still beneath his cassock, and was a very popular parson. His services were 'High Church', and I loved the smell of incense and the ritual.

My mother's youngest brother was killed at Passchendaele in 1917. He is on the Amberley War Memorial as Frederick EVERS-SWINDELL and on the Minchinhampton one as Ernest F. EVERS-SWINDELL. The family worshipped and Fred was baptised at Amberley. Why, I wonder, is his name on both Memorials? He followed his two elder Brothers to New Zealand when he was sixteen, missing his final exams at Wycliffe College to do so. I have copies of the shipping registers for his two brothers' sailings in 1905 and 1908, but have been unable to find anything for Fred in 1910. Any suggestions very gratefully received! His brothers sailed on the *Rimutaka* and I feel Fred probably did the same. National Archives in New Zealand have been unable to help with him although they supplied his brothers' details.

(Reproduced from the Gloucestershire Family History Society Journal No. 80 March 1999 by permission of the Editor and the author)

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.

THE 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 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.

Memories of Tetbury Street

Hilda Martin (nee Pegg)

We came to live at the Post Office in the Easter Weekend of 1942.

There were two houses opposite. We were told one was designated as “The Morgue” where bodies from bombing raids were to be housed – fortunately this was never used. The other was the paper depot where, on Fridays, the ladies of the town would gather and tie up bundles to be collected for salvage.



Next below the Post Office (where Mr. Wall’s electricians is now) was the Salutation Inn, where the landlady “Speedy Andrews” was a favourite with the American soldiers who had a well-established camp on the Park. The coloured soldiers were under canvas between the “W” and the Ladder. They were allowed to go to Nailsworth but not up the hill. The “Snowdrops” – American Military Police with white helmets – were always on patrol to be sure there was no contact between the two groups.

At the top of the street was Fred Cuff’s grocery store. He was a keen supporter of our local football team and was loud in his advice and encouragement! It was his son Garth who was detailed to call for my young brother and get him safely on to the bus and to his new school.

Miss Ethel Beale had a house with a garage, and she was, I understand, the first lady motorist in the town. I can remember her best for her peanut butter cookies!

Nurse Burton, our District Nurse, also lived at the top of the street and could be seen pedalling madly through the town on her errands of mercy.

Joan and Valerie Trimble gave a concert at the Baptist Church. The moving of their two pianos had almost as big an audience as the concert! This was in the days, of course, when the church still had its balconies. At the Institute next-door there was a bathhouse where the young lads could book a bath and they were often seen arriving with their towels under their arms.

We used the Institute for Christmas post. Dear George Ellins would be there to greet us with the lights all on and the kettle boiling. We then progressed to the Chapel schoolroom. I would leave home in the very darkened streets – plus cat and dog. As we turned into chapel lane the streetlights would come on. Jiggs the cat would see us safely in then go across the garden walls and in through the pussy flap to a peaceful Post Office.

It was this combination of Jiggs and the pussy flap that was to save the day when burglars decided to make off with the Post Office safe. Jiggs would be waiting by the window for the light to come on next door – he would run through the house to be first in line for the hot milk provided by the Fewster sisters. This obviously startled the burglars for they hurriedly departed, leaving the safe in the middle of the room with the crowbar on top!

One morning we woke to snow; the lorry delivering to Hall's bakery had brake trouble and slithered across the road to end up in the side door of Willson's grocery store. Mrs. Willson reported this to her husband, who raised his head from the pillow, said "April Fool" and promptly went back to sleep! Yes, it was April 1st.

The Fewster sisters "covered" all the funerals and could be seen striding down the centre of the road in their wide black hats – off to see another fellow townsman on the road to glory. Another middle of the road traveller was Ted Jeffries, retired postman, who had a furniture repair shop where Julie the hairdresser is now. He would balance a newly repaired chair on his head and stride down the street!

The Sheppard Family History

A history of the Sheppard Family of Minchinhampton was written by Mary Sheppard in 1892.



Preface

When our dear Mother was taken from us in 1885 the idea suggested itself to me that I would compile a short family history from the Diaries she had kept with much perseverance and faithfulness for upwards of half a century. When I began the work I found I had much interesting material in my possession referring to events anterior to the time when she began to write and I therefore thought it best to “begin from the beginning”.

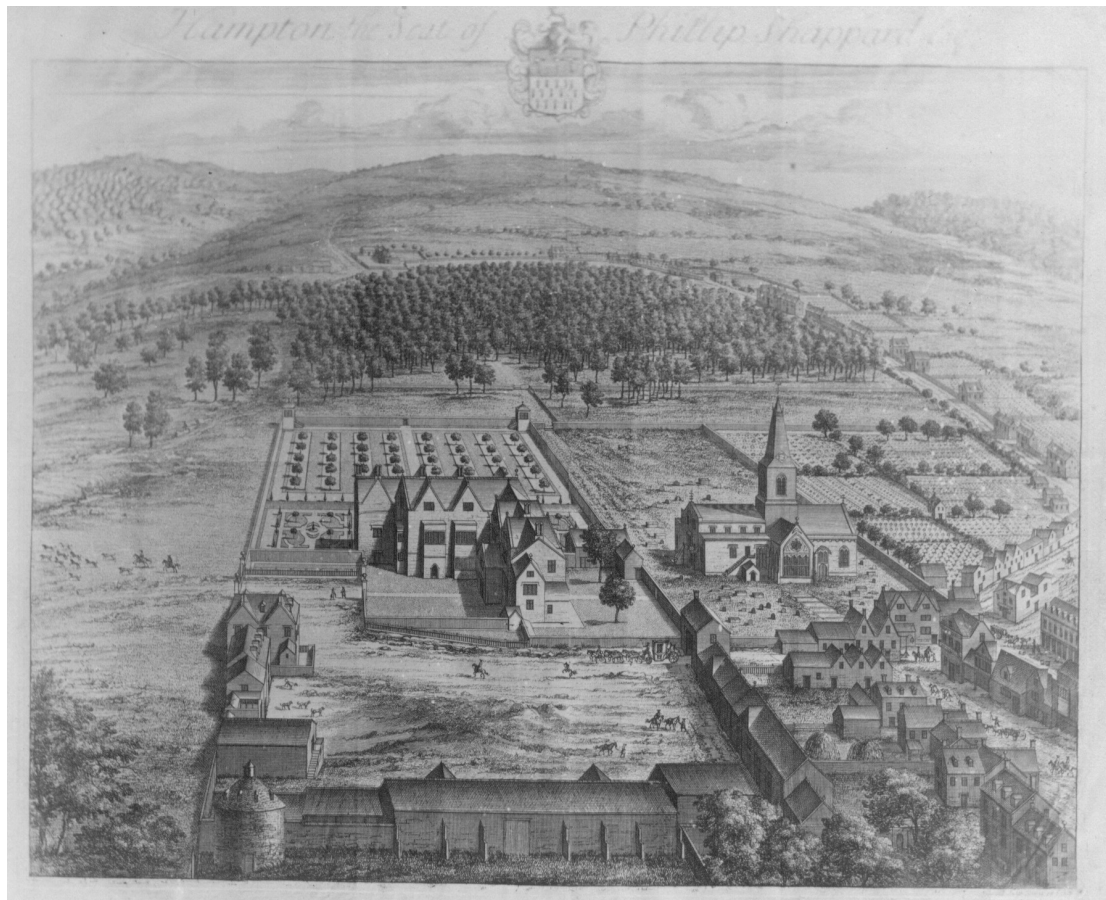
For the early records of our family I had to turn chiefly to County Histories, while old letters & papers furnished me with much that was interesting in the early life of our Parents until such time as our dear Mother took up the pen.

I wish some abler hand than mine could have undertaken the work, but I have done my best, & as the work to me has been one of love & duty, I hope my Brothers & Sisters will accept it as it is, & that the rising generation will read with respectful interest the simple record of the lives of those who have gone before, & with whom they are connected by the tie of blood & affection.

Elizabeth Sheppard
May 18th 1892.

Elizabeth Sheppard May 18th 1892
26 Marlborough Buildings, Bath

The Sheppards of Gloucestershire descended from a family of that name seated



at Possmarch or Peasemarch near Rye in Sussex, which Manor they had purchases from Lord Montague. Other branches of the family were settled at Tenterden in Kent, and Battersea near London. About the end of the 16th century, William Sheppard, who married Margaret, only daughter and heiress of Francis Codrington of Frampton on Severn, migrated to Horsley in Gloucestershire and founded the Gloucestershire branch of the family. The Codringtons had married into the old family of Clifford, of Frampton, of which the celebrated Fair Rosamund was a daughter, and we read that a mill and lands in the parish of Frampton were given to the Nuns of Godstow, by Walter Clifford to pray for the souls of Margaret the wife and Rosamund his daughter, the latter of whom lay buried in the Choir of the Nunnery of Godstow in Oxfordshire. William Sheppard was succeeded in the family Estates by his son Philip [d. 1623] who left three sons, William of Hempstead, John of Tetbury, and Samuel of Minchinhampton, and one Daughter, Rebecca, Wife of Charles Hellier of Horsley. William was married four times, and John twice, but nothing is known of their descendants. The third son, Samuel, purchased the Manor of Minchinhampton and Avening from the Trustees of Lord Windsor in the year 1651. He married Isabel, daughter of George Worth of Buckingham, Wilts, a sister of one of his brother William's wives, and died March 11th 1672 aged 70. The issue of this marriage was two

sons and two daughters. Samuel the Elder, died young, and Philip the younger, a Justice of the Peace for the County of Gloucester, and Barrister-at-law, inherited his father's estates. He married first Elizabeth daughter of Sir Gamahel Capel of Rockwood Hall, Essex, and secondly Frances, daughter of Francis Lord Seymour of Trowbridge, and a Relict of William Ducie the first, and only Viscount Downes. She died without issue and was buried at Minchinhampton. The Capels were descended from Sir Richard de Capel, Lord Justice of Ireland A.D. 1261. Some time in the 14th century Sir John Capel was Chaplain to Lionel Duke of Clarence, which Duke gave him a girdle of gold to make a Chalice in the memory of him to pray for his soul. The family had large possessions in Suffolk at Stoke Nayland and Capel Stanton. William Capel, who was Lord Mayor of London, A.D. 1503, was knighted at the coronation of Henry VII A.D. 1485. His son, "Sir Giles" was knighted for his valour at the siege of Tournay and the Battle of the Spurs. Sir Edward, son of Sir Giles, married Anne Pelham and had issue Sir Henry, who married Catherine daughter of John Manners Earl of Rutland and it was the daughter of their grandson, Sir Gamahel, who married Philip Sheppard.



Holy Trinity Church

From the elder son of Sir Henry Capel the Earl of Essex are descended. Philip died in 1713 aged 82, and was buried at Minchinhampton. Atkyns in his history of Gloucestershire [Ed. 1768 p.236] says of him "*Philip Sheppard is the present Lord of the Manor of Minchinhampton and keeps a Court Leet. He has a large house near the Church, and a spacious grove of high trees in a park adjoining to it which is seen at a great distance. He hath a very large Estate in this and other parishes within this County*" The Rectory of Avening was also in his Gift and was presented by him in the year 1685 to the Revd George Bull afterwards Archdeacon of Llandaff and Bishop of St. Davids. The following extract is from

the life of Bishop Bull by Robert Nelson page 348 - 477. *"It was in the year 1685 when Mr. Bull was presented to the Rectory of Avening in Gloucestershire, a large parish about eight miles in compass, the income whereof is £200 a year" [His predecessor was The Revd Robert Frampton D.D. Bishop of the Diocese] The Patron of it is Philip Sheppard of Minchinhampton Esqr. A very worthy gentleman, eminent for his probity, sobriety and charity, and for his great usefulness in his country for he not only administers justice with great impartiality, but endeavoureth to reconcile all quarrels and dissensions among his neighbours before they break into a flame and before his neighbours lose their money and their temper in legal prosecutions, in which commonly they both suffer. It happened that when this living became vacant, Mr. Sheppard, Mr. Bull, with some other friends, were at Astrop Wells in Northamptonshire drinking these mineral waters for the advantage of their health, and they were even together with some other Gentlemen when Mr. Sheppard received the news of it upon which he acquainted the company that he had a very good living to dispose of, and reckoned up all those qualifications he expected in the person upon whom he should bestow it which so exactly agreed to Mr. Bull's character that everyone present plainly perceived that Mr. Sheppard designed to determine that preferment in Mr. Bull's favour, but he had too much humility to make the application to himself, and therefore took not the least notice of it. Some time after Mr. Bull withdrew with some of the company to walk in the garden in which opportunity Mr. Sheppard took to declare that he had on purpose given those hints that Mr. Bull might be encouraged to apply to him for it, but finding his modesty was too great to make that step, he was resolved to offer it to him who had more merit to deserve it, than assurance to ask for it, which accordingly he did as soon as Mr. Bull returned into the room, which he received with all those acknowledgements which were due for so good a living, to so generous a patron."*

Mr. Bull had not been long at Avening before he was preferred to the Archdeaconry of Landaff by Archbishop Sancroft, and was installed Archdeacon June 20 1686. He was consecrated Bishop of St. David's in Lambeth Chapel April 29th 1705, when in his 71st year, and died Feb. 17th 1709. Philip Sheppard had by his first wife three daughters, two of whom died young, the remaining one married Robert Pleydell of Ampney Crucis Gloucestershire, and two sons, Samuel of Frampton, & Philip of Colesbourne. The latter, who was born in 1663, and was buried at Colesbourne, married a daughter of White Esq. of Didmarton, and had, with other issue, John who was living at Colesbourne in 1770. He sold the Manor of Colesbourne in that year to Francis Eyre Esq., who in his turn sold it to John Elwes Esq., in whose family it remains. John married first, Rachel, daughter of Powell Esq. of Mandage Park near Malmesbury, which no doubt the place known now is Mandith's Farm, about two miles from Malmesbury.

He appears to have had no children by his first wife but by his second, whose maiden name was White, he had a son John of whom nothing is known with

certainty, tho there was some idea that he emigrated to America 1791. To return to Samuel Sheppard the eldest son of Philip of Hampton, by his Wife Anne, only daughter & Heiress of Thomas Webb of Wallbridge near Stroud, (who died 1734 aged 70 & was buried at Hampton) he had six sons and three daughters. "This lady probably brought a considerable fortune to her husband as in the next generation the family occupied an important position in the county." Three of the sons and one daughter died unmarried. William the sixth son is described as of "Hackney Middx" "Blackwell Hall factor". Philip the fifth son became Rector of the parishes of Minchinhampton and Avening, both valuable benefices, and there is a tablet to his memory in the Chancel of Hampton Church which states that he died December 18th 1768, having been Rector of the parish for 49 years. He built the Rectory house at Hampton, and planted an avenue of lime trees. Mr. Playne of Longfords Gloucestershire has a fine portrait of him in cassock and bands with full grey wig. In a letter dated 1765 concerning the sale of the next presentation to the two livings it is said of him *"Tis well known that the present Incumbent, who is an easy gentleman, doth not make the most of them . . . he had some time ago a stroke of the palsy, by which he has been lame ever since . . . being unable to do duty himself he keeps three curates to two of whom he gives £40 per annum each, and to the other £30 ! The parsonage house, where the present Incumbent lives, was new built by him, and is as pleasant, neat and convenient a dwelling as most in Gloucestershire."* He married Mary daughter of Knight Esq. of Eastington, who died without issue in 1753, aged 49 years. Samuel, elder brother of Philip, inherited the family Estates, and was a Justice of the Peace and High Sheriff of the County in 1730. He married Anne, daughter of Edward Darrell Esq. of Rockhampton Surrey, who died December 29th 1749 aged 58. The family of Dayrel or Darrell was established in England by one of the Companions in arms of the Conqueror, and the name of its founder appears in the roll of Battle Abbey.



Tomb of Samuel Sheppard

Samuel died on the 20th December 1749; on his tombstone in Hampton Churchyard there is this epitaph, and if he possessed all the virtues it ascribes to him, he must indeed have been a remarkable man.

“In memory of Samuel Sheppard Esq., a gentleman of unblemished integrity, unaffected piety, and truly primitive simplicity of manners, affable and courteous in his behaviour, easy and instructive in his conversation, just and upright in his dealings, without partiality without hypocrisy. His charity was as free from ostentation as his nature from disguise. In all social offices he remarkably excelled, an eminent example of conjugal affection, a tender parent, a kind master, a sincere friend. Thus adorned with an uncommon sanctity of morals, he sustained the miseries of human life with Christian fortitude, his conscience not reproaching him with the omission of any duty, to God or man. He was patient and resigned in his death and his hope was full of immortality. He died Dec. 20th 1749 in the 63rd year of his age.”

He left two sons, and two daughters, Samuel the elder son married Jane daughter of Thomas Whorwood Esq. of Holton Oxfordshire, who died in 1770 aged 51, and was buried at Hampton. The issue of this marriage was six Daughters, and two sons (twins) who died in infancy. In default of male issue, on the death of Samuel the estates devolved on his Brother Edward, who married Sarah daughter of Charles Coxe Esq. of Lower Lippiat.

The Cocks, or Coxes, were an old Herefordshire family, but removed to Kempley on the borders of Gloucestershire. Charles born 1658, Sarah Sheppard's Grandfather, was a Welsh Judge. He sat in many parliaments for the City of Gloucester, and the Borough of Cirencester. He married Catherine daughter of Thomas Chamberlain of Oddington Gloucestershire and Wanborough Wilts, by his Wife Catherine daughter & heiress of Robert Treme of Lippiatt Hall in the County of Gloucester. The Chamberlyns were a very ancient family, the name having been “de Tankerville”. Count John de Tankerville held the post of Lord Chamberlain to Henry 1st, as did his descendants to King Stephen and Henry II, and hence the change of name. Catherine Coxes great great Grandmother, the 3rd Wife of Sir Thomas Chamberlayne, was a Sister of Antony Monk's of Potheridge, Grandfather of Monk Duke of Albermarle. The Tremes who had owned Lippiat “many” hundred years, were an ancient family, the last of the name, Thomas, buried at Bisley 1657 had three daughters, two of whom married into the Chamberlayne family, but none left issue except the eldest Catherine whose Daughter & Heiress Catherine married the Welsh Judge.

The estates of the Sheppard family at this time as is shown by rent rolls and accounts in the possession of Mr. Playne of Longfords, were of considerable extent, and had very much increased in value. Edward, therefore, on coming into the property appears to have considered the old Manor House at Minchinhampton

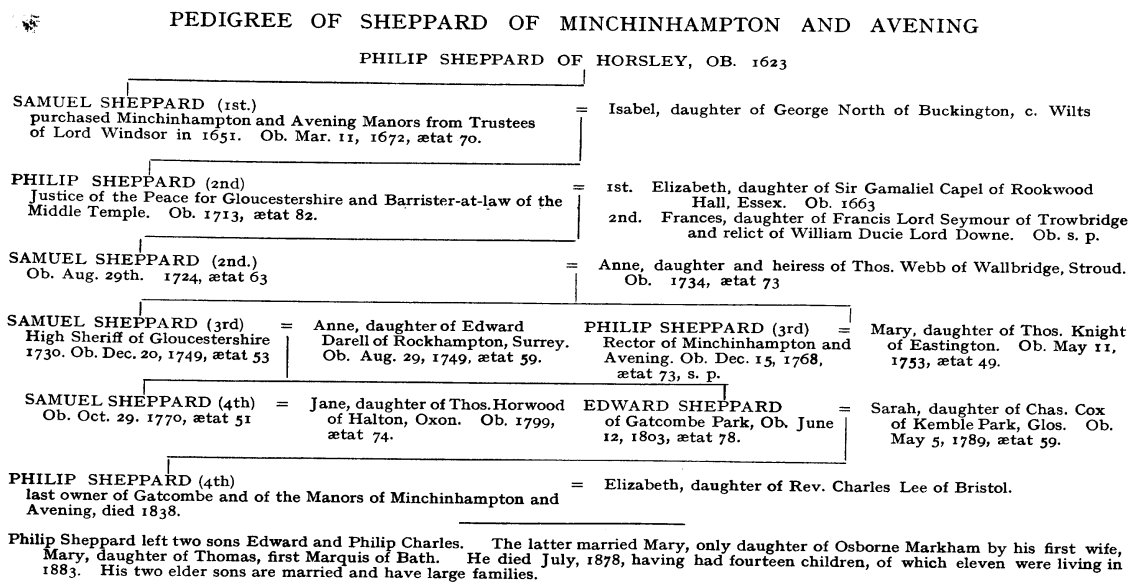


Gatcombe

to be no longer suited to the requirements of his family, and accordingly built a new house at Gatcombe in a beautiful situation about a mile from Hampton. This house, described by Fosbrooke in his County history as “the elegant modern Seat of the Sheppard family” is a handsome looking building with grey stone front seen on the left hand side of the road leading from Nailsworth to Avening. It is not known how long a time was occupied in the erection of it, nor the cost, but judging from documents in Mr. Playne’s possession, it must have involved the owner in considerable difficulties. At any rate on the death of Edward Sheppard in 1805, at the age of 78, the property was deeply mortgaged. The next heir was his only son, Philip, our Grandfather, who was born in 1767, and married in the parish Church of St. Augustine’s Bristol 17.. Elizabeth daughter of the Rev. Charles Lee D.D. & his Wife Frances Newman Lee, daughter of Henry Dampier freeman of the City of Bristol. Our Grandfather was a good natured easy going man, very extravagant, and with great taste for sport and expensive amusements. He raised a troop of Yeomanry in 1795, the equipment and maintenance of which cost him a large amount of money. He also kept a pack of fox hounds at Gatcombe, which were not looked on with favour by his Father if we may judge from an entry in a pocket book bearing date 1790. *“Phil talks of parting with ye hounds. I hope he may continue in ye resolution”*. On his accession to the property attempts were made to free it from encumbrances by the sale of the advowson of the Rectory of Avening and the next presentation to the Rectory of Hampton. The sums realized however fell far short of the amount required and his circumstances went from bad to worse. He endeavoured to stave off ruin by

raising money on the mortgage and by selling portions of the property.

At this time the Manor House at Minchinhampton, the old home of our family, was sold and pulled down by the purchaser. At last the crash came, and in 1813 the Manor of Avening with all the property in that parish, was purchased by Mr. William Playne of Longfords, and the following year 1814 the Hampton Estate was sold to Mr. David Ricardo. With £10,000 of the purchase money our Grandfather purchased land at Almondsbury belonging to a Mr. Frampton and commenced building a house, but before two years had elapsed he had run through his money and mortgaged his land which soon after was bought from the mortgagee by Mr. Ludlow the then Recorder of Bristol. After this his ruin was complete, he left England and resided at Dunkerque.



The books consisted of two hand written folio volumes bound in original leather. They were loaned to us by the present owner Mrs. Carolyn Causton who allowed us to copy the pages relevant to Minchinhampton. Most of the pictures in this article were taken from the history.

The history continues to record the fortunes of the family, but no more has been transcribed.

A Living Faith

Anon (written c. 1953)

I stepped down the hillside lying southwards from the great Minchin Hampton Common, dedicated to be an open space for ever, and managed by a local Committee appointed by the National Trust. And as I walked down the steep approach to Box Village I saw ahead of me to the East the golden spire of Box's new church gleaming in the sunlight. Crowned with its cross of gold it shone out beside an evergreen tree and lighted up the little Valley in which the church is hidden. I walked more quickly, and passed through the village between Cotswold cottages and walls of grey and honey — coloured stone until, guided by the spire, I reached the church.

Twenty three years ago Canon Rex Hodson — whose father was Curate here in 1876 - was appointed Rector of Minchin Hampton and had charge of the hamlet of Box. Box's temporary church of wood and galvanised iron was wearing out and getting beyond repair. So the people of Box, greatly daring, began to dream of a church of stone.

A fête was organised in the village and the first fifty pounds was won and put into the bank to start a building fund: and ever since then fêtes, concerts, bazaars and jumble sales have followed one another in constant succession, so that the fund has gone on mounting steadily in spite of what often appeared insurmountable difficulties.

Year after year Box made its church-to-be the focus of their prayers, the object of their Labours, the symbol of their faith. At last, about two years ago, it began to seem possible that the dream should materialise. The fund amounted to over £1,000 when a neighbour gave the site and paid all the legal fees for the transfer to the Diocese in perpetuity. After many vicissitudes an architect, famed for his local work with local materials, was found to take on the task: plans were submitted which gave great satisfaction to all concerned: and a local builder undertook the work for just over £3,000.

The Rector decided that building could start as soon as the fund reached £2,000, strenuous efforts were made. For instance, one day in Summer everyone in the village was asked to support a special Gift Day during which the Rector sat for many hours within and without the church awaiting the gifts. A pony brought ten shillings. A little boy brought a bag of some hundred ship half-pennies that he had been collecting for years. And a dog brought his quota - and then tried to bite the hand of a friend who was putting a couple of sovereigns as his contribution into the box. An old woman who remembered the erection of the temporary church gave five pounds in memory of her husband who as a boy had rung its bell Sunday

by Sunday. And so it went on. By the end of the day over £450 had been given by the village.



Completion of Box Church

Meanwhile the Rector had appealed to the leading industrialists of the neighbourhood, asking them to follow the example of their forefathers who had helped to build the beautiful churches of the Cotswolds. The fund benefited substantially by their response.

Soon after this a memorial fund was opened in memory of one of Box's most faithful worshippers; and this produced over £400. Building could begin.

So on December 8th, 1951, the foundation stone was laid by the Bishop of Gloucester amid much rejoicing and thankfulness, and well within the year the building has been nearly finished.

A local firm gave the great iron stanchions to hold the roof; an old building was

bought and the stone brought up to Box, along with the old golden-grey tiles that had withstood the rain and bluster of countless winters; two friends have each given a stained glass window; another the altar as a memorial; others — also as memorials — the fine old doors. The Beaufort Hunt, when asked for a hunting gate, has offered two. Another local firm has given the fluted aluminium spire, which has been overlaid with pure gold given by a well-wisher in her husband's memory. Like a shaft of light it crowns the little church which on October 25th will be dedicated by the Bishop to the service of God, and which will not only enoble the village but will stand witness to generations yet unborn of the living faith without which it could not have been built.

JAMES SIMMONDS & SONS

1860 to 1973.

as told by Frank Simmonds

James Simmonds was born in Mangotsfield in 1828 and in youth was apprenticed to a decorating firm in Bristol. His apprenticeship over, he was sent out to do work in various places in the neighbourhood. One such job was at Bownham House - now demolished and now Bownham Park Estate in Rodborough. It was necessary for him to find lodgings and he eventually settled in at Rose Cottage, Amberley with Mr and Mrs Burrows and family. They had two daughters, and James who had found that there was plenty of work to do in Amberley, decided to settle down here, married one and took a nearby cottage. The work expanded and James moved to Minchinhampton and rented a house from the Lord of the Manor, David Ricardo of Gatcombe House. This house, number 3 West End, had formally been a public house, known as The Grand Turk. Here he rapidly built up a good business, two of his sons Ralph and Alfred - James had a large family, eleven in all though four died in infancy-had passed their tests and obtained their City and Guilds Certificates so he took them into the business, Ralph as a plumber including hot water work, and Alfred as a decorator. When they married, James arranged with David Ricardo to purchase a block of buildings. These were 3, 5, 7 and 9 West End - number 9 was a public house called the Greyhound.

James kept his family at number 3. There was a large garden with fruit trees against the walls, and a smaller one with a greenhouse and a wash house with sink and a boiler furnace and a stone paved back yard and business office. Announcing his firm, James painted on the gable end of the house "J. Simmonds & Sons Plumbers and decorators, Sanitary Engineers, Hot Water Engineers. Laborare est Orare". He also made a weather vane, representing a painters inch brush and fixed it on the roof over the painter's shop. It was still there when the business was sold in 1975 and Stroud Council built eight old peoples flats there. James was fond of brief sayings and on the frieze in the lounge he had written "Kind words don't

wear out the tongue”, “Men build houses, women make homes”, “If the mind grows not corn it grows thistles”, “Wedlock is pedlock”.

It is a measure of how fast the business had grown that James placed a number of workshops at the rear of the newly bought block and up to Lammas lands. These were a plumber's shop with painters and decorators overhead, paint mixing shop, ladder store, plasterer's shop and tiller's shops, blacksmith shop and forge, carpenter's shop over what had been the stables to number nine, timber shop, stables for two horses with carts and trucks in an open shed.

In the late 1890s and early 1900s men were being sent to work in large houses not only in the parish but also afield in Avening, Tetbury, Easton Gray and Sherston Magna.

This meant, of course, that they had to lodge at the site and the firm had to arrange transport to bring them home at the weekend. Here are some examples of the work they had to do: plumbing and central heating and decorating, greenhouses and conservatories were becoming popular, and once erected, needed heating which was provided by sectioned boilers, fuelled by coke, with large 4 x 3 inch cast iron pipes carrying the heat around. Servants needed to be within reach so the firm put in sets of bells on a board near the kitchen and servant's hall and operated through a copper wire passing through special hinged brackets to a pull in the family rooms. This calling system did not become obsolete until the 1930s. Other work that the firm did for those larger houses was the provision of water, necessary because there was then no mains supply. This was dealt with partly by collecting rain water in large tanks constructed in timber and lined with lead, joints soldered and the whole braced on the outside. Such tanks were usually in the roof space so allowing water throughout the house. Another site was at ground level taking water from the roof gutters. Water from springs was obviously a straightforward source of supply, and wells created a different problem with the need to wind up buckets of water. To obviate this the firm supplied water pumps to wells which were sixty to seventy feet deep according to the water level. The pump handle was fitted on a timber post with gearing and iron rods running down to the pump with delivery pipes taking the water to the kitchen sink or to the attic; and then when bathrooms were being demanded also to them and upstairs W.Cs.

In the early 1900s the Stroud Gas Company laid their gas mains to Minchinhampton, and a gas holder was fitted at the bottom of Well Hill as a reservoir of gas for the town and the firm of J. Simmonds and Sons was employed to tap into the mains and run service pipes to houses in Minchinhampton, Box, Amberley and Bownham with gas meters and black iron gas cookers which the gas company, anxious to get customers, would fix free of charge for the working class. The firm was also employed in lighting the streets with incandescent lamps,

servicing them all the year round and paying men to light all the lamps at lighting up times and putting them out at eleven p.m. during the winter months. James was given a special course of instruction in London on the best way to obtain good lighting.

In 1910 James Simmonds died and the firm was then in the hands of his two sons, Ralph and his younger brother, Alfred. The Great War led to Alfred having to leave the firm and undertake work of national importance. It had been decided to build an aerodrome on Aston Down for the Australian Air Force and Alfred applied to the contractors doing the job and stayed there until the end of the war.

As men returned to private life many were welcomed back to the firm as the building industry was rapidly growing and by 1920 became a boom. Three plumbers who came back met a wide demand for central heating and domestic hot water. Since there was no electricity central heating had to work by gravity. Large houses had cellars where boilers which burnt coke were fixed from which four inch pipes running through the cellar and under the floor took the heated water through smaller pipes to radiators in the rooms. Coke brought by railway truck loads was cheap and little thought was given to insulation.



West End, Simmond's Premises on left

In 1920 we were given the contract to supply and carve the stone and fix the War Memorial in the Market Square in Minchinhampton.

In 1921 Nailsworth Urban Council decided to build council houses in Park Road. Because of shortage of labour J. Simmonds and Sons joined with the Nailsworth

firm Baldwin and Sons to form the Nailsworth Housing Contractors which built the houses.

It was much later when electricity came to the town, but around this time several large houses were fitted with private electricity generating plants with tiers of large glass jars for storage. It was the responsibility of the gardener or chauffeur to look after this plant.

In the early twenties the firm obtained the contract to build the Shard at the bottom of Well Hill and I began working with the foreman in charge, supervising the stone banker masons whose job it was to carve the stone to templates from the architect's drawings, and measuring up sizes and ordering from the stone quarries. The firm built many such houses among them Cotswold Chine, Derham House, St David's in Box Lane, houses in Lammas Park and many other houses. All this led to the purchase of Tuffley's Quarry 1930. The stone was of good quality, Great Oolite, yielding blocks up to ten tons in weight which were sawn to size for windows, doors, church windows, grave stones and such. So stone crushing plant and mechanical sawing plants were installed, and also a sixty foot jib crane. Some of the stone was used in Maisemore Bridge over the Severn. Work continued at the quarry until 1973 when the best stone was worked out, and the quarry was sold for £2,000.

The Second World War brought a halt to house building, to pick up again after



Workers at Tuffley's Quarry

1945 when the firm carried out several large contracts to build council houses in Forest Green for Nailsworth Urban Council. The firm also built Nailsworth Clock tower and bus shelters in natural stone.

The last house J. Simmonds and Sons built was the Farm House at Burleigh, after which the business was sold in 1973.

Richard MONK - A PIONEER

Reminiscences Of The Early Days

This is an extract from the New Zealand CANTERBURY TIMES, March 4, 1914 contributed by Roger Kelly who is a descendant of Richard Monk. It describes the exploits of a Minchinhampton boy who left the town and finished up in New Zealand. The latter part of this article has been omitted due to its length, but the full extract can be seen in the Local History Collection.

Between the range of hills which fringes the coast towards Kaikoura and the sea there is a strip of level country, sometimes a mile or two wide, sometimes broken into sections by a long spur reaching right to the beach. On either side of the Conway River at its mouth there is a stretch of good level land, and on the southern side of the river there is a small settlement mentioned in few maps but known in official productions such as the *Telephone Directory & Post Office Guide* as Conway Flat. To reach the settlement the visitor must go to the terminus of the main trunk line, Parnassus, and then proceed by coach to the Fingerpost, which overlooks the last ford of the Conway River. There he alights, and by buggy proceeds down the riverbed a mile or two, fording the river many times, and at last reaches the group of houses that comprise the settlement. When the river is in flood the visitor waits, days probably, until it goes down, for there is no entrance to Conway Flat, if one excepts a sheep track or two over the ranges, except by way of the river.

For nearly half a century Mr Richard Monk has lived at Conway Flat and although 85 years of age he has no doubt at all that he will live there for many years to come - after a career full of incident and adventure the old pioneer is bold and hearty. His hair and beard are quite white, and a heavy stick is requisitioned when he walks - life in the early days was conducive to rheumatism - but his eye is bright and keen, and he takes a great interest in many things. Recently a *Lyttleton Times* reporter visited Mr Monk at his home and, sitting on his verandah, the patriarch of the settlement recounted many of his experiences.

Boyhood Days

"I was born in Minchinhampton Gloucester, "Mr Monk said. "My father was a farrier, who at one time held the appointment of farrier to King George III at Hampton Court, He was a strange man, and thought more of having his sign painted afresh every year than he did of anything else, even his family. I left school when 12 years of age, and one of my first jobs was to take three horses to a fair at a town nearby. I started off in the early morning and on the way I saw a sight I shall never forget. Many a time I've laughed about it. The rector had a finishing school for young gentlemen, and my word they were proper rascals. That morning, as I passed along, I saw that they had got a bull tied to a tree in a paddock. The farmer had deliberately put the bull there to prevent people going through his fields. Well, they had this bull tied to a tree. Some of the boys were up the tree, but two of them were on the ground. Then, like a flash the two disappeared, the bull was let go and I saw what was up. They had tied a live cat to the bull's tail. That bull went through three live hedges and disappeared, pussy hanging on firmly, and later on he was found dead. When the culprits found out I knew what had happened they kept me well supplied with pocket money."

"An effort to make me a baker failed badly, chiefly owing to an over-fondness for pastry, I think, so I was apprenticed to a butcher. I might have got along alright but one day I heard the boss threatening to deal violently with me when he got me, and so, without any hesitation I set out to walk to London, 104 miles away. My cash amounted to 2s 10d, and I was then 15 years of age."

The Navy In 1844

"When I got to London Town I kept asking for the Queen's Head, Tower Hill, for I had heard that it was a sort of recruiting place for the Navy. Here I met a quartermaster, a big burly fellow, and asked him how I should go about getting into the Navy. He said that boys only got about 12s 6d or 12s 9d a month, but added that as I was a big chap, I could safely tell the captain that I was nineteen years old. Then he took me upstairs to the captain. He was sitting at a round table, and on it I remember was some blue paper, some red tape and a decanter of rum. The old man was a link to the very distant past and he had a terrible gruff voice."

"What do you want?" he growled, and I said, "To go in a man-o'-war sir." "Some young, runaway apprentice or other," he snapped out, and I owned up that he was right. Well, I passed the doctor, who had a room downstairs, and the captain ordered the quartermaster to take me to the receiving ship, *Perseus*, lying in the Thames off the Tower. When I got to the hotel I only had 2d. I spent that on something to eat, thus joining the Navy absolutely penniless. I didn't like the look of things aboard the *Perseus* at all, and as for the hammocks, I couldn't get into them until a fellow showed me how. The rations were none too good. We got 1 lb

of biscuits and a pint of cocoa for breakfast; a pint of soup, 1lb of meat, a few vegetables and ½ pint of grog for dinner, with a pannikin of tea, and some grog and what biscuits we had saved from breakfast for tea. Then we went to Sheerness to the hulk *Minataur* to wait until the *Vanguard* had fitted out of Plymouth.”

An Early Steam Squadron

“All the vessels of the line were sailers in those days and the real wooden walls of old England right enough. I boarded the *Vanguard* at Plymouth in 1844, and the next year we cruised in the Bay of Biscay. There were eight steamships when we started, seven paddle boats and one screw. I think it was the first steam squadron in the Navy. Anyhow it was an experiment. The names of the paddle boats were the *Terrible*, *Retribution*, *Siden*, *Odean*, *Bulldog*, *Gladiator* and *Polyphemus*, and there was the *Battler*, a barque rigged screw driven ship. After an 8 week cruise the *Battler* was the only one of the lot with us, the others having developed engine troubles and put into the nearest ports.

“For the most of my time I served in the Mediterranean. They were rough days. Nearly every week, men were flogged and on one occasion that I know of a man was hung from the yardarm. Part of the outfit of our ship would make sailors laugh nowadays. All round the orlop deck below the water line were hung shot plugs. These were made of wood, and when the boat went into action the carpenters had to walk round and round, so that if a shot came through they could grab a plug, cover it with oakum and grease, and drive it into the hole with a maul.”

A Whaling Cruise

“Early in 1849 I was paid off and in the same year I shipped aboard the whaler *Norwhal* for a cruise in the south seas. She was a wooden barque of about 400 tons and was commanded by Captain Baker. We carried six guns for our protection. Early in 1850 we arrived in the Bay of Islands. There must have been 18 or 20 whalers in at the time. I remember going aboard the American ship, *Swift*, hailing from New Bedford, and the *John Franklin*, which was a full ship. We had 760 barrels of oil. In those days Kororareka consisted of two hotels, two stores, and a few shanties. The 65th Regiment was camped somewhere in the neighbourhood, if I remember right, and there were thousands of Maoris.”

“I left the *Norwhal* at the Bay and shipped in a 10 ton hooker trading along the coast as far north as Awanui, near the North Cape, and six weeks later I landed in Auckland. It was only a small place. On the right hand side going up Queen Street there was a large ditch and you had to walk across a plank to get into the stores.”

PERSECUTION OF QUAKERS IN MINCHINHAMPTON

from notes by the Late Cyril Turk

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Quakers were always liable to be attacked. Here is an incident from 1653.

In that year Thomas Goodyear of Nailsworth was drawn to go “to Hampton and declare the Truth there”. But he found the people “exceedingly rude” especially Samuel Butt, a shopkeeper. (There were two Samuel Butts in Minchinhampton at that time. One had a cottage in West End, the other one in Parsonage Court. Only the fortunate survival of a deed to one of these cottages will distinguish between them) Samuel Butt “stirred up” the rude people of Hampton so that the Friends were “greatly abused, stocked, stoned and imprisoned”. Butt also broke up meetings in Nailsworth and continued to do so for several years. “Yet” says the writer of this account, which was published in 1707 “Truth got round and prevailed”. The wicked man “blasted” and “came to little and they also that joyned with him”.

The antipathy towards Quakers on the Government side after 1660 was due to the fear that they might encourage anti-monarchical sentiments, and the Quaker Act put severe restrictions on their meetings; to be caught for a third time at a meeting could result in transportation. These conditions, however, were eased by the Act of Indulgence in 1672.

For the ordinary people of a village or town the Quakers were a group set apart by their dress, their habits and their obstinacy - or determination - in opposing rites or ceremonies of organised religion and social customs. Hence, as usual people ganged up against the strangers.

This can be seen in the story of Samuel Clift, a clothier of Avening. He came to Minchinhampton one day in 1657 and, whether from curiosity or with time to kill, went into the “steeple house” where Samuel Heiron was preaching. He stood quietly among the people about an hour - in that age it was often over an hour before the preacher reached “seventhly and lastly”. But at last Samuel Heiron began a prayer, when, noting Samuel Clift still covered, ordered him to be removed. The constable thereupon took matters into his own hands, and, though without a warrant, evicted him from the church and set him in the stocks, only to come back a little later and recognising the illegality of putting him in the stocks, freed him and asked him not to make any trouble.

All should have ended there. But some five weeks later, Samuel Clift was taken up by a warrant before a J.P. who brought up the Hampton affair and asked “whether he heard Mr. Heiron praying or preaching while he was there”. To which Clift’s answer was “he did that thou mayest call preaching”. The next question was whether he kept his hat on, to which he replied “I bought my hat to wear” whereat the Justice, enraged, struck him three blows and ordered his removal to Gloucester Goal. The end for Samuel Clift was much better than it would have been three years later, when Quakers were in ill-repute, for, on it being proved that he did neither “molest or interrupt” Samuel Heiron, he was acquitted.

Another outrage against Quakers occurred in 1741. Round about 10 o’clock one evening in June that year Mr. Connock, a Quaker, arrived in Hampton to find a group of Friends waiting for him. He held a short meeting and arranged for a further full meeting on the following day. Accordingly at 9 o’clock the next morning he was in Mr. Adams’ house (I think this was in Well Hill. Several houses at this time were licenced for non-conformist worship, notably Thomas King’s in West End, Edward Danford’s in Well Hill and Dan Fowler’s. In 1746 the Quakers asked for the Market House to be licenced).

There was a large congregation awaiting him and the meeting began, but “the devil led on his soldiers” who beat drums in the street outside the house. When this had no effect in preventing the people “from hearing”, the gang then exploded gunpowder so that “the poor folk were startled” but “soon waxed bolder few moved”. The “devil’s soldiers” then got an engine and sprayed the meeting “with stinking water” mixed with “hogswash and grounds from a barrel” Mr. Connock reported the incident in a letter to Mr. Lewis, wrote “I never saw so great a Power of God” as the congregation stayed in silent prayer and “scarcely looked at their persecutors” and even squibs thrown among them “caused no confusion”. When the water supply ran out after about an hour and a half Mr. Connock spoke to the rabble about “the Terrors of the Lord and the Judgement to come” Some laughed and threw wet dust until they “were suffered no further by the Lord” and the meeting ended. Mr. Connock ended his letter “since I came from Hampton I hear one of the chief men of the town was the head of the persecutors! Though he would not be seen in it, yet lent the blind fools the engine”. Eighteenth century Minchinhampton was not unfamiliar with outrage and affray.

This article is taken from the account in the records of the Society of Friends, kept in the Gloucestershire Record Office.

Football in Minchinhampton

by Stan Dyer



Minchinhampton
Football Team
1904

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



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.

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.

MEMORIES OF LONGFORDS MILL

Sylvia Raines April 1983

Schooldays drawing to a close
The year was '38
Now is the time so I was told
To face the world and earn your keep
Tread a straight path, hold your head up high
Sow only good seed, a rich harvest to reap.

My heart was set on being a cook
With kitchens of my own
The very best of foods I'd bake
And serve in my own tearoom
But fate stepped in, it was not to be
I received a message from Auntie D.

A cloth mender by trade was she
Employed by William Playne
The message read - There is a vacancy
For a young girl leaving school.
It is to mark the numbers in the cloths
And then progress to mend.

"I don't want to go" I firmly cried,
"I want to be a cook"
But my father sitting beside the fire
Pointed a finger and gave me a look - "You will go".
I had no choice - my birthday came one sunny Sunday morn
The magic age of fourteen years - for tomorrow silent tears.

With my lunchbox packed and my heart in my mouth
I was taken to the mill
Ernie Llewellyn's sister escorted me down the hill
Through the gate and up the yard
I entered the mending shop door
Piles and piles of coloured cloths were stacked along the floor.

Annie Ind was formistress - Ivor White the boss
Twenty-two other people were busy with their tasks
Mending, burling, spilling, picking
Each job its part did play
In making what they were proud to make
West of England cloth.

People were friendly they welcomed me in
All willing to show me 'how'
Long friendships began from that first day
Some lasting through life until now.
The first payday came, it was a thrill
A wage packet of my own

All of nine shillings was my wage
I hurried up the hill.
My mother was waiting she eagerly took
The money I had earned
She handed me back one shilling piece
"Don't spend it all at once".

As time passed by I began to learn
The meaning of different things
Twill to the right, step to the left,
Don't forget the ladder on the back,
Brome shoots, double shoots, jack shoots and skims,
Single ends, double ends, wrong beats and crams.

War clouds gathered, friends were drafted,
Longfords did its share
We made airforce blue and kahki
Dark blue for the Royal navy
Tank cloths too, to line aircraft tanks
To stop the fuel escaping.

When peace returned and trade was good
Orders in abundance
Flannels for presidents, worsted for kings
Motor linings for bright new cars
Suitings and tweeds, cavalry twills
And tennis for Wimbledon sports.

Forty-five years have come and gone
Since that day in '38
I have memories - some most precious
Regrets! - nothing great
But changes have been creeping in
Sadly, not all for the best.

No worsted or woollens for making smart suits
No motors for lining a Rolls
Only tennis - just tennis is made at the mill
It is used for covering balls.
May the future be kind, and the looms rattle on
Here's to balls! better balls! carry on.

