

# WYCHWOODS HISTORY

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## Foreword

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In volume number 31 we continue our occasional series on Nonconformists in the Wychwoods, with Sandy Bradshaw's story of the Quakers in Milton, whose former Meeting is now her house. Simon Draper, Assistant Editor of the Victoria County History for Oxfordshire, who is working on the history of the Wychwood villages, analyses the versions of the mysterious injury and death of Thomas Sinden, butler to Sir John Reade of Shipton Court, in an attempt to establish the truth of this episode. Wendy Pearse has been investigating villagers of Ascott who emigrated to Australia in search of work, some successfully, others less so. The volume continues on a happier note with the history of the Women's Institute in the three villages, coordinated by Alan Vickers with the help of many women who were and are members. We finish with Michael Davies's account of the Ralph Mann Archive at Kingham, which will be a research resource for interested students of all ages for many years to come. The Editor is most grateful to all the contributors and to Alan Vickers for his work on the illustrations.

*Nicola Coldstream*

# The Quakers of Milton Under Wychwood

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Sandy Bradshaw

**H**aving bought our semi-detached cottage in Green Lane at auction it was fascinating to discover that it was part of a Quaker Meeting house and even more amazing to find that the gentleman who put the property in trust for the Quakers was a Robert Seacoll, since Seacole happens to be my family name.

Robert Seacoll, yeoman, was born in 1594 and married his wife, Joane Horn, in 1626. Robert and his wife and other family members were attending St Mary's Church in Shipton and in 1636 he became Church warden. He became disillusioned with the Church of England, objecting to paying tithes; church records show that in 1648 Robert and his wife along with several others refused to pay for their bread and wine.

In the 17th and 18th centuries Quakers were subject to intense, vicious persecution for their refusal to attend parish churches, to pay tithes and to defer in any way to the established ecclesiastical authorities. As non-conformists they were denied access to the professions or to higher education. They concentrated their talents on business and industry. Members pooled their resources to give support to their fellow Quakers who were imprisoned, often for many years and had their goods distrained.

There are several sets of deeds relating to the property, most of which are in our possession either in original or copy form. The significant deeds are dated 1668, when Robert Seacoll settled his main property as a freehold in trust to fund the Seacoll charity for poor Quakers. His malthouse and adjoining plot of land were left in trust for a leasehold term of 1,000 years for use as a Quaker Meeting house and burial ground. The property was put in trust for the Quakers of Milton, Shipton, Brize Norton, Chadlington, Charlbury (Chalvery) and Lyneham (Lineham). The trustees were bound to abide by the rules and good order of the Society of Friends or forfeit their membership. The only conditions made by Robert were that he, his wife Joane and a spinster known as Martha Goodenough were able to use the premises for the rest of their lives and would be buried in the burial ground. A yearly rent was also payable to him of a peppercorn on Lady Day if he demanded it. The garden and grounds at this time consisted of a few acres and rent was collected from the tenants. This money was used to keep the Meeting house and stable in good condition and for planting many elm trees in the garden and burial ground. Money was also given to the poor. Robert and his wife Joane both died in 1670.



Green Lane, Milton, photographed in the early 20th century. The Quaker Meeting house is at the extreme right of the picture beyond the tall building (now demolished).

Alexander Harris was a leader of the Quakers in the Parish, holding meetings at his home in Charlbury. In 1657 Harris was imprisoned for three and a half years for refusing to pay his tithes. In 1684 goods of his worth £8.00 were distrained by the constables of Charlbury to pay a fine on Milton Meeting house of which he was a trustee, a position he gave up in 1689 to make way for a younger man. This group of non-conformists grew and became very active locally and in 1660, 21 Quakers were sent to Oxford Gaol, some for as long as seven weeks after meetings in Milton and Brize Norton were broken up. Francis Dring, the leader of Brize Norton Quakers, was among these; he was fined for unlawful assembly in 1662 and excommunicated in 1663 'for saying that his conscience would not permit him to go to the parish church and that he is a church himself'. His father, the vicar of Brize Norton, died in 1663; a death believed by the Quakers to have been hastened by his having to read in public the sentence of excommunication on his own son. Dring was a trustee of Milton Meeting house but also gave up his position to a younger man in 1689.

About 80 Quakers are recorded as meeting at a monthly conventicle in the Meeting house in 1669, and in 1675 29 Quakers, including some from Milton, were fined for attending a meeting in Alvescot. John Busby, weaver, was born in Milton in 1638 and he and his wife attended Milton Meetings. The monthly meeting minutes (Oxford, later Witney) record that in 1682 he was given his transfer certificate and given permission to emigrate with his family and join the Philadelphia Monthly meeting in America. He died in August

1699 in Philadelphia.

New Trustees for the charity were appointed over the years and in 1773 the list includes a Thomas Huntley of Burford. Thomas was the schoolmaster of Thomas Huntley's Hillside Academy in Burford and a very active member of the Burford meeting. His second wife, Hannah, ran an interesting sideline making biscuits in the school kitchen. Later his son, another Thomas, went into partnership with a Mr Palmer to found Huntley and Palmers biscuit company.

Another trustee at this time was William Green. William was born in 1722; his father was a Quaker attending meetings in Shutford, near Banbury. At or about the age of 14, William was placed as an apprentice clockmaker at the Sibford workshop of the Gilkes family. By the 1750s he was ready to establish himself as a clockmaker and chose Milton to start his new business. William now settled down to become a pillar of the Milton and Witney meetings.

Not long after June 1756 William married Mary White from Milton.

As well as being a prominent member of the Quakers he was a successful clockmaker making hoop and spike clocks traditional to North Oxfordshire. William died in 1802 aged 79 and is buried in the Meeting house burial ground.

Matthias Padbury, born in 1751, also became apprenticed as a clockmaker to a member of the Gilkes family in Adderbury, then started his clockmaking business in Burford High Street. Receiving permission, he married Sarah Minchin at Milton Meeting house sometime in May/June 1774. William Green, a prominent Quaker clockmaker from Milton under Wychwood, attended the wedding and as recorded in the minutes of the Charlbury meeting of 13 June 1774, 'it was conducted with a good degree of order and decorum'.

Over the years more weddings took place and also many burials, but by the middle of the 1800s the number of members had dropped significantly, the last recorded burial being in 1848. The Charity Commissioners agreed to sell the property in 1925 by public auction but it remained unsold and was eventually bought by Mr Walter Rawlins in November 1925.

The history of the property is recorded in Oxford, later Witney, Monthly Meeting of the Quakers, 1668-1813, and other documents which state: "The first meeting was at Robert Seacoll about the year 1655, and a meeting house was [later] built there"; rather bought than built, for in 1668 the meeting house, formerly a cottage, and burial ground, already perhaps in use by Friends, were purchased from R. Sand and "conferred upon" trustees. It was partially rebuilt and repaired in 1743 to make a separate women's meeting room. The meeting closed in 1813 and in 1829 the building reverted to cottages, let in 1831 at £6 pa. The burial ground was in use at least until 1905.

There are no details of what the Meeting house was like inside but at

some point it was converted by the Quakers into two semi-detached cottages. The interior dividing walls of the cottages – now Quakers Meet and Quaker Cottage – were all of red brick, which was used to divide up the original Meeting house. We were lucky to have the old fireplace in our cottage. The downstairs ceilings are 8ft high, which is lofty for an old house, and the upstairs ceiling is 10ft. This leads us to think that the Meeting house may have had a gallery at some time.



The Meeting house as it is now (photo Alan Vickers)

We often wondered where the burial ground was situated and whilst digging the foundations for our garage a number of skeletons were found. The police were called, the coroner informed and once the possibility of mass murder was dismissed we were allowed to rebury the bones. These were relaid in the same place and some members of the Society of Friends from Burford came to the garden and said a few prayers and the unfortunate skeletons were put to rest.

It appears that Robert and Joane Seacoll were childless, but it would be wonderful to find a link to my family however distant.

## WHAT REALLY HAPPENED AT SHIPTON COURT: THE DEATH OF THOMAS SINDEN REVISITED

Simon Draper

Author's note: As an outsider to the Wychwoods, I have found myself drawn to the area's rich local history in my capacity as Assistant Editor of the Victoria County History of Oxfordshire. For volume 19 in the county series ('Wychwood Forest and Environs') I have researched and written a history of Shipton-under-Wychwood, which can be read online (together with those of neighbouring parishes) in the 'Work in Progress' section of the website: [www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/Oxfordshire](http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/Oxfordshire). There is still some time to go before final publication (the 'red book' is expected around 2019), so any comments on or corrections to draft histories are warmly encouraged. I offer the following as an intriguing diversion from my professional research.

Anyone studying Shipton's history seemingly cannot progress far without encountering the tragic episode of Sir John Chandos Reade and his butler Thomas Sinden, who may or may not have been fatally wounded by Sir John at Shipton Court on the evening of Sunday 28th May 1843. The story was related by Muriel Groves<sup>1</sup> and revisited by Anthony Cronk in the pages of this journal.<sup>2</sup> The former account drew heavily on village tradition, which made out the death to be the result of a drunken brawl between master and servant leading to the latter being found by the footman impaled on a fire-dog. Cronk's account, based mainly on documentary sources, concluded that Sir John was innocent of any wrongdoing and presented him as the victim of 'the old English sport of squire-bashing'. The purpose of this short article is to present some new pieces of evidence (seemingly overlooked until now) which cast some interesting light on proceedings, although they perhaps throw up more questions than they answer.

In his article Cronk argued that there was 'no suspicious death, no inquest, no exhumation...', but in at least two respects he was incorrect. As reported in the *Oxford Journal* on 8th July 1843, there was an exhumation and inquest into the death of Thomas Sinden, the details of which are worth quoting in full.

*Inquests by James Westell, Esq. Coroner*

On Friday 30th ult. at the Crown Inn, Shipton-under-Wychwood, on the body of Thomas Sinden, the late butler of Sir John Chandos Reade, Bart. of Shipton Court. The deceased died on the 1st of June, and was interred on the 8th, but from information by his widow, the coroner, on her application, issued his warrant for disinterment, which took place on the morning of the inquest, the body being removed to the church for examination. On removing the coffin lid the body appeared in an advanced state of decomposition; but there were visible marks of violence on the right side of the head, which exhibited considerable bruises, and a superficial wound under the eye of about an inch in length. From the evidence of Mrs. Sinden, the widow of the deceased, and Mrs. Bailey, maid to Miss Reade, it was proved that the deceased was about 39 years of age, and had lived with Sir John upwards of 12 years. On Sunday the 28th of May he was in good health and spirits, and at a quarter past eleven on that night was well and uninjured in the kitchen, with some other servants. At that time he went up stairs to answer the dining room bell, and came down again about twelve bleeding profusely from a wound below the right eye, and much bruised. In answer to an enquiry by Mrs. Bailey, he said that "he thought his eye was out", and "that one blow did it"; but refused to say more about it. He afterwards returned up stairs, and remained about 20 minutes, soon after which he retired to bed. He complained of great pain from the eye to the back part of the head; it was bathed and other remedies used, and every attention paid to him, but on the following day he still experienced so much pain that Mr. Cheatle, surgeon, of Burford, was sent for, and applied leeches. On the Tuesday Mr. Cheatle continued to attend him, and used other remedies, but in the course of that day he was attacked with a fit, from which however he recovered a little, and on the Wednesday morning appeared somewhat better. On the Thursday he became much worse and was delirious, and continued gradually to sink until a quarter past eleven at night, when he died. Throughout his illness Sir John Reade manifested much anxiety for the deceased, and frequently visited him in his bed room. It was proved that on the Sunday night, while [the] deceased was up stairs, something like a heavy fall or knock was heard from the dining room, or that part of the house, by the servants in the kitchen. The deceased was said to be perfectly sober, and had been so throughout the previous week.

The evidence of Joseph Wakefield, footman, was somewhat conflicting. He stated that on the Sunday evening he was in attendance on Sir John Reade, with the deceased, and no other persons were in the dining room; that they were sitting with him; but he stated positively that he saw nothing done relating to the bruises or wounds on the deceased; there were none when

he left the dining room, and knew not how they were inflicted or occasioned; that the deceased was absent some time, and he afterwards first saw the bruises, &c. in the pantry; that the deceased was sober on the Sunday, but had been drunk during the week; that he was not a temperate man; was much debilitated; and had complained some time previously of his head being hot; that Sir John and the deceased were much attached to each other, but sometimes disagreed.

T.R. Fisher, Esq. surgeon, of Oxford, made a post mortem examination of the body, and stated that but little satisfactory could be observed on it, its far advanced state of decomposition not permitting him to form an opinion as to the cause of death. There was not sufficient appearance of disease in the viscera of the chest or abdomen to account for death; there was no fracture or apparent injury of the skull; and the brain was so much decomposed as to render it impossible for him to say that the wounds and bruises on the head observed by the Jury had occasioned death, or induced disease which had terminated fatally, nor could he say that they had not done so.

Mr. Cheatle, who assisted on the examination, confirmed Mr. Fisher's testimony, and stated that he had known the deceased 12 years. About four years since he met with an accident, and sustained concussion of the brain, from which he had recovered, but was since much altered. He attended him on being seized with a fit about six months since; he had then an attack of delirium tremens, from which he recovered after three weeks' illness, and had been in a state of debility ever since. He attended him on the Tuesday before his death, and he was then suffering from the effects of the blow and had fever, and exhibited great tremor and general debility. He saw him that evening about nine o'clock, when he was labouring under delirium tremens, and he remained in much the same state until Thursday at mid-day, when he began sinking rapidly, and died at 11 or 12 that night. Witness was with him when he died, and he believed he died of delirium tremens.

The deceased had refused to inform his wife and others how he came by the wound and bruises, and it is still unexplained; but the coroner submitted to the Jury that, after the medical evidence, it was obviously useless to pursue the investigation, because clearly it would not be in proof that the injuries occasioned or led to the death. The Jury adopted the view of the case, and returned a verdict of "natural death, by the visitation of God."

The evidence of the footman Joseph Wakefield is especially intriguing owing to the fact that Sir John, following the premature death of his son and heir Compton at the age of 37 in 1851, wrote his will in 1856 in which he left all his property, including Shipton Court and its substantial estate, to Joseph, who had by then been promoted to butler.<sup>3</sup> The will was proved in June 1868, some five months after Sir John's death in January,<sup>4</sup> and Joseph Wakefield



Sir John Chandos Reade, Bt.

changed his surname to Reade by royal licence soon after as a special condition of his inheritance.<sup>5</sup>

Understandably, villagers began to wonder whether Joseph Wakefield (Reade) had been rewarded for helping Sir John evade prosecution in 1843, and certainly, I would argue, the above report of the inquest does highlight a striking inconsistency between the evidence of Mr Wakefield and his fellow servants. Nevertheless, we must take into account any potential biases; firstly, on the part of the journalist writing the newspaper story, secondly, from the servants who may have harboured grudges against Joseph and/or Sir John, and thirdly on the part of Joseph himself, who seems not to have got on particularly well with his (by all accounts) irascible and potentially alcoholic superior Mr Sinden.

Although Sir John left both his real and personal estate (including his 'gold-headed walking-stick') to his butler Joseph Wakefield, his baronetcy passed to his great-nephew Sir Chandos Stanhope Hoskyns Reade, who made at least one legal challenge to Sir John's will. In doing so, he may have tried to enlist the support of his great-aunt Emily, Sir John's daughter, who had

seemingly been overlooked in the will, although she was mentally ill and certified as unable to manage her own affairs.<sup>6</sup>

A sense of the public notoriety the story was attracting is given by the following article from the Middlesborough-based *Daily Gazette*, 9th May 1878, which possibly first appeared in the *Whitehall Review*.

There is a young baronet at present in London whose case deserves commiseration. Sir Charles Stanhope Hoskyns Reade, eighth baronet, is the son of a Madras officer, and great-nephew of the late Sir John Chandos Reade, Shipton Court, Oxfordshire, and Oddington Park, Gloucestershire, who in his dotage disinherited his heir in favour of his footman, a man of the name of Wakefield, who has since assumed the name of Reade. The story of Sir John Reade's life remains yet to be told. He inherited large landed estates in Berks, Oxon and Gloucestershire, was a Harrow and Ch[rist] Ch[urch] man, and married a niece of the then Lord Ellibank. For years his drunken habits were a by word and when he served the office of High Sheriff, at a dinner at the Star at Oxford, his intoxication took the form of dancing on the table. His wife died of grief; his only son, Compton, of the vice to which he was addicted. Lastly, he was suspected of having got rid of his butler – a man named Sinden – by foul play, and some months after the death the butler's widow inscribed on the tombstone the words, "It was a mortal hand that did the deed". This led to a coroner's inquest, but the body on being exhumed was found to be decomposed, and told no tale. For the last 20 years of his life he lived at Shipton Court in complete seclusion, his only associate being Wakefield, to whom he bequeathed his whole possessions ... Sir Chandos Reade is engaged at present in ascertaining whether there are sufficient grounds to enable him to move the law court in any special direction; and I am informed that, should the case be thoroughly exploited, some very strange and dramatic details will be made public. It should be added that Sir Chandos Reade's right to the baronetcy has been already decided by a lawsuit in his favour, the date of creation being 1660.

Whilst the case was scheduled for court in 1879, it was seemingly abandoned,<sup>7</sup> and a sense of Sir Chandos's frustration nine years later can perhaps be gleaned from the following exchange which took place in the *Oxford Times* in 1888. The first article, printed on 21st July, followed on from an account of the execution of a Milton man, Robert Upton, a builder's labourer working at Shipton Court, for the murder of his wife Emma.

Speaking of the Milton murder, it strikes us as a coincidence that this is the second homicide in connection with that ancient Royal residence ... In 1843, the butler of the late Sir John Chandos Reade died in the Court, and was hastily interred. Six months afterwards the rumour having got about that the man had been knocked down with a poker by his master, the body



was disinterred and an inquest held, but owing to rapid decomposition no conclusion could be arrived at. The Baronet never after that until the date of his decease in 1868 went into society, and by will he bequeathed his property to the butler's successor, disinheriting his nephew, the present Sir Chandos S.H. Reade.

In response, the following letter appeared in the newspaper on 4th August, where I suggest that Sir Chandos himself was the 'one who knows'.

SIR – Your paragraph concerning the late Sir John Reade's will is not strictly accurate. His heir was not his great-nephew, the present baronet, but his daughter, who is in confinement as being non-compos. This lady was of weak intellect from her childhood, otherwise I presume she would have disputed her father's will, which gave all that he possessed to the servant, J. Wakefield, and his gold-headed walking-stick! A will thus erratically drawn in favour of a servant would not have been allowed, in my opinion, to pass in any civilised country except England, but with us any testamentary disposition, however absurd, seems sufficient if it be unchallenged. In this case there was no one beyond an imbecile lady to raise the issue, and Mr. Wakefield, who was footman at Shipton Court at the time when Sinden, the butler, died had the enjoyment of the Shipton Court Mansion and estates since 1868, having also assumed his Master's name. Shipton Court was purchased with money granted by Parliament for the support of his title, simultaneously with its creation AD 1660, and there is much reason for believing that the late baronet imagined that this portion of his real estate was inalienable, and inseparable from the title. One would imagine that he added the ridiculous clause about the walking-stick to attract the attention of the judge. Should Sir Chandos Reade survive his imbecile relation and become heir at law, it is possible that he will challenge the will. – I am, Sir, yours etc,

ONE WHO KNOWS.

In the event Sir Chandos died without issue in 1890, seven years before Emily in 1897. Joseph Wakefield (Reade), meanwhile, retained Shipton Court (although choosing himself to live at Shipton Lodge and later Grove Farm) and its estate until his death in 1893, when both passed to his son Joseph, seemingly unchallenged in law by Sir Chandos's cousin and heir Sir George Compton Reade, ninth baronet.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, it is difficult to separate fact from fiction in this case, and clearly the story has been embellished by both local gossip and journalistic sensationalism. Judging by the inquest evidence and the conflicting accounts of Joseph Wakefield (Reade) and the rest of the servants, however, Sir John certainly cannot be absolved of any involvement in Thomas Sinden's death, and neither can his motives for leaving his real and personal estate to Wakefield pass unquestioned. The central mystery remains: if Sinden did not acquire his

fatal injuries in the presence of Sir John in the dining room of Shipton Court (as Wakefield claims), then how did he come to gain 'visible marks of violence' to his head? It is a great pity that the long-running TV drama *Downton Abbey* has recently come to an end, otherwise the writer may have derived more than enough plot material for a whole series from the tragic Sinden affair.

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4. Oxfordshire History Centre, E 2/22D/6.
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6. *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* (2003), III, p. 3298; Howard-Drake, 'Reade family', pp. 35–7.
7. *Isle of Man Times*, 11 Jan. 1879; *Oxford Times*, 18 March 1893.
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## AUSTRALIA BOUND: SOME ASCOTT EMIGRANTS

Wendy Pearse

In our affluent world of today, it is very difficult to visualise what life must have been like for the villagers of Ascott in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The Rev. Samuel Yorke, through the pages of the Leaffield and Ascott Parish Magazine, and later the Chipping Norton *Deanery Magazine*, 1880-83, recounts various happenings and events but it is almost impossible to glean the reality of everyday life for the craftsmen and labourers of the village. What were the conditions like within the houses? How did they obtain their food and water? How about sourcing clothing and footwear? Where did they obtain fuel to heat their houses and cook their food? That particular period of the century hit the British countryside hard. Farmers were finding it difficult to compete with increasing imports from abroad. Wheat and refrigerated meat from other parts of the world were increasingly unloaded on British shores, thus lowering the price of the home market. Imported cattle were bringing in diseases to which indigenous breeds had little resistance. And the weather was atrocious, providing climatic conditions totally opposite to those necessary to aid the production of food. Farms were difficult to rent out, resulting in less available work for farm workers. Wages were poor, and the lower down the class system, the greater the problem of providing for a family. For many living in Ascott, daily life may have been dire indeed.

However, primarily for the young, there was a source of hope: the promised lands on the far side of the world beckoned. Apparently a fair number of Ascott's born and bred were prepared to seize this opportunity. The possibility of acquiring land of their own, and the chance of setting their feet on an upwardly spiralling ladder, proved difficult to resist. In the early 1870s many people left the Wychwoods to seek a new life in New Zealand, partly with the assistance of the emerging Farm Workers' Trade Unions. But a decade later, Perth and Western Australia appear to have had the most to offer to the youth of Ascott, and through the Deanery, we can follow a number of these youths as they set out on their greatest adventure.

In 1875 when Rev. Yorke and his wife Frances arrived in Ascott, it

seems that Mrs Yorke proposed the establishment of a Night School for the village youths. This she pursued, with about 30 students ranging in age from twelve to the middle twenties. Apparently these young villagers were already giving thought to improving their lot in life. Five years later, Rev. Yorke reported that some of the earlier students had already taken advantage of their additional qualifications by joining the Railway Company, the Post Office, the Army or, indeed, by emigrating abroad. Three past students, Frederick White, Raymond Pratley and Jacob Moss had emigrated to Western Australia, where to all intents and purposes they were doing well. Raymond Pratley was the son of a farm labourer and Jacob Moss the youngest son of a shoemaker. They were approximately the same age, born in Ascott, and had probably known each other all their lives. Frederick White, however, was a few years younger than the other two and must have been only about 16 or 17 when he left England. This may have been due to family matters since his father, the village blacksmith, had died in the late 1870s, and his mother was left with other young children and an older stepson, so maybe he decided the time was right to make his own way into the world.

In 1880 in the last issue of the Leaffield and Ascott Parish Magazine, Rev. Yorke reported that Mr Hyatt, whose family had farmed at Stone End Farm (now Ascott Earl House) for generations, had recently seen three of his grandsons depart for Australia: Frank Gomm, the son of his daughter living in Tackley, and Alfred and Edwin Townsend, sons of his other daughter Sophia, the widow of Edwin Townsend of Long House Farm in High Street. The Townsends, like the Hyatts, were a family of long-established Ascott farmers. James, an elder brother of Alfred and Edwin, had sailed for Australia in 1876, which was probably an added incentive to his younger brothers' desire to emigrate. Alfred was 20 and Edwin, like Frederick White, only 16 or 17. The three young men sailed from London on the steamship Potosi on the 29th October 1880.

The S.S. Potosi, built in 1873, had been purchased by the Orient Line from the Pacific Company's fleet only in the past year. She was considered a good, seaworthy vessel and was known for fast steaming. She had a gross measurement of 4219 tons, length 421 feet, beam 43 feet and the depth of the hold was 33 feet 5 inches. Following her initial arrival in Australia in July 1880, *The Maitland Mercury and Hunter River General Advertiser* reported, '...it is lit up at night with the new electric process (Siemens), and this is the first vessel that has been in this harbour lit up in such a manner; and the satisfaction the light has given is likely to lead to all the Orient boats being fitted up in a like manner. The second saloon is lighted in the same method, but in a lesser degree of brilliancy. The light in the saloon having been found to be too dazzling, gauze coverings had to be put round the globes to temper it. There are four of

these globes, one under each corner of the large skylight in the main saloon. The Potosi is propelled by engines of 600 horse-power nominal, with inverted cylinders; these are two in number.'

In the *Deanery* of January 1881, Rev. Yorke reported, 'The ship 'Potosi' of the Orient line [with the three Ascott youths bound for Perth, Western Australia] reached Adelaide after a voyage over the 12,000 miles of 43 days from London, including stoppages at Plymouth, St. Vincent and the Cape. In their letters received from the Cape, they say that the voyage thus far had been a most pleasant one, after passing Madeira and the Canary Islands, or about 1,500 miles from home, the weather became so hot that they could not sleep comfortably in their cabins below, and passed the nights on deck; the sight of the flying fish seemed specially to strike them, flying sometimes in the air for a distance of about a chain and a half and then diving again into the sea. ... the passengers on board the ship numbered nearly 700, chiefly English, but some from Germany and others from Russia.'

By the time the Potosi reached Adelaide half the passengers had already disembarked, including the Ascott lads, who had reached their destination at Perth. The following June, Rev. Yorke reported, 'Four other Ascott youths, James and Albert Weaver, George White and Henry Pratley, have sailed in the ship 'Charlotte Padbury', for Perth, Western Australia; also Thomas Ward and his newly wedded wife. Let us wish them all a prosperous voyage. With the others who have previously gone out from our Parish there will be quite a little Ascott colony settled in those remote parts. But there is an abundance of room for a very large population; the inhabited portions extend for about 350 miles in length and 200 miles in breadth (or nearly the entire size of England), but the whole population does not at present exceed 10,000 persons and thus many districts are very thinly peopled.'

Brothers James and Albert Weaver had been born in Ascott and were the sons of a shoemaker, Charles. James was 20 and Albert 18 when they left to seek their fortunes abroad. George White, aged 22, was the stepbrother of Frederick White, who had already sailed for Perth, and eighteen-year-old Henry Pratley was the younger brother of Raymond Pratley, who had left at the same time as Frederick White. So it would appear that favourable reports had been winging their way across the world to family members in England.

The Charlotte Padbury, which left London on 26th June 1881, was a clipper barque of 636 tons, significantly small in comparison to the Potosi. She was owned by Walter Padbury of Perth, Western Australia (see below), but had been built in Falmouth. Her Commander was Thomas Barber and on this particular voyage he had taken his wife with him. She had been a cabin passenger, together with one other, in what were reputed to be well-ventilated cabins. The saloon was said to be spacious, a bathroom was included and the

accommodation was declared superior. The number of steerage passengers, including the six from Ascott, was 24.

In the August issue of the *Deanery*, Rev. Yorke had reassuring news to impart: 'The painful rumour that was spread abroad in the Parish, early in last month, of the total loss of the ship containing those who have lately left us for Australia, has happily proved to be unfounded: the owners, Messrs. MacDonald, have written to say that they have every reason to believe that the vessel is quite safe and pursuing her voyage.'

The December issue of the *Deanery* reported that, 'Tidings have come of the safe arrival of the ship 'Charlotte Padbury' at Perth, Western Australia, on September 18th, conveying, amongst other passengers, James and Albert Weaver, George White, Henry Pratley, Thomas Ward and his bride (formerly Sarah Ann Hone), all from Ascott. The voyage occupied about 12 weeks.' A newspaper sent to the Vicar from Perth, announcing their arrival, states that it was 'a pleasant and welcome sight to see the fresh English faces of the emigrants, healthy looking and cleanly dressed.'

The March 1882 *Deanery* reported: 'The following is an extract from a letter, lately received from one of the Ascott youths [probably Albert Weaver] who emigrated to Western Australia in the summer of last year: he was a Church bell-ringer and also one of our best cricketers:-

"Swan Bridge , December 26th, 1881.

Christmas has come again and found me a long way from the post I occupied, last year, that of ringing the old Church Bell. I am now in the burning sun of our midsummer, while you, probably, are in a land of snow and ice. We travelled up into the bush from Perth with a team, and we felt it rather strange having to roll ourselves up in our blankets and sleep under the wagon; after 5 days we reached our destination but we found ourselves in a very rough place and resolved to leave it as soon as possible. I left the work and took to my trade again (shoemaking) and am doing capital well, but I must tell you that if one comes out here they must not care how they live, or they had better stay at home, though a man can earn more money here, but I would not advise anyone to come out here for I shall not stay for long."

Four months later there was news of the Townsend family. 'Tidings have lately come from Mrs Townsend's three sons, in Western Australia: they seem to be doing well, but the Colony has suffered, in the past summer, from a terrible drought such as has not been known there for 10 years: the pastures have been dried up, and the sheep, cattle and horses have been dying by the hundreds. Mr James Townsend, who left England shortly before his lamented father's death, in 1876, has married and settled down in Geraldton, in Champion Bay, almost 300 miles north of Perth; he kindly signifies that he

will shortly send a few notes giving some account of the country, which may appear in our Magazine. Alfred has gone several hundred miles higher up into the bush, where a white man is rarely seen, near to the pearl fisheries: a Church is not to be found in his district, he seems to feel the want very much, Edwin is with Mr Padbury, in the neighbourhood of Perth.'

Walter Padbury of was a significant figure in Western Australia history. He was born in 1820 at Stonesfield, Oxfordshire, the second son of a small farmer. He emigrated with his father to Western Australia in 1830, intending to send for the rest of the family once they were established. Unfortunately within five months Walter's father died, and a couple whom his father hoped would look after Walter took his money and disappeared. Walter found work around Perth, eventually becoming a shepherd, until, aged 22, he took to fencing, shearing and droving. He acquired his own stock, which he sold at profit, and eventually secured enough money to bring the rest of his family to join him. In 1845 he married 18-year-old Charlotte Nairn and established a butchery in Perth. He became a property owner, built a flour mill and was very good to his employees. Eventually he went into shipping (his ship, the Charlotte Padbury, was evidently named for his wife) and set up with William Thorley Loton as general store keepers in Perth and Guildford. He was very active in public affairs, long associated with the Agricultural Society; he became a justice of the peace and mayor. He contributed generously to the church, to the establishment of children's homes, hospitals, to the poor and other charities. He died in 1907, and after legacies to relations and friends, left about £90,000 to be divided amongst named charities.

Padbury had also been a great letter writer and at the end of 1882 appears to have written to Rev. Yorke. 'Our Magazine obtains a wide circulation: it has readers in America, South Africa and Western Australia. Mr W. Padbury has written from Perth, in the last named Colony, drawing attention to the letter of an emigrant from Ascott published in our parish notes of March last. He does not dispute the facts stated therein, but writes:- "There is ample room in any of these Australian Colonies and New Zealand for half the population of England: but they must not come here with the notion that they can at once make a fortune, or jump into the shoes of those who have been here all their lives; if they are industrious and economical as a rule they will certainly do better than they can in England." Mr Padbury adds statements of wages given, corresponding with those set forth on the first page of last month's Magazine in Sydney, New South Wales. On the other side of the question it is only fair to consider the length of the voyage, extending at times, to over 100 days in reaching Perth; the extreme heat of the climate in Summer, and its liability to not infrequent droughts; also the separation from friends and acquaintance, the many hardships to be encountered and the like.'

There is some more evidence about the emigrants, which seems to suggest that mixed fortunes attended the Ascott lads. Of the Townsend family, the only additional information is about Edwin. He married Lucy Ann Drummond in 1887 but unfortunately died in 1900, only thirteen years later, aged 36. Both Raymond and Henry Pratley married in 1884, but nothing further is known. Albert and James Weaver also married in 1884. Albert married Charlotte Staples in Fremantle. They had at least one son, Charles George, born in 1889. Charlotte died in 1914 and Albert in 1938. James Weaver's marriage to Sarah Hyde was very shortlived. She died the same year, aged only 18, and their son of three months, James Albert, died the following year. It would appear that James married again in 1888 and hopefully fortune then treated him more kindly.

Nothing further is known about Frederick White, but George White married Jane McGowan in 1884. Sadly fate was not kind to them either, since George died the following year aged only 26. However, it would appear that the oldest son of William James White, the Ascott blacksmith, and the brother of Frederick and George, had, like the eldest Townsend son, preceded his brothers to Perth. In 1879 he married Annie Coffin at Yatheroo and in the following years, they produced a family of four sons and three daughters. Three of their sons joined the Australian Expeditionary Force in the First World War. The eldest, George Eustace, named for his uncle who died the year that he was born, joined the Australian Army Medical Corps and served in Egypt. Bason, the youngest, perhaps fortunately for his mother's peace of mind, was too young to leave Australia before the War ended. The second son, Cecil, married Ivy Derepas in Perth in 1915 and later, as a sergeant in the Australian Expeditionary Force, was shipped to England. On leave, whilst completing his training, he travelled to Ascott to see his father's birthplace. Then in January 1919 he sent to his cousins, the White family living in Centuries House, copies of the photographs of Ascott which he had taken during his visit. His photographs will be reproduced in a future volume of *Wychwoods History*.

## The Women's Institute in the Wychwoods – 100 years of Service by and for Women

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Alan Vickers (Milton and Shipton), Wendy Pearse  
and June Holmes (Ascott)

After the Church, the Schools and the Village Clubs and even before Grove's and the Tillyards, probably no other institution has had such a continuous and continuing effect on the Wychwood community over the last hundred years as the Women's Institute. The history of the W.I. in the Wychwoods reveals much, not only of the activities of the three branches, but also of change over the last hundred years. The following article is compiled from the surviving records and the memories of the members themselves. Unfortunately, the records are not complete: there is a big gap in those for Milton (see below) and the W.I. in Ascott ceased to function during World War II.

The original Women's Institute was founded at Stoney Creek Ontario in Canada in 1915. The first W.I. in Britain was formed under the auspices of the Agricultural Organisation Society (AOS). AOS Secretary, John Nugent Harris, appointed Canadian Madge Watt to set up W.I.'s across the UK. The first was at Llanfair PG, on Anglesey, North Wales on September 16th 1915, and the first W.I. in England was at Singleton in Sussex.

The Wychwoods' W.I. was founded in 1918 and was therefore among the earliest W.I.'s in England. Two notes, one from Mrs Tom Miles and the other from Mrs Holmes, who in 1968 lived in Australia and was the last founding member still alive, describe the first steps in the establishment of the Milton W.I. as they remembered it at the fiftieth anniversary in 1968.

First, Mrs Miles – "Milton-under-Wychwood Women's Institute can, I think, claim a direct descent from the original W.I. at Stoney Creek. Mrs Way, who lived in Frog Lane, Milton-under-Wychwood, was an American lady by birth and I think that correspondence had passed between one of the Stoney Creek members and Mrs Way suggesting the idea of a W.I. at Milton. It will be remembered that one of the original reasons for the existence of W.I.'s was the production of food during the German submarine campaign in 1917-18. Mr Way was the local Food Production Organiser and himself set an example by building pigsties and producing bacon at Frog Lane. When America came into the war in 1917, we were taught the American National Anthem at Milton

School, and I think Mrs. Way came to hear us sing it at school. I lived in Frog Lane then and Mrs. Way made me a pair of cardboard placards, one back and front, and on each a notice giving particulars of a meeting to be held to discuss the formation of a W.I. in Wychwood. Mrs Way also provided me with a hand bell and, like a town crier, I walked through the streets of Milton and Shipton. For this I was paid sixpence. The first person, to read the notice on my sandwich boards was Mrs Sam Groves. (I think Mrs. Groves may have had discussions previously with Mrs. Way, and knew that the announcement was to be made in this way.) It was in the Spring or Summer of 1918 that I went round the villages, for it was after tea in the evening that I started and it had to be daylight for people to read the notice, as Oxfordshire was one of the counties where a black-out was in force in the first war. Mrs. Way moved to Lydney in 1919, and started a W.I. there. "

Mrs Holmes, writing from Australia: "I was a foundation member of the W.I. The very first meeting was held in Mrs Franklin's house who lived opposite the Green. Her sister Miss Cross lived with her. Then we used to meet in the classroom at the School. The first demonstration we had was in soft toy making - a cuddly bunny, I have made dozens and still have the pattern. A lady from Oxford came down to demonstrate. I'm sorry I can't remember who was president after Mrs Way left Milton. I was on the Committee from the first meeting until I left. There was a W.I. exhibition held in Oxford in 1919. Mrs S Groves asked all the Committee to enter which I did, and got several certificates. I was lucky to get two for soft toy making. I still have them and also a medal for making a sun hat out of the rushes that grow in the river. Lady Buckland bought it. Mrs Sam Groves was very pleased about it. We had some lovely times together and outings...I have two photographs taken at a W.I., meeting at Shipton Court...We used to do Mrs Jarleys Waxworks.<sup>1</sup> Winnie Slater was King John. Janet Groves was the Executioner. I was the poor woman who got her head chopped off - Mary Queen of Scots. I was the smallest and the only one the costume would fit. We went several places with that show owing to Mrs Sam. She was a live wire and lovely to work with. The W.I. owed a lot to her. There were twelve or fourteen figures and Mr S Groves used to transport us to different places."

The inaugural meeting of the Wychwood W.I. took place on 27 May 1918 in the infants' schoolroom of the Baptist Chapel. The first officers comprised Mrs H. E. Way, President, Mrs Williams of Shipton, Vice President, Mrs S. E. Groves of Shipton, Secretary and Miss Groves of Milton, Treasurer. Other members of the first committee were Mrs Barker, Mrs Parsloe (Milton), Mrs Ridley, Mrs Williams, Mrs Keen (Milton), Mrs Burson, Miss Myddleton-Evans, Miss Cross and Mrs Gillett (Milton). In the early years, committee meetings were held once a month at "Kohima" in Milton. Mrs Groves of Shipton, the

secretary for many years, was the wife of the owner of Alfred Groves and Sons, the builders and timber merchants. It was said that if Mrs Groves told a Groves employee that his wife should join the W.I. he agreed for his own good.

In 1918 there were 25 members. Girls over 14 were eligible for membership. Meetings were held between 6.0 and 8.0 pm on the last Tuesday in each month. Each member could bring a guest for sixpence (refreshments included). The general format of the meetings was similar to today but some of the subject matter was different, e.g. making a new article from an old one, learning how to preserve and bottle fruit, make jam and darn socks.

Subjects in the first programme, for 1919, included "Sing, Say and Penny Pay", a Magic Lantern Show and the Moral Training of Children. Other items in the first programme were – Care of Teeth, Blouse Making, Accidents and How to Meet Them, House Cleaning Hints, Health and the Home, Shirt Making, an Exhibition of Children's Underclothes. They made soft toys for sale at five shillings or half a crown. Miss Cross, Mrs Ridley and Miss Silman ran the 'propaganda committee'. Library books could be changed at "Frogmore" every Tuesday between 3 and 4 pm.

By 1920 some additional programme elements had been introduced – the Flower Show and Fete in July, a Garden Fete in August with children's play and country dancing and a members' evening in September when the Committee took a back seat. In November there was a paper presented by the Vice President, Miss Dix, on "Women's Work" and this was followed by a debate.

In 1923 there was an evident emphasis on mending, with a competition to produce the best flannel patch of four inches square in January and a similar competition for a linen patch (three and a half inches square) in May. At other times in the year members could learn how to make slippers, compete for the best article made from a pair of black stockings and learn about "stitchery".

Unfortunately there is a large gap in the Milton under Wychwood's archives covering the 1920s and 1930s, which searches have failed so far to overcome. The following paragraphs taken from the Wychwood Local History Society's publication *That's How it Was – Women in the Wychwoods during World War II* provide a picture of the character of the W.I. in the early 1940s: "The Wychwood Women's Institute seemed to have been the mainstay of [wartime] activities in Shipton and Milton. Cis Miller, Brenda Bishop, Daphne Edginton, Marjorie Rathbone and Rose Burson all belonged. Members knitted, collected salvage, made pyjamas for our prisoners of war and endlessly collected money for refugees and prisoners. They responded generously to appeals from, among many others, Burford Cottage Hospital, St Dunstan's Home for the Blind, National Children's Home, Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital and Great



Wychwoods Women's Institute, 1921

Ormond Street Hospital, the Red Cross, the Wychwood Ambulance and the Empire Cancer Campaign. They helped at the War Nursery at Bruern Abbey and made toys for the babies. They made lavender bags for London hospitals and air raid victims. They visited evacuees to 'report on necessitous cases'; entertained refugees, soldiers and evacuated children and their mothers; distributed ration books; held numerous sales of work and whist drives and ran a poultry club and a regular produce stall of vegetables from members' gardens.....They also ran a preservation centre in the ARP room in Groves' yard particularly worked in by the ladies from across the road in Pear Tree Close – Valerie Davis' mother, Mrs Timms, Mrs Miles and Mrs Gee. The W.I. minutes for October 1941 record that 240 lbs of jam had been made for sale and that it was intended to make chutney and rosehip syrup. The 12s 4d received for the hips already picked and dispatched would be given to the Russian Red Cross. The following autumn it was recorded that 118 lbs of rosehips were dispatched for processing and 165 lbs of jam made. Daphne Edginton owned a canning machine that was used for canning sessions with neighbouring W.I.s.....Wychwood W.I. meetings often had to be reorganised because of air-raid warnings and the problems of meeting during the blackout in winter and the requisitioning of public rooms in the villages by the military or other organisations. Many talks gave advice on war-time problems: 'Meatless Meals' and 'Drying Dandelion Roots, Foxglove Leaves and Nettles' and 'Knitting with Unravelling Wool'. At some meetings they had cakes and biscuits but no tea and at others no refreshments at all, feeling it their patriotic duty to go without."

In the Table of Officers printed below, the Miss Hartley mentioned during the early years was Elsie Hartley born in Wigginton near Banbury. In



Milton Women's Institute, 1968

1892 the Hartley family moved to Grove Farm, Shipton. The unmarried Elsie looked after various family members until her parents died, she herself living until 1979. Mrs E. Rogers was the wife of the Pastor at the Milton Baptist Church. Mrs Florrie Mayman lived in Pear Tree Close and later at Westfield. She was an excellent seamstress and worked at the drapers, London House. Mrs Davis was Valerie Davis' mother-in-law. Valerie herself joined in 1948 and is today the longest serving member in the Wychwoods. Her mother, Rose Timms joined in the 1930s and was still a member in 1998, as was Rose Burson who had joined in the 1920s. Daphne Edginton was a farmer's wife living on the other side of the Stowe Road beyond Milton. She came from the Rose family and was known for her work for the Red Cross. Agnes Early was born in Milton in 1910 and lived there for most of her life until she died in 1978. She was an active member of many village organisations including Church Secretary for thirty years. She was also a Church Warden and *Oxford Times* correspondent for twenty six years. In her obituary in *The Wychwood Magazine* it was noted that she was nicknamed 'Mother Milton' for her local involvement. Marjorie Rathbone joined in the 1930s and was still a member at the 80th birthday of the Institute in 1998. Leslie Batt worked in the Housing Department of the District Council; her husband was a solicitor from an old established Witney family and when she was President there was greater involvement at County level. Eva Montgomery came to Milton in the early 1950s and joined the W.I. in 1958. She is still a member today. She feels that the W.I. is much less formal now. Meetings are no longer officially opened by "Madam President" and members today do not bring their knitting.



Members of Milton W.I., 2015

During the last two years, membership has increased significantly and has now reached 61.

The recent programme has been varied but different from that of fifty or one hundred years ago. Talks have included Defibrillators, Brass Rubbings, Poisons for Medicines and Elizabethan Textiles. There was a talk on recycling and two visits to the Waste Recycling centre at Cassington. A favourite evening was when a speaker cancelled at the last minute and a wide variety of board games were brought to the meeting. Members have now suggested that this should be a regular feature – one which earlier members would have recognised. Extra afternoons were organised for members to do crafts and make the Institute's own red, white and blue bunting to be used at village events. Catering forms an important part of the Milton W.I. (more so than in Shipton) and several funerals were catered for plus supplying food for the W.I.'s own Harvest Supper and Christmas Party. The latter two events resulted in donations being made to local causes serving the young and old of the community. Donations have also recently been made to the Lawrence Home Nursing Team and to the Milton Welfare Trust.

Wychwood W.I. Officers				
Year	President	Vice President	Secretary	Treasurer
1918	Mrs H. E. Way	Miss A. Williams	Mrs S. Groves	Miss Groves

1919	Mrs H. E. Way	Miss A. Williams	Mrs S. Groves	Miss Groves
1920	Mrs Dick Hartley	Miss Dix	Mrs S. Groves	Miss Groves
1921				
1922	Mrs Davis	Mrs Marshall	Mrs S. Groves	Miss Elsie Hartley
1923	Mrs Davis		Mrs S. Groves	Miss Elsie Hartley
1924-1940	records untraced			
1941	Miss Batt	Miss Harris Miss Mason	Mrs Groves	Miss Elsie Hartley
1942				
1943				
1944				
1945	Miss Batt	Miss Harris Miss Mason	Mrs Groves	Miss Elsie Hartley
1946	Mrs Scragg	Mrs D Hartley Mrs H Walker	Mrs Fairbairn Miss Turner	Miss Elsie Hartley
1947				
1948				
1949	Mrs Scragg	Mrs Jennings Mrs Daphne Edginton	Mrs Agnes Earley	Miss Elsie Hartley
1950				
1951	Mrs E. L. Rogers	Mrs Jennings Mrs Loader	Mrs A. Earley	Mrs Florrie Mayman
1952	Mrs E. L. Rogers	Mrs Jennings Mrs Loader	Mrs Hanks	Mrs Florrie Mayman
1953				
<b>Milton under Wychwood W.I. Officers</b>				
1954	Mrs E. L. Rogers	Mrs A. Earley Mrs Tidmarsh	Miss Valerie Timms (later Davis)	Mrs Florrie Mayman
1955				
1956				
1957	Mrs Agnes Earley	Mrs D. Davis Mrs F. Tidmarsh	Mrs F. H. Miles	Mrs Florrie Mayman
1958	Mrs Agnes Earley	Mrs D. Davis	Mrs F. H. Miles	Mrs Mayman
1959	Mrs Agnes Earley	Mrs D. Davis	Mrs F. H. Miles	Mrs R. Baldwin
1960	Mrs L. M. Batt	Mrs D. Davis Mrs F. Tidmarsh	Mrs F. H. Miles	Mrs R. Baldwin
1961	Mrs Leslie M. Batt	Mrs D. Davis	Mrs F. H. Miles	Mrs R. Baldwin
1962	Mrs Leslie M. Batt	Mrs D. Davis	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone	Mrs R. Baldwin
1963	Mrs Leslie M. Batt	Mrs E. Montgomery Mrs D. Davis	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone	Mrs R. Baldwin

1964	Mrs Leslie M. Batt	Mrs E. Montgomery	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone	Mrs R. Baldwin
1965	Mrs E. Greenaway	Mrs F. Tidmarsh	Mrs A. O'Sullivan	Mrs J. Macleod
1966	Mrs Haseler	n/a	Mrs Witcombe	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1967	Mrs Leslie M. Batt	n/a	Mrs Witcombe	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1968	Mrs Leslie M. Batt	Mrs D. Davis Miss M. Rowe	Miss O. Tucker	Mrs M. Rathbone
1969	Mrs Leslie M. Batt	Mrs D. Davis Miss M. Rowe	Miss O. Tucker	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1970	Miss M. Rowe	Mrs E. Montgomery	Miss D. Parry-Billings	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1971	Miss M. Rowe	Mrs F. Smith Mrs B. Foster	Miss D. Parry-Billings	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1972	Miss M. Rowe	Mrs B. Foster Miss O. Tucker	Miss D. Parry-Billings	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1973	Mrs D. V. Edginton	Mrs B. Foster Miss O. Tucker	Mrs F. Thomas	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1974	Mrs D. V. Edginton	Miss O. Tucker Mrs M. Joyes	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1975	Mrs D. V. Edginton	Miss O. Tucker Mrs M. Joyes	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Marjorie Rathbone
1976	Mrs E. Montgomery	Miss O. Tucker Mrs B. Foster	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Molly Joyes
1977	Mrs E. Montgomery	Mrs B. Foster Mrs H. Roebuck	Mrs G. Grason	Mrs Molly Joyes
1978	Mrs B. Foster	Mrs H. Roebuck Mrs M. East	Miss O. Tucker	Mrs Molly Joyes
1979	Mrs B. Foster	Mrs M. East Mrs I. Hobbs	Miss O. Tucker	Mrs Molly Joyes
1980	Mrs B. Foster	Mrs E. Frost Mrs M. Clarke	Mrs M. East	Mrs Molly Joyes
1981	Mrs I. Hobbs	Mrs E. Frost		
Mrs A. Earley	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Molly Joyes		
1982	Mrs I. Hobbs	Mrs E. Frost		
Mrs A. Earley	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Molly Joyes		
1983	Mrs I. Hobbs	Mrs E. Frost		
Mrs A. Earley	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Molly Joyes		
1984	Mrs K. Toy	Mrs P. Stephens Mrs C. Bidgood	Mrs S. Iles	Mrs Molly Joyes
1985	Mrs K. Toy	Mrs A. Earley	Mrs S. Iles	Mrs P. Stephens
1986	Mrs K. Toy	Mrs A. Earley Mrs B. Darge	Mrs S. Iles	Mrs P. Stephens



1987	Mrs E. Naish	Mrs E. Montgomery* Mrs B. Darge	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Molly Joyes
1988	Mrs E. Naish	Mrs E. Montgomery* Mrs B. Darge	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Molly Joyes
1989	Mrs E. Naish	Mrs B. Darge* Miss N. Perry	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs Molly Joyes
1990	Mrs E. Naish	Miss N. Perry Mrs M. Wilmott	Mrs B. Foster	Mrs L. Dixon
1991	Mrs B. Foster	Miss N. Perry Mrs M. Wilmott	Mrs A. Lewis	Mrs L. Dixon
1992	Mrs B. Foster	Miss N. Perry* Mrs M. Wilmott	Mrs A. Lewis	Mrs L. Dixon
1993	Mrs B. Foster	Miss N. Perry Mrs M. Wilmott	Mrs A. Lewis	Mrs S. Iles
1994	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs D. Edginton	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs S. Iles
1995	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs D. Edginton	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs L. Dixon
1996	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs D. Edginton	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs L. Dixon
1997	Mrs L. Dixon	Mrs B. Field	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs E. Naish
1998	Mrs L. Dixon	Mrs B. Field	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs E. Naish
1999	Mrs L. Dixon	Mrs B. Field	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs E. Naish
2000	Mrs L. Dixon	Mrs B. Field	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs E. Naish
2001	Mrs E. Naish	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs L. Dixon
2002	Mrs E. Naish	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs L. Dixon
2003	Mrs E. Naish	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs L. Dixon
2004	Mrs E. Naish	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs L. Dixon
2005	Mrs E. Naish	Mrs V. Davis	Mrs R. Hartley	Mrs L. Dixon
2006	Rose Hartley	Edna Naish	Valerie Davis	Linda Dixon
2007	Rose Hartley	Edna Naish	Valerie Davis	Linda Dixon
2008	Rose Hartley	Edna Naish	Valerie Davis	Linda Dixon
2009	Rose Hartley	Edna Naish	Valerie Davis	Linda Dixon
2010	Linda Dixon	Edna Naish	Rose Hartley	Yvonne Pearman
2011	Linda Dixon	Polly Seviour	Rose Hartley	Yvonne Pearman
2012	Linda Dixon	Polly Seviour	Rose Hartley	Yvonne Pearman
2013	Linda Dixon	Polly Seviour	Rose Hartley	Helen de Salis
2014	Linda Dixon	Polly Seviour	Rose Hartley	Helen de Salis
2015	Linda Dixon	Elaine Russell Jarvie	Rose Hartley	Helen de Salis
2016	Polly Seviour	Elaine Russell Jarvie	Sylvia Couldrey* Jan Hand	Linda Dixon

## Shipton

By 1952 membership of the W.I. based in Milton had grown. Mrs Muriel (Sam) Groves remarked to Mrs Vi Smith that there were so many ladies

now in the Wychwoods W.I. that it was getting too big and perhaps a new W.I. in Shipton was needed. She wondered whether Vi Smith would be prepared to help in setting up a new W.I.

A preliminary meeting to consider the formation of a new branch took place in the old Beaconsfield Hall on Wednesday 9 July 1952. It was chaired by Mrs Groves and around 35 women from Shipton attended. Mrs Betty Haynes proposed the motion that "A Womens' Institute be formed in Shipton under Wychwood". This was seconded by Mrs Joan Chaffers. The minimum age for joining was set at 16. It was agreed to meet again in September once the harvest and summer holiday season was over. This also had the advantage that National and County affiliation fees would not be paid until the next year. The first meeting of the new W.I. duly took place at the old Beaconsfield Hall at 7.15 pm on Friday 5 September 1952. It was decided that the annual meeting was to be in November and the Financial Year would end on 31 October. Regular monthly meetings would be on the 4th Thursday of each month at 7.15pm. Visitors paid six old pence, a cup of tea cost twopence and a cake threepence. A Vice President was to be elected by the Committee. There was a ballot for committee members and the following were elected: Mesdames Chaffers, Cook, Coombes, Cross, Groves, Hornby, Hartley, Haynes, Towle and Kemp. Nominations were received for the post of President. Six names were put forward but five withdrew so that Joan Chaffers was unanimously elected the first President. Forty eight subscriptions had been received at the start of this meeting and a further 36 subscriptions were received during the meeting, giving a total of 84.



The Shipton Women's Institute banner

The resolution that first year was that “flogging should be reinstated”. It was recorded that this was rather a dull meeting but enlivened by two friendly swallows who insisted on joining the meeting. Social half hours consisted of a posting game, Sing, Say or Pay and Phylida Cook gave some useful hints on detergents. There was a competition for a well-dressed egg. Mrs Chaffers pointed out that the rules for the competition must be closely followed, e.g. a painted egg meant painted and not dressed. Later, however, she was disqualified from the competition in October as she had put seeds in with her berries. Other competitions were for a dressed peg and the best garment from an ounce of wool, although the competition for puff pastry had no entries.

Joan Chaffers was 52 when she became the first President. She had come to Shipton in 1948 from Yorkshire. Apart from her work with the W.I. she achieved 35 years of work for local hospitals and was a Councillor on the Chipping Norton Rural District Council. She was subsequently awarded an MBE in 1961 for her public service and died aged 90 in 1990. Mrs Hornby, wife of St John Hornby (one of the founding directors of W. H. Smith) lived at the Old Prebendal which was used for garden meetings of the W.I. Mrs Hornby was always eager to win the monthly competition but had keen competition from Gladys Avery. Phylida Cook was an international hockey umpire. She had a London degree in English from Reading which in later life enabled her to be a librarian with the county mobile library service. Mrs H. Coombes was the wife of Harry Coombes who had founded the United Woodworking Tillyard at Hawthorns on Station Road where she lived. Muriel Groves was the wife of Samuel Groves, the last male member of the Groves family to manage Groves the Builders in Milton. She wrote a history of Shipton under Wychwood in the 1930s.

The W.I. was invited in October to organise a Coronation tea for the whole village with the Mothers' Union. The Ascott under Wychwood W.I. invited ten of the new Shipton W.I. members to come to their Christmas party but Shipton was “unable to accept” because the date clashed with their own party. It was not considered possible that the Shipton W.I. would be able to put on a play for their Christmas party but they would try to get a play produced by a visiting branch. At the next Christmas party Mrs Wastie of Charlbury was paid £1 for providing entertainment for the Christmas Party. The new W.I. was a long way from writing and putting on its own pantomimes. Only five members later attended the Spring meeting of Ascott.

The treasurer reported in March 1953 that there was a balance in hand of £3.9.9½d which meant “that more money must be raised”. This was evidently an early preoccupation. There had been a Bring and Buy sale which had made £9.13.3d. This was held during the Social Half Hour of the November

meeting. Mrs Coombes had offered to be responsible for teas and to contribute the profits each year. The hire of cups and saucers for each meeting was costing 2/6 per evening.

A 2d-in-the-shilling stall was to be held at two monthly meetings and by June had raised 19/2. An early sign of the competitive character of the Shipton W.I. was the minute from the Committee meeting that “every effort should be made to send exhibits from the Institute” to the County Exhibition of Produce. Mrs Cross offered to act as Exhibition Secretary.

By the May 1953 committee meeting it was reported that, “as there is so little time left before the Coronation, the members should finish the curtains at the next meeting”



The Shipton patchwork

Membership decreased during the 1980s from around 35-40 members attending each meeting to only 23 in 1984. Newer, younger members were found. Margaret Hartley who had joined in 1976 and was President in the early 1980s encouraged several energetic young women to join at this time including Sue Jourdan, Gail Huntingford, Diana Johnson and Jenny Charlwood and membership and attendances increased. The younger members tended to have young families and activities were chosen which would appeal more to them. These included a family picnic to Bruern and visits to the Thames Barrier, the Stock Exchange and the Houses of Parliament. Other outings made in that decade were to Harveys Sherry Producers in Bristol, Broughton Castle and to the Oxford Colleges. Janet Groom organised a car rally. There were visits, too, to Didcot Power Station, Bath and the Meteorological Station at Bracknell.

In the area of work for the community Members adopted a ward at Bradwell Grove Hospital for mentally handicapped residents. Visits would be made and occasionally residents would come to Shipton and be entertained by members in their homes. Every year a group of 'au pairs' living and working in Jewish families in North London would visit Shipton with their English teacher. In the eighties they were often treated poorly by their families and their teacher wanted to show them how hospitable some of the English could be. The W.I. provided refreshments for a Good Neighbours' party and catering for the annual Evergreens Lunch. It supported fund-raising events for the village hall and the hospital in Chipping Norton in particular with stalls at the Chipping Norton Hospital and Tall Trees fete.

As ever, a wide range of activities was engaged in. In the area of sport, tennis in the Oxford Federation of Women's Institutes was very successful. Many members took part in the county tournament – the winners then went on to the Southern Region finals and if successful then played in the finals at Queens Club, London. Table tennis and bowls were both played by members and county darts and bowls competitions were well supported.

Cookery afternoons were held at Coldstone Farm where members demonstrated their favourite recipes. This was supplemented by demonstrations in cake icing. The end results were consumed and commented on. As part of the fund-raising campaign for the new village hall in the 1990s a cookery book, *What's Cooking in Shipton*, was published, including some of the most popular recipes. It was sold for £5 a copy and was a sell-out.

In the mid-1980s Daphne and Duncan Waugh moved into the Old Till House in Upper High Street and revolutionised the W.I. drama group. The pantomimes Daphne wrote and produced are legendary. They were always a sell-out. Everyone remembers the commuters (honorary W.I. members for the duration) who appeared in every panto with their suits and bowler hats and performed a dance routine which left a lot to be desired. On one occasion when Dick Whittington (Christine Halliday) boarded the train with the commuters the guard from Charlbury station made a guest appearance. Another regular feature were the Penguins. Joan Howard-Drake and Evelyn Dixon produced the most realistic, hard wearing costumes for these creatures to appear in the most unlikely climates. Rehearsals took place in the barn at Coldstone Farm for many months beforehand before moving down to the village hall. The dress rehearsal was taking place one December morning, everyone oblivious to what was going on outside, until it was time to leave when they discovered that they were snowed in. John Hartley appeared with his tractor to take the thespians home. The price of tickets was £1.50 to include wine and mince pies. The W.I. produced a pantomime for ten years and then in 1996 handed it over to the Wychwood Players.

Daphne Waugh's talents were not confined to the village hall. On two occasions she produced a review – this time actually in the barn. Shipton W.I. ladies served a three course meal with roast beef as well as taking part in the sketch "The Committee Meeting".

By the 1990s it was obvious that the old village hall, which had been built in 1884 and had been used by the W.I. since its inception was coming to the end of its life. The kitchen was damp and inadequate not to mention the lavatories. Plans were developed to build a new village hall. A committee was set up and fund-raising started in earnest. The W.I. was involved in many of the events. Pantomime and review profits all went towards the campaign.

The W.I. served refreshments at the annual fetes (sometimes under very difficult conditions) and always in costume. They dressed up as clowns for a circus fete and Victorian ladies for a Victorian fete. Further catering efforts involved providing teas for visiting coach parties and hosting visitors from Texas in their homes and introducing them to the Cotswolds. The everyday activities of the W.I. were not neglected and membership continued to increase, partly due to the publicity provided by the pantomimes.

To mark the Millennium, Shipton W.I. produced a profile with details of all 60 members. This revealed that the average age of members was 65. Only four members were under 50 but at the other end of the scale, only four were over 80 including one of the founder members of 1952. The average length of membership of Shipton W.I. was close to 13 years. Only ten per cent of members



Members of Shipton W. I., 2012

could be considered purely local (born and brought up in the Wychwoods or one of the neighbouring villages). Of the ninety per cent who had been born and educated elsewhere, close to forty per cent had lived for significant periods of time outside the UK. Many had gone on beyond secondary school to gain higher qualifications including degrees. Unfortunately we do not have such a detailed breakdown for the class of 1952 but it is hard to believe that the pattern had not changed significantly since the early 1950s, reflecting the greater independence of women and increased educational and employment opportunities. An annual report on the year 2000/2001 contained in the Millennium Profile gives an excellent snapshot of the character and activities of the Shipton Institute at that time and there is probably little difference in the period since then. Observation suggests that the social pattern is still broadly the same today as it was fifteen years ago at the time of the Millennium.

This extract from the Millennium Profile gives a flavour of life in the modern W.I.: “We have heard about the life of a manservant in London 1837, a village boyhood, the healing and beneficial effects of herbs, the Everest Memorial trust, bats, the John Lewis Partnership, fifty years as a nanny, and Egypt, the land of the seventh millennium. We have learned about hat-making and tried on exclusive and elegant models, we have discussed and voted on resolutions dealing with Oxford Federation of W.I. terminology and management, the collection of pensions or benefits at Post Offices, funding of children’s hospices and the availability of treatment for people following a stroke.....Shipton members joined in the a group outing to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford, hosted the group meeting in September when we were entertained by the Blockley Ladies Choir and attended the February group meeting at Bledington ....Members have again participated in bowls, golf, darts, table-tennis and organised walks. The bowls team from Shipton represented Oxfordshire in the Southern Area Finals....At the Showtime 2000 event Shipton won the Produce Guild Shield and individual members came first in the sugar craft and ceramics competitions as well as two further seconds and one third. As a result of this, two members were invited to appear on television to demonstrate their skills. ...Shipton again supported the bulb scheme. Various other activities included a team entered in the Oxford Federation quiz, two members went to the briefing conference, twelve enjoyed an outing to Malvern Spring Flower Show, three attended the Craft Spectacular at Tatton Park, four went to the Grand Fashion Show, twelve went to the Heritage Lectures and seven to the ‘Working for the Future’ evening.

Shipton members organised and enjoyed a trip to the Dome, coffee mornings for the new and old members, a Scrabble afternoon, a visit to the Hearing Dogs Centre at Lewknor, a tour of the Met Office and a Christmas lunch.

Finance was raised by providing teas at the Wychwood Millennium exhibition and for a visiting group from the Cotswold Association of the National Trust. A cake stall was run at the Shipton Fete. A voluntary collection raised over £150 for the Pheriche Hospital for Sherpas and climbers... Members opened their gardens and provided lunches to raise £160 for the Wychwood Library Appeal... Individual members raised £350 for Katharine House W.I. with a coffee morning and bring and buy and a Sponsored Knit raised £233 for the Winged Fellowship”.

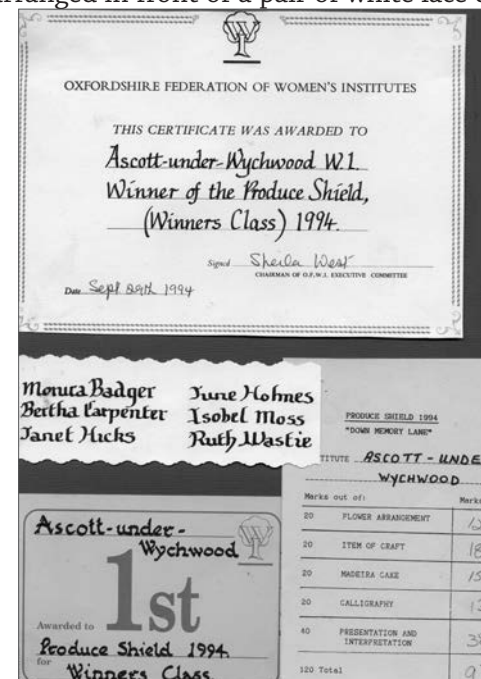
<b>Shipton under Wychwood W.I. Officers</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>President</b>	<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Treasurer</b>
1952/53	Joan Chaffers	Betty Haynes	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1953/54	Joan Chaffers	Betty Haynes Phylida Cook	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1954/55				
1955/56	Betty Haynes	Joan Chaffers Phylida Cook	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1956/57				
1957/58	Phylida Cook	Betty Haynes Violet Smith	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1958/59	Phylida Cook	Betty Haynes Violet Smith	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1959/60	Phylida Cook	Betty Haynes Mrs F. White	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1960/61	Joan Chaffers	Mrs R. Brookes Mrs F. N. White	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1961/62	Joan Chaffers	Mrs R. Brookes Mrs F. N. White	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1962/63	Joan Chaffers	R. Brookes A. J. Pearse	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1963/64	A. J. Pearse	R. Brookes Mrs A. D. Hopkins	Amy Kemp	Mrs Cyril Cross
1964/65	A. J. Pearse	Mrs R. Brookes	Mrs A. E. Oliver	Mrs Cyril Cross
1965/66	A. J. Pearse	Gladys Avery	Violet Smith	Barbara Pearce
1966/67	A. J. Pearse	Gladys Avery	Violet Smith	Barbara Pearce
1967/68	A. J. Pearse	Gladys Avery	Violet Smith	Barbara Pearce
1968/69	Dulcie Arundell	Gladys Avery	Violet Smith	Barbara Pearce
1969/70	Dulcie Arundell	Gladys Avery	Violet Smith	Barbara Pearce
1970/71	Mary Pauling	Dulcie Arundell	Violet Smith	Barbara Pearce
1971/72	Mary Pauling	Janet Groom	Violet Smith	Barbara Pearce
1972/73	Mary Pauling	Rachel Grant	Violet Smith	P. Moore
1973/74	Rachel Grant	Barbara Pearce	Violet Smith	P. Moore
1974/75	Rachel Grant	Barbara Pearce	Violet Smith	P. Moore

1975/76	Rachel Grant	Barbara Pearce	Violet Smith	P. Moore
1976/77	Janet Groom	Celia Riddick	Dorothy Cotsell	E. McClelland
1977/78	Janet Groom	Celia Riddick	Dorothy Cotsell	E. McClelland
1978/79	Janet Groom	Barbara Pearce	Margaret Hartley	E. McClelland
1979/80	Barbara Pearce	Pam Williams	Margaret Hartley	E. McClelland
1980/81	Barbara Pearce	Ruby Mix	Margaret Hartley	Evelyn Dixon
1981/82	Barbara Pearce	Gladys Avery	Rachel Grant	Evelyn Dixon
1982/83	Margaret Hartley	Pam Williams	Rachel Grant	Elaine Way
1983/84	Margaret Hartley	Gladys Avery	Pam Williams	Elaine Way
1984/85	Pam Williams	P Coombes	P Bradley	Valerie Green
1985/86	Margaret Nicholson	P Coombes	Barbara Pearce	Audrey Rayner
1986/87	Margaret Nicholson	P Coombes	Barbara Pearce	Audrey Rayner
1987/88	Margaret Nicholson	Win White	Barbara Pearce	Peggy Clark
1988/89	Win White	Eileen Jessey	Margaret Hartley	Peggy Clark
1989/90	Win White	Eileen Jessey	Margaret Hartley	Peggy Clark
1990/91	Win White	Eileen Jessey	Margaret Hartley	Gail Huntingford
1991/92	Sue Jourdan	Eileen Jessey	Sheila Davies	Gail Huntingford
1992/93	Sue Jourdan	Eileen Jessey	Sheila Davies	Gail Huntingford
1993/94	Sue Jourdan	Eileen Jessey	Sheila Davies	Margaret Hartley
1994/95	Eileen Jessey	Sheila Davies	Margaret Nicholson	Margaret Hartley
1995/96	Eileen Jessey	Jane Hills	Margaret Nicholson	Margaret Hartley
1996/97	Eileen Jessey	Jane Hills	Carolyn Innes-Wilson	Barbara Pearce
1997/98	Sheila Davies	Margaret Hartley	Carolyn Innes-Wilson	Barbara Pearce
1998/99	Sheila Davies	Margaret Hartley	Carolyn Innes-Wilson	Barbara Pearce
1999/00	Margaret Hartley	Pat Bannister	Janet Groom	Gail Huntingford
2000/01	Margaret Hartley	Pat Bannister	Janet Groom	Gail Huntingford
2001/02	Margaret Hartley	Pat Bannister	Janet Groom	Gail Huntingford
2002/03	Pat Bannister	Janet Groom	Rosemary Wilson	Margaret Hartley
2003/04	Pat Bannister	Stella Perceval	Rosemary Wilson	Margaret Hartley
2004/05	Pat Bannister	Janet Groom	Rosemary Wilson	Margaret Hartley
2005/06	Pat Bannister	Janet Groom	Rosemary Wilson	Margaret Hartley
2006/07	Margaret Hartley	Pat Bannister	Rosemary Wilson	Sylvia Vickers
2007/08	Margaret Hartley	Pat Bannister	Maggie McKillop	Sylvia Vickers
2008/09	Margaret Hartley	Pat Bannister	Maggie McKillop	Sylvia Vickers
2009/10	Anita Spencer	Margaret Hartley	Maggie McKillop	Sylvia Vickers
2010/11	Anita Spencer	Pat Bannister	Nicky Pratt	Margaret Hartley
2011/12	Nicky Pratt	Anita Spencer	Margaret Hartley	Sylvia Vickers
2012/13	Nicky Pratt	Margaret Gibbs	Margaret Hartley	Christine Murphy
2013/14	Margaret Gibbs	Kay Shortland	Margaret Hartley	Christine Murphy
2014/15	Margaret Gibbs	Kay Shortland	Lesley Crofts	Christine Murphy

2015/16	Margaret Gibbs	Kay Shortland	Lesley Crofts	Jill Mavin
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## Ascott

1994 was the year. They had entered before and continued to do so afterwards, achieving 2nds and 3rds, but it was in 1994 that Ascott Women's Institute won the Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes Produce Shield. The exhibit had been constructed around the theme 'Down Memory Lane' and Monica Badger, Bertha Carpenter, Janet Hicks, June Holmes, Isobel Moss and Ruth Wastie had spared no pains in preparing their entry. A floral posy, beautifully dressed Victorian doll, madeira cake and calligraphy document were artistically arranged in front of a pair of white lace curtains resulting in



1994, Ascott's victorious year

them receiving 38.5 points out of 40 for presentation and interpretation.

1994 was the 63rd year of the establishment of Ascott Women's Institute, ignoring a break during World War II. It had all begun on February 26th 1931 when 33 women were present to debate the resolution that there should be a Women's Institute in Ascott. It was carried unanimously. Three weeks later the Ascott Women's Institute was formed and a resolution was passed that they should be affiliated to the National Federation and the

Oxfordshire Federation. Eleven members were elected to the Committee. Mrs Eccles became the first Chairman, replaced in June by Mrs T. Chaundy, the wife of Tom Chaundy of Yew Tree Farm. Meetings were held in the Tiddy Hall, initially Wednesdays but later changed to Thursdays. According to the usual W.I. pattern, 'Jerusalem' was sung at the start of the meeting and 'God Save the King' at the end. Business discussions were followed by lectures on all manner of subjects, many including lantern slides. Competitions and craft events were established and meetings with other local Women's Institutes were arranged. Plays were performed, bulb growing competitions were initiated and a Games or Social Half Hour always finished the meetings. Miss M. White was the Secretary for most of the pre-war years, the Minute Book for those years meticulously written by her. The Annual Meeting was arranged for January and a Celebration Cake (always made by a member) appeared for those meetings. Funds were raised in various ways and different members represented Ascott at the Oxfordshire and National Meetings in Oxford and the Albert Hall in London.



Four Founder members of Ascott Women's Institute:  
left to right, Mrs Storey, Mrs Powell, Mrs Campbell and Miss Lily Edginton

In 1933 Miss FitzRandolph, the current Chairman, approached the Tiddy Hall Committee to ask if they could assist with the expenses of a Cloakroom 'for the Hall which is greatly needed'.

A matchbox competition was held in March 1933, which was won by Mrs Simmonds, her box containing 112 different articles, and the competition for the following June was 'a Garment [which] might be either knitted or made of material, the prize being for the garment considered the most hygienic.'

Unfortunately there is no further mention of this mysterious garment. More serious discussions included the plight of housing for elderly people and the question of whether bread should be wrapped in paper.

The first Minute Book finishes in December 1936. During World War II the hall was taken over by the military. The W.I. struggled to meet in members' homes, but this proved too difficult, and they resolved to cease the meetings until the return of peace. Ascott Women's Institute came alive again on 22nd May 1947. A very enthusiastic group of ladies joined and were soon involved with all aspects of the W.I. Christmas parties, whist drives and dances, flower shows, outings to Weymouth and Stonehenge were arranged, as well as a revival of lectures, competitions, handicrafts, visits to Group Meetings with other Institutes and members attended Oxfordshire and National W.I. Meetings. In a country still living with ration books, food parcels were received from Australia and raffled. The Ascott W.I. also sent a petition to the County Education Committee asking if Burford School could change their hours to a 5-day week instead of the children having to attend in the mornings only on Tuesdays and Saturdays. This was successful. Mrs Tait, Mrs Badger and Mrs Treweeke were leading members of this newly revived Institute. In 1953 an outing was arranged to London to see the Coronation Illuminations.



Left to right: Annaliese Niebuhr, Doris Warner, Edie Pratley, Theresa Pratley, 1963.

Over the next few years fundraising events were organised to help local charities and hospitals and for new chairs for the Tiddy Hall. The average attendance at the monthly meetings was 16. In 1963 the talks included the travels of a jet pilot's wife and demonstrations of Tupperware. In that year were discovered two dresses originally worn by Doris Warner and Edie Pratley when they danced folk-dances in 1913 for Cecil Sharp, the great collector of folksongs and Morris; these were modelled by Annaliese Niebuhr and Edie Pratley's grand-daughter, Theresa, to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of that event.

1966 was the W.I. Jubilee year. Mrs H. Moss attended the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace and Mrs Mortimer attended the Special A.G.M. Conference at the Albert Hall. The W.I. gave three litter bins to the village to mark the Jubilee and a village scrapbook was compiled by Miss Walkinshaw.

This today is a grand evocation of Ascott in 1965, recounting not just the history of the village, its buildings and inhabitants, but fashions in dress, cars, kitchen equipment etc. It is completed by a journal of happenings and events, month by month throughout that year. Miss Walkinshaw, who had



Members of Ascott W.I. on their way to Lady Brunnon's garden party, 1965

Left to right: Mrs Hickson, Mrs Scully, Mrs Powell, Miss Walkinshaw and Mrs Greenaway

just retired after ten years as headmistress at Ascott School, left an enthralling memory for the future. She became the W.I. President in 1959 and remained in that position for 12 years.

By 1967 average attendance was 20, worryingly low, especially to funds; but although much was achieved in all aspects of the society and initially the membership rose to 24, by the early 1970s the number attending the meetings had dropped so significantly that doubts were creeping in about whether the Ascott W.I. could continue. However, a public request for the collection of paper and cardboard saved the day. The W.I. took the initiative and funds were rescued by the raising of £80 by the members in that year. Things then took a turn for the better when the membership rose to 27 including 5 junior members. Together with other fundraising events donations could then be resumed, including to one of their longterm recipients, The Royal National Mission for Deep Sea Fishermen.

On 2nd June 1976 at the 55th Annual General Meeting in the Albert Hall, Mrs Tait gave a speech supporting the resolution from Mrs B. Walton of Shipton, "That the age of consent should not be lowered, but remain at 16." Mrs Tait later appeared on ATV Television to talk about her speech.

Celebrations were organised for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1978, the W.I. particularly praised for the success of their teas. Then in 1980 another celebration was held to commemorate the centenary of the birth of Reginald Tiddy, the founder of Ascott's Tiddy Hall, who was killed in the First World War. He was a great lover of folk song and dance and collected Mummers' Plays from all over the country. The W.I. between them prepared 100 meals for the visiting Morris and Mummers men; the feast was held in Harry Cook's barn. In 1981 the W.I. celebrated the Golden Anniversary of Ascott W.I. when every member wore a golden buttonhole and they finished their evening with sherry and a magnificent cake.

They continued with fundraising for various causes and gave donations to many organisations, as well as enjoying Christmas parties and other events. They led support against the suggested closing of the local railway and strongly supported the non-closure of Burford Hospital. The first was won but the latter lost. A good variety of lectures continued. One lecturer, who talked about her husband receiving an award from the Queen at Buckingham Palace, caused much amusement when she said, reiterating women's usual plea of having nothing to wear, that she was told by her husband that she had a whole wardrobe of dresses upstairs and the Queen hadn't seen any of them.

Perhaps the greatest challenge occurred in 1998, the highlight of their year, when they prepared lunch for 160 members of the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain, who were competing in a 48-hour event around the country. The



Phyllis Campbell, a Founder member, receiving a posy from Mrs Tait at the Golden Anniversary, 1981

lunch took place in the new Tiddy Hall (the original wooden hall would have been too small). Veteran cars were parked at the Tiddy Hall and all up Shipton Road. The lunch was a huge amount of work, taxing the produce committee to their limits, but every W.I. member contributed to the day. It was thoroughly enjoyed and left the W.I. funds in a very healthy position.

Memories of these later years are recalled by Kathy Pearce who joined the W.I. in the early 1980s: "Ascott W.I. was a very active Institute which I joined soon after moving to the village. As a member I was introduced to many interesting speakers and demonstrations including cookery and a wide variety of crafts. I have fond memories of those days and appreciate the opportunity it gave me to make many friends in the village and the surrounding area. We welcomed people from other Institutes to enjoy and share our meetings, which usually involved a competition; these evenings were always good fun.

"We loved to listen to Mavis Mortimer reciting poems; her "Pam Ayers" was brilliant. There were many talented ladies in Ascott W.I. Each year we entered the County Competition along with the other 100 plus Oxfordshire Institutes. We always did very well, coming second or third on more than one occasion; then in 1994 we took the first prize. We also had a lot of success with the individual entries. For our 60th Anniversary we celebrated each decade with a reading from the Minutes of that time and a song (the rehearsals were hilarious). We invited Barbara Grey, Chairwoman of the Oxfordshire Federation of Women's Institutes. She gave a speech and I will always remember her saying 'Small Institute, Big Talent'. We were very proud."

In 2001 Ascott W.I. celebrated their 70th Anniversary in grand fashion, including wine and their usual magnificent Celebration Cake. But sadly all things come to an end and in 2002 the Ascott W.I. had completed its allotted span. Members were growing older and few new ones were coming along. In January of that year the W.I. asked to be suspended from the membership of the Oxfordshire Federation, and now only memories and scrapbooks remain.

Two Wychwood W.I.'s remain (sadly without Ascott), and in recent years they have increased their membership and widened their interests and activities. As the Secretary of the Milton W.I. concluded in her report for 2015: "Our W.I. members are incredibly supportive not only of W.I. events but also of events that individuals are organising. Bonds of friendship formed in the W.I. stretch all around the village". They have undoubtedly had a strong influence on making the Wychwoods the active and caring community it is today and study of the social background of members and the way membership has changed and developed over the last hundred years reveals much about overall changes in Wychwoods' society.

#### Ascott under Wychwood W.I. Officers

Year	President	Vice President	Secretary	Treasurer
1931/32	Mrs Eccles	Florence Chaundy		
1932/33	Miss FitzRandolph	Mrs T. Chaundy	Miss M. White	Miss K. Chaundy
1933/34	Miss FitzRandolph	Miss Price	Miss M. White	
1943/35	Miss FitzRandolph	Mrs M. Moss	Mrs Lewis	Miss Price
1935/36	Miss FitzRandolph	Mrs M. Moss		
1936/37	Miss FitzRandolph			Miss Price
1937/38 – 1946/47	Records not traced			
1947/48	E. M. Smith-Bosanquet	Mrs Badger Mrs Treweeke	Mrs Clements	Mrs Chapman
1948/49	Mrs Chapman	Mrs Badger Mrs Treweeke	Mrs Barrett	Mrs Tait
1949/50 – 1954/55	Records not traced			
1955/56	Mrs Pearce			
1956/57	Mrs Pearce			
1957/58	Mrs Pearce			
1958/59	Mrs LeW.I.s			
1959/60	Miss Walkinshaw			
1960/61	Miss Walkinshaw	Mrs Barrett	Mrs Tucker	Mrs Alden
1961/62	Miss Walkinshaw	Mrs Barrett Mrs Treweeke	Mrs Tucker	Mrs Alden



1962/63	Miss Walkinshaw	Mrs Tait Mrs Tucker	Mrs Mortimer	Mrs Alden
1963/64	Miss Walkinshaw			
1964/65	Miss Walkinshaw			
1965/66	Miss Walkinshaw	Mrs H. Moss Mrs Tait	Mrs Mortimer	Mrs Alden
1966/67	Miss Walkinshaw	Mrs Tait Mrs Tucker	Mrs Mortimer	Mrs Longshaw
1967/68	Miss Walkinshaw	Mrs Tait Mrs Tucker	Mrs Mortimer	Mrs Timms
1968/69	Miss Walkinshaw			
1969/70	Miss Walkinshaw	Mrs Tait Miss Weygang	Mrs Stanyon Mrs Longshaw	Mrs Alden
1970/71	Miss Walkinshaw		Mrs Stanyon Mrs Greenaway	Mrs Alden
1971/72				
1772/73	Mrs Mortimer	Miss Walkinshaw Miss Weygang	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Benfield
1973/74	Mrs Mortimer	Miss Walkinshaw Miss Weygang	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Benfield
1974/75	Mrs Mortimer	Mrs Carpenter	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Campbell
1975/76	Mrs Campbell	Mrs Tucker Mrs Warner	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Carpenter
1976/77	Mrs Anne Benfield	Mrs Carpenter Mrs Tait	Mrs Sheppard	Miss Linda Shirley
1977/78	Mrs J. Campbell	Mrs Benfield Mrs Mortimer	Mrs Shepherd	Mrs Hicks
1978/79				
1979/80	Mrs Campbell	Mrs Desyllas Mrs Mortimer	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Hicks
1980/81	Mrs Tait	Mrs Campbell Mrs Desyllas	Mrs McAll	Mrs Hicks
1981/82	Mrs Tait	Mrs Sheppard Mrs Desyllas	Mrs McAll	Mrs Hicks
1982/3	Mrs Tait	Mrs Sheppard Mrs Carpenter	Mrs McAll	Mrs Hicks
1983/84	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Carpenter Mrs Badger	Mrs McAll	Mrs Hicks
1984/85	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Badger Mrs Holliday	Mrs McAll	Mrs Hicks
1985/86	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Badger Mrs Holliday	Mrs McAll	Mrs Hicks
1986/87	Mrs Sheppard	Mrs Carpenter Mrs Eames	Mrs McAll	Mrs Hicks
1987/88	Mrs Hicks	Mrs Carpenter Mrs Holmes	Mrs McAll	Mrs Benfield

1988/99				
1989/90				
1990/91	Mrs Hicks	Mrs Badger Mrs Carpenter	Mrs McAll	Mrs Barefield
1991/92				
1992/93	Mrs M. Badger	Mrs J. Holmes Mrs M. Carter	Mrs K. Pearce	Mrs J. Hicks
1993/94	Mrs M. Badger	Mrs J. Holmes Mrs M. Carter	Mrs K. Pearce	Mrs J. Hicks
1994/95	Mrs M. Badger	Mrs Carter Mrs Bailey	Mrs K. Pearce	Mrs J. Hicks
1995/96	Mrs A. Bailey	Mrs B. Carpenter	Mrs J. Hicks	Mrs P. McAll
1996/97	Mrs A. Bailey	Mrs B. Carpenter	Mrs J. Hicks	Mrs P. McAll
1997/98				
1998/99	Mrs B. Carpenter		Mrs J. Holmes	Janet Evans

## Acknowledgements

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## References

1. Edited only to correct obvious typographical errors.
2. Mrs Jarley was a minor character in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, by Charles Dickens. She assembled figures of famous people who pretended to be made of wax as in a real waxworks. Each figure was presented and then encouraged to come to life. Such performances became very popular as part of community entertainments from Victorian and Edwardian times.

# The Ralph Mann Archive, Kingham

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Michael Davies

In 2015 the late Rev Ralph Mann, the noted local historian, left his extensive collection of material and writings on Kingham for the use of the village. A small group of residents have secured a room in the Village Hall in which the material is now stored and have catalogued and sorted the material, housing it in a cupboard, map case and file cabinet. The cataloguing of the material was in part based on the WLHS inventory of documents which helped us develop categories into which the material could be sorted without resorting to trial and error. The catalogue is on a set of Excel spreadsheets and a copy has been lodged with WLHS. This format enables users to sort the categories in any order they like to find subjects that they may be working on. The catalogue also contains an alphabetical listing of all names that are featured in the various categories to facilitate searches for family records.

The material has been listed and catalogued into a number of topics with cross-referencing where appropriate resulting in some 1,400 entries. Thus there are lists of the material relating to: local transport, official records, parish records, local homes and farms, churches, local businesses, wills, etc. Some of the material relates to families in surrounding villages, including Daylesford, Churchill and the Wychwoods, mostly where there are connections between Kingham families and other local families through marriage, etc.

The archive contains some 50 books, pamphlets and articles on Kingham, around 300 family records (including a considerable number of family trees covering between three and eight generations) and 300 wills ranging from 1550 to 1926, most of which were transcribed by Ralph Mann, as well as 100 records concerning farms and properties in the area and 40 maps (including a detailed map of the original enclosure awards of 1850). Other material extends to census returns from 1841-1901 and National Monuments Records for Kingham and surrounding villages; some two to three hundred photographs, copies of all entries in the Parish Registers (1663-1963), the Churchwardens' books (1760-1882) and transcripts of the records of: the Overseers of the Poor (1780-1914), the Fieldsmen (1772-1820), the Constable's books (1760-1847) and records of the Parish Council from its inception in 1894.

There is an original case record from the Lord Chancellor, dated 1850, concerning a will in dispute between the Phillips and Frogley families. One interesting set of records is Richard Rainbow's farm accounts from 1867-9

and a notebook dating from 1836 belonging to the Phillips family recording traditional remedies for animal illnesses. Rainbow farmed Kingham Hill before the school was built. The collection also contains material relating to Kingham Hill School and the village school records from 1873-1919 as well as histories of some of the older dwellings in the village, such as The Old Rectory and the 'Little' cottages.

We have, as well, assembled some electronic records on Kingham available from the internet and from new material such as photographs that have been scanned into the record. In addition some of Ralph Mann's more recent studies were available in electronic format. Those records that are in electronic format, which now comprise some 14 percent of the collection, are indicated on the catalogue and can, on request, be sent by e-mail to those who want specific documents. There are also a few recordings of conversations with local residents.

As a result of the local publicity given to this donation we have also received a number of other contributions, including a substantial amount of material from the Phillips family (the original owners of the farmhouse that is now the Wild Rabbit inn). As a result we have been able to expand the archive to include new documentation, such as the original 1790 rental agreement with New College, Oxford, for the Phillips' farm house, a collection of 100 photographs/photograph albums relevant to Kingham and the letters of Anne and George Phillips, which describe farming life and events in Kingham over the period 1840 to 1940. Other donations include photographs of some of the commercial activities taking place in Kingham in the late 19th and early/mid-20th centuries including photographs of the Lainchbury works and the Rathbone forge and a biography of Shadrack Bridges which covers his work as a railway lengthman at Chipping Norton Junction.

Kingham is indeed fortunate in having available such an extensive resource which includes histories of several long-established families in the area and histories of some of its older buildings. The material is now available for study by interested parties and we hope to make the archive accessible on most Fridays, upon request to: 01608 658596 (messages can be left on the answering machine). We have obtained a photocopy machine for the archive room for the use of researchers. The electronic version of the catalogue is available on request from: [mikedvd@hotmail.com](mailto:mikedvd@hotmail.com).

We are aware that there are a number of additional documents, particularly Kingham wills in the National Archives, that would help complete the collection, and the core group is considering ways in which the archive can be expanded and maintained. Any person who is interested in helping to maintain the collection and/or expanding its use (for example, for students to use as a research resource) is also requested to contact the same phone number

or leave us an e-mail message; as are those persons wishing to contribute further to the collection. We are, in particular, interested in material such as photographs, old postcards, copies of early village newsletters and family trees or family records relating to the period 1900 to 1960.

## Wychwoods Local History Society Publications in Print

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Wychwoods History, an Index to Journals 1-19 (2004)

All the Society's past Wychwoods History journals are in print. Journal 26 is out of print, but is the first to have been digitalised. An Index of articles, contributors, personal names, farms, maps and subject in journals 1-19 is available free on receipt of a self-addressed C5 9229 x 162mm) envelope with two first class stamps. Names from Journals 1-29 are indexed on the Society's website: [www.wychwoodshistory.org](http://www.wychwoodshistory.org)

*Wychwoods History* 25 (2010) £3.50

Coldstone, an Ascott Anomaly; The Silence of Three Shipton Church Bells Explained; The Manor of Shipton in 1289; Great Scotts; The Shaven Crown, Shipton; The Crown Inn Charity; Annunciation Relief at St Mary the Virgin, Shipton

*Wychwoods History* 26 (2011) £3.50

The Butler of Bruern; St Michael's; Doctor Gordon Scott Revisited – The Wychwoods Social Centre

*Wychwoods History* 27 (2012) £3.50

Memories of Dees' Stores; More memories of Shipton, The Cross Papers, The Griffin Family of Bruern Grange and their Steam Engines; A brief History of Bruern Abbey and The Great Fire at Bruern Abbey; What makes us Tick?

*Wychwoods History* 28 (2013) £3.50

Old Beaconsfield Hall; Cow Cubbs and Dung Flakes; a Letter from Dr Scott in 1956; A Wartime Serendipity; Emigrants from Milton to New Zealand; Images emerging from the Archive

*Wychwoods History* 29 (2014) £3.50

Some of the Brookes Family of Shipton, What price a Funeral, How to Keep your House Clean, Bruern Abbey, 1935-1947, An Idyllic Life – living by an old Oxfordshire Mill before and during the Second World War, Graham Cairns

*Wychwoods History* 30 (2015) £3.50

Brasenose Leases, 'All Christians for evermore': the Ascott Village Charity, Apprentice Boys, A Study of the Vegetable Gardens in Shipton under Wychwood and Milton under Wychwood, the Gorton Family of Milton and Oddington, Eliza Gorton, The Townsend-Averys of Church Street, Shipton

The Wychwoods Local History Society meets once a month from September through to June. Meetings usually alternate between the village halls at Milton and Shipton. Current membership is £15 for an individuals and £20 for a couple or overseas member, which includes a copy of *Wychwoods History* when published.

Further details can be obtained from the Secretary, Paula Nielson.

6 Tothill, Shipton under Wychwood, Chipping Norton  
Oxon, OX7 6BX Tel.No. 01993 830877

To obtain further copies and back numbers of *Wychwoods History*, please see [www.wychwoodshistory.org](http://www.wychwoodshistory.org)

An Index of articles, contributors, personal names, farms, maps and subjects in Journals 1-19 is available. See the website for details.

The personal names index is also available on the website for Journals 1-27.

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