

WYCHWOODS HISTORY

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Foreword

WYCHWOODS Local History Society has always been lucky in having a number of members interested in recording oral history and this Journal has articles based on recordings by Janet Wallace and Trudy Yates of some of the older residents of the Wychwoods. They give a vivid picture of a way of life that has gone forever. Janet interviewed Joan and Ben Townsend, born and bred in the area and Bim Champness who moved to Milton with his adoptive parents. Trudy Yates records in her article the life of Dulcie Arundell, a well-respected and well-known figure in Shipton throughout the later twentieth century, now living next to her daughter in Carterton. In the process she found another poignant story, the story of a girl who became a lifelong friend of Dulcie. Myrtle Rice and her sister, Irene, lived in the St Michael's Church of England Home when it was in Milton Road, Shipton, since demolished for the building of Willis Court.

After many years of members participating in 'fieldwalking', Margaret Ware gives the last part of the final report on the findings of the Society's fieldwalking activities with an evaluation of the pottery with tables and maps showing how much and where the finds were made.

The book review commends the volumes produced by Jack Howard-Drake of the Depositions in the Oxford Church Courts and he follows up a case about a seventeenth-century Burford attorney who had land in Milton but refused to pay his share of the tax on land for the repair of Shipton church when the parishioners of Milton were part of Shipton parish with no church in Milton.

In yet another different century, Wendy Pearse gives details and family relationships of the women of Ascott who, in 1873, became known as the 'Ascott Martyrs'. Coming from a small village in the Wychwoods their case caused a great uproar reaching as far as the Government and Queen Victoria herself.

Joan Howard-Drake, Trudy Yates and Sue Jourdan

Defiant Women - The Ascott Martyrs

WENDY PEARSE



IN May 1873 Ascott under Wychwood shot abruptly into the national consciousness. An obscure village in West Oxfordshire suddenly featured in the major newspapers of the time and was vehemently discussed in the august Houses of Parliament. Ultimately, it was even fervently alluded to by the fountainhead of the British Empire, her Imperial Majesty, Queen Victoria.

But what caused this eruption? Surely not a parcel of country women, the lowly wives of farm labourers and village craftsmen. Indeed they did. Not intentionally perhaps, but their actions were to resound throughout the land and in time were to leave a lasting legacy to the British nation.

Just who were these women? What was their background and why should they and their actions have this stirring effect on formidable Victorian values? Today we call them the 'Ascott Martyrs', not perhaps as dramatic an appellation as the words imply, but there is no doubt that they were martyrs to a cause and this was their moment of glory.

Most of them came from the Moss family, three were Pratleys, two were Smiths, one was a Dring and one a Honeybone. Many came from families long resident in Ascott, or at least their husbands did. Most were interrelated, sisters, sisters-in-law, cousins, aunts and nieces, but their inclusion in the appellation was perhaps unintentional. They may have been the ones who protested most violently but they may also have been the ones known to the constable who took their names, or those slowest to disperse once he had begun this action.

Exactly what did they do? Primarily they followed the simple maternal instinct of caring for their husbands and children.

When Joseph Arch from Barford in Warwickshire began his campaign in Wellesbourne in February 1872 to improve life and conditions for the agricultural labourer, little would the villagers of Ascott have thought that in barely a year they would become a shining beacon for his movement. In April 1872 Arch held the first meeting of what would become the Oxford District of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union on The Green at Milton, and fifty men joined there and then. By the end of May over 500 men in the area, divided among thirteen branches, had become members and that number must have included labourers from Ascott.

The following April the agricultural labourers working for Robert Hambidge at Crown Farm in the middle of the village, unable to feed, clothe and support their families on their minimal wage of 10s a week, asked for an increase to 14s and gave a week's notice to strike. This was official procedure arising from the



Crown Farm. The tenant Robert Hambidge was the farmer at the centre of the 'martyrs' incident

Liberal Government Act of 1871 making Unions and their activities legal except for the action of preventing anyone else from working. Of course this tied the strikers' hands but perhaps someone in Ascott realised that it did not tie the hands of their wives and daughters who were not members of the Union. After a couple of weeks without labour, Robert Hambidge decided on action. He hired two teenagers, John Hodgkins and John Millin from Ramsden, and on 12 May went off to Stow Fair leaving these lads with instructions to begin hoeing a certain field. It is believed to have been one of those near to the Leafield turn on the Charlbury to Burford Road. As the lads neared the field gate they found awaiting them a crowd of about forty women and girls. Whether this was a planned action or spontaneous we do not know. It was suggested that some women sported sticks and used them to intimidate the lads but subsequently no proof of this could be produced, and the accepted scenario is that amongst jostling, joviality and suggestions the lads greatest threat came with the impromptu call to remove their trousers. Abashed the boys sought support and either they or Robert Hambidge's wife enlisted the

aid of the local constable. The women, who imagined that they had won the boys over to their side of the argument, were amazed but before they could disperse, seventeen of their names had been noted by the constable.

Upon his return from Stow, Robert Hambidge was incensed and demanded justice. The women must be brought before the magistrates. This took place on 21 May at the newly built Police Station in Chipping Norton where the women were charged with intimidation under the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The two magistrates who tried the case were the Revd Thomas Harris of Swerford and the Revd William Carter of Sarsden, the son-in-law of Lord Langston of Sarsden Estate. Mr Carter had already spent the years 1852-68 as the vicar of Shipton and may have had prior knowledge of the villagers of Ascott. Six of the women were Baptists and one was a Methodist and their persuasion may well have further antagonised the Church of England JPs at a time when the swelling growth of non-conformity was a ripening source of irritation to the established church.

The women had no legal representation at the court and this on the surface might seem remiss on the part of Joseph Arch and the Union. But should the women be convicted and a harsh sentence imposed, what publicity for the Union. There should really have been no case to answer. A few months before, a similar case in Woodstock had resulted in the men involved being bound over to keep the peace. This trial rested simply on the word of two teenage lads against that of seventeen women whose honesty had never before been questioned. But Hambidge demanded justice, pressured Harris into pronouncing the severest sentence possible under the law and although Carter was reluctant and agonised over the decision before finally concurring with his colleague, one woman was acquitted whilst nine more were sentenced to seven days in gaol and the other seven to ten days. To add insult to injury the sentence was to be served with hard labour.

The news spread like wildfire and in no time a mob of 2,000 locals surrounded the police station where the women, two with young babies, awaited transport to Oxford Gaol. Ugly scenes ensued, tiles were smashed, windows broken, but the strength of the new building proved its worth and although incidents occurred until late in the evening, by midnight the crowd had dispersed. In the early hours of the morning the support urgently summoned by Police Superintendent Lakin and the Mayor, finally turned up in the form of constables and a large wagon into which the women were rapidly bundled without even time to clothe the babies adequately against the coldness of the night.

They arrived at Oxford Gaol at six o'clock in the morning, cold, questioning and probably terrified, but defiant. Hard labour consisted of washing and ironing, jobs to which they were well accustomed, but the two with babies were excused these chores and some milk was found for the

infants. For these women, however, who probably in the whole of their lives had hardly left homes, families and familiar territory, the ordeal must have been heartrending. In Ascott over a dozen children under ten were suddenly deprived of their mothers. The women may have been sustained by the pride they felt in making a stand for an improvement in their life and living but those prison days must have seemed endless as their concern grew for their families back home.

Whilst the women served their sentence, matters did not stand still. Grumbles about the events grew by the hour, the national newspapers took up their cause, debates were held in Parliament and the Home Secretary corresponded with the Duke of Marlborough who heartily endorsed the clergymen's action. Such behaviour by the lower class was beyond understanding and could not be condoned by the middle and upper classes. The news reached the ears of Queen Victoria whose unhappiness with her Liberal Government may well have prompted her feelings against the proceedings, and she demanded that their hard labour must be rescinded and the women given a free and complete pardon.

Unfortunately by the time all these procedures had occurred, ten days had passed and the last seven women were released. But with such celebrations. Joseph Arch and the Union officials milked the occasion for all it was worth. 150 people thronged the prison gates as the women emerged, and a hearty breakfast had been arranged before they were conveyed in style to the King's Arms in Woodstock for a sit-down lunch. Whilst they were incarcerated, the women were probably little aware of the widening controversy ensuing from their actions, so they must have been quite overwhelmed by their reception. Mr Holloway, the Secretary of the Union, instructed the wagon to drive through Blenheim Park, effectively thumbing their noses at the Duke of Marlborough, before continuing on to Chipping Norton where a large crowd including the women's families awaited them. In Ascott outside Crown Farm, the women were presented with £5 each by Joseph Arch. This money had come in donations from the general public. They also each received a silk dress in Union blue, or more likely the material with which to make a dress. The Queen is believed to have sent them all a red flannel petticoat and 5s in cash.

The women's ordeal was over but how much greater publicity could the Union have wished for? Already the newspapers were labelling them 'Martyrs' to what was believed to be a very just cause. They were just ordinary women, the majority of them the wives of agricultural labourers. But what do we know about their normal everyday lives and what became of them in the years following their national prominence?

Ascott was and always had been an agricultural village. With no resident lord of the manor, the majority of the village and land was owned by Lord Churchill of Cornbury and Wychwood, a relative of the Duke of Marlborough.

Approximately 460 souls lived in the village including a number of farmers and their families, mostly tenants of Lord Churchill, Brasenose College or the daughter of the late vicar of Iffley. However, amongst the other necessary craftsmen, innkeepers and timber workers, the agricultural workers and their families formed a large proportion of the residents. As is normally the case in any community their homes varied greatly. The farmers socialised, entertained and mixed with their equals in what were probably typical Victorian well-endowed homes of the period. But as the houses diminished in size through the social scale their appearances probably did the same. One of the 'Martyrs' homes was described at the time in the *Oxford Chronicle and Berks and Bucks Gazette* of 31 May 1873. The wife of a wheelwright, her home was described as follows:

more than comfortable for the home of a working man. Pictures adorned the walls, ornaments the mantelpiece. A cocoa-nut mat covered the floor. The dresser was abundantly furnished: the flesh of a pig or two hung under the ceiling or kindly took the smoke from a rack overhead. The mistress of the cottage was well dressed and well spoken; of three other women present the same may be said. They would, in appearance and in behaviour, be taken as good specimens of lower middle-class Englishwomen. Tea things were spread; two joints of meat rested on the white cloth.

The housewife was entertaining three others, obviously relations or friends of hers, probably living in the same type of dwelling. The writer of the article also informs us that all four had recently returned from incarceration in Oxford Gaol.

On the other hand, certainly two of the women lived in a decidedly basic structure, part of charity property, the lowest-priced accommodation in the village in an ancient building once the workhouse and described at the time in a letter in the *Oxfordshire Weekly News* of 11 June 1873.

imagine a narrow place, like a coal cellar, down which you go two or three steps, no flooring except broken stones, no ceiling, no grate, rough walls, a bare ladder leading to the one narrow bedroom about 6ft wide, containing two bedsteads for a man, his wife, and three children, the whole place as wretchedly bad and miserable as imagination can conceive, and only divided by a rough wooden partition not reaching to the roof, but over which you may look into the bedroom of the adjoining house, equally wretched and miserable.

This letter was written by C. Holloway, Chairman of the Oxford District Agricultural Workers Union and was followed by another in the 2 July edition of the *Oxfordshire Weekly News* from an indignant group of Ascott farmers and shopkeepers, the Feoffees of the Ascott Charity.

We the undersigned Feoffees of the village charity, which consists chiefly of cottages, assert that with the exception of two homes, the cottages

and gardens are good, the rents low and the general condition of the labouring poor above the average of that class. The dwellings described as cottages by Mr Holloway ... are not cottages and never were, but a large old building erected in the time of Queen Elizabeth for a village workhouse. ... The Workhouse ... has become a lodging house for two classes of the labouring poor, viz. those who will not pay more than 6d or 1s per week rent, and those who are so objectionable as tenants, that owners of cottages refuse to receive them. The two women that were sent to prison for ten [sic] days with the infants have rooms in this house.

So two differing points of view which over this distance in time are hard to dispute. However on the day that the women were conveyed to Chipping Norton Town Hall in a conveyance supplied by Robert Hambidge, to stand before the JPs, it seems most unlikely that they had any idea that the next week or so of their lives would be spent in Oxford Gaol. Probably some dressed in their best clothes in a spirit of defiance; print dresses and felt or straw bonnets for the girls and young women, with the older women primly attired in black with short capes or crocheted shawls around their shoulders. Even the more deprived may have added a bow or ribbons to their threadbare skirts, blouses and aprons, the ensemble topped with cloth caps or sunbonnets. The seven classed as ringleaders and sentenced to ten days hard labour were **Martha Maria Smith, Mary Moss** (alias **Smith**), **Charlotte Moss, Ann Susan Moss, Fanny Honeybone, Ann Moss** and **Rebecca Smith**. A rather strange assortment since Martha Maria Smith and Charlotte Moss were over forty, Fanny Honeybone and Mary Moss (Smith) only sixteen and seventeen and the other three in their early twenties. The others sentenced to seven days hard labour were **Lavinia Dring, Amelia Moss, Caroline Moss, Jane Moss, Martha Moss, Mary Moss, Elizabeth Pratley, Mary Pratley**, and **Ellen Pratley**. This group, apart from Lavinia Dring (forty-four), Caroline Moss (eighteen) and Ellen Pratley (twenty-five), were all around thirty years or over.

The wife of the wheelwright in the tidy and well-ordered cottage was Mary Moss, aged thirty-five. Mary, née Edginton had been born in Ascott as was her husband Alfred. It



Long House Farm,
lived in by the Townsends
and near some of the
'martyrs' cottages

seems they had known each other all their lives since their respective families lived close to each other near Long House Farm near the western end of Upper Street (High Street) and the young couple, when they married in 1859, rented a cottage near both pairs of parents. By 1871, although married for twelve years Mary and Alfred had no children of their own but they had brought up from a young baby, Louisa, the illegitimate daughter of Alfred's sister Ellen. His youngest sister Caroline was the eighteen-year-old girl imprisoned with the women.

Alfred's grandparents, William and Susannah Moss married in 1797 and lived in Ascott where they produced a large family, mostly sons. Their sons remained in the village, married and likewise produced a large number of children of their own and it was through this extended family that most of the 'Martyrs' were inter-related. Alfred's father was Joseph, one of the sons of William and Susannah and the three visitors in Alfred's house could well have been his sister Caroline and other relations. His cousins Charlotte Moss aged forty-one and Amelia Moss aged thirty-six, the daughters of his Uncle James together with Mary and later Caroline attended the original school in Ascott which was built by Lord Churchill in 1833 and listed on the Enclosure Award of 1838 as the National School. The national schools were set up under the auspices of the Church of England. It is surprising therefore that although Mary, Charlotte and Amelia are listed as literate on the prison documents, Caroline is not. Caroline does not appear in later Ascott records but in 1874 she married Thomas Phillips at Shipton and at that stage must have left the village. Unfortunately Alfred died in 1887 aged only fifty but Mary, together with her niece Louisa continued to live in the High Street in Ascott until her death in 1908 aged seventy. Through her brother Stephen, Mary's extended family was present in the village into the second half of the twentieth century, since Stephen's son James had two sons Ron and Reg Edginton with Reg still living in a cottage near Long House Farm until his death in the 1970s.

On the prison records Mary and Caroline give their occupation as gloveress while Charlotte and Amelia are listed as labourers, but these last two were certainly following the occupation of gloveress at other stages of their lives. To work as a gloveress was a significant form of occupation for Ascott women in the nineteenth century. The master glovers in local glovemaking firms based in Charlbury and Chipping Norton cut the shapes and then each week the pieces were delivered to the women in local villages to be sewn together in their own homes. If a woman worked from dawn till 10 p.m. with only short breaks, she could probably complete four pairs of gloves in a day earning about 1s but few women would have had that amount of time to spare, so they had to work relentlessly to make much money in a week. Nevertheless to many families glovemaking was of great necessity as a supplement to the lowly wages of their menfolk. It was a less arduous occupation than labouring

on the farms and the two occupations could not be combined since labouring roughened the hands which would leave them unsuitable for glovemaking.

Amelia Moss married George Moss and Charlotte Moss married William Moss. Amelia and George with their young daughter Julia seem to disappear from Ascott records after 1873 but Charlotte and William remained in the village for the rest of their lives. After their marriage in May 1854 they occupied a cottage near the Swan in Shipton Road. William, originally an agricultural labourer, by 1871 was listed as a railway servant and he continued to work for the railway until his retirement sometime before 1901. The couple had one son, William, who also worked on the railway. Unfortunately William junior, who was one of Ascott's first Parish Councillors, in 1896 fell whilst lighting one of the signal lamps on the railway and was killed. He left a wife Alice and several children, one of whom, Reuben, was awarded a Military Medal in the First World War. By 1891 Charlotte and William had moved to a cottage in High Street and remained there until William died shortly before Charlotte, who died in September 1904.

Martha Moss, aged thirty-three, was married to Charlotte and Amelia's brother William. Like his father and grandfather, William was a carpenter and sawyer and appears to have travelled about with his work. Perhaps that was how he met Martha who was born in Mixbury, near Brackley. In 1871 they had a cottage in High Street near Mary and Alfred, and Martha was also a gloveress. Although still in Ascott in 1881, Martha, like Amelia, disappears from the records after that date.

Married to Alfred's cousin Robert, the son of his uncle Thomas, Jane Moss was also a gloveress, aged thirty-one, Robert was a shepherd, and they lived in a cottage at the east end of High Street. Jane was the sister of Fanny Honeybone who at sixteen was the youngest of the 'Martyrs'.

Fanny was the eleventh and last child of John and Jane Honeybone. John had been born in Ascott and Jane in Langley and

Fanny Honeybone (Rathband)



they married in 1834 in Ascott church. John was described as a carter or farm labourer and lived with his family in one of the cottages on the south side at the west end of Shipton Road. He could well have worked for either the Hiatts at Stone End Farm (now Ascott Earl House) or the Gomms at Coldstone Farm. His sons were later described as ploughboys, cowmen or farm labourers. By the time she was thirteen, Fanny was working as a domestic servant at the Churchill Arms (now Sunset House), but by 1873 she had become a gloveress like her elder sister Jane. Three years after Fanny's experiences in Oxford Gaol she married Edwin Rathband in September 1876, and left Ascott to live in Milton in Hawkes Yard. Perhaps Fanny saved for her wedding some of the £5 presented to each of the 'Martyrs' by Joseph Arch outside Crown Farm after their triumphant return. Fanny may also have proudly worn her Union blue silk dress on her special day. Edwin worked as a labourer either on the land or in the stone quarry, and by 1881 the couple had already produced two daughters and one son. Five more sons and four daughters were to follow, the two youngest Frederick and Hilda. In December 1928, eleven years before her death, Fanny was interviewed by a reporter from The Land Worker and contributed her memories of those stirring times and the pride she felt to be 'left as the one survivor of the sixteen women who suffered the penalty of the law for the cause of the agricultural labourers. There was something of the idea of fun in what we did - certainly no intention to harm them. Those were stirring times and it gives me a thrill of pleasure to remember them.' In the Oxford Mail of 16 February 1939, the death was reported of Mrs Fanny Rathband. She was eighty-one years old.



Church View (The Row) opposite the churchyard. Two of the 'martyrs' lived in The Row

Unfortunately her sister Jane was not blessed with Fanny's longevity and only six years after the women's incarceration, she died at the age of thirty-seven. Although Jane had given birth to a son George, sometime before her marriage, Robert and Jane had no more children and after Jane's death, Robert became a boarder in the house of his brother Thomas in the Row (Church View). Robert died in 1905, a widower for over twenty-five years.

His brother Thomas, a timber hauler, was the stepfather of Mary Moss, alias Smith, having married Mary's mother Eliza when Mary was six years old. Mary, aged seventeen, gave her occupation to the prison authorities as that of housemaid at College House (The Grange) and she had already secured this position two years earlier, working for Robert and Esther Boyes who had inherited the property, including farm land, from Esther's father, Peter Harris. There are no more records of this couple and by 1878 the Grange had been leased to Sir Morgan Crofton, Bart. Mary, however, married George Pratley from Leafield in September 1875, and by 1881 the couple had four children aged between five and seven months and were living in Ascott in the Row (Church View). They went on to have four more children but sadly in 1890 Mary died aged only thirty-three.

Jane Honeybone, the mother of Fanny Honeybone and Jane Moss, was born a Newman. She had a sister Mary who married Peter Smith and one of their older sons was named George. A younger son of Mary's, Charles was born two years after the death of Peter, so George and Charles were half brothers. In 1856 Martha Maria Hart of Asthall Leigh married George Smith and in 1867 Rebecca Belcher of Kingham married Charles Smith which made Martha Maria Smith and Rebecca Smith cousins by marriage to Fanny Honeybone and Jane Moss.

George and Martha Maria Smith lived in the Row and by 1873 when Martha Maria was sent to Oxford Gaol, aged forty-five, the couple had produced six daughters. Presumably these girls were well able to cope with everyday life during their mother's absence but unfortunately a much greater tragedy was to strike the family only seven years later. It was reported by the Vicar of Ascott, the Revd Samuel York in *The Leafield and Ascott under Wychwood Parish Magazine* in 1880. 'February 19th. A fatal accident happened to George Smith (aged 50) employed on Mr Chaundy's farm, he was alone with a cutting machine, when it seems to have caught him by his smock and dragging him in, to have strangled him causing instant death. He leaves a widow and five children; he worked for Mr Chaundy for 25 years and proved himself to be a valuable and faithful servant.'

This report of George's death sheds rather a different aspect on the case of the 'Martyrs' and the women involved, and certainly indicates that the women were not all immediately connected with the strike at Crown Farm. George had been working for John Chaundy for twenty-five years, his employment

beginning just before his marriage to Martha Maria. John Chaundy was the tenant of Yew Tree Farm at the eastern edge of the village and valued George as one of his permanent employees. On the other hand, the fact that women whose men worked on other farms were also included could indicate a general dissatisfaction in the village as a whole and a scenario where the wives of the farm labourers felt compelled to make a stand of their own on the question of an increase in wages. This could bear out Fanny Honeybone's continuing sense of pride in the sequence of events. In 1881 the Census records Martha Maria, a widow, alone in the house in the Row, but next door was her daughter Ellen Jane married to Robert Beechamp a farm labourer born in Whichford, Warwickshire. Their son George aged three had also been born in Whichford, but Emma, their daughter of six months, had been born in Ascott so perhaps Jane and her husband had returned to Ascott to be a comfort to her mother after George's death. It is also possible Robert may have secured the vacancy then available on Yew Tree Farm. Ironically Martha Maria's youngest daughter Eliza was working as a general servant at Robert Hambidge's Crown Farm where he employed ten men and five boys. By 1891 Martha Maria was still in the Row but

there is no record of her after this date. Perhaps she moved away to live with another daughter. The Beechamps were still in Ascott in 1901.

Rebecca Belcher married George's younger half brother Charles in 1867 and they remained in Ascott for the rest of their lives. They lived in the cottage facing Coldstone Farm on the double bend at the west end of the village. The couple had seven children, four boys and three girls, the boys following their father as agricultural labourers, beginning as plough boys or teamsters as early as thirteen years of age. Fred, the last son, however, opted for life in the army and by the time the First World War started he was a corporal in the First Battalion the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. The battalion was sent from India in late 1914 to fight the Turks in Mesopotamia (today's Iraq) where



The tombstone of Rebecca Smith, her husband Charles and son Fred

many battles occurred during the following year. After a string of victories, the Expeditionary Force under Major General Townshend overstretched themselves just short of Baghdad and were forced to carry out a fighting retreat down the Tigris to the fortress at Kut. There they were besieged for over four months until lack of provisions culminated in surrender. Fred, who by that time had been promoted to sergeant, was sent north together with hundreds of others from the surrendered garrison on a humiliating, brutal and devastating march towards the Turkish border several hundreds of miles distant. A large proportion of the soldiers died en route through brutality, starvation or sickness, including Fred who was last heard of when left behind in a small village suffering from dysentery. Following the end of the war his body was recovered and buried in Baghdad North Gate Cemetery. After his father Charles died in 1918 and his mother Rebecca in 1920, the family commemorated them on a tombstone in Ascott churchyard, at the bottom of which is inscribed 'also Fred their son who died during the Siege of Kut. June 1916'. Fred's brother Charles succeeded his parents at the Coldstone Cottage and in time his son Charles was born. This third Charles lived in Ascott all his life, later with his wife Dolly, until their deaths within the last two decades.

Ann Moss, aged twenty-two, was the wife of another of Alfred's cousins, Caleb, the son of Alfred's Uncle George. Ann and Caleb were only married in Eynsham three months before the 'Martyrs' incident and she may have been the 'newly married Sunday School teacher' mentioned in the newspapers at the time. Unfortunately no other mention of this couple appears in the Ascott records.

Lavinia Dring née Moss married James Dring in 1855 and in time like the George Smiths they produced a family of girls. Lavinia was another gloveress and their home was near the Swan in Chapel Yard beside the Baptist Chapel. James Dring, a labourer, died in 1887 aged fifty-six leaving Lavinia a widow, living with her daughter Mary, also a gloveress, and her granddaughter Alice. Lavinia died in 1908 aged eighty and was buried in Ascott.

Lavinia's brother John married Ann Susan Owen from Chipping Norton and she would appear to be the Ann Susan Moss aged twenty-five included amongst the 'Martyrs'. There is no further record of her and after 1881 John married Emma Wright, the only witness for the women at the trial, so it seems like Jane Moss and Mary Moss (Smith), Ann Susan Moss died at a young age.

However, through Lavinia and John's elder half sister Jemima, a link with the final three women occurs. Jemima Moss married William Pratley after the death of his first wife and took on the role of stepmother to his three eldest children, John, Hannah and Philip. The couple then went on to have five more children of their own, Mary, William, Frederick, Eli and Sarah. Eli was the husband of Elizabeth Pratley and Frederick the husband of Mary Pratley, the two women who took their young infants to gaol with them. John, the elder

half brother of Fred and Eli, married Jane Moss, the daughter of Alfred's Uncle George, providing another family connection, and their son John married Ellen, a gloveress from Leafield who was the final 'Martyr' Ellen Pratley. Elizabeth Pratley and Mary Pratley are probably the two women who lived in the dire conditions of the old workhouse at Ascott as described by the reporter in the newspaper. Perhaps this explains their desire to emigrate with their husbands and children to the enticing shores of lands anew.

Elizabeth Pratley's life took a tragic turn. Shortly after the episode at Ascott, twenty-nine-year-old Elizabeth, Eli and their three children, Elizabeth, Eleanor and Eli Junior who had spent the days in Oxford Gaol with his mother, emigrated to the eastern seaboard of America. Typhoid as it was described at the time, but more likely typhus, was endemic there and no sooner had the family arrived than Elizabeth contracted the disease and died. Eli and the three children returned in a wretched state on 20 November 1873 to Ascott bringing with them several boxes of old and filthy clothes and bedding. They settled into his mother's house where the only other inhabitant, Eli's brother, contracted typhoid on 29 November followed by Eli's mother Jemima who subsequently died. The only other person to contract the illness in Ascott was Eli's sister who had taken some of the clothes and bedding to wash. So it seems that unfortunately Eli had carried the disease back home in his belongings. Young Eli, probably very weakened by his experiences, died in February 1874. Eli remarried a Jane Malins at Ascott the following May and, nothing daunted, he then emigrated in September to New Zealand with his new wife and one daughter. There he ultimately prospered and by the turn of the century had a large family and well-run farm, leaving the stricken Elizabeth Pratley in her lonely, probably pauper's grave on the far side of the Atlantic Ocean.

At the age of thirty-four Mary Pratley, the wife of Eli's brother Frederick, also emigrated to New Zealand with her husband and six children on the same clipper ship the 'Crusader' as Eli and family, leaving Plymouth in September 1874. After about eight years working as farmhands, the brothers leased land jointly before taking on their own separate farms. Frederick leased 400 acres at Winchester in South Island and prospered but Mary must have died some time before 1895 when Frederick remarried an Elizabeth Venville née Simmons from Oxfordshire.

Eli and Frederick's nephew John and his wife Ellen Pratley were not listed on the Ascott census for 1871 but were certainly there by 1873 when Ellen became the final 'Martyr'. Aged only twenty-five at the time Ellen must have left her three-year-old son John back in Ascott to be looked after during her absence. The family lived in a cottage at the eastern end of High Street on the north side beside Yew Tree Farm. They had a family of seven boys and two girls. Ellen died in 1921 aged seventy-three while her husband Jacky Pratley continued living in the cottage until his death in 1935.

So how did life treat these sixteen women? Of Amelia Moss, Ann Moss, Caroline Moss and Martha Moss we have no further record. Four died at a fairly young age, three in Ascott, Jane Moss, Mary Moss alias Smith and Ann Susan Moss, and one on the far side of the Atlantic, the tragic Elizabeth Pratley. Mary Pratley was more fortunate than her sister-in-law Elizabeth but, although emigration to New Zealand brought an improvement in wealth and status, her life was not particularly happy and she died in her fifties. Fanny Honeybone married and moved to Milton and lived to be over eighty as did Lavinia Dring who remained in Ascott all her life. Charlotte Moss, Mary Moss, Ellen Pratley and Rebecca Smith all remained in Ascott and lived into their seventies whilst Martha Maria Smith spent the majority of her life in the village.

But what was their legacy? Primarily their actions led to a change in the law which resulted in the right to peaceful picketing. Over the next few years the use of local members of the clergy as JPs gradually disappeared. And in time the Union did help farm labourers to achieve a rise in their wages. But unfortunately this came about at the same time as a deep depression in both climate and conditions severely shook British agriculture, a situation which scarcely improved until everything changed with the onset of the First World War.

But perhaps greatest of all to the women themselves was a continuing sense of pride in their actions such as that which remained with Fanny Honeybone for the rest of her long life.

Today the memory of these ordinary but defiant women lives on, recorded on a circular seat on the village green at Ascott.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Bev McCombs, a descendant of Eli Pratley in New Zealand, for her generous help whilst researching the 'Martyrs', and to Ralph Mann who provided me with the original list of their names and from whom I first heard their story. Also to Janet Taylor for the information on Fanny Rathband.

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Joan and Ben Townsend and Albert (Bim) Champness

JANET WALLACE

FOR some years I have been visiting older members of our villages to record their memories on tape. I have transcribed the tapes which is a time-consuming task, then typed and, with photographs, put them into the archives of the Wychwoods Local History Society. Starting in July 1997, twenty-five interviews have been recorded and documented. These are two, the first of which is of Ben and Joan Townsend in 1999 and Joan again in 2000, and the second is Bim Champness in 2005.

Recordings were used in the compilation of the publication *Women in the Wychwoods during World War Two*. Anthea Jones, Sue Jourdan, John Rawlins, Trudy Yates and Joan Howard Drake were also involved with this project, which was printed in 2000 to mark the Society's recognition of the Millennium. Others have been published in *The Wychwood* magazine and the *Journal* of the Wychwoods Local History Society number twenty-one in 2006.

Joan and Ben Townsend

Benjamin Townsend was born on 17 January 1910 in Fifield, one of the eight children of John Townsend and his wife Ellen (née Griffin) who had been brought up at The Folly (between Fifield and Idbury) with her parents and siblings. John lived with his mother in Fifield but after his marriage to Ellen they moved into The Folly, which was a smallholding where John eventually took over the management, adding extra land when it became available.

Their children were Stephen, George, Leslie, Olive, Lydia,

The Four Dangerfield Girls. Doris and Lucy behind and Joan and Ruth in front



Kenny, Roy and Ben. From an early age the children were required to help their parents on the smallholding so there was no time for playing games or taking part in sports such as football. Poor Kenny suffered from epileptic fits and Ben recalls going blackberrying and Kenny having a fit and all the blackberries going up in the air and all over the road. With the exception of Kenny they all lived into old age - the men often outliving their spouses. Their father, John, died aged when he was eighty-five and mother, Ellen when she was ninety-two years of age.

Joan Dangerfield was born at Lane House Farm, Shipton-under-Wychwood on 5 April 1918. She was the youngest of five girls (Joan being the survivor of twins as her sister died a few days after birth), the daughters of Ben Dangerfield and Rose Shepherd.

Joan's grandfather Joseph Jabez Dangerfield came from Devizes in Wiltshire in the 1880s. Sadly his first wife and child died and he moved to Shipton where he first bought Lane House Farm and secondly Bank House with an adjacent shop selling groceries and hardware. Bank House is now the property of Liz Clarke-Watson and the adjacent shop has more recently been altered to domestic dwellings, currently including the estate agent's office. Joseph married for a second time, Matilda Gorton, who had become his housekeeper after he arrived in Shipton. Matilda's family owned Gortons' Stores in Milton High Street. Prior to this she had worked in the Isle of Wight and in several local post offices (including Shipton). Joseph and Matilda had thirteen children, ten of whom survived, Nancy the eldest was a nurse who went to Scotland, Tom married Fanny Dix from Fordwells, Lydia opened a shop in Milton High Street called London House, and Aggie worked in the Post Office at Pulborough in Sussex. Kate was not allowed to go away as she was required to help look after the younger children. She later married James Alfred Willis, the saddler who had his shop next to the Crown Inn and who was very active on the Parochial Church Council and well-known for his lantern slide shows. Dot married Ted Coombes who, with their two daughters Elma and Barbara, lived in a bungalow in Milton Road,



Joseph Jabez Dangerfield

Shipton (since demolished and now replaced by Gorton Playne). Lucy stayed at home to look after her mother and she eventually died aged seventy-three in 1980 at Castle View in Chipping Norton. George who was the youngest was sent away to school and later went to Agricultural College in Pershore, Worcestershire where he became very successful and well respected working for Bomfords' and various horticultural businesses, eventually retiring to Wales. And of course there was Ben, Joan's father. Three other children including Frank and Lily died in infancy and Grace, who was nursing in London, came home one weekend suffering from 'sleeping sickness' and died, aged twenty-six.

At the age of seventeen Ben Dangerfield, Joan's father, had to take over the farm when his father died. He was in partnership with his brother Tom and paid rent to their mother who continued to live in the farmhouse. When Ben and Rose married they lived in the cottage next door (first house after the original farmyard buildings going towards Milton). After a while Tom and Ben split up. Ben stayed at Lane End Farm while Tom moved to The Meadows farm in Meadow Lane, Shipton (now converted to a house) where he lived and worked with his wife. They had six children: Mary, Grace, Eric, Cyril, Frank and Kathleen.

Joan says that she and her three sisters Lucy, Doris and Ruth had to help with the chores, delivering milk to the more outlying customers, leaving father to do the local round on foot, doling



Ben and Rose by the seaside (c 1924)



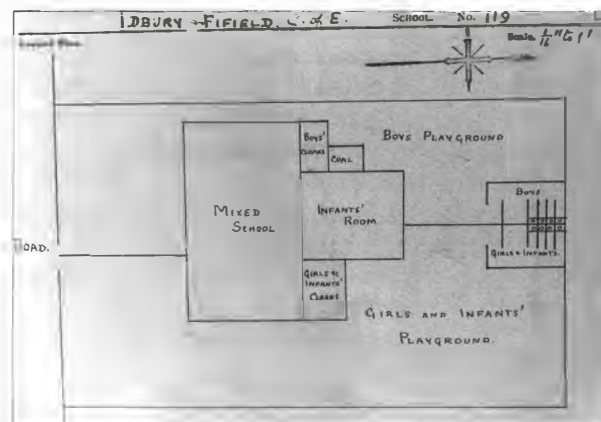
The four girls bathing (c 1919/20)

out the milk from a large can using half pint and pint measures. Customers brought their jugs or containers to the door. In the hot weather he would repeat his delivery round two or occasionally three times a day, as it was very difficult to keep the milk cool in those days. Joan says

that her father sometimes gave her a penny or tuppence (old money, of course) for her help! They also had to deliver cream, eggs and apples when required, all this to be done before school for which they were sometimes late, and at weekends. The youngsters enjoyed the freedom of the fields on the farm and swimming in the River Evenlode and recall connections made with some of the children in St Michael's Home for Waifs and Strays (now the site of Willis Court) 'smuggling' apples and other treats to them. Joan says that she still keeps in touch with one of the girls who was in the home. She also remembers what were known as 'Pound Days' when local people would take along one pound bags of sugar, sago, rice etc. to help to feed the children. She said that they were all wrapped in blue bags but the children at St Michael's were not present on such occasions, although later when they held fetes there they were allowed to go. Joan said that, like Ben, they did not have much time to play as children as there was always work for them to do for their parents. Illnesses in both Joan and Ben's families were mercifully few and they do not recall anything of note. Joan remembers that her mother used to keep turkeys and she would save all the 'turkey money' to spend on her children at Christmas. She travelled on the train to Sarsden and then by road going on a secret visit to a shop and post office in which she had worked in Churchill. Ben's mother had a sister who lived in London who was very well off and she used to send a hamper for the family via the railway at Christmas.

Joan's future husband Ben Townsend went to school in Idbury which in those days consisted of two classes with approximately thirty children. One of the teachers, Miss Jones, used to travel on the train from her home in Charlbury to Kingham Station and then cycled up to Idbury. After leaving school, Ben went to work in the Kettlewell's gardens in Fifeld where he stayed for two years, but one of his brothers, who worked for Alfred Groves & Sons in Milton, persuaded him to apply for an apprenticeship. In 1926, he got his indenture papers and became an apprentice mason. The weekly wage was about 10s the first year, 30s for the second and £3 for the third year.

Interior of Idbury School c1906. See also cover picture of Idbury School



Plan of Idbury School c1906

After this Ben worked mostly on buildings, and his first job was at Chadlington to which he cycled every day from Fifield. Unfortunately Ben was on the dole for a while because there was no work available as the weather was so bad. He had, however, saved his money and managed to exchange his push-bike for a motor bike, one of the first in the village,

although he had no other tools, not even a plank of wood! He was eventually asked by a local resident to do a job for him in Jubilee Lane making a connection to the main sewer. Ben quoted him £10 for the job, but asked another man to help him do the digging as the job had to be done quickly. Although it was a success, Ben paid his helper the £10 so the first job was not a profitable one! Another job soon came along, however, for John Henry Turner who lived at Cotswold, a house on the corner of Frog Lane and Shipton Road. Another job at Lyneham followed. Then came a request from Mr Watson who lived at Bleak House, also in Jubilee Lane, who needed help when his pipes became frozen. So his business as a builder began.

Meanwhile Joan was attending the Church of England School in Shipton and doing well. Her three older sisters all went to Burford Grammar School, two on scholarships and the third paid for by her father. At school Joan enjoyed domestic science and hoped to become a teacher, but sadly, six weeks before the scholarship exam for Burford Grammar School was due to take place, she

Ben and Rose Dangerfield with their four daughters c1922



injured her arm very badly whilst trying to climb on some spiked railings in the playground and so she had to stay away from school. She had to do her school work at home and Miss Smith, the teacher who called to help her with her school work, assured Joan's mother that she would pass the scholarship. However she failed this exam. Her father refused to pay the necessary fees despite pleas from the headmaster Mr Horne and the vicar, the Revd Mr Freeman. So her father found a job for her and, at the age of fifteen, she was employed at the local telephone exchange (in No 9 High Street, Shipton, the home of Mr and Mrs Alf Miles, where their grand-daughter Barbara and husband Colin Pearce now live). Joan found this rather boring as the exchange was so quiet in the early 1930s with few people having telephones. There were only about eighty in the whole of the Wychwoods area. She stayed there for two years and was then transferred to the exchange at the General Post Office in St Aldates in Oxford where she remained for five years until she got married at the age of twenty-one.

Joan and Ben were married in 1939 at the Zoar Baptist Chapel in Hawkes Yard (now The Terrace) where both of their families worshipped, and went to live in Milton. Ben had built his first house in Bruern Road which he sold to Joan's aunt, Mrs Gilbert, and with the proceeds, he built the house next door called Bruern End which was to be their home for nearly fourteen years (these are the last two houses on right going towards Bruern). There they brought up their five boys - David, Peter, Roy, Michael and Maurice. As Joan said, 'We had our children quite quickly'. Toys were difficult



The wedding of Ben and Joan Townsend

to obtain because of the war and many were home made from such things as painted Ovaltine or cocoa tins, while some were second-hand renovations which were sold in the British Legion Hut, near the current village hall in Milton, on Christmas Eve. With the exception of Maurice, all their sons worked at some time for their father. In 1947 Ben bought a large plot of land in Green Lane and built a new house for the family. This was Windmill Close where they

lived until about 1977, by which time their sons had moved out of the family home. Joan and Ben moved into Whitlands, one of two delightful bungalows which Ben had built on the rest of the land which he had bought in 1947. Ben said that he thought he had built about thirty houses but he renovated many more properties locally and further afield in the Cotswolds, throughout his life in the building trade, mostly as his own boss.

Sadly, Ben died at Whitlands in 1999 shortly after our meeting but Joan still lives in this lovely bungalow. She enjoys going to the Day Centre at Shipton once a week and receiving visits from family and friends and, thankfully, she still has a very good memory.



The Golden Wedding of Ben and Joan Townsend with from left to right: Joan, Ruth, Doris and Lucy

Albert (Bim) Champness

Bim was born at Limpsfield in Surrey on 2 May 1919. He says that his mother never chose to tell him who his father was and her family, who were Anglo-French, were very put out at his birth and just wanted him to go into a 'home' and be forgotten by them. However, his mother's sister Aunt Ada, who was a devout Christian living in Wembley, decided otherwise. She had friends also living in Wembley with two children of their own and Aunt Ada often went to their house for meals and fellowship. She asked them if they would look after her sister's baby temporarily. When Bim was six weeks old he was taken in and eventually brought up by Charles Gee and his wife Martha, their fourteen-year-old son Arthur and twelve-year-old daughter Lily.

His foster father Charles Gee was born at a cottage on High Lodge Farm in Milton under Wychwood, one of eight children of David and Alice Gee (née Baldwin). He left school when he was twelve to help support the family. He would leave High Lodge Cottages before 7 a.m., walk up Two Bush (the track signed to Crow's Castle now), then cross the Stow Road and was soon ploughing with the bullocks at Tangle which was, in those days, all part of the Barrington Estate. At the age of seventeen he walked to Stow, told a fib

about his age and joined the Gloucestershire Regiment. He was in the South African War and also survived the Siege of Mafeking. When he came back to England he finished with the Army and joined the Metropolitan Police in Wembley. It was probably at this time, Bim thinks, that he met his future wife Martha Phillips. She was a cook with a wealthy family in London and came from Shoeburyness in Essex. She was one of ten children, half of whom had migrated to New Zealand at the turn of the century and apparently settled in the area of New Plymouth where they prospered.

Home was at 97 Lanover Road, Wembley, a slate-roofed semi-detached house, similar to many thousands built around London, quite a pleasant house with sash-cord windows, and an outhouse in which the family used to bath in the tin bath. Bim went to school in Wembley and big brother Arthur would take him to watch football matches at Chelsea and Watford. Dad took him to watch Middlesex playing cricket at Lords. But what he liked best was when Arthur went with him to watch athletics at Old Stamford Bridge and the White City Stadium. Here he saw some of the superb athletes of the day such as Lord Burghley, and chief of all there was Sidney Wooderson who ran the mile in just over four minutes.

In 1931 when Bim was twelve years old, his dad Charles had finished his time with the police and while on a visit back to his parents David and Alice Gee, who were now living in Fifield, he found a house to rent in the High Street in Milton under Wychwood (on the right of the entry to The Terrace). Bim had become used to this area as he had visited Granny and Grandad Gee and also had got to know his cousins, Ruby, Jim, Mavis and Cecil whose father Bert Gee worked for many years at Matthews' Mill, and also Bert Field who lived in Fifield next to Bim's grandparents. As well as holidays here he used to visit his mum's sister Lily's family in Shoeburyness near the sea.

He continued attending school at Burford until he was fourteen, and on leaving he tried to get a job with Alfred Groves & Sons as a carpenter. He was not successful as they had already taken on Arthur Langford who had left school at the same time as Bim. However Dad's cousin Reginald J. Bradley who ran a garage in Station Road, Shipton, heard that he needed work and offered him a job in the motor trade to which he became apprenticed in 1933. He enjoyed the work; it was interesting and varied, cars for the gentry, local tradesmen's van, farmers' vehicles. He said he also enjoyed picking up and overhauling stationary engines used for running equipment such as milking machine and generators and also the farm tractors which were replacing the horse-drawn ploughs on the farms. Unfortunately during the early part of his apprenticeship Bim had to 'man the petrol pumps' on Saturday afternoons and so was unable to take part in football and cricket games in the village although later he played when away in the RAF. However he had been a keen cyclist from a young age and thought nothing of returning home on his half day, having

lunch and then off on a fifty to sixty mile ride to Stow, Broadway, Stratford, Moreton in Marsh, back home, and off courting at night! Or on a Friday evening cycling up to Harrow to stay with his brother Arthur over the weekend, cycling back on Sunday and taking it all in his stride.

Bim says that in 1935 they moved to live in a house which had been occupied by his foster mother's sister Sarah. She had met George Arthurs, one of the Fifield hurdlers, during the First World War when he was serving with the artillery at a huge base at Shoeburyness, and after marrying George she came to live in a cottage at Fifield. When Uncle George retired, his son took a café on the crossroads at Northleach and Sarah and George joined him. Bim's parents took over the tenancy of the hurdlers' cottage, known as Pole Cottage, which had a beautiful garden. 'It was owned by a retired civil judge Mr Monteath, who'd done service in India and when Dad went to pay the rent one day Mr Monteath asked him if he could find one hundred pounds to buy the house. Dad managed to raise the money and bought the house and that's where we were living when I was called up. Mum and Dad continued to live in Pole Cottage until mother had a heart attack and my brother and sister decided it would be best for their parents to return to London and live with them. Pole Cottage was eventually sold.'

Bim told me that soon after moving down here from Wembley, while looking out of his bedroom window one day he espied this raven-haired young lady walking down to Ridley's Farm (top of Church Road on the left) swinging a milk can. She was Joyce Smith and he was obviously smitten with her. She lived with her family in a terraced cottage near the top of Milton High Street. She was one of the children of Sidney Smith and his wife Annabella. She had three brothers, Jack, Roy and Gordon and a sister Peggy who married an American serviceman and went to live in America. Her father worked at Alfred Groves & Sons as a builder and also rented barns and a couple of fields from Wally Rawlins, approximately where The Sands/Langston House is now situated, where he kept cows and pigs. He also rented some land from Miss Bailey who lived and farmed at Foxholes. Joyce was apprenticed to Bespoke Tailoring in Oxford and her first weekly wage for fifty hours work was 4s 6d, but her train fare was 4s 7d a week! She was good at her work and soon the boss was letting her bring some work home - a pair of sleeves to make the hand sewn button holes meant she would receive an extra 3s 6d.

Bim's six-year apprenticeship ended in 1939 just as conscription was brought in. Bim, Jim Prew and Arthur Langford were probably the first three lads in the village to be called up. Jim and Arthur went into the army, but Bim signed on the reserve for five years in the RAF. He was sent to Uxbridge and because he had been a mechanic he was given the option of training as an air frame fitter or an engine fitter. He opted for the latter, went on two courses and emerged as a Fitter 2E. While he was on a fitter's course at Cosford,

Bim and Joyce married on 7 December 1941. First working with Training Command, then a night fighter squadron, he was finally posted overseas. He went to Blackpool to be fitted out with tropical kit, but just before the boat sailed, he went down with pleurisy. After twelve weeks of hanging about in Blackpool he was called to headquarters along with about thirty other technical NCOs and they were sent to Woodhall Spa in Lincolnshire. On arrival there they found only a skeleton staff and no planes, but gradually it evolved into Squadron 619 and joined 5 Group Bomber Command. A little later the first four engine Lancaster bombers started to arrive; of course the men had never seen them before. After a few weeks of learning the ropes, the air crews arrived and started flying and then began to bomb Germany. And that's what he did for the rest of the war. Joyce came to live in York to be nearer to him and it was there that their first child Suzanne was born. Soon afterwards Joyce returned to live in Milton in the last cottage in Milton High Street. At the end of the war in Europe, the planes were modified and repainted with the intention of being used in the east against the Japanese, but the atom bomb put an end to that and after a few months he was demobbed. He was asked to go back and join up for another twenty-five years but by that time Joyce and Bim had another child, Robert. Although Joyce said she was willing to go with him wherever he was sent, he decided not to go back.

Bim has some interesting stories to tell of his life in the RAF; here are just three.

I was very fortunate, we were not stationed far from Hull and Hull was one of the most bombed cities in England during the war. I think as far as the number of raids went it was one of the worst. And the Jerries would of course not have far to come from the French coast and with plenty of fuel and ammunition still on board when they dropped their bombs, they would scout around to see if there was anything around to shoot up and of course they knew exactly where the aerodromes were, they had their maps, and we often got bombed with light anti-personnel bombs. I remember once having a bad tummy and was sitting on the loo in the middle of the night when the air-raid sirens went and everybody went into the shelters. I was glued to the toilet when the whole place was lit up with incendiaries. I thought my end had come, but anyway, when it was all over of course I got my leg pulled severely by my mates. Another occasion, it was foggy and we were doing some night fighter training and couldn't fly but Jerry knew where we were and dropped six anti-personnel bombs, one of them just outside the hut we were sleeping in, and pretty well wrecked the hut; but anyway we got away with it. Another two or three feet and all of us in the hut would have been killed. And another occasion, when I was an NCO, one of our Lancaster bombers had engine trouble and landed, he'd been on a raid to the heavy water plant at Pienamunder and that was a very long range trip, and he ran short of fuel and landed at Stockton on Tees. I was ordered to get a couple

of men, an oil cooler had been damaged, and our crew flew us up in an Air Speed Oxford with our kit to repair this Lancaster and fly back with the crew. Well, we did the job the following day and started to fly back from Stockton on Tees to Lincolnshire and ran into a snowstorm. The pilot decided to pull out over the North Sea (which he should not have done apparently) to get out of the snowstorm. We arrived over a convoy and I was sitting in the bomb aimer's compartment at the time and the navy fired on us. Fortunately he gave us six warning shots from the Bofors gun and the navigator fired the colours of the day out in time so we were recognised and no further action was taken. When I came home my brother in law who was on a battleship in the Navy said, 'Good job you didn't have our man, he'd have shot you down.' So anyway that was an escape. That's a little tête-à-tête about my time in the RAF. But I was very fortunate.

On return to civilian life, Bim went back to Bradley's Garage for about a year. He then worked for Phyllis Smith and her husband in Shipton making cash tills and from there went to Morris's in Oxford, leaving the motor trade altogether after a short time to go to Smith's Industries in Witney. However, British Leyland at Cowley in Oxford were appealing for motor mechanics and, because he had been on technical inspection in the RAF, he was put onto inspection. This he didn't like and managed to get moved to the tuning department and that is where he continued to work until retiring at the age of sixty-three. Bim enjoyed gardening in his spare time and, shortly after the war ended, he and Joyce were able to move into a new council house on The Sands.



Bim and Joyce c1988

The family had continued to grow with the arrival of Mick, and after a gap of ten years, Steven was born followed by Sarah four years later. Life had its traumas. Mick was very ill as an infant but fortunately survived and is now living in Canada where he has his own business. Tragically Suzanne died very suddenly at the age of twenty-eight, leaving two young children. Robert also is married and lives in Idbury with his wife Mary. They have two children and two grandchildren and run a business from Groves' Yard. Steven and Sarah have both married and moved away from Milton. Very sadly, Joyce died very suddenly on 7 August 1990.

Looking back Bim says he didn't take much interest in village life. He used to like watching the football and cricket matches on The Green and was much engaged in chapel life where he also played the piano. When a child his teacher was Mrs Wells, whose husband owned Poplar Farm. She was cross and disappointed when he gave up his lessons as she said he was the most promising pupil she had ever had and could harmonise so well. He recalls some of the village characters, Jackie Miles the postman, Roy Ridley the farmer at Hill Farm, Wally Rawlins, and some of the men who worked at A. Groves & Sons; also cricketers like Perce Bridges who was a superb fast bowler, Doggie Pitchard who could mix it up with speed and spin and could act the fool at most matches, one or two of the footballers such as Frank Miles who played for Oxfordshire on a couple of occasions, and Buckney Slatter from Shipton who played for Corinthians in those days. He also remembers the building of Little Rissington Aerodrome in 1937/8 and Brize Norton which was built at about the same time.

Bim, like most people, has had his ups and downs and after many trips to Canada to visit his family, he lives in a very comfortable bungalow in The Sands where he enjoys listening to his classical music CDs, reading, gardening and meeting friends and family.



Bim Champness March 2005

The Society's Fieldwalk Programme The Final Report

MARGARET WARE

Part 2. The Pottery

THE first part of this report¹ described the traces left by prehistoric peoples in the form of flint tools and flint knapping waste, recovered during the Society's fieldwalking in the Evenlode valley. It was stressed that, apart from nearby Neolithic long barrows, we found no other indications of prehistoric occupation - no hearths, dwelling remains or graves; nevertheless the scatters of worked flints provided ample evidence of their past presence in the locality.

Pottery sherds are the other great class of man-made artefacts besides flints which can survive over long periods of time, in contrast to organic items like fabric, bone and wood which usually decay, unless preserved in exceptional circumstances. The making and using of pottery vessels began as a feature of the more settled way of life gradually adopted by people of the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages (Figure 1), when arable farming and pastoralism replaced hunting and gathering during the last 4,000 years BC, but very early pottery is usually fragile and often only recoverable from buried sites like graves. In surface ploughsoil examined during fieldwalking, years of ploughing and attack by rain and wind are likely to have destroyed much pottery made over 2,000 years ago, and our own very sparse finds reflect this. We found no Neolithic pottery, only four sherds from the late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age, 800-500 BC (fields A 2 and Ly 1), six Iron Age pieces (Sh 3 & 15, Ly 1), and two more tiny fragments 'possibly prehistoric', (Sh 14 & M 4), weighing in all less than 200 grams (Figure 2). These few finds merely confirm the presence in our locality of these prehistoric peoples, already indicated by their flint artefacts.

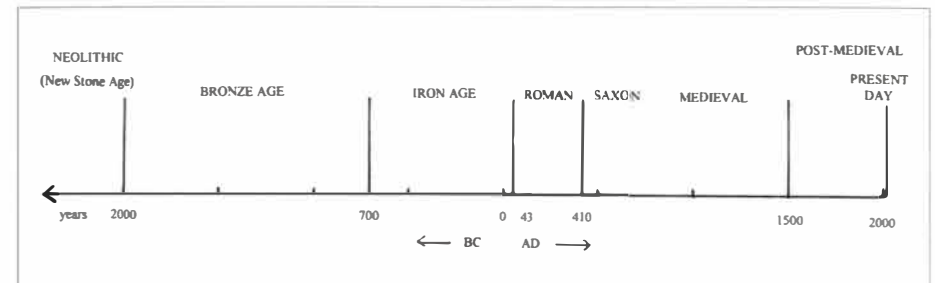


Figure 1 Simplified Time Line (Britain)

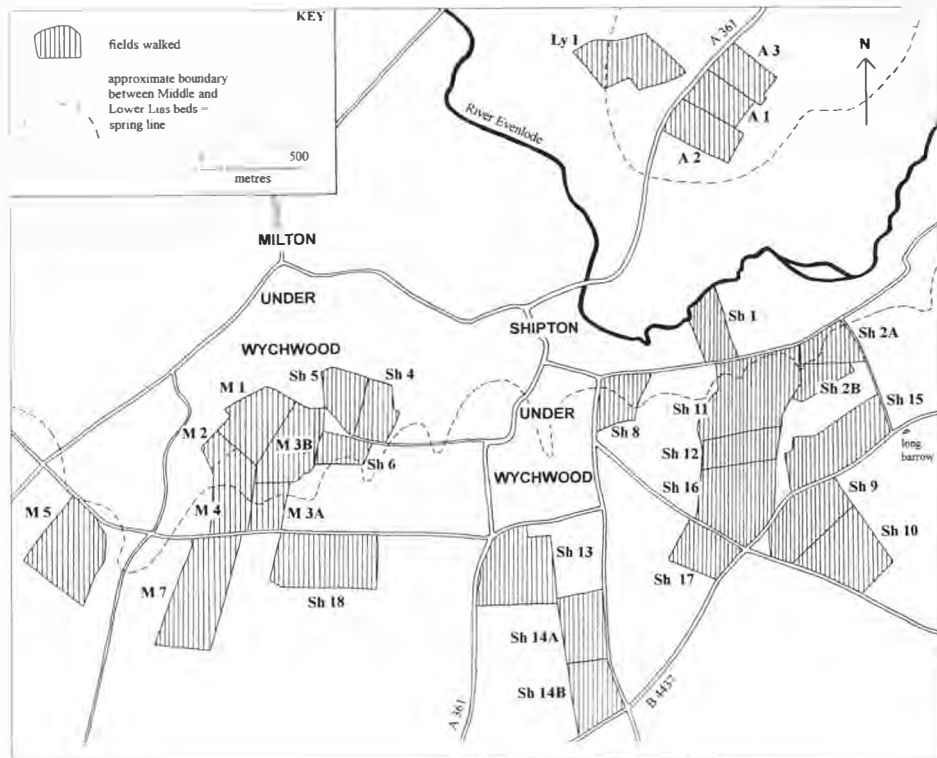
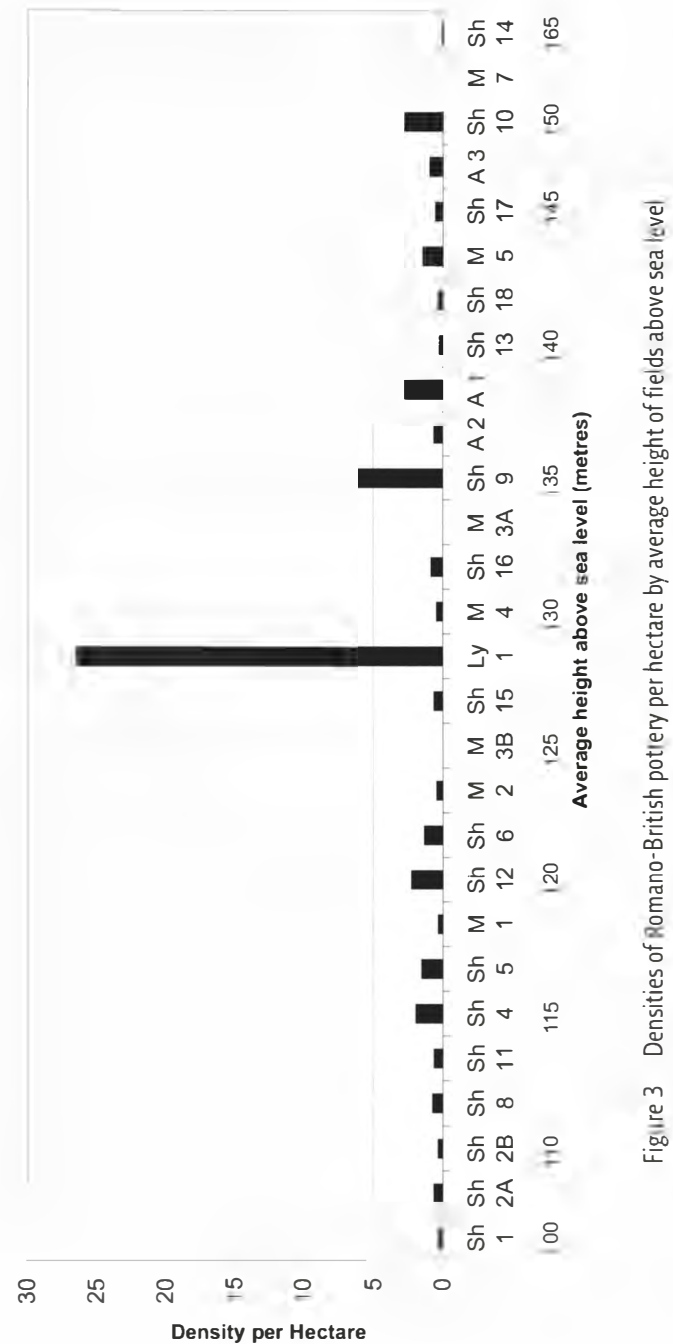


Figure 2 Fields walked

The picture changes completely with the coming of the Roman invaders to our shores in the first century AD, bringing with them superior pottery manufacturing techniques like kiln firing, with ceramic production often on an industrial scale. The increasing use of pottery by a growing population together with greater survival in the ploughsoil of discarded, broken but better-made pots, has left us indelible clues as to settlement and land-use in the Romano-British period. Nearly two thousand sherds weighing a total of thirteen kilograms (28½ lbs) were collected from twenty-three out of the twenty-six fields examined, an amount all the more remarkable considering the relatively short time-scale of the Roman influence (the first four centuries AD), compared to the preceding three or four thousand years of pre-history.

Figure 3 shows the density of Romano-British sherds per hectare, the fields ranked in order of average height above sea level. Clearly, most of the fields had a very thin scattering of sherds: only one every two hectares or less. This can be identified as a 'manuring scatter', whereby domestic and animal refuse including discarded broken pots thrown on the midden was then carted out and spread on the arable fields. The obvious peaks in the graph showing



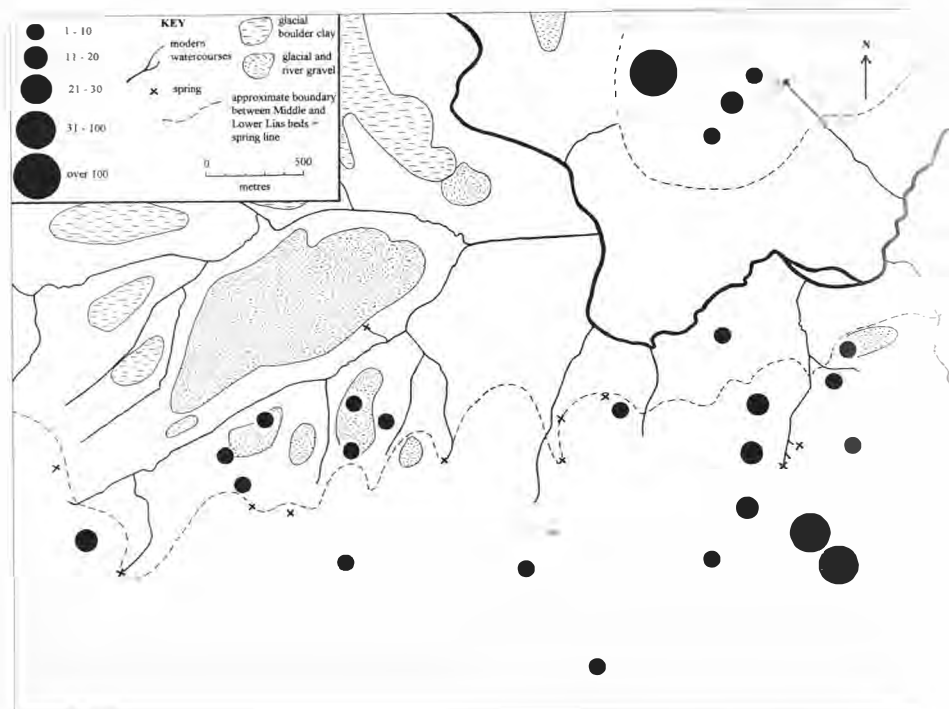


Figure 4 Number of Roman-British ceramic sherds per field

higher densities of potsherds suggest settlements of some sort or at least their associated rubbish dumps. These densities record only those sherds picked up along the transects during our seven per cent sampling. It was immediately obvious on the ground where the pottery scatters were thickest, often between the transects, and had the density figures included all the pottery that was actually collected, the peaks as indicators of settlement would be even more pronounced. Figure 4 shows the number of sherds picked up in each field and gives a clearer picture of the settlement pattern. The possible small farmstead near the hedge between Sh 9 and 10 was described in the Society's first fieldwalking report 'Practical Fieldwalking in the Evenlode Valley'², and the evidence for a possible Roman villa at Upper Milton (M 5) was discussed in *Wychwoods History No. 14*.³ Field A 1 is quite near to a known villa site on the eastern shoulder of the hill above Ascott, and both this field and an adjacent spring yielded a significant number of Roman sherds. But by far the most obvious settlement site was the field (Ly 1) on the south-western slope of the hill north of Shipton, where unusually dense scatters of sherds were clearly visible even on cursory examination. Some Roman coins had previously been discovered in this field and a few more low-denomination bronzes of the fourth



Figure 5
The origin of our Romano-British pottery

century were found during the fieldwalk. The distribution and dating of the finds indicated a fourth-century farm complex or hamlet of fairly lowly status, with a possible connection to the Ascott villa.⁴ Four other fields (Sh 4, 5, 6 and 12) also had a slightly higher sherd density than the 'background whisper' of the general manuring scatter but the pottery was not concentrated enough to suggest a settlement.

Of the total Romano-British ceramic material collected from all the fields examined, three-quarters (seventy-six per cent) was fairly coarse and grey in colour, fired in a reducing atmosphere, and just over fifteen per cent mostly reddish-brown oxidised

ware. Reduced ware could have been everyday kitchen ware, while some at least of the oxidised ware was of finer quality and probably used as tableware. Both of these sorts of pottery were likely to have been made within the general Oxford area, either in local settlements or in the vast swathe of potteries to the east of present-day Oxford. It is now realised that the Oxford pottery industry became one of the three or four largest and most important in the whole of Roman Britain.⁵ A vigorous trading network was also a feature of the Roman occupation and a further seven per cent of our total pottery has been identified as non-local. Twenty pieces (one per cent) were of Samian ware, a glossy terracotta fabric used to make fine tableware, imported during the first and second centuries from southern Gaul. (Later on the Oxford industry was to develop a less costly substitute, red colour-coat, for the home market.) Six per cent of our sherds came from other potteries in the province (Figure 5). A further two per cent of the total ceramic material was made up of probable Roman brick, several heavy pieces of roof-tiles - the angular tegulae and curved imbrices, and a few pieces found in Sh 11 & 12, M 1 & 5 were characteristically scored to act as a key for wall plaster.

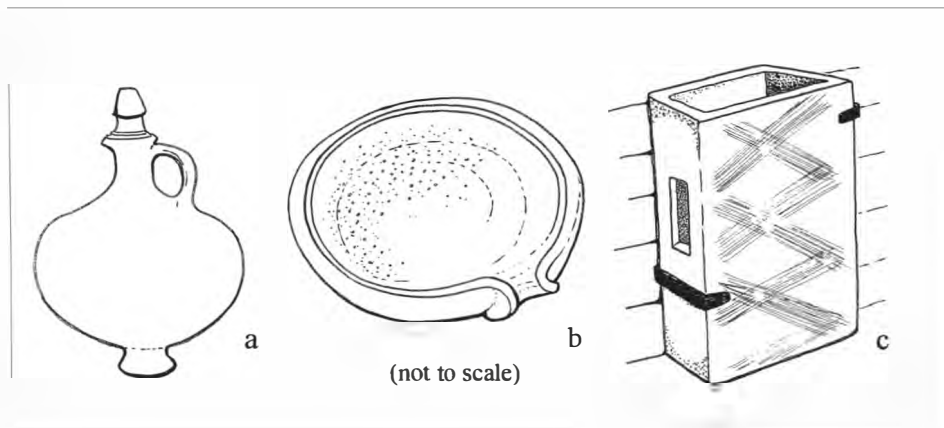


Figure 6 Romano-British ceramics:

a. Flask b. Mortarium c. Characteristically scored box flue-tile

These are distinctive fragments of central heating box flue-tile and suggest a building of some status (Figure 6). They were conspicuously absent from the assemblages from both Ly 1 and Sh 9 and 10, indicating that these were lowly habitations, but were found in M 5 at Upper Milton and formed the basis for the suggestion of a villa type building nearby.

Many of the pot fragments picked up were small, abraded and anonymous in shape, but surviving rims, bases and other shaped pieces give clues as to their form and function. The most comprehensive analysis was carried out on the Lyneham material⁶ which identified mostly jars, bowls, dishes, and about twenty pieces of mortaria or food-grinding vessels which have tiny grits fired into their inner surface. Other fields yielded a few more mortarium pieces, a small fragment of a colander or cheese-press with regular holes and the elegant flask from Sh10 described in the first report (Figure 6). The widespread presence of Romano-British pottery in the landscape suggests that our locality was intensively settled and farmed during this period, whether by small, independent farmers probably of British Iron-Age ancestry, or as part of larger estates of wealthier villa-owners, who themselves could have been native British who had 'made good' and adopted the culture and civilised living of the invaders.

The period immediately following the departure of the Roman army in the early fifth century, popularly known as the 'Dark Ages', saw the breakdown of civilised living and administration in the former Roman province of Britannia. The subsequent Anglo-Saxon culture was characterised by beautiful metalwork and domestic objects in horn, bone and wood, but initially by very little ceramic. The early pottery survives as small blackened fragments in ploughsoil, the low firing temperature of the pots leaving abundant carbon in the clay body from

its grass or chaff temper. Our very sparse finds from ten locations, of fourteen tiny fragments weighing only 100 grams in total, dating to the sixth-eighth centuries AD, constitute the only pottery evidence for an early Anglo-Saxon presence in our area. But the Saxon origin of our village names *Sheep tun* and *Middle tun* point to the beginnings of local settlements, while burials from the garden of The Prebendal House, Shipton provide evidence that the church graveyard had been established before AD 900.⁷

By the later Saxon and early medieval periods, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, more durable ceramics were being produced in the Oxford region or imported from neighbouring kiln centres.⁸ These were mostly hand-made, bag-shaped cooking pots or storage vessels and some shallow dishes, the clay tempered with calcareous gravel or flint and quartzite. The most abundant type in our area at this time is Late Saxon and Early Medieval Oxford Ware (Fabric OXAC), a hard, dark grey-brown ceramic, identified initially by Professor Jope in his excavations of Ascott D'Oilly Castle.⁹ This could have been made in the Wychwood area, possibly at Ascott under Wychwood, where kiln-wasters have been found. The Norman conquest brought no discernable innovations in pottery-making, as the Romans had done, but as the medieval period continued more pots were wheel-thrown and a greater range of vessels produced - not only cooking pots but also dishes, bowls, lamps, flasks and pitchers, often with simple decoration. From the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, another local ceramic type came to predominate in our area, Early to Late Medieval North-West Oxon or Wychwood Ware (Fabric OXCX). This could be either hand-made and wheel-finished, or entirely wheel-thrown, the clay tempered with calcareous gravel probably derived from the Lias beds and gravel terraces of the Evenlode valley. Prolonged exposure of OXCX sherds to acid soils or rain leaches away the calcareous inclusions leaving numerous holes and giving a characteristic 'corky' appearance. The centres of production are not known but again, a wide variety of vessel types were

made, of which only a few have been identified in our assemblages. We have examples of cooking pots (the commonest vessel type), dishes, small jugs with pinched decoration round the base and bung-hole cisterns (Figure 7). However most medieval pottery sherds, especially those collected from ploughsoil,

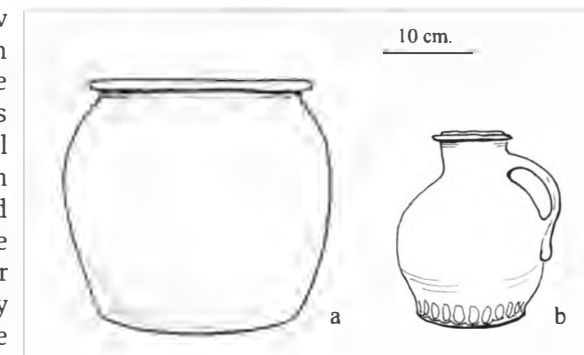


Figure 7 Wychwood ware (OXCX) medieval vessels:

a. cooking pot b. Jug with pinched base showing potter's thumb marks

are frustratingly anonymous, not to mention difficult to recognise in the field, being usually dark reddish- or grey-brown and often very abraded. The third most abundant medieval pottery type identified locally is more easily visible – the high quality, wheel-thrown output from the Buckinghamshire kilns of Brill and Boarstall from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries, often recognisable by a greenish or yellowish glaze. In addition, over the whole mid-Saxon to late medieval period, small amounts of pottery made further afield were also used in our locality, thought to derive from kilns in the Northampton area, Abingdon, Oxfordshire and Savernake Forest and Minety in Wiltshire (Figure 8).

Fabric Type and Date Range	Fieldwalking (26 fields)		26 Village Sites (mostly Shipton)		Total Medieval Pottery	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Late Saxon Oxford ware. OXB (late 8c-early 11c)	2	<1	9	<2	11	1.5
Late Saxon and early medieval West Oxon ware. OXAC (late 9c-late 13c)	25	9	129	27	154	20.5
St Neots type ware. OXR (mid 10c-mid 11c)	8	3	17	4	25	3.3
Late Saxon-medieval Oxford ware. OXY (early 11c-late 13c)	-	-	3	<1	3	<1
Late Saxon-medieval Abingdon ware. OXAG (early 11c-early 15c)	-	-	1	<1	1	<1
Minety type ware (N.E. Wilts). OXBB (mid 12c-early 16c)	1	<1	6	1	7	0.9
Early-late medieval E. Wilts (Savernake) ware. OXAQ (late 12c-mid 15c)	1	<1	10	2	11	1.5
Early-late medieval NW Oxon (Wychwood) ware. OXCX (late 12c-mid 15c)	172	64	182	38	354	47.1
Brill/Boarstall type ware Bucks. OXAW (late 12c-mid 14c) OXAM (early 13c-mid 17c)	1 26	<1 10	3 20	<1 4	} 50	} 6.6
Northants type medieval ware OXBK (late 12c-14c)	2	<1	-	-	2	<1
Other and/or unidentified medieval fabrics	31	12	103	21	134	17.8
Total	269	100	483	100	752	99.2
Total weight (grams)	1,918		4,578		6,496	

Figure 8 Summary of medieval pottery

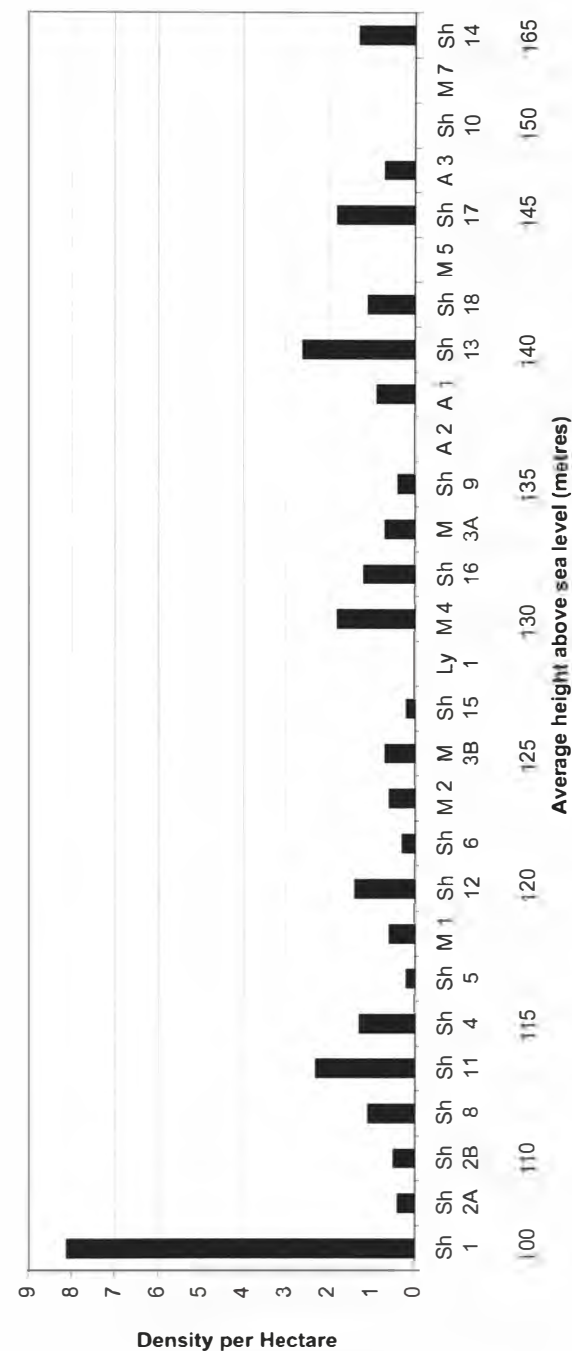


Figure 9 Densities of medieval pottery per hectare by average height of fields above sea level

In all, 269 medieval sherds weighing two kilograms were recovered from twenty two of the twenty six fields walked; the density per hectare of all sherds from each field, regardless of fabric type, is plotted on Figure 9. This irregular thin scatter of sherds over almost all of the ground surface examined again indicates manuring spreads, while the markedly higher density in Sh1 has already been suggested to be the result of intensive cultivation and thus manuring over a long period, since the sherds were scattered and not concentrated in any one area.² The slightly higher than average density in Sh13 is not unexpected given the field's proximity to one of the older areas of village settlement along Upper End. The lack of medieval material on some fields e.g. Ly1 and Sh10 could indicate past use primarily for grazing rather than arable cultivation.

In addition to fieldwalking, the writer took the opportunity, over a number of years, of collecting artefacts from gardens, cleared development sites and foundation trenches in Shipton (twenty sites) as well as from Ascott, Upper Milton and Bruern (two each), which has yielded a further 483 medieval sherds weighing over four and a half kilos.¹⁰ At some of these locations e.g. Willowbank, Mawles Lane, Shipton and adjacent to cottages in Ascott High Street, the sherds formed a dense layer in the soil suggesting a rubbish pit or under-floor refuse layer. In others e.g. the gardens of Coldstone Farm and The Dower House, both Shipton, the sherds while numerous were more scattered rather than in a discrete layer, but still suggested early occupation of each site. Discoveries from the site of St Mary's School paddock in Church Lane, now Maple House, Shipton were reported in an earlier article.¹¹

The same familiar pottery fabric types were represented in these assemblages, but Figure 8 clearly shows that while Wychwood ware sherds (OXCX) still predominated in both field and village sites, the earlier type, Late Saxon and Early Medieval West Oxon ware (OXAC) made up a greater proportion of the total in village sites compared to the fields. Whether this is a real and significant difference, or a bias due to the small size of some of the samples collected, is not known. But the evidence of settlement at least in parts of Ascott and Shipton possibly as early as the tenth century is clearly demonstrated by our pottery finds, and stands alongside the evidence for a Saxon origin of many of our place-names.

It must be emphasised that ninety per cent of the pottery picked up in all our fieldwalks consisted of post-medieval material, both the glazed red earthenware produced by country potters such as those at Leafield from the eighteenth century onwards, and stonewares and white-glazed earthenwares from such centres of national importance as the Staffordshire potteries. This material continued to be carried out into fields piecemeal with refuse and manure or was used to fill old quarry workings, before more organised refuse disposal in landfill was centrally organised. The range of post-medieval pottery

types found in our earliest fieldwalks was described in *Wychwoods History No.4* and remains typical of all subsequent collections.¹² The same is true of the other categories of finds such as metal, glass, claypipe and bone objects, and the reader is referred to the 1988 report for a description of these.

Details of the artefacts found in each location have been sent to the Oxfordshire County Sites and Monuments Record. Representative samples of the flint, pottery and other finds have been deposited in the Society's archives, together with copies of the written records.

I acknowledge with gratitude the help I have received from members and ex-members of staff of Oxford Archaeology in identifying the pottery finds, notably from Richard Chambers, Sarah Green, Maureen Mellor, Paul Booth and Carole Wheeler. Once again, thanks are due to those members of the Society who helped with 'setting up' the fieldwalks, and not least to the 137 members and friends who bent their backs and strained their eyes looking for the artefacts.

Notes

¹ Margaret Ware, 'The Society's Fieldwalk Programme: The Final Report: Part 1. The Lithics'. *Wychwoods History* 22 (2007), pp. 46-60.

² Frank and Margaret Ware, 'Practical Fieldwalking in the Evenlode Valley'. *Wychwoods History* 4 (1988), pp. 16-49.

³ Frank and Margaret Ware, 'A Roman Villa at Upper Milton?' *Wychwoods History* 14 (1999), pp. 38-9.

⁴ Margaret and Frank Ware, 'Fieldwalking a Romano-British Site above Shipton'. *Wychwoods History* 8 (1993), pp. 50-65.

⁵ Martin Henig and Paul Booth, *Roman Oxfordshire* (2000), pp. 163-74. Sutton Publishing.

⁶ Ibid. *Wychwoods History* 8 (1993).

⁷ John Blair, 'The Origins of the Minster Church at Shipton under Wychwood: Human Burials from Prebendal House'. *Wychwoods History* 7 (1992), pp. 4-9.

⁸ Maureen Mellor, *Oxfordshire Pottery. A Synthesis of middle and late Saxon, medieval and early post-medieval pottery in the Oxford Region* (1994). Reprinted from *Oxonienia* vol.LIX.

⁹ E. M. Jope and R. I. Threlfall, 'The Twelfth-century Castle of Ascot Doilly, Oxon'. *Antiquaries Journal* 39 (1959), pp. 219-73.

¹⁰ Margaret Ware 'Medieval Pottery in the Wychwoods'. *Wychwoods History* 15 (2000), pp. 51-4. Note: the map on p. 54 does not show the 50+ sherds found later in the garden of Coldstone Farm, Shipton.

¹¹ Margaret Ware, 'The Secret of the School Paddock'. *Wychwoods History* 5 (1989) pp.95-6.

¹² Ibid. *Wychwoods History* 4 (1988).

The Godfrey Case

JACK HOWARD-DRAKE

The Visitation

ON 29 April 1696 there was a visitation at Chipping Norton held by Doctor Henry Alworth, the chancellor of the Oxford diocese.¹ The regular inspection of his diocese by the bishop dates back to medieval times and by the end of the sixteenth century it had become the standard practice for him or his representative to visit his diocese every three years, and for archdeacons or their representatives to make annual visits to their archdeaconries. The holding of a visitation at a named time and place was announced in advance and the appropriate parish officers and others in the area of the visit were ordered to appear. Visitation articles were issued listing the subjects to be enquired into, such as the condition of the parish church, the behaviour of the clergy and the conduct of the parishioners. The churchwardens brought their reports to the visitation as required by the articles and *inter alia* presented those allegedly guilty of various misdemeanours. Those presented could then be cited to appear before the bishop's or archdeacon's court if the cases against them were to be taken further.

At the time of Henry Alworth's visitation at Chipping Norton, the parish of Shipton under Wychwood included the townships of Shipton, Milton, Lyneham, Leafield, Ramsden and Langley and churchwardens were appointed for each of them except for Langley. Those summoned were the vicar John Palmer, and the churchwardens for Shipton, William Whiting and Stephen Matthews, for Milton Robert Seacole, for Leafield Richard Wyatt, for Lyneham John Gibbard and for Ramsden Richard Joyner. The churchwardens presented a number of people for failing to pay their shares of both the regular church rate, known as the stipend, and a periodic levy which all landholders in the parish were required to pay towards the maintenance of the church. Those presented were John Brookes of Milton who owed six year's stipend, four people from Lyneham who owed various sums, Thomas Harris, six shillings, widow Baylis, four shillings and eightpence, John Shepherd, one shilling and fourpence, John Gibbard, eightpence, Joseph Soden of Hook Norton for lands in Milton, one shilling for the stipend and one shilling for the levy, and Henry Godfrey for lands and a house in Milton, fourteen shillings for the levy and four year's stipend money (? four shillings). There is no record of Brookes, Harris, Baylis, Shepherd, Gibbard (a churchwarden at

the time of the visitation) or Soden being cited to appear in court. Presumably they decided to pay up after being presented. Henry Godfrey, however, was cited to appear in court for non-payment of the levy but not, apparently, for non-payment of the stipend.

The Godfreys



The Godfreys were a prominent arms bearing local family.² Henry Godfrey, a lawyer of Burford, was buried in Burford Church where a memorial reads:-

Near this place lyeth the Body of Mercy Godfrey wife of Henry Godfrey of Burford in the County of Oxford Gent. who departed this life ye 5th of October 1687, In ye 63rd yeare of her age
And also the body of Elizabeth Godfry theyre Grandchild who dyed in the second yeare of her age
Mary Godfrey daughter of Henry and Mercy died in January 1691
Here Lyeth the body of Henry Godfrey late of Burford Gent. who departed this life the last day of March in the year of Our Lord 1701. and in the 69th year of his age
Also near this place lieth ye Bodie of Anne the Daughter of Henry Godfrey who died the 12th day of April 1738 in the 73rd year of her age

Near this place lyeth the body of Mercy Godfrey wife of Henry Godfrey of Burford in the County of Oxford Gent. who departed this life y^e 5th of October 1687. in y^e 63rd yeare of her age
And also the body of Elizabeth Godfry theyre Grandchild who dyed in the second yeare of her age
Mary Godfrey daughter of Henry and Mercy died in January 1691.
Here Lyeth the body of Henry Godfrey late of Burford Gent, who departed this life the last day of March in the year of our Lord 1701. and in the 69th year of his age,
Also near this place lieth y^e Bodie of Anne the Daughter of Henry Godfrey, who died the 12th day of April 1738. in the 73rd year of her age.

There is another memorial in Shipton Church commemorating other members of the Godfrey family including Henry's brother William of Holwell. It reads:

Near to this place lieth the body of WILLIAM GODFREY of Holwell Gent. Who was buried March 31st 1706: Aged 71. Likewise ye body of JOHN Godfrey of Milton Gent. who was buried October 13th 1714: Aged 58. Also the body of MARY the wife of THOMAS GODFREY of Milton Gent. Who was buried August 11th 1736: Aged 37. And MARY-ANNA and JANE Her daughters. Both Enfants. Mr THOMAS GODFREY OF Hailey late Milton Gent. Was buried November ye 2d 1747. Aged 51

Copies of Henry Godfrey's and William Godfrey's wills are at appendix B.³ Henry's is dated 1697, he died in 1701 and the will was proved in May of that year. William's is dated March 1705 and was proved in April 1706. The wills show both men to have been of considerable substance. Henry held land in Milton, Filkins, Hailey, Shipton, Bampton, a house and land in Burford, land and property held from University College in Oxford and property of the late widow Hunts. He also left considerable sums of money and items of silver. William Godfrey, though not so affluent, was also a man of some means. They each left 40 shillings to the poor of Holwell 'to be laid out in bread'.

The court case

The case against Henry Godfrey was held in the bishop's or consistory court in Oxford. The surviving volumes of the depositions in the Oxford church courts end in 1694 so we do not have the record of the evidence as given there, but the case went to appeal and we have the appeal court documents which repeat the depositions made in Oxford.⁴ There is also an act book which enables us to see the progress of the case through the Oxford church court from the citation to the judgement and Godfrey's notice of appeal.⁵ This shows that the case was first in the court on 1 August 1696 and that Godfrey did all he could to delay proceedings, mostly by failing to turn up. He was finally there on 17 December 1698 when judgement was given for the churchwardens and Godfrey immediately gave notice of appeal.

The churchwardens' case in the Oxford court was presented by Stephen Matthew and Robert Seacole. In the years 1690 to 1695 the church had needed repairs to the body of the church and the aisles, especially to the floor, walls, leads, slates, windows, bells, chimes and bell ropes. These repairs had been carried out and paid for by the churchwardens, especially by Matthew and Seacole. They had also spent £8 14s 3d in necessary expenses, for bread and wine for the sacraments, for the cost of a surplice and its laundry, for a hearse cloth, for the dues and fees of the parish clerk and for other charges as recorded in the parish book, that is the churchwarden's account book.⁶

The customary way of raising money for repairs to the church was by

taxing the parishioners and the occupiers of land in the various districts of the parish by the yardland. Accordingly in March 1696 they had given notice of their intention to raise a rate and the major part of the parishioners met and agreed a rate of three shillings a yardland on land occupied in the last five years. This taxation appears in the churchwardens' account book under the date 4 February 1696 without mentioning the rate at which it was fixed. It reads:

At a public meeting in the church (there being notice given thereof the precedent Lord's Day), there was a levy made this 4th day of February of Shipton under Wychwood in the County of Oxon for paying the arrears of the churchwardens and for buying a surplice and a hearse cloth and for the discharge of other bills for the reparation of our parish church by us John Palmer, Edward Hastings, Richard Draper, William Whiting, Stephen Mathews, Robert Sakell, John Gibear, Richard Joyner, Nicholas Willett, Richard Wyatt.

The amounts for which certain parishioners, including Godfrey, were liable, do not appear in the churchwardens' accounts but were presented in court as part of the evidence. These are set out at appendix A.

At the end of the account book there is an undated entry which reads as follows:

The repairs of these parcels ensuing with their appurtenancies are to be accounted church reparations and are to be borne not only by the parishioners but also by all those that occupy lands, tenements or possession within that parish where the church is to be repaired.

The walls of the church, steeple and churchyard etc. of stone and brick and the windows of stone or brick and ... with bars of iron and glass and ...

The roof of timber with laths [viciggs], nails, dogs and bolts of ...

The covering of lead, slate, tile or shingle

The floor of stone or paving tiles

The doors of timber with the locks, keys, riders, [hooes] nails ...

The furniture of the steeple as stays, floors, bells, wheels, ropes ...

The pulpit

The pews or seats not made by any private person

These are not properly called church reparations but yet they are duties belonging to the church to be performed rateably by every inhabitant of the parish

The communion table with the coverings thereof

The communion cup

Bread and wine for the communion

The books

The surplice

The washing of the communion clothes

The candles

The clerk and sexton's wages

The expenses of the churchwardens and sidemen at the visitations

The fact that this entry is undated and appears at the end of the account book suggests that it was hastily written in before the book was produced in court in order to put the custom of the parish on official record.

Godfrey's reply was put to the consistory court by his proctor, Smith, on 16 April 1698, two years after his citation. Smith said that at the time the levy was made on 30 March 1696, Godfrey was not a parishioner of Shipton but was of Burford. He was not the occupier of any of the five and three quarter yardlands in Milton Field in question at that date and had not been for the previous six years. The occupiers and possessors were William Hughes and Cesar Sharpless who had agreed to pay all taxes to the church and the poor as required by law. The tax was unjust and unequal because some lands which should have been taxed had been left out. If any tax to raise money for the church or the poor was to be laid on the inhabitants of Milton it should be made by the people of Milton and not by the vicar or churchwardens of Shipton; and the churchwardens of Shipton had no right to present any of the inhabitants of Milton for not paying their rates and taxes.

There are certain obvious weaknesses in Godfrey's argument. Milton was part of the large parish of Shipton and the vicar was as much vicar of Milton as he was of Shipton. Furthermore, Robert Seacole had been appointed churchwarden for Milton, and the tax had been approved by all the parishioners of the parish including those who lived in Milton. Stephen Matthews, replying to Godfrey's proctor on 21 May 1698, did not agree that any lands had been left out in calculating the taxes levied. He did, however, confirm that at the time of making the levy, Godfrey lived in Burford and on 30 March 1696 was not the occupier of the house or any of the yardlands in Milton.

The crux of the argument, therefore, was whether foreigners, that is those owning land and buildings in the parish and not resident there, were liable for the tax. Hence, the significance of the statement at the end of the churchwardens' account book that the costs of repairs to the church 'are to be borne not only by the parishioners but also by all those that occupy lands, tenements or possession within that parish where the church is to be repaired'. The point does not appear to have been argued in court as a matter of law and the evidence was concerned only with establishing the facts of the case.

There were thirteen witnesses in the consistory court. They were the vicar, John Palmer, the two churchwardens, Stephen Matthews and Robert Seacole, the parish clerk Thomas Smith, John Shayler, blacksmith, Job Smith, Henry Potter and William Ward, labourers, John Silman, carpenter, Job Johnson, husbandman, Richard Wyatt, baker, a churchwarden from 1690 to 1695, Richard Joyner, also a churchwarden from 1690 to 1695 and William Hughes.

The witnesses all confirmed that money had been spent on repairs to the church and various other expenses and that a tax on the parishioners had been

levied with their agreement according to custom; but there were differences of opinion about whether and when Godfrey had actually lived in his property in Milton and what tax he was liable for. John Silman said Godfrey had occupied the house and land between 1690 and 1695 and that there were no tenants. Silman had on one occasion collected two levies for the poor on the property at 2s 4d and 4s a yardland and the money had been paid by Godfrey's son. Silman gave him an acquittance in Henry Godfrey's name. Hughes said that he had held three and three quarter yardlands from Godfrey from May 1694 to the making of the tax and had paid 3s 3d as his share of the tax for that period. This was confirmed by Stephen Matthews. William Ward said that Godfrey had occupied the estate for about three and a quarter years so that from the time of his entry until he put in another tenant was about four years. Job Johnson said that in 1692 Godfrey had paid him the poor tax in 1692 at the rate of 18d a yardland.

There was also evidence about Godfrey's involvement in the day to day management of his land in Milton. Ward said that Godfrey had employed him for about nine months in all sorts of labouring work, and when Godfrey entered the property in Milton in May 1691 he had driven the cattle there to another house being suspicious of his neighbours. Henry Potter said that he had worked for Godfrey some five or six years ago. He had employed him on several days to hedge the common in Milton Green which belonged to his yardlands. Godfrey had paid him at so much a piece. Godfrey had put horses on the common, which was not usual, and they had been pounded. Godfrey had once sent him to Chadlington Hundred pound to release one of the horses. Job Smith had worked for Godfrey for about four years. He had mowed his hay and raked the barley and done other work for Godfrey and had sometimes been paid by his son and sometimes by Godfrey himself but 'the whole account was stated and paid by Henry'. He, too, said that Godfrey had put horses in the common but added that he had 'no right to do so except by possession of the 5³/₄ yardlands'.

The appeal

Appeals from judgements in the consistory courts went to the so-called Court of Arches in London which was the appeal court for the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. Godfrey had his own witnesses there and their evidence was designed to show that he had never lived in Milton, and had handed the day to day management of the house and five and three quarter acres over to others.

John Salmon, a leather bottle maker from (? Marton) in Warwickshire, said that he had lived in Shipton for twenty-six years and knew Godfrey well. (He was not related to him but had borrowed two shillings from him since coming to London.) At one time, John Smith, a husbandman in Milton, was indebted to Godfrey in a considerable sum of money for the rent of the house and the five and three quarter acres in Milton Field. Godfrey heard that someone

else had got an execution against Smith for debt and sometime in May 1692, with Salmon's help, he seized Smith's cattle and goods in payment for his rent. Smith had held the property for six or seven years as Godfrey's tenant.

Richard Godfrey, Henry's nephew, had taken over the house and grounds in 1692 and Henry had given the profits of the property to him. In 1694 William Hughes took over as Henry's tenant and stayed there until 1698.

Presumably to support Godfrey's contention that the tax had not been properly levied because not all yardlands had been included in the assessment, Salmon said that in addition to the five and three quarter acres in Milton, Godfrey had a close in Shipton Fields valued, he thought, at £6 a year. A strange point to make since it implies that Godfrey should have been charged for his land in Shipton.

Anne Foster (wife of Robert Foster), who 'calls [Henry] cousin but cannot say how near of kin they are ... but is not indebted to him or him to her', had lived in Shipton for nine years and during that time Henry had lived in Burford. She had lived with William Godfrey for three years and with Richard Godfrey in Milton from May 1695 until Christmas that year. By chance she was present with Richard when he and Hughes discussed a debt of £4 which Hughes owed him for some ploughing of the five and three quarter acres and for straw and other things which Henry had sold him. Hughes said he had not ready money to pay but would give Richard a note in hand. There was also some talk about a crop which Hughes had sown when he took over the property.

There was similar evidence from Andrew Adams who had been born and bred in Shipton and had been John Smith's shepherd.

There is no record of the Court of Appeal's judgement but is difficult to suppress the wish that Godfrey lost. He dragged out the case in the bishop's court for two years, he seems to have been a bit of a bully as a landlord and to have broken the rules about putting his horses on the common; but was there a family reason why he fought so hard to avoid liability over these yardlands? As his first legacy Henry left them to his eldest son, John. If John died without a male heir, they were to go to his second son Henry, and if Henry junior died without an heir, to his third son, Richard. John and his heirs and 'whosoever shall enjoy the said premises', shall pay every year for twenty years after Henry senior's death the sum of twenty nobles [£6 13s 4d] to Henry junior. If John or his heirs refused to pay the twenty nobles they went to Henry junior until the twenty nobles had been raised from the holding plus the cost of recovering the money. Clearly here was something special about these yardlands.

There is still a field in Milton called Godfrey's Close, at one time part of Poplar Farm. Is there perhaps an echo there of the case in the church courts some three hundred years ago which caused the churchwardens so much trouble?

Notes

¹ MS. Oxf. Archd. papers e.15, Visitation Call book 1695-6.

² The Godfrey coat of arms was sable a chevron between three pelican heads vulning themselves or. Their crest was a demi Saracen proper holding in the dexter hand a cross crosslet fitchy or.

³ NRA/PROB 11/460; 11/487.

⁴ British Library, Court of Arches Process Book, D. 1371; Lambeth Palace Library Eee 8; ff 879.

⁵ MS. Archd. papers Oxon. c.24 and c.25.

⁶ When Godfrey appealed the churchwardens' account book was sent to the appeal court, the Court of Arches in London, and was never returned. It found its way to Lambeth Palace Library and was among the 10,000 documents damaged during the Second World War. It came to notice in 1997 as among the last documents to be repaired. It is catalogued Lambeth Palace Library, Court of Arches, MS. Ff.12; RR.13:1.

Appendix A

Rate made 30 March 1696 by Robert Seacole by the order of the Minister and Churchwardens of Shipton for the repair of the church.

	£	s	d
Master Henry Godfrey		14	0
William Hughes		3	3
Jane Rawlins	1	5	6
John Whiter		12	0
Edward Lord		9	0
Widow Mathews			7
Sarah Jefferson and Charles Wilkins		4	6
Widow Capp		3	0
John Crase		18	0
Robert Seakell		3	0
Joseph Holland		3	0
Thomas Chapman		1	6
William Perratt		2	0
William Tomes		2	0
Joseph Soden		1	0
George Russell			9
John Silman		2	0
Edward Young			9
Richard Wayne			3
Thomas Cripps			3
William Wayne		2	0
William Cripps		4	6

Widow Hart	3	0
Richard Burson	2	1
Master Masters	3	0
Deverell Townsend	1	6
Jonathan Dumbleton	2	0
Widow Stewart		9
Widow Baylies	1	6
William Capp	9	0
Master Brookes	15	0
Master Raleigh	6	0
Henry Willett	7	6
Thomas Brookes		6
Jane Archer	6	0
John Baylies	3	0
	8	14
		3

Appendix B

Will of Henry Godfrey of Burford

IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN I Henry Godfrey of Burford in the County of Oxford gent being well in body and of good and perfect minde and memory blessed be God my Creator and mercifull preserver doe make this my last Will and Testament in manner and forme following First I bequeath my Soul into the hands of Almighty God in hope of eternal Salvation through the meritts of Jesus Christ my Saviour and Redeemer and my body to the Earth in expectation of a glorious resurrection at the last day and to be interred in decent Funerall in the Chancell of Burford near my wife daughter and grandchild the day and year of mine and my daughters decease I desire may be Engraved on the Monument of my late Wife in the Chancell aforesaid And as for the Temporall Estate wherewith the Lord in his mercy hath bestowed upon me who am less than the least of all his mercies I give and dispose thereof as followeth Imprimis I give and bequeath unto my eldest son John Godfrey for the terme of his life my Messuage or Tenement and Five yard Landes and a halfe with the appurtenances lyeing and being in Milton in the parish of Shipton in the County of Oxford aforesaid And after his decease I give the said Messuage and Lands unto the heirs males of his body lawfully to be begotten And for want of such issue I give the said Messuage and Premises unto my second sonn Henry Godfrey for the terme of his naturall life And after his decease to the heires Males of his Body lawfully to be begotten And for default such issue I give the said Messuage and Lands unto my third sonn Richard Godfrey and the heires males of his body lawfully to be begotten for ever And my minde and Will further is That my sonn John and the heires Males of his Body and whosoever shall

enjoy the said premises shall during the terme of Twenty yeares after my decease pay yearly to my said sonn Henry his heires and Assignes twenty nobles at the Feast of St Michael the Archangel And my Will is that if my said sonn John Godfrey and the heires Males of his Body refuse to pay yearly the said twenty nobles as aforesaid Then I give the said messuage Lands and premises unto my sonn Henry Godfrey and his heaires until the said summe of Twenty nobles be raised out of the said Messuage and premises besides the Cost and charges for the recovery of the same And that the said Messuage and Lands shall stand charged for the payment thereof Item I give and bequeath unto my daughter Marcy Godfrey the summe of Two hundred pounds Item I give and bequeath unto my said daughter Marcy her Executors Administrators and Assignes Messuage and halfe yard Lands with the Appurtenances lyeing in Filkins in the County of Oxford with all Estate and Interest therein Whereas I have already given unto my sonn Henry Godfrey the summe of Five hundred pounds to sett up his Trade I now give unto him besides what is mencioned before in this my Will for a pledge of my love to him one hundred pounds and unto his daughter Mary Fifty pounds and a silver Candlestick Item I give unto my sonn Richard and his heires for ever my Messuage or Tenement and one quarterne of a yard Lands and yard Meadow with the appurtenances in Milton aforesaid which I bought of one Richard Busby And four Acres of Land lyeing on Black Heath in Milton aforesaid late Nicholas Shaylers Item I give unto the said Richard Godfrey and my daughter Ann Godfrey and the heires of the survivor my Coppinghold Closes lyeing in Hayly in the parish of Witney in the said County of Oxon called Mabhayes and Loozing Grove. Item I give and bequeath unto the said Richard Marcy and Ann Godfrey and their Heires my Copyhold Messuage and Lands lyeing in Hayly aforesaid which I purchased of Ms Pryor Item I give unto the said Richard Godfrey his Heires Executors Administrators All my Closes Lands and premises which I hold of University College in Oxon Item I give unto the said Richard the summe of one hundred pounds Item I give and bequeath unto my daughter Ann and her heires for ever my Close of Pasture ground lyeing in Shipton aforesaid now in the possession of Mr Hastings Item I give and bequeath unto the said Ann Godfrey the summe of Two hundred pounds Item I give and bequeath unto Richard Marcy and Ann Godfrey All my Estate right title and Interest of and in all those two Messuages and two yard Lands and a halfe lyeing in Weald in the parish of Bampton in the County of Oxon which I purchased of Sir William Coventry Item I give and bequeath unto my daughter Marcy my Jewell And to my daughter Ann my silver Platter And to my sonn Richard my silver Salver and all the rest of my Plate I give unto Richard Marcy and Ann my three children equally to be divided between them Item I give and bequeath my Messuage and house wherein I live in Burford aforesaid And the Messuage and Lands late Widdow Hunts And all my Estate and Interest therein unto Marcy Richard and Ann Godfrey their Executors Administrators and Assignes with all the rest of my household goods equally to be divided between them by my Executor hereafter named Item I give unto my sister Elizabeth

my double Guiny And to my Brother Willm Twenty pounds Ten pounds whereof to buy him Mourning Item I give unto the poor of Holwell Forty shillings to be layd out in Bread item I give unto my sonn Henry's wife a Guiny to buy her a Mourning Ring and to her sonn Thomas Five pounds All the rest of my goods and chattels unbequeathed I leave to my loveing Brother Willm Godfrey whom I make my Executor of this my Will desiring him to dispose and divide the same amongst my said three children Marcy Ann and Richard Godfrey in such manner as he shall think fitt And I doe desire my said Children to be advised and directed by my said Brother not only in disposing of themselves in Marrying but in all other things having confidence he will be a good Friend unto them In Witness whereof I have nowe unto set my hand and seale the Fourth day of September in the year of our Lord one thousand six hundred Ninety Seven Hen: Godfrey Sealed published and declared to be the last Will and Testament of the said Henry Godfrey in the presence of Wm Bowles John Dunsdon Mary Minchin John Minchin.

Will of William Godfrey of Holwell

In the Name of God Amen I William Godfrey of Holwell in the parish of Broadwell in the County of Oxon being sick and weak in body but of sound mind and perfect mind memory and understanding (blessed be God) do make and ordain this my last Will and Testament in writing thereby revoking all former Wills by at any time heretofore made My Soul I bequeath to God that gave it hoping to be saved by the merits death and passion of Jesus Christ my Savio' and Redeemer

And my body I desire to be buried in the parish Church of Shipton under W^{ch}wood in such a decent manner as my Executors shall think fitt. My wordly Estate I dispose of as followeth. Imprimis I give devise and bequeath all that my Rectory of Holwell with the appurtenances thereunto belonging and all that my one yard Lands in Holwell aforesaid unto my Cousen Thomas Godfrey for and during the term of his naturall life and after his decease unto the Heirs males of his body lawfully to begotten and for want of such Heirs I give devise and bequeath the said Rectory and one yard Lands unto my Cousen Richard Godfrey for and during the term of his naturall life and after his decease unto the Heirs Males of his body lawfully to be begotten And for want of such Heirs to the right Heirs of me the said William Godfrey for ever Item I give unto my cosen Henry Godfrey the ffather of the said Thomas Godfrey twenty pounds to be paid to him within two years after my death Item I give unto my Cousen Mary Godfrey daughter of the said Henry Godfrey by his first wife the sum of one hundred pounds And I give unto Hester Godfrey and Mercy Godfrey his daughters by his now wife one hundred pounds a piece to be paid to he said Mary, Hester and Mercy when and as they shall respectively attain to the age of eighteen years And if either of my said Cousen Henry's daughters happen to die before that age The legacy of such so dying shall goe and be paid to the Survivo^rs and Survivor of them Provided alwayes that the true

intent and meaning of this my Will is and I do hereby and appoint that the said Rectory and One yard lands with the appurtenances shall stand and be charged and be chargeable with the payment of the said Sums of three hundred pounds before hereby given to the said Mary Hester and Mercy Item I give Mercy Godfrey of Milton ffifty pounds to be paid to her within one year after my decease Item I give unto my Cousen Anne Pursell fifty pounds to be paid to when and as soon as she shall have any child or children of her body borne to and for the use of such child or children Item I give unto Elizabeth Goldsmith daughter of John Goldsmith by his first wife ffifty pounds And to the rest of his children five pounds a piece to be paid to them respectively within two years after my decease Item I give unto John Durham Son of my Cousen Mary Durham ten pounds to be paid to him within two years after my decease Item I give unto my Cousen Elizabeth King of Burford widow the Summe of ffive pounds to be paid to her presently after my decease Item I give unto my Cousen John Godfrey of Milton ten pounds to be paid to him within one years after my decease And whereas I lent my Cousen William Parran one hundred and five pounds and three shillings and he is forthwith to have ffour and forty pounds and seventeen shillings more which makes up one hundred and fifty pounds and is to be secured by his own and his ffathers Bond I give one hundred pounds thereof to his ffive youngest Brothers and Sisters to be equally divided betwixt them and paid to them at such time as his said ffather shall direct and appoint And the other ffifty pounds thereof I give unto my said Cousen William Parran Item I give unto the poore of Holwell fforty shillings to be laid out in Bread and distributed by my Executors at the time of my ffunerall and whereas there is one hundred pounds and interest due to me from Richard Jordan of ffulbrooke Lent upon a Mortgage on some part of his Estate there I give the same summe and the Interest and encrease thereof unto my Cousens Mercy Godfrey Richard Godfrey and Anne Pursell to be equally divided between Item I give unto the said Richard Godfrey the summe of one hundred pounds to be paid to him within two years after my decease Item I give unto the five youngest Children of my Cousen John Parran the summe of one hundred pounds aforesaid to be paid by my Executors within two years after my decease into the hands of the said John Parran for the use of his youngest Children All the rest of my Goods and chattles whatsoever unbequeathed I do hereby give and bequeath unto my said Cousen Mercy Godfrey of Milton whom I do hereby make constitute and appoint whole and sole Executrix of this my last Will and Testament Provided alwayes that all my just debts and the sevriall legacies aforesaid (except the three hundred pounds charged on my Estate aforesaid and payable to the Children of the said Henry Godfrey) shall be thereout paid and is charged And I do hereby nominate and appoint the said John Parran overseer of this my last Will And I give him a guinea for his care and pains to be taken therein In Witness whereof I the said William Godfrey have to this my last Will written on two sheets of paper to the first sett my hand and to this my hand and Seal this Two and twentieth Day of March In the year of our Lord god according to the computation of the Church of

England One thousand seven hundred and five William Godfrey Signed
Sealed published and delivered William Godfrey the testator for and as
his last Will and Testament in the presence of Edmond Cornewall Richard
Monke John Jordan.

Book Review

SUE JOURDAN

Oxford Church Courts. Depositions 1629-1634. Jack Howard-Drake.
Published by Oxfordshire County Council, Cultural Services, 2007

JACK Howard-Drake published his first calendar of Depositions in the Oxford Church Courts in 1991, thus commencing the publishing of his magnum opus which is nearing its conclusion with this volume, 1629-1634, the ninth and the penultimate. These manuscripts, which are very difficult to read, reside in the searchroom of Oxfordshire Record Office. Joan Howard-Drake has deciphered and transcribed them for Jack to sort, summarise and index. By this time the depositions made by witnesses appear to be in a more formal language and perhaps less likely to have been taken down verbatim but they are full of life as it was lived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the family historian, casual browser or academic are in their debt for making them so accessible

The range of cases falls into a number of categories, Testamentary, Matrimonial, Defamation, Tithes and Offerings and 'others'. As in the previous volumes, the residents of the villages of the Wychwoods feature in several cases with Bartholomew Perrie of Leafield who was born in Ascott, John Hooper of Lyneham and Richard Millen of Shipton. Eglantine Browne, born in Shipton but now resident of St Thomas, Oxford was described as 'a wife with no goods of her own but her husband lives by his trade and has two or three milch kine which she milks and makes butter and cheese for the family.' She was a witness in a defamation case when a woman had been called 'a whore, quean and jade'. They illustrate so well unchanging human nature over the centuries; families fall out, neighbours exchange words and there is always someone who makes difficulties over payment of dues to the vicar. So much of the way of life and the organisation of village, farm and church management can be illuminated from these statements made so many years ago. Many of the cases warrant further investigation in other sources.

WLHS has been extremely lucky to have Joan and Jack as hard working members. Through these volumes a wider audience than the Wychwoods is indebted to them for bringing such instructive and entertaining cases in Oxford diocese to a broader readership of local and national historians.

The Little Girl from Salisbury Place

TRUDY YATES

IT was a very confident young Dulcie Shepherd who entered Miss Clayton's office at Burford Grammar School. Miss Clayton was the school's rather severe headmistress at the time (c1932) and a former suffragette. She was calling the girls in one by one to discuss their results in the Oxford School Certificate examinations before the new term began. Dulcie excelled in mathematics and had sat that particular test a year early. 'I knew I had come first because the first three places had been announced,' Dulcie (now Arundell) recalled. 'I was expecting a bit of praise,' she continued, 'but instead Miss Clayton told me how disappointed she was that I had not matriculated in maths. I could have dropped through the floor and I said to myself, "I'll show you this year!"'

And so she certainly did. The following year Dulcie received Honours in both mathematics and religious knowledge (Miss Clayton's two subjects). 'It taught me a lesson that I have remembered and lived by all my life,' the now ninety-year-old Dulcie declared. 'It doesn't give me any satisfaction to do things in a haphazard fashion. I have always done everything to the best of my ability.' And after a pause and a broad smile - 'And that's the way she was!' And so Dulcie astonishingly concluded this tale, crediting Miss Clayton and not herself for a lifetime of service in Shipton under Wychwood.

There were two other people who influenced Dulcie. One was her mother Winifred. 'My mother was always busy in the village,' Dulcie said, recalling how the young Revd Mr Cundell and his wife set up a choral society and then a Mothers' Union in the village after they arrived. 'Mother was the first secretary of the MU and she was treasurer of the women's section of the British Legion. Whenever there were fetes, mother was making the cakes.' Mrs Shepherd did refreshments at the whist drives in the Red Triangle Hut, as well. 'Mr Coombs, the postmaster, and Mr Goss, who was the chief chappie in the mill up in the office, were bosom pals and they used to run everything for the local lads during the war,' Dulcie said. 'They always came to mother with their "Will you do this?" and "Will you do that?" When Dr Scott set up a canteen down there both for the evacuees and any soldiers billeted in the area, mother was always making loads of apple tarts. I can still see the kitchen table just loaded with lovely, golden brown, flaky tarts. You're brought up with it, you see, doing for others.'

The other strong influence was Dr Gordon Scott. 'Dr Scott came to the village in 1936, I think, and rapidly changed it,' Dulcie remembers. 'Up to then

we'd had a doctor, a Dr Roe, a very good doctor, no doubt, but he was merely a physician, a medical practitioner. Dr Scott arrived and he was immediately interested in everything, in schooling, the way you lived, your housing, your recreation, every part of life he was interested in. He quickly became a member of the parish council, the district council, and the county council. He instigated the building of the bungalows for the old people and set up the clubs for them around the villages. He set up the Well Child Clinic at Milton chapel and he was soon encouraging me to stand for county council and to be on this or that committee.'

Dulcie's list of accomplishments turned out to be far more than membership in 'this or that committee'. She was a long time and diligent member of the Girl Guides; she worked long hours at Shipton station during World War Two; she served on the board of school managers as county council representative, where she was responsible with Mrs Haynes for replacing earth closets with flush toilets in the local school. Then there was active political participation, at first as a member of the Labour Party before a fierce independent streak (and a fervent dislike for a certain party activist from Banbury) led her to abandon such restrictions and proceed in her own way. There were campaigns for heating in the village hall and for a recreation ground free of cattle manure. There was parish council membership (she and Betty Haynes were the first female members in the 1950s) and there were petitions for water and sewerage systems throughout the village. Unsurprisingly, there was district council membership.

Somehow there was time for service on the Milton WI committee and the same for the Shipton organisation when it began. Dulcie and her husband Graham (secretary of the football club) organized the drive to clear and level the recreation ground and Dulcie also did fund raising for the village hall. She was a member and office-holder of the tennis club. She was an outstanding president of Shipton WI, spearheading the fund raising for a local bursary to Denman College. After her retirement as manager of Woodland Management in Burford, she served as chairman of the Evergreens for fifteen years, all this in addition to continuing responsibilities as wife, homemaker and mother to Kathleen, Renee and Jeffrey.

Dulcie's maternal grandparents came to Shipton from Wigginton with the Hartley family in 1891. Joseph Powell was farmer Richard Hartley's cowman; his wife, the former Emma Manning, was from South Newington. The couple planned to emigrate to America and Joseph did work his passage there but, when Emma decided not to follow, Joseph returned to England and the couple married here. Their first home in Shipton was one in the row of cottages that ran across the south side of the allotments on what is now the village green. 'They were poor cottages,' Dulcie explained, 'with washhouses and earth closets at each end of the row. Grandfather was dissatisfied almost immediately with this because they had had quite a nice house in Wigginton. He told Mr Hartley that

if he couldn't find him a better place to live, the Powells would be returning to Wigginton.'

Mr Hartley had settled his mother in the cottage on the Ascott Road nearest the Gas Works (where Jo Cook now lives). He moved her to his own farmhouse (presently the Cochrane home on the High Street) and the Powells with their two daughters left the old cottage for more comfortable accommodation. Seven further children were born there, Doris, who married Billy Peters and lived in Charlbury; Elizabeth, who married Robert Woodward from Stonesfield; Wilfred, who married Doris Dorsett from Milton; Tom, who lost an arm in World War One and married Beatrice Allen, a ladies' maid at Shipton Court; Ellen, a teacher at Shipton school, who married Victor Smith; Olive, who married Walter Matthews from Sherborne; and Bertram, who was for a time a Metropolitan policeman and married Hannah Puffet, a tilyard employee. The two eldest girls born in Wigginton were Elsie, who married gardener Billy Wiblin and Winifred Emma, who married Leonard Hill Shepherd and became Dulcie's parents.

Leonard Shepherd came from Stonesfield and became a roundsman for a Mr Foster, who ran a butcher's shop at Salisbury Place in Church Street, Shipton. Young Winifred Powell had excelled at the local school, attaining her certificate at the age of twelve instead of the usual fourteen. She went immediately into service with a family in Ledwell, near Chipping Norton. 'They were very good to her,' Dulcie said, 'being a chapel family, and the arrangement wasn't unusual. Many young girls went into domestic service in those days, so she did.'

Perhaps the young couple met when Winifred was in the village visiting her parents but, however it occurred, they did meet and married in 1913 or 1914. Dulcie's older sister Kathleen was born in 1915. Soon after that, Mr Foster removed to Charlbury and opened a butcher's shop there. Salisbury Place was rented to the Shepherds by the owner Harold Dee, the proprietor of the local store. Church Street was the family home when Dulcie and Doreen were born in 1917 and 1922. Dulcie knew no other until she married Graham Arundell in 1936.

Leonard Shepherd was called to World War One service soon after Dulcie's birth. When he returned from France, he took a job with the railways, which was considered quite good employment in those days. 'It wasn't much pay,' Dulcie explained, 'but it was regular. He worked there until he retired in 1950.'

'I was brought up on Church Street,' Dulcie continued. 'There were no tarmac roads then. It was a sort of stone-based road. If we didn't play in the garden, we could play out in the road, hopscotch, balls, hoops, things like that, we couldn't play in the garden because it supported the house in those days. You had a large garden with vegetables, flowers, the lot, one or two pigs and plenty of chickens or bantams. We had fruit trees and all the soft fruits we grew. Everything was homemade. As a matter of fact, I used to long for a bit of what I called "bought cake". Sometimes you might see an iced cream bun somewhere

if some other child invited you to tea, well, we never had it. Everything was homemade. Oh, and we had bees, too, so there was always honey.'

Leonard Shepherd's services were sought when the time came for butchering pigs in the village. Dulcie remembers his long knives kept exclusively for this purpose. Besides the meat, lard flavoured with rosemary was a welcome result of the pig's demise.

'And everyone had homemade wine,' Dulcie said. 'I don't think many ordinary people ever bought bottles of wine. They would go to the pub, perhaps, to have a glass of beer or something like that, but practically every cottage had homemade wine. The cottages in Leafield were well known for it, much more so, perhaps, than Shipton.'

Tragedy struck the Shepherd family without warning one autumn Thursday afternoon in 1925. 'My sister Kathleen was two years older than me,' Dulcie said, 'and we used to take it in turns to take my father's tea to the station when he was on late turn. This particular day, my sister went. She was anxious to get back to the church that evening because she was in the choir and they'd got some sort of choral service coming up and there was practice.'

Just by chance, there was a lorry at the station driven by Mr Hickman, the local coal merchant from Fulbrook. He offered Kathleen a ride back into the village. 'I don't actually know for sure how it happened, of course,' Dulcie continued, 'but I suppose she thought Mr Hickman wasn't going to stop at the top of Church Street. Anyway, she alighted from the lorry while it was still just on the move and she slipped underneath. The back wheel went over her and she died a short time later. It was absolutely terrible for us and for Mr Hickman.' Kathleen Shepherd was ten years old and had just passed the scholarship examination to attend Burford Grammar School.



The grave of Kathleen Shepherd in St Mary's churchyard

Dulcie Shepherd had started at Shipton under Wychwood National School No. 181 when she was three years old. 'You could go to school then at three if you could look after yourself,' she explained. Look after yourself. What does this mean exactly, the reader may wonder? Perhaps it meant the ability to make one's way with some certainty to the earth closet when the need arose; or to stay awake between 9 a.m. and 12 noon; 1.30 p.m. and 3.30 p.m. without floods of tears; and, perhaps, the self-discipline to remain seated on hard chairs or benches until told otherwise. No wonder the younger pupils were referred to as 'infants'. That is exactly what they were.

In spite of this early exposure to education, Dulcie thrived on the experience and gained a county scholarship to Burford Grammar School (BGS) at the age of ten. This would have been in 1927, only two years after the school began to accept female pupils. 'There were just over thirty girls in the school

when I first went so we had a lot of attention, but it hadn't long been opened,' Dulcie explained. 'Very soon after that, of course, there were girls coming in, two and three, three and four, from all the surrounding villages, Clanfield, Carterton, the Barringtons, Taynton, as well as the Burford girls and, of course, they were taking paying students, as well.'

The grammar school was strictly segregated with a high wall between the boys' and girls' buildings. A walk up the hill to the recreation ground found the boys trailing up the High Street and the girls relegated to Barnes Lane for the journey. They were allowed in the same room for concert practice but they sat on opposite sides. 'There were the usual cat calls and whatnot,' Dulcie commented, 'but we certainly never entered into any sort of conversation.'

The first year at BGS, Dulcie cycled to and from Burford. The bicycle was provided by the county council because the family's income was below a certain level. 'My father kept that cycle in absolutely pristine condition,' Dulcie said. 'When a charabanc began to collect us the next year, we had to return the bike because we couldn't afford to buy it. Whoever had that had a very good bicycle. It was kept beautifully.'

There were gaiters and a mackintosh for cycling with black shoes and stockings. 'We had to keep an extra pair of stockings at school in case we got very wet,' Dulcie continued, 'and we also kept a pair of house shoes and gym shoes at school, all black, of course.' Each student had a gymslip and white blouse with a silk blouse for concerts and prize-giving. A blazer and a tight fitting hat with the school crest on it (a rampant lion) completed the uniform.

Lessons began at 9 a.m. and were three quarters of an hour in length. They continued, with a fifteen minute break at 11.15 a.m. until 1 p.m. when there was an hour lunch break followed by two more lessons and a half-hour drill completed the school day. Thursday and Saturday were half days. Dulcie remembers losing her Thursday half day just once for a minor misdemeanour. Miss Clayton refused permission for her to borrow her mother's bicycle for the return journey home, so Dulcie was prepared to walk after what she expected would be a delightful afternoon of maths problems, which she loved. Miss Clayton assigned no such enjoyable punishment and presented her shocked pupil with a book about the stars. 'Now I wasn't remotely interested in the stars or the planets and when she said, "I'll come back later on to see how you enjoyed it", I read this blessed



Dulcie Shepherd in her Burford Grammar School uniform in 1929

chapter through and through and it didn't mean the slightest thing to me - not the slightest. I wasn't looking forward to the walk home either.' As it turned out, there was no questioning about the stars and, when four o'clock came, Miss Clayton pressed sevenpence in Dulcie's hand and told her to hurry along to catch the Midland Red coach which was due in from Swindon. 'And that's the sort of person she was,' Dulcie reiterated. 'She was a wonderful headmistress. You really worshipped her.'

Dulcie stayed at BGS until she was sixteen and then took the Open Clerical Examination for the Civil Service. She went into the Inland Revenue as a junior tax officer in Banbury. About this time, Dulcie met her future husband, Graham Arundell, a local lad who was a member of the Boys' Brigade. 'I was in the Girl Guides,' Dulcie said, 'That was how boys met girls in those days. We had meetings on the same night, Thursday.' After she met Graham, Dulcie sometimes found she had a pressing need to work in the garden at certain times of the day. Graham often came down Church Path on his way to the vicarage on errands. Long conversations over the garden wall must have ensued because the young couple married in 1936 when Dulcie Shepherd was nineteen.



Graham and Dulcie Arundell with baby Kathleen in the doorway of their first home in Station Road called Evenlode in 1936.

Both Graham and Dulcie were christened, confirmed and married in St Mary's church, Shipton. Graham's funeral service was also held there in October 2004



Girl Guide Dulcie Shepherd stopping by for a 'cuppa' at the Lyons Tea van

Graham was employed at the pressed steel plant at Cowley. 'Around here the work was mainly agricultural, a little bit of building, things like that,' Dulcie explained. 'And by this time the Cowley car complex was going great guns. There was a good workmen's train service up from Ascott in the mornings - it was the train delivering papers out this way, and the workmen took it back right through to Cowley. It was one and thruppence return. The wages were about five pounds a week, which was considered very good. Farm labourers got £1 7s 6d and, I think my father brought home about £2 a week. There was one drawback to this

work, however, from the time of the automobile show in November until orders began to come in, the workmen were laid off. So that was about five weeks during the Christmas period with no pay. You had to be prepared for that.'

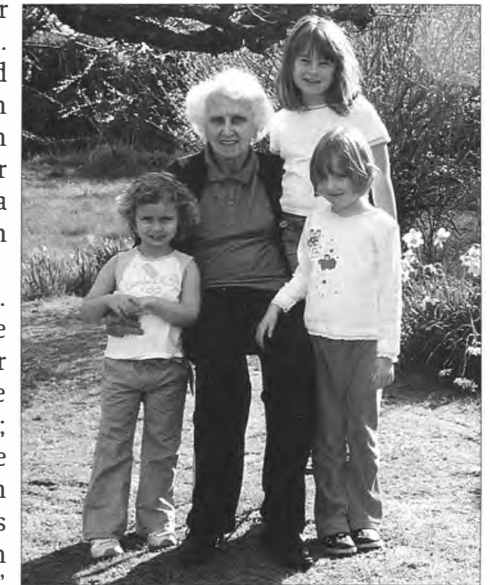
The Arundells began their married life in a bungalow on Station Road but they soon moved to a house built by Graham's father on the Leafield Road where they remained until they had saved enough to build a home of their own next door. Daughters Kathleen and Renee were born in the 1930s and both won scholarships to BGS before it became a truly co-educational institution. Jeffrey was born in 1948 when things had changed considerably. He attended Burford Comprehensive School.

Kathleen eventually married John Jacobs from Bicester in 1958. He was a surveyor in the Banbury area. The Jacobs had three children, Michael, Helen and Gillian. Michael's wife, Theresa is a Yorkshire girl and the couple live in Kingston on Thames. They have a foster son, Brodie. Helen married Paul Johnson, an American serviceman and, although she is now divorced and back in England, Helen finds herself torn between the two countries. Sons Jacob and Matthew are in the USA and teenager Emma wishes to return there. Gillian is divorced from Robin Wiltshire and is a legal secretary in Cheltenham. Sadly, Dulcie was to lose not one, but two, beloved Kathleenes during her long life. Kathleen Arundell Jacobs died in January of 1982 at the age of forty-six.

Renee married Richard Barnard from Burford. Dick Barnard has been a farmer, a fruit, flower and greengrocer and also has done private hire driving. Renee was a school dental nurse and then office manager of the Bampton dental practice. Their two children are Roger, who was killed in a motor accident in 1979 and Janice, who is a nursing sister and lives in Carterton with her daughter, Katie.

Jeffrey Arundell lives in Bath. He has had three partners - Maria de Los Angeles from Mexico, the mother of Alexander and Lucy; Caroline, the mother of eighteen-year-old Marcus; and his present partner Diana Irskine from Northern Ireland. Jeffrey's son Alexander lives in Brize Norton and is in the IT business as well as active in the development of his grandparents' land on the Leafield Road.

Graham Arundell died at home in October 2004 after a long illness



Dulcie Arundell with three great-granddaughters: l. to r. Esme, aged four; Emma, aged seven, and Katie, aged four

during which he was cared for entirely by his wife. On 2 June 2005, Dulcie moved from Shipton to a pleasant Carterton house next door to daughter Renee and her husband, Dick. She was close by when Renee had heart surgery in 2006 and now that she is fully recovered, Renee drops in on her mother every day. Dick does the garden and lawn work at both houses and the three are enjoying a very satisfying life together. There are days out when they go sightseeing, visit friends or seek out the perfect pub lunch. There are get-togethers with Dulcie's sister, Doreen, a retired Oxford communications officer, who lives in Bampton, and there is always a drive to Shipton to contemplate, a special church service, a cemetery visit, a friend to call on or, now and then, a Wychwoods Local History Teatime Memories get-together when Dulcie and Doreen can renew old acquaintances and give us newcomers the benefit of their absolute recall of Shipton people and events. The little girl from Salisbury Place has played an important and integral part in the twentieth-century history of Shipton. She is a very special lady and a credit to her mother Winifred, Dr Scott and, of course, that paragon of headmistresses, Miss Clayton.



Dulcie Arundell with daughter Renee (left) and granddaughter Janice (right)

The St Michael's Connection

TRUDY YATES

THERE is always another story. During interviews with Dulcie Arundell about her long and noteworthy life in the Wychwoods, she mentioned a childhood friend, Myrtle Rice. Later, when John Rawlins produced some pages of early photographs of Dulcie, one of the two women was included, along with this poignant picture of Myrtle Rice, her sister, Irene and older brother, Stanley. Who were the Rices, I wanted to know? The story is well worth the telling.

The Rice family was a happy one. In the early 1920s they lived at Newhaven on the south coast near Brighton where Mr Rice was a carriage maker for the railroad. Mrs Rice was a devoted mother and homemaker; her children happy and confident. One day Mrs Rice travelled to Brighton to purchase some material to make dresses for her daughters. She never returned. Mr Rice's brother was a member of the Metropolitan Police in London and, when local authorities were unable to find any trace of the young mother, he mounted his own investigation. No clue was ever found.



Irene, Myrtle and Stanley Rice c1922-3

When the immediate trauma and sorrow of their loss began to subside, Mr Rice was faced with the problems of every day existence. In order to keep his job, the children needed care. One can only imagine his turmoil. Eventually, and probably with the help of the local vicar, Stanley was sent to a Church of England home in Yorkshire and the two girls went first to Cold Ash Home near Newbury and then on to St Michael's Home for Waifs and Strays in Shipton under Wychwood.

'Up until 1924, St Michael's was an industrial school and the girls (inmates) were educated in-house,' John Rawlins explained. 'But in 1924, the whole purpose of the building changed. It became a home for girls who had lost parents or who came from problem households where poverty or overcrowding made family life impossible.

The girls were often taken some way from their former homes,' John continued. 'A clean break with their families was deemed the best policy so that a new life could be pursued without interference or disruption.'

Daily routine at St Michael's seldom varied. The older girls were up at 6.30 a.m. to begin the cleaning, which included scrubbing the stone floors. Fires had to be lit, including those for heating water in the laundry. The rest of the girls arose at 7 a.m. in silence. They washed in cold water and stripped their beds. These consisted of cotton



St Michael's Home for Waifs and Strays 1924

sheets and straw palliasses on iron bedsteads lined up in the dormitory. Prayers were then said before the girls filed down the stairs for breakfast, again, all in silence. After breakfast they went to chapel wearing their severely styled calico dresses and white caps. Next came a visit to the Hall to say good morning to all of the staff before returning to the dormitory to make their beds and prepare for the day.

If it was a school day, the girls lined up in crocodile fashion to walk two by two to the school by the church. When not at school, the general running of the home was the order of the day. They cleaned the building, did all the laundry work, prepared the food, served and washed up. They were also responsible for cleaning all of the boots and shoes and fetching the water. There was jam once a week for breakfast, if one hadn't misbehaved, and syrup of figs was administered once a week. Heads were, of course, examined every day.

Bathing was done one after another in the same water and there were baskets under the bed for clothes. St Michael's had no closets, cupboards or cabinets.¹

'I was seven-years-old when the Rice girls came to live in Shipton,' Dulcie said, 'and that was when I got to know Myrtle.'

It was shared tragedy, however, that was to cement the friendship. The logbook of Shipton under Wychwood National School, Oxfordshire No. 181, tells the story. In 1925 among those awarded commendations were: Lower Group, Irene Rice; Infant Group, Myrtle Rice. On 19 June, this terse comment by the Headmaster John Strong: 'Kathleen Shepherd was run over by a motor lorry last evening and died within a half hour of the accident. A letter of sympathy was sent to the parents.' Kathleen was, of course, Dulcie's older sister and her death in this tragic incident is described in her story.

The following year (1926) on 25 October, Mr Strong made the following entry in the logbook. 'Notified that Irene Rice died yesterday.' Mr Strong had even less to say about this sad event but, perhaps, he can be excused. Irene's death must have been expected. According to Dulcie, Irene died of tubercular meningitis in Burford Hospital. Myrtle had visited her sister at the sick bay in

St Michael's. She recalled many years later that there was a picture of Jesus on the wall entitled 'Suffer the little children to come unto me'. Irene gestured toward it and whispered to her little sister, 'He came and spoke to me.'

By this time, Mr Rice had obtained a transfer to Swindon with the Great Western Railway and he used his Saturday off to cycle to Shipton to see his daughters. 'I can see him now,' Dulcie recalled, 'with his bowler hat and bicycle clips on his trousers.' The young father was devastated and had nowhere to turn. 'I think he came to my father because they were both railway employees and had both lost daughters so tragically,' Dulcie continued. 'At any rate, he asked if Irene could be buried beside Kathleen.' Permission was granted and Dulcie and Myrtle forged a bond that could not be broken even though a long separation was to come.

'It happened this way,' Dulcie said. 'When Myrtle left St Michael's with three of everything² which was the custom at the time, she went into service at the vicarage. She was a general skivvy at the same time that Megan Bradley was the cook. The vicar was the Revd Mr Freeman. He, it seems, was well thought of but his wife was very demanding and quite unable to keep staff. One Saturday when Mr Rice came to see his daughter (he was by now travelling on the Midland Red coach which had begun service) she was eating her lunch while polishing the silver. Mr Rice asked why she didn't lay aside her work until she had finished eating and her reply left him in no doubt that conditions at the vicarage were no longer to be tolerated. Despite pleas from Mr Freeman, Mr Rice took his daughter back to Swindon with him that very day, carrying Myrtle's trunk on his back as far as Lechlade.'

'And so we were separated,' Dulcie continued. 'I had no idea where she was or what happened to her for many, many years.'

It was well after World War Two, when Dulcie's son-in-law Dick Barnard had a flower shop in Burford, that he fell into conversation with a customer purchasing flowers for his sister's grave in Shipton. He mentioned that his name was Rice but gave no address. 'When Dick told me this, I knew it had to be Myrtle's brother and I went to the cemetery right away. Sure enough, there were fresh flowers on Irene's grave but I still had no way of finding Myrtle,' Dulcie said. 'It must have been two years later that he stopped at the shop again. This time I happened to be there and Dick called me in from the back room. There was Stanley and I learned at last where Myrtle was.'

And it was near enough that Dulcie could go to visit her old friend. Myrtle was newly retired from nursing at Reading Hospital and living in a comfortable council house in Peppard. 'She had lived with her father for a time and then moved to Yorkshire to be near Stanley and his family,' Dulcie recalled. 'She worked for a while for Charles Laughton's brother Frank, who ran the Prince of Wales Hotel in Scarborough but then she contracted TB and was in hospital for four years. She even lost a lung before she began to recover.'

One day when Myrtle's discharge from hospital was approaching, the head nurse asked what she planned to do with the rest of her life. She urged Myrtle to become a nurse and strongly encouraged her in spite of Myrtle's doubts about her own abilities. 'I think the head nurse put Myrtle forward,' Dulcie said. 'And it certainly was good judgment on her part. Myrtle was voted Nurse of the Year during her time at Reading.'

Myrtle Rice took early retirement due to her fragile health but there were many happy visits with Dulcie at Shipton as well as Peppard. Dulcie remembers that during one of her visits to the village, they stopped at St Michael's which was at the time a second-hand shop called The Olde Junke Shoppe, run by Bernard Hill. 'She asked if she could look around a bit and explained that she had lived there many years ago,' Dulcie said. 'She bought a little saucer to mark the visit.'



Dulcie Arundell and Myrtle Rice
about 1990



The unmarked graves of Irene and Myrtle Rice, with snowdrops, next to Kathleen Shepherd's headstone in January 2008

Following a fall, Myrtle Rice was taken to the Reading hospital where she had nursed for so many years. When her condition deteriorated, Dulcie was sent for, although a niece was her closest living relative. Myrtle died on 25 June 1994 and her ashes were buried in St Mary's churchyard beside her sister Irene and Dulcie's sister Kathleen. She was the last St Michael's resident to be interred there.

Myrtle Rice had shone as a student in Shipton, winning the Bishop's Prize two years in a row. Since she received the Book of Common Prayer in 1929 and won again in 1930, it wasn't deemed quite proper to present her with a second volume. Therefore, Myrtle relinquished the prize to the runner-up, Muriel Buchanan. She also excelled in sport. In 1930 she won every event that she entered for Shipton against other area schools. However, when she won a scholarship to Burford Grammar School, there was no question of her being able to accept. She had been trained to go into service and a skivvy was needed at the vicarage.

Notes

¹ An interview with Myrtle Rice by John Rawlins in 1990.

² 'Three of everything' were provided by St Michael's to all girls leaving the home to go into service. Included were drawers, vests, aprons etc.

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 £6 for an individual and £9 for a couple or overseas member, which includes a copy of *Wychwoods History* when published.

Further details can be obtained from the Secretary, Wendy Pearse, Littlecott, Honeydale Farm, Shipton under Wychwood, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 6BJ (telephone 01993 831023).

To obtain further copies and back numbers of *Wychwoods History*, please see www.wychwoodshistory.org

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Cover illustration:
Idbury School c1906



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