

Minchinhampton

The newsletter of Minchinhampton Local History Group

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Editor's note:

Welcome to the 4th edition of our newsletter. This is a busy time of year as we are preparing for our Remembrance event. All proceeds will, like last year, go to the Royal British Legion, and we would love to beat the £1437 we made last year. As this is a charity event, unfortunately there isn't any discount for members, but this will be an event not worth missing. Please put Friday the 8th of November in your diary and the 10th of November. There is a free event [Donations welcome!] in the Market House on the 10th after the Remembrance service. No spoilers but some of the exhibits have never been seen before! If you want tickets for the Remembrance event, this event is always busy so it may be worth you considering paying by BACs so that we can have your ticket ready on the door!

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The Lady Chapel at Minchinhampton

By Chiz Hayward

‘Your Church Newly Built...’

Back in 2016 I was asked to help with archaeological input into the planned reordering of Holy Trinity Minchinhampton, sparking a deepening interest in the church and the town. There followed an archaeological evaluation, documentary research, and excavations inside and outside the church. The town now has a ‘new’ church, the organ is being restored, the stained glass is next, and eight years on a book is about to be published on the church’s history.

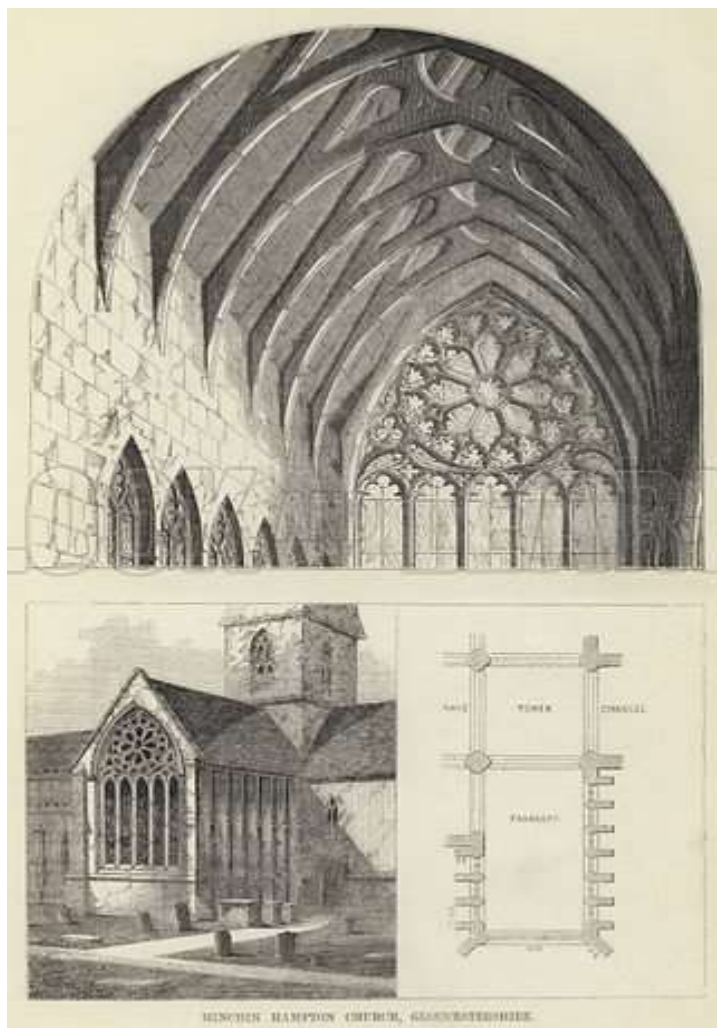
The book tells the story of Holy Trinity: how the physical building has changed over the centuries but also what those changes can tell us about the wider church and the community that worshipped there. Although much of the medieval church was demolished in 1842, we’re very lucky that many documents survive including descriptions, financial accounts, plans and drawings. These all weave together to give a history of the church and the stories of the building and a few of the townsfolk.

The Lady Chapel?

One such story is of the south transept, known today as the Lady Chapel, and part of the surviving medieval church. In the early 14th century, most of the church was largely still a Norman building with round arches and heavy columns, but that was all to change with a massive rebuilding program in the ‘Decorated’ style that lasted for much of the first half of the 14th century, ending at the Black Death. Much of this ‘Decorated’ church was demolished in 1842 and the south transept was only saved at the last minute. We are lucky as it is a quite remarkable structure, described by renowned Victorian architect William Burges as “One of the most perfect and

curious specimens of the Architecture of the middle of the 14th Century” whilst David Verey holds the ‘remarkable’ south transept as ‘The outstanding example’ of Decorated Gothic in the Gloucestershire Cotswolds.

Externally the narrow bays and deep buttresses give a staccato verticality to the chapel, emphasising the huge rose window. Internally the chapel is architecturally innovative with stone scissor beams supporting a vault of stone slabs. This is architecture as a statement and would have required a mason of great skill and a patron of means; its construction is part of a regional renaissance in architecture linking work at Old St Paul’s in London to Bristol, Wells, Exeter and Gloucester.



The south window and stone roof of the south transept, published in *The Builder* in January 1858

The chapel contains the carved effigies of a knight and his wife, buried within

ornately decorated wall niches and almost certainly the patrons of the building work. Prayers and mass would have been sung for their souls in this chantry chapel, but their identities have long been disputed with various names suggested over the centuries - and each name suggests a different date for the construction of the chapel that was their memorial.

Unpicking the riddle of the effigies involves studying medieval documents, antiquarian accounts, and the heraldry of the eagle displayed on the knight's shield - the sign of the de la Mere family. But the eagle displayed; was also the sign of the Ansley family, and just to confuse matters John of Ansley married Peter de la Mare's widow! The architecture of the chapel helps here, fixing it at around 1325–30, and from a combination of records, it is clear that the south transept was completed in 1330 as a memorial to John and Lucy Ansley and the chapel was known as Ansley's or Ansloe's chapel until at least the late 16th century.



The effigies of Lucy and John Ansley in the south transept wall niches

The new south transept was only one part of the new Decorated church, the chancel

had been completed by 1315 and then the tower was rebuilt. The north transept

(possibly containing a Lady Chapel first mentioned in c.1300) was partly rebuilt in

1338 when Holy Trinity's priest, William of Prestbury, left land and rental income to

fund 'a priest maintained singing daily at the altar of our Lady in a chapel situated

within the parish Church yard and every holy day to help sing the divine service in

the Same Church and to pray for the founder's soul and all expired souls'.

The remains of an altar with flanking statue niches were found here in 1842. It is clear that the north transept was the original Lady Chapel, in fact the first time I could find

reference to the south transept being called the Lady Chapel is not until after 1911, when an altar was added there.

The book, titled 'Your church newly built...a history of the church of the Holy Trinity, Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire' will be published by Hobnob Press, proceeds will go to the church.

Chiz Harward

[The Turnpike Gates at Burnt Ash](#)

[By Richard Davis](#)



The cattle grid at Burnt Ash

If you were travelling around the parish between about 1750 and 1880, you would have had to pay a toll to pass through gates erected across the main roads. The intention was that the money collected – and borrowed against the security of the tolls – would lead to a general

improvement in the state of the roads. I have found evidence of twelve such gates in the parish and am doing some research to find out more of their history. The following is a work in progress on the gates which stood at Burnt Ash, near the Ragged Cot.

The first was set up pursuant to an Act of Parliament of 1751 “for the better surveying, ordering, amending, and repairing” of the road from Cirencester to Stroud via “a House called the Blue Boys, in or near the Town of Minchinhampton”. The Act appointed trustees, who included Samuel Sheppard, Lord of the Manor, and other local landowners, and gave them powers to erect gates and charge tolls for 21 years from 25 March 1752.

They appointed an attorney to act as clerk, who sought expressions of interest from lenders, surveyors, contractors, and gatekeepers.

Unspecified “difficulties” arose over the precise location of the gates (Gloucester Journal, 19 May 1752). As far as the stretch of road between Aston Down and Rodborough was concerned, the trustees opted for the junction at Blue Boys but soon reviewed their decision. A notice in the Journal of 7 January 1755 convened a meeting at the Crown in Minchinhampton “to take it into Consideration whether the Turnpikes erected at the Blue-boys on the said Turnpike-road ought not to be removed”. I have found no other record of a gate (or gates) at Blue Boys which suggests that it was removed following the meeting. The word “remove” could mean “move somewhere else” as well as “take down” and the implication is that the new gate and posts at Blue Boys were dismantled and re-erected elsewhere, probably at Burnt Ash. The precise arrangements are not known as the minutes of the trustees’ meetings for this period have not survived.

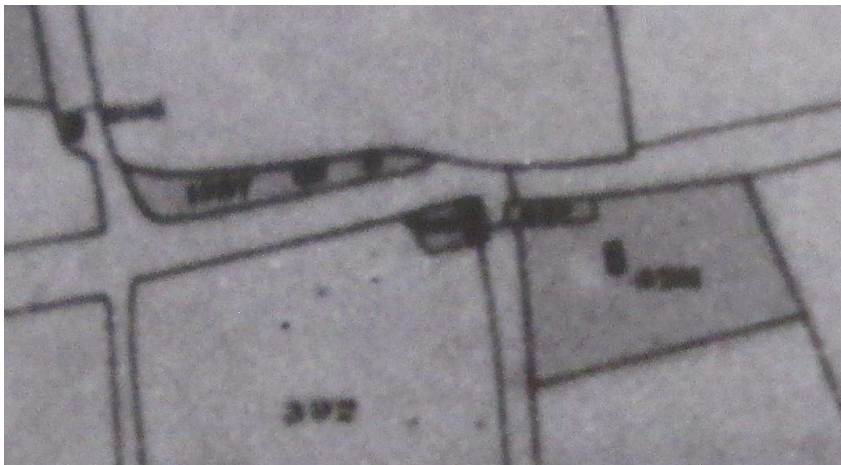
The second gate at Burnt Ash was across the Tetbury road. It was set up pursuant to an Act of 1758 for the improvement of the road from Tetbury to Chalford via Hyde, which crossed the Cirencester Road “at or near a place called the Burnt-Ash”. The Act provided that no gate should be “set up within the town of Minchin-Hampton, or on the west side thereof”. (This section was repealed in 1822.) A notice in the Journal of 13 June 1763 called a meeting to let the tolls under the 1758 Act including “that Gate at Burnt Ash which is comprised in the said Act”, as distinct presumably from that erected under the 1751 Act.

A further notice of 16 May 1774, placed jointly by both trusts, convened a meeting at the Crown to let the tolls “which said Tolls produced last Year the following sums of Money, ... the Tolls of Burnt Ash Pike upon the Tetbury Road 14l. 14s. ... and the Tolls of Burnt Ash Pike upon the Cirencester Road 52l. above the Expences [sic] of collecting the same”. “Pike” was an abbreviation of “turnpike” which became a synonym for the gate and even for the road itself. In effect the trusts were selling the tolls arising for the following year in return for a lump sum payable monthly in advance. The purchaser (or “farmer”) of the tolls could keep any excess of the sums collected over the lump sum but would bear any deficiency himself. It was a way of ensuring a predictable cash flow for the trusts. The tolls were regulated by statute, e.g. three halfpence if you were travelling on horseback (the price of a newspaper) or two shillings for a coach and four, but trusts could charge less if they so wished.

The earliest plan of the gates I have found is a map of Minchinhampton prepared in 1803 for the valuation of the poor rate (Glos Archives P217a/VE/1/1).



It shows the toll house in the mouth of the Tetbury Road with a vertical line across the Cirencester Road representing the gate set up under the 1751 Act. The trustees had the power to build a toll house across any way or lane leading off the turnpike road.



Curiously, when a new plan for the poor rate was made in 1830, the gate across the Cirencester Road was shown on the opposite side, next to the Ragged Cot (Glos Archives PC/1908).

Either the earlier plan was in error or the gate was moved. It seems odd to separate the gate from the house but surveyor's scale

drawing of 1879 (Glos Archives D1442/box2529/6) shows it in the same position, adjoining a rectangular piece of land measuring about eight by forty feet, projecting into the Tetbury road by about three feet, which the poor rate survey states belonged to the road trustees. It is labelled "Garden" and may have been used as such by the gatekeeper.

Both the 1830 plan and the tithe map of 1839 show a small garden adjoining the house but this is not recorded on the 1879 drawing, which just shows a small house in the entrance to the road with two rooms on the ground floor. Its dimensions were about ten by twenty-five feet. It does not indicate where the door was. It may have resembled the toll house at Hyde Gate at the top of Hyde Hill which

was later expanded into a larger house (pictured below). There was a side gate and a fence on either side of the turnpike gate.

What do we know of the gatekeepers? The 1830 survey identifies Edward Lediard as occupier of the "Turnpike house". The census returns of 1841-1871 record only one person acting as gatekeeper at



Burnt Ash at any one time, and it seems that she must have collected the tolls at both gates.

In 1841 Sarah Heath, aged 48, a married woman, is described as "Keeper of toll gate" living at "Burnt Ash Turnpike" with three children.

She may have been a widow. In 1851 the "Gate Keeper" at Burnt Ash was Sarah Banks, aged 53, living on her own, again perhaps a widow. Widows were often beneficiaries of the poor rate, and it occurs to me that turnpike trusts may have employed them to reduce their burden on the parish, although I have not researched this possibility.

In 1861, Ann Dyer, aged 38, is described as "Toll Collector" living at Burnt Ash with her husband Charles, an agricultural

labourer, their four children and her brother. She had to make a weekly declaration itemising the number of carriages, carts, and horses passing through and the tolls collected in respect of each category. Those for the period 1860 to 1869 have survived in the Treasurer's accounts for the Tetbury road gate (Glos Archives D590/3/4). To take one declaration at random, in the week commencing 20 January 1861, on Tuesday, the busiest day, she recorded one carriage, four carts, one horse-rider, and 3 sheep or pigs; while on Thursday, the quietest day, just one horse-rider was recorded. There were some categories of traveller exempt from the tolls but even so there seems to have been remarkably little traffic. Mrs Dyer was still the toll collector at Burnt Ash in 1871, living there with her family. By then she must have become something of a local institution.

The successor of the 1751 Act was due to expire on 1 November 1879 and the trust for the Cirencester Road had to wind up its affairs. This involved dismantling its gates and either selling its toll houses or pulling them down and adding their sites to the roads. The trust notified the highway surveyor of Minchinhampton, William Coates, of its intention to sell the house at Burnt Ash. He objected, preferring to see it demolished and the road widened accordingly.

The trust appealed to the Quarter Sessions, where the justices had the power to make such order as they thought fit, but it appears that there was a compromise whereby the house would be demolished but only part of the garden thrown into the road.

Tenders were invited from contractors for pulling down the house, removing the materials, and making good the road on removal of the gateposts. The successful bidder was George Trotman of Brimscombe, who offered £9 for the materials of both Burnt Ash and Frampton Mansell turnpikes (Glos Archives D1442/box2529/6).

The successor of the 1758 Act expired on 1 November 1877. A surveyor prepared a list of the gates operated by the Minchinhampton, Tetbury and Bisley Turnpike Trust (Glos Archives D590/4/6). He valued its toll houses at between £30 and £60 each; in the case of Burnt Ash, he refers to a “hovel or lean-to” in bad repair, worth just £2. The surveyor’s notebook records this property as an “Outhouse of little or no value” and the words “To come down” below it. It may have been added onto the house owned by the Cirencester trust.

Turnpikes were quite picturesque and must have been drawn or painted by amateur artists but no pictures appear to have survived for those in Minchinhampton. The cattle grid near Burnt Ash with its white gates and fencing gives an impression of how they might have looked. I would like to thank Gloucestershire Archives for permission to use the extracts from the 1803 and 1830 plans and for making documents available for inspection at the Heritage Hub in Gloucester.



[Grave of the month](#)

[By Martyn Beaufort](#)

[Henry Champion 1811-1890](#)



1833.

Walk through the Lych Gate at Holy Trinity church – under which several Kirbys lie buried [Another story], for about twenty yards and you will find this grave which is of Henry Champion who died in 1890. It is at the top of the grass bank.

He was born in Dursley Gloucestershire. Henry's parents are George Champion 1779 - 1838 & Hannah Maria Longstreet 1788 - 1826.

He was a saddler and married Elizabeth Hillier at St George the Martyr church in Camden on the 31st of March

He was obviously very successful and by 1881 was living in Holcombe House, Minchinhampton.



Henry's first wife Elizabeth Hillier Champion died 1884 and was buried 13th Dec 1884. You can see her named on the grave.

N.S.D.		L.R.C.P.		Bristol		1884	
113	Birth December 1884 Holcombe House R.P.D.	Elizabeth Champion	Female 43 years	Wife of Henry Champion a Retired Saddler	Paralysis 9 days Coma Certified by Rich. C. Ryder M.D.	Henry Champion Widower of deceased In attendance Holcombe House Minchinhampton	13th December 1884
	Seventh				Chronic Bronchitis	P. G. L.	W.A. Jones Registrar

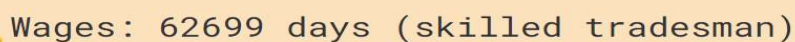
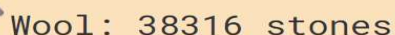
However, Henry remarried less than a year after his first wives' death to a woman who was 42 years his junior. By repute, she was one of his servants. However, it is impossible to say if this was true or not. In the 1881 census, Henry and Elizabeth Champion had two servants, neither of who were Louisa Decilia Rickatson. At the same time, Louisa was a housekeeper but to her brother who was a Leather Merchant in London. It is hardly the same thing to equate a housekeeper to a brother as an ordinary servant.

Her father was a currier employing six men and an apprentice and is described as a "Gentleman" at her marriage whilst the ditto marks underneath seem to indicate a description of Louisa herself as a "Gentlewoman"

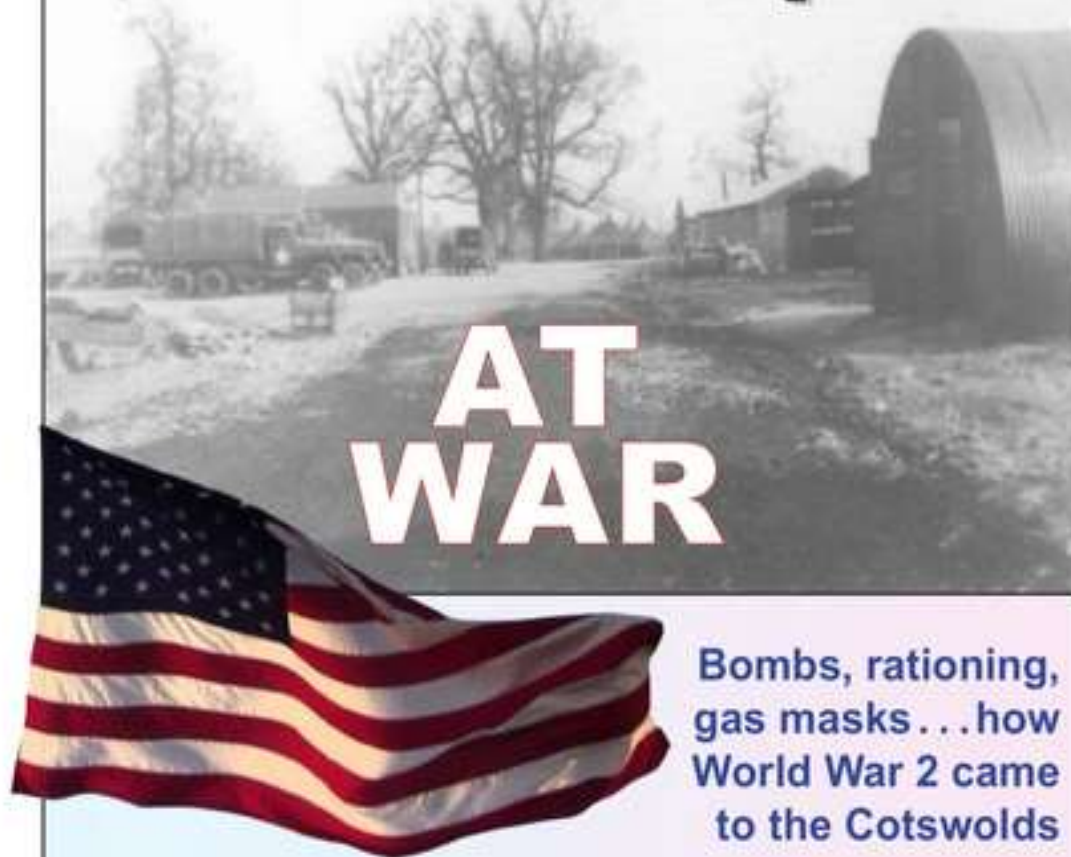
It is impossible to say, but I would think almost certain that the marriage of a 70-year man to such a young woman was a scandal to the good people of Minchinhampton!!

I don't suppose that Louisa was too bothered as on her husband's death she inherited £20,690 16s. This in 2017 was equivalent to the following:
In 2017, this is worth approximately:

In 1890, you could buy one of the following with £20,690, 16s:



Minchinhampton



**Bombs, rationing,
gas masks... how
World War 2 came
to the Cotswolds**

Historian and author Brian Lett recounts the triumphs, tragedies and dramas of wartime life, concluding with the Last Post, silence and Reveille.

Friday, November 8 Minchinhampton Market House

After the talking, there's music from Pete Blackwell and his band of entertainers featuring Kate Tyler in tuneable tribute to Vera Lynn, the Forces' Sweetheart. And if the mood takes you, get up and dance!



Tickets £15 from the Market Stores or on the door. Doors open 7pm, event starts 7.30. Licensed bar. All profits go to the Royal British Legion. Event presented by Minchinhampton Local History Group.



Raffle prizes kindly donated by the BBQ Society takeaway, Stroud and Gloucester;
The Crown pub and restaurant, Minchinhampton; Henry's Bakehouse Café, Minchinhampton.

