WYCHWOODS HISTORY

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Contents

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Foreword

THE first Wychwoods History was published in 1985, a very different time in the dissemination of information. After twenty-three years of making 'hard' copy, for the first time this year we are publishing the result of much hard work by Joan and Jack Howard-Drake straight onto the web, with the Introduction included in this journal. Joan and Jack were surprised and delighted to be informed of the existence of Churchwardens' Accounts for Shipton under Wychwood 1554-1696. Where they were found and their own history is described in the Introduction, and the resulting transcript of this important and complete run of accounts is now available at www.wychwoodshistory.org/. There is also a printed 'hard' copy in the Society's archives.

We also have the fascinating stories of three very intrepid young ladies who in the late nineteenth century left their families and the Wychwoods behind them and travelled with their husbands to, respectively, New Zealand, Belize and India, a daunting adventure for gap year students even in these days. We also have another follow-up article about St Michael's childrens' home with the memories of another very young child sent with her sister in 1926. The children attended St Mary's Church of England school and we reproduce a group photograph taken a hundred years ago and another taken on the day the old building closed.

One of the members of WLHS who has done the most to preserve so many memories and so many old photographs of the Wychwoods is John Rawlins and we are very pleased that he agreed to be interviewed about his life. We just wish we could preserve him for ever as he is such a fund of local history information.

Joan Howard-Drake, Trudy Yates and Sue Jourdan

Shipton under Wychwood Churchwardens' Accounts 1554–1696

Jack Howard-Drake

AT the end of the seventeenth century the churchwardens of Shipton took a case in the Bishop's Court in Oxford against Henry Godfrey of Burford, a lawyer who had land in Milton and had refused to pay his share of the cost of repairs to the church.[1] The churchwardens won their case but Godfrey appealed and the case went to the court of appeal, the Court of Arches, in London.[2] As part of the evidence the current Shipton churchwardens' account book was sent to 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 among the last documents to be repaired.

The accounts were not well kept and considerable re-arrangement and editing of the text have been necessary to reproduce the information in them in readable form.[3] Spelling has been modernised. So too have place names and Christian names but surnames have not been standardized. Some punctuation has been introduced. The year is taken as beginning on 1 January. Illegible text is indicated by '...' or '?'.

In order to avoid the substantial cost of printing, only the introduction to the edited version of these accounts is published in this journal and the complete text has been placed on the Society's website, www.wychwoodshistory.org. It will add to the comparatively small number of such accounts for the Oxford diocese. Ronald Hutton in *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (1994) produced a list of extant accounts for the period *c.*1558–1660. Out of 662 for the whole of England and Wales he found sixteen in the Oxford diocese.[4] A copy of the full text is in the society's archives.

The parish

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the parish of Shipton under Wychwood included the villages of Shipton, Milton under Wychwood, Lyneham, Leafield, Ramsden and Langley, with the church in Shipton, originally a minster church, serving the whole parish. The villages were administered as separate units and independent churchwardens were chosen for each village with Shipton taking overall responsibility. When a levy was approved in 1616 the entry in the accounts read 'This levy is to be collected by the churchwardens of every village and to be brought in to the churchwardens of Shipton ...'.

That the churchwardens were anxious to make the independence of the villages clear is shown by an entry in the accounts for 1577 when wardens were named for the 'parish of Shipton' and the word 'village' was written over the word 'parish'.

The account book

The account book covers the period 1554 to 1696; that is it covers the Reformation, the Civil War and the Restoration, but, as will be seen, there is little evidence that these major events had much impact on the daily life of the parish.

The entries in the book are not all in chronological order and some appear to have been made wherever there happened to be a space on the page. The early accounts are in narrative form with varying amounts of detail, some merely recording no more than the discharge and appointment of the churchwardens, the total amounts of money collected and paid out and the balance in hand. For some twenty of the years covered by the accounts there are no dated entries. There are tabulated accounts for 1557(?), 1601(?), 1613, 1616 and 1641 and a continuous run from 1672 to 1696, some of which are incomplete.

The 1696 account was marked 'entered in the new book'. Evidently a new book was opened with a copy of the account for that year when the book described here was sent up to London for the Godfrey case, but no trace of it has been found.

The accounts

In 1585 the accounting year was the year ending on 19 December. In 1588 it was decided 'by the consent of the whole parish that the account hereafter shall be ever made upon All Souls' Day [2 November] if it be not a Sunday and then on the next day following'. In 1591 the account day was changed to St Andrew's Day (30 November) and it was decreed that every churchwarden who failed to bring in his account then should put 12*d*. in the poor box. In the sixteenth century the annual meetings were in practice held at various dates at the end of the year. In 1593 when the life of the area, particularly in Milton, was disrupted by the plague, the accounts were not made up by St Andrew's Day, 'by reason of the plague', and the parish meeting was held the following April. In the seventeenth century meetings were regularly held around Easter, usually on Easter Tuesday.

If the parishioners were satisfied that the wardens had carried out their duties properly, the wardens were discharged. The money in hand, the 'church stock', was put into the church box[5] or passed on to the incoming wardens. Sometimes the wardens for each village were shown as making their separate accounts and passing cash in hand to their successors. For Leafield there are

separate surviving churchwardens' accounts from 1654 to 1772 covering payments for the upkeep of its chapel.[6]

From 1640 when George Selfe became vicar, the vicar and some of the churchwardens signed off the accounts. Previously the accounts were unsigned although an entry in 1569 (ff. 16–17) reads 'Written by me, vicar there, in such order as the ancient of the parish uttered the promise, William Master'. For the most part those who signed were able to write their names with only a small minority making marks.

Income

The major part of the income of the church came from an annual tax called a stipend supplemented by occasional levies. In 1576 the stipend was fixed 'by the consent of the whole parish' for the maintenance of the church at £1 for Shipton, 16*s*. for Milton, 13*s*. for Lyneham, 5*s*. for Ramsden, and 1*s*.10*d*. for Langley. Leafield was at first rated at 5*s*. but this was reduced to 3*s*.4*d*. The rates were unchanged throughout the period covered by the account book. The inhabitants of the villages 'should amongst them all make up the sum ...', and some of the accounts show the amounts paid by individuals. In 1612 it was agreed that the stipends should be 'brought in in full' to the annual settlement of accounts without any charges being deducted, and that the charges incurred at visitations should be collected in every village in addition to the stipends. There was a good deal of irregularity and the full amounts were not always paid on time. In 1583, for example, the parish meeting decided that 'Langley must be sued to contribute to the maintenance of the church as it is most reasonable they should for diverse considerations etc.'.

The churchwardens sometimes met the costs for which they were responsible out of their own pockets, being reimbursed when the accounts were made up the following year. In 1585, for example, the churchwardens had received a total of £4.12*s*.7*d*. but had spent £5.11*s*.6*d*., leaving them short by 16*s*.11*d*. The parishioners therefore agreed that each of the villages should pay 'proportionably' according to their stipend to cover the deficit.

Levies were made as the need arose and were fixed at so much per yardland. They were made at the same rate throughout the parish. The first to appear in the accounts was in 1616 when it was fixed at 12*d*. a yardland and the number of yardlands in each village was listed, forty-six in Shipton, fifty-six in Milton, fifty in Lyneham, sixteen in Leafield, twelve in Ramsden and eight in Great and Little Langley. (The relative importance of Lyneham in the old parish is noteworthy.) In addition 'the cottagers and all those of ability' were called upon to help with the levy 'before the ordinary stipend'. At 12*d*. a yardland the levy should have brought in £9.8*s*.0*d*. There is, however, a detailed account for the year which confusingly records a rate of 4*s*. the yardland. This would have brought in £37.12*s*.0*d*., but the total was given as £35.10*s*.0*d*.

The levy was agreed at the church on behalf of the whole parish of Shipton by fourteen parishioners who signed the record in the accounts, including Charles Bramsbie on behalf of Sir Thomas Lacy, the owner of Shipton Court, and by Henry Mills, the vicar.

In 1676 the vicar and the churchwardens decided that a levy of 1*s*.6*d*. the yardland should be levied. Six days later, notice having been given in church the previous Sunday, this was changed to 2*s*. the yardland. From then onwards there were frequent levies. A levy of 12*d*. the yardland was agreed in 1679 but there is no reference in the accounts to the receipt of a levy until 1681. Later levies were agreed at 9*d*. and 12*d*. the yardland.

The villages each contributed to the cost of bread and wine for communion in addition to the stipend but there is nothing in the text about the way in which the amounts were calculated.

The parish had some income from money let out at interest. There are fifty-five entries in the tabulated accounts showing the receipt of interest. The amount of the loan is not always given but where it is it varies from £21.3*s*.4*d*. to £20.6*s*.8*d*. The rate of interest works out at about six per cent.

The names of the holders of the loans were given in most references. They were people of some standing in the parish such as the Wisdoms and the Brookses. Some interest was on money 'in the hands of the churchwardens'. It looks as though the churchwardens were themselves borrowing money from the parish for their own ends, perhaps for meeting church expenses, perhaps for personal use. That this is a possible interpretation can be seen from the story of William Master's legacy which is told in *Wychwoods History* (1992).[7] The legacy, dating from 1591, provided money half of which was to go to the support of two poor scholars in Merton College and the Queen's College in Oxford, and half to the relief of the poor in Shipton. Some payments for this were made but it is a tangled tale of maladministration which was the subject of several enquiries. At one point the money for the poor scholars was in the hands of two prominent parishioners in Shipton and the money for the poor was in the hands of various other parishioners and of the churchwardens. In 1637 Queen's College won a case in Chancery against the parish but there is only one reference to the money being paid to them before 1672 from when regular payments, usually of £1.13*s*.4*d*., were made to 'two poor scholars in Oxford'. In 1684 the payments were made three years in arrears.

An enquiry into the legacy in 1702 said that in the last thirty years of the seventeenth century the poor of Shipton got nothing. In 1674 and 1678 the accounts show that the parish was getting interest on 'the poor money' and the 'use of Master's money'.

The parish had a little money from the rent of church properties. Mary Rawlins paid 2*s*.6*d*. in 1674 for a chamber in the church house. From 1678 to 1689 she paid the same amount for her house. For two years James Hope rented church land for 13*s*.4*d*. a year. The few other entries were for unspecified properties at various annual rents between 2*s*.0*d*. and 10*s*.0*d*.

In 1675 the parishioners agreed that Thomas Kemmer should be excused his previous year's rent 'by reason of his poverty' and that in future he should pay 'but 20*s*. per annum for the church estate which he now has'. He had been recorded in 1672 as paying £1.10*s*.0*d*., with Mrs Kemmer paying 2*s*. 0*d*. Kemmer's poverty must have been relative if he could still afford to pay a pound a year rent.

There was a charge for 'breaking up the ground in the church' for burials at what appears to have been a standard rate of 3*s*.4*d*. per burial. There were charges for laying and washing flagstones in the church and presumably these were lifted and replaced after the graves were dug.

Surprisingly there is only one reference to church ales in the accounts. This is dated 1608 when the cost of repairs to the church had been such that in spite of cash in hand, the proceeds of a levy and the profits from the previous year's midsummer ale, the parish was £20.13*s*.4*d*. in debt so that another levy would have to be made; but there are no details of a levy being made or collected before 1616. The parish also benefited from occasional small legacies and gifts.

Expenditure

The maintenance of the church was a constant demand on parish finances. An undated list at the end of the accounts sets out what were considered to be church repairs. The fact that this entry is undated, appears at the end of the accounts and emphasises that non-residents were liable to pay their share of repairs to the fabric of the church, the pulpit and the pews, but not of other expenses, suggests that it was hastily written in before the book was sent to London as evidence of the rightness of the parish's cause in the Godfrey case.

The churchwardens paid for building materials, timber, laths and lath pins, lead, slates, lime, nails, gravel and so on. They also bought moss and powder but there is nothing to say what these were used for. They paid plumbers (for work with lead), smiths, carpenters, glaziers, masons and others. One entry, which is unfortunately not detailed or fully legible, records the expenditure in 1663 of the substantial sum of £9.10*s*.0*d*. for the repair of the steeple and the weathercock. They paid for clearing the ditches round the church and repairing fences. They paid for making a bier and for mending the hearse cloth, washing the church and the church linen, painting the sun dial, and a cushion for the pulpit. In 1695 they paid £3.5*s*.5*d*. for 'ten ells of Holland' to make a surplice and £1.0*s*.0*d*. for making it. They paid the clerk's wages.

After the Restoration in 1660 it became compulsory for churches to display the Royal Arms but as early as 1616 a levy had been made not only for

the cost of painting and repairing the church but also for 'making' the King's arms. In 1679 the painter was paid £2.2*s*.0*d*. for 'setting up the King's arms', presumably for repairing them. There is no trace of the arms in the church today.

The 1616 levy was also to pay for unspecified jewellery work and to buy the King's bible and a communion book. The parish paid for various books which the apparitors brought to the parish, bibles, prayer books, homilies, special prayers for particular occasions and so on. Several of the books were 'for the fast'.

One of the more frequent charges on parish funds was the cost of visitations. These were the regular inspections of their parishes by the bishop and archdeacon or their representatives. The holding of a visitation at a named time and place was announced in advance and the appropriate parish officers and others 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 presented those allegedly guilty of various misdemeanours. The parish had to pay the apparitor for bringing the notice of a forthcoming visitation and cover the expenses of those attending. It is an interesting indication of the independent administration of the villages in Shipton parish that the churchwardens representing them presented their own delinquents and claimed their individual expenses. From 1612 charges resulting from visitations were collected in every village in addition to the stipend. The places where the visitations were held are mentioned only occasionally and were either Chipping Norton or Deddington.

Another regular charge on parish funds was for the purchase of wine for communion. Parishioners were expected to take communion three times a year and the accounts show wine being purchased for services at Easter, Whitsun and Christmas, the largest quantities at Easter. The amounts for Easter varied between fifteen and twenty quarts and for other occasions between one and three quarts. The average price between 1672 and 1695 was 2*s*.2*d*. a quart, bought in quart bottles.

Another charge on parish funds was the cost of bell ropes. Between 1672 and 1696 there were twenty-three payments for ropes, at about 3*s*. a rope at the beginning of the period and between 3*s*. and 4*s*. at the end.

There are few scattered entries in the accounts about the cost of maintaining the church clock. A rope for it was bought in 1557 for 6*s*.8*d*., about twice the price of a bell rope a hundred or so years later; and in 1585 old John Smith, the clerk, was paid 9*d*. that was owing to him for looking after it. He also received another 3*s*.4*d*. for doing so from the parishioners of Leafield who handed this amount to him in payment of their stipend. There

were only five relevant payments in the seventeenth century, four for mending the clock, one of which was of 5*s*. to widow Colls, and one for 'shutting'[8] the clock rope.

Parishes were responsible for the welfare of 'travellers' or 'passengers' passing through their neighbourhood. These were the people carrying removal orders requiring them to return to their parishes of origin. Shipton made a number of payments to people in this category, on three occasions to those who had for some reason suffered loss by fire. One payment was to a poor minister who got 1*s*.4*d*.

Parishes were required to contribute to the relief of poor prisoners in the King's Bench and Marshalsea prisons in London and to the care of maimed soldiers. Shipton paid a regular rate of 6*s*. 6*d*. a year which was paid over to the constable. Churchwardens were expected to pay towards the extermination of vermin but there is only one reference to this in the Shipton accounts when in 1694 they paid 1*s*. for a fox's head.

Bells

There is currently a peal of eight bells in Shipton church. The fifth is recorded as being made by James Keene of Woodstock in 1628 but there is no mention of a bell in the accounts for this date. However, in 1685 there was a levy of 6*s*. in the yardland for 'paying for the casting of the Great Bell and additional metal and other necessaries belonging to the church'; and a charge for 'money out of pocket', £1.4*s*.0*d*. for ale at the churchwardens' meetings in Shipton and Woodstock 'at the casting of the bell, at her taking down, loading and hanging up...'. The bell had been cast by James Keene at a cost of £40.12*s*.0*d*. The accounts for 1685 show that the levy was collected at the rate of 6*s*. the yardland from Leafield, Milton, Lyneham, Ramsden and Langley but not from Shipton and there is no record of the bell being paid for. It was not one of the peal of five bells in the tower in 1893 when two of them were melted down and recast to form the present peal of eight. Its fate remains a mystery, but something seems to have been going on in the bell tower in 1685 and 1686 as there were no payments to bell ringers in those years.

Presumably to help towards paying for the maintenance of the bells, the churchwardens decided in 1613 that 'strangers' could ring one peal for free but would have to pay 1*s*. for other peals, so it seems that bell ringing was a hobby as well as a duty.

Smoke farthings

Smoke farthings had their origin in Peter's Pence, a tax established in 787 AD and paid to the Pope. They were also known as Pentecostals. They were abolished in 1534, were appropriated by the Crown and became an offering to the cathedral church made at Whitsun by parishioners according to the

number of their chimneys. It does not seem to have been collected with any consistency in Shipton. There are no named individuals or count of chimneys but the parish paid lump sums on four occasions, 10*s*. in 1625 for five years arrears, 3*s*.4*d*. in 1641, 17*s*.2*d*. in 1679 for ten years arrears and £1.5*s*.6*d*. in 1688. In 1625 the money was paid to Isaac Biggler of Wootton.

Briefs [9]

Briefs were letters issued by the Government commending a charitable appeal. They were addressed to the minister and churchwardens and were read from the pulpit. At the end of the service the clerk stood at the church door to take the collection, saying as the congregation left, 'Please to remember the brief'. The collection was later handed to an authorised collector.

Very few original briefs have survived as they were returned with a parish's contribution but records of them occur in churchwardens' accounts throughout the country. They were usually entered on spare pages in the account books. With one or two exceptions they are to be found grouped together in the Shipton account book and cover the period 1658 to 1687, but are not in chronological order.

In 1634 Shipton contributed 5*s*. towards the building of St Paul's in London. Of the sixty-five collections recorded thirty-five were for towns that had suffered by fire. One collection in 1661 was for a fire in Oxford 'in the year forty-four'. In 1667 Shipton twice contributed to the relief of those who had suffered during the 'great fire of London' in 1666. There were seven collections for the rebuilding of churches and one for rebuilding the quay and houses in Watchet in Somerset. Another was for rebuilding the town of Bridgnorth in Shropshire. One was to help John Davis and Isabel his mother rebuild their house in Hereford. Another was for the relief of widow Rose Wallis in Oxford. One wonders how Davis and his mother and the widow Wallis qualified for a national appeal. One brief, enigmatically, was for 'forth of fishermen'. Two were for the relief of Protestants, one in Poland where the churches had been driven out; one in Bohemia where twenty families had been driven out. One was for the poor captives in Algeria, that is those who had been captured by Barbary pirates in raids on the south coast, and one for Hungarians in slavery. There were fifteen for which no reason was given.

The churchwardens

Until 1580 churchwardens were named only for Shipton, Milton and Lyneham. A warden for Leafield, Ramsden and Langley was appointed that year to represent all three villages. Thereafter none were appointed for Langley, which was presumably represented by Shipton, and each of the other five villages had its own wardens.

The accounts are somewhat ambiguous about how the churchwardens were chosen. Some references are to them choosing their own successors. A typical entry is 'Churchwardens Chamberlayne and Thomas Huckes have made their accounts before the whole parish and have chosen new churchwardens William Carlis and Richard Camesbie ...'. Other entries use the phrase 'there is chosen' as in 'Richard Shailer being discharged there is chosen William Chapman for Milton'. One entry reads, '[t]he inhabitants of Milton and the whole parish and the churchwardens there have chosen ... Milton churchwardens ... Thomas Collyns and William Mychell'. It looks as though the new men, however chosen, had to be acceptable to the parishioners although no doubt the outgoing churchwardens, being men of consequence, influenced the selection.

For the most part churchwardens served for a year and were then replaced although they might sometimes serve for two or three years before new men were appointed. The exception was Leafield where it was the custom for them to serve for more than a year, sometimes for several years in succession.

Other parish officers

Sidesmen generally helped the churchwardens to carry out their duties but there is only one reference to one in Shipton when Master Thomas Rawlins was chosen sidesman for Leafield.

Overseers of the poor were established by statute in 1597. They were appointed by the justices of the peace and the parish had no say in their nomination. The office originated in the earlier office of collectors of the poor [10] and there is one reference to collectors in the accounts when in 1567 Henry Poaree and Alexander Gardiner were collectors for the poor 'according to the statute this year past', and John Cox and Richard Smith of Shipton were appointed their successors. The entry for the year records that Poaree and Gardiner had received 'only' 14*s*.1*d*. from their neighbours in Shipton and with their consent the money was given to the poor of Shipton village. There are a few other references to payments to the poor from parish funds. In 1555 responsibility for the upkeep of the King's highway was transferred from the manors to the parishes. Until 1691 the churchwardens appointed surveyors of highways for the parish but thereafter they supplied a list to the justices of the peace who made the appointments.[11] For Shipton itself there were named appointees for every year to 1683 except for 1680, and for 1688 and 1692; for Milton there were appointees for every year to 1691 except for 1678–80, for Lyneham only to 1677, for Leafield only for the years 1675 and 1676 and for Ramsden only to 1676. Some of the missing years were perhaps covered by surveyors continuing in office.

Religion

Shipton was a staunchly protestant parish during the period covered by these accounts and does not appear to have been overmuch disturbed by national religious events; but there is some evidence of the parishioners' involvement in them.

The most striking of these is an entry dated 14 December 1589 from which it appears that they had suddenly woken up to the fact that they were paying old Nicholas Becket £2 a quarter to remove popish symbols from the church when there were none there to be removed, not surprising in the thirty-first year of the reign of Elizabeth I. Old Nicholas was obviously at death's door because the vicar and the parishioners decided to do nothing until he died and then to use the money to pay for a schoolmaster.

A detailed account in the early part of the records suggests that Nicholas may originally have had work to do. In this account, the date of which cannot be read but which somewhat ambiguous internal evidence indicates might be 1557, there are two payments for frankincense, one at Christmas, and four payments to the summoner, one 'for a book which he brought, of novenas[12] out of Ireland'. The catholic Mary Tudor was on the throne in 1557 and these payments suggest that Shipton was conforming to the state religion. The ambiguous evidence as to date is the entry of 4*d*. for 'writing out Chapman's will', the text of which is included in the records.

Chapman wrote his will in 1557, the last year of Mary Tudor's reign. Among his other legacies he left 10*s*. to be given to the poor at his 'month's tide', or month's mind, the requiem mass celebrated thirty days after death or burial. In addition he instructed his executors to provide twenty sheep from his estate, the profits from which were to pay for masses and dirges for him and his friends to be said at Easter and Christmas. But he seems to have seen what was coming. If, he said, the law in future will not permit masses and dirges, the profit from the sheep was to go to the poor.[13]

There is no obvious reason why the parish should have paid for writing out Chapman's will in 1557; but in 1603 there was a case in the Oxford Church Courts[14] about the sheep and the version of the will in the accounts is marked 'Examined by Henry Mills, vicar, and James Cooke 1 March 1601/2'. It is headed 'The will of John Chapman *verbatim* as follows', which suggests that it was not written out in 1557 but was a copy made in 1602 in preparation for the court case. This would seem to date the account to 1602, but it is extremely unlikely that the then protestant vicar, Henry Mills, was into buying frankincense and novenas.[15] The vicar in 1557 was Ralph Willett, whom John Chapman appointed his overseer. There is nothing to suggest that Willett had any Catholic sympathies, although he survived Mary Tudor's reign, perhaps because he was unmarried and was prepared to conform. The question remains open.

At the other end of the religious spectrum there is a hint of trouble over Quakers in the accounts for 1648 when a number of parishioners are said to have refused to pay for bread and wine. The group included Robert Seacole and his wife and some of the Seacoles were prominent Quakers in Milton.[16] Quakers were very active in Shipton parish in the seventeenth century as can be seen from *Bishop Fell and Nonconformity* edited by Mary Clapinson.[17] There were regular conventicles in Shipton and both Leafield and Milton were centres of Quaker activity. There were forty-two nonconformists including Quakers in Shipton in 1676. In 1660 a Quaker meeting in Milton was broken up and most of those taking part were sent to Oxford gaol. About eighty Quakers are recorded as meeting at a monthly conventicle in Robert Seacole's house in Milton in 1669 and in 1675 Quakers from Milton were fined for attending a meeting in Alvescot. In 1695 and 1696 the vicar and the churchwardens charged for their expenses for going to Doctor Allworth 'about the proceedings against the Quakers' and for 'carrying the presentment'. There were further charges for a warrant from Allworth and for payment to a proctor.

There are no Roman Catholics listed for Shipton in *Bishop Fell and Nonconformity* as there are for other parishes but in 1613 the churchwardens spent 8*s*.10*d*. 'about the recusants', those Catholics who refused to go to the parish church.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries certain dates in the calendar were marked by local celebrations, including bell ringing and bonfires, to demonstrate the country's essentially protestant culture.[18]. The most important dates were 17 and 5 November, the anniversaries of the accession of Elizabeth I and of the Gunpowder Plot. We have only one detailed account for the sixteenth century and that is for the last year of Mary Tudor's reign so we do not know whether the citizens of Shipton were enthusiastic about celebrating Elizabeth's accession during that century; nor do we have anything relevant for the first three quarters of the seventeenth century; but any enthusiasm they may have had certainly disappeared by 1672 as no payments for the 17 November are recorded in the accounts from then on. There were, however, regular payments to the ringers for ringing on 5 November which shows that the protestant ethos was still strong.

In 1641, with the country on the brink of civil war and anti-catholicism rising,[19] Shipton rang the bells to celebrate Charles I's birthday. From 1672 there were regular payments for ringing the bells for the return of Charles II and his coronation day, 23 April. These payments cease abruptly in 1685 when the Catholic James II came to the throne.

No expenditure on bonfires to accompany celebratory bell ringing, a common practice, was recorded in the accounts.

To sum up

It is unfortunate that the Shipton churchwardens entered so few itemised accounts in their account book. There are only four such before 1672 and it is to these few and to the run of tabulated accounts from 1672 that we are dependent for the details of the parish's income and expenditure and the day-to-day work of the churchwardens. It is perhaps unwise to draw overmuch in the way of generalisations from the evidence we have but such as it is, it suggests that although Shipton and the other Wychwood villages were never much disturbed by the major national events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were nevertheless aware of them. They seem to have ridden the religious and political turmoil of the period with minimum disruption; but there is a hint of some involvement. When Mr Thomas Rawlins, Leafield churchwarden, cleared his account in 1654 he had become Captain Rawlins.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Lambeth Palace Library for the following description of the account book as it now is (Court of Arches, MS. Ff.11.). The original manuscript measures 25.5 × 30.5 × 3.5 cm. The pages have been repaired and are now conserved in a modern binding. There were musical endpapers in the original binding but these form no part of the modern binding.

We acquired a film of the book from the Library and my wife Joan transcribed a hard copy of it. Much of the book was difficult to read and I am greatly indebted to her for her skill and patience in copying it out so that I could work on it and also for her help with research and proof reading and for her constant support.

Notes

[1] At the time Shipton Church was the church for the then large parish of Shipton of which Milton was part.

[2] Jack Howard-Drake, 'The Godfrey Case', *Wychwoods History*, Number 23, 2008, pp. 40-52.

[3] Mike Brown, *Guide to Churchwardens' Accounts*, (Dartmoor Press, 1997), hereafter 'Brown, *Guide*' has been a most useful aid in compiling this booklet.

[4] I am indebted to Anthea Jones for this reference.

[5] Parishes were required to provide a box for parishioners to put in their offerings and alms for the poor. (Brown *Guide* p. 45). Shipton wardens seem to have used it to hold their cash in hand as well.

[6] Oxfordshire Record Office, MSS. DD. Par. Leafield c.4. There are further accounts from 1787 to 1863 which include the transformation of the chapel into an independent church, MSS. DD. Par. Leafield e.2.

[7] Jack Howard-Drake, 'Henry Mills, Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood 1593-1641', *Wychwoods History*, Number 7, 1992, pp. 45-52.

[8] The meaning of this is not clear. The nearest relevant definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is the welding or splicing of metal. Here, perhaps, it means splicing or whipping.

[9] This section draws on W. E. Tate, *The Parish Chest*, third edition, pp. 120-5. An example he quotes is of a collection of 3*s*.11*d*. in Norton-le-Moors, Staffordshire for Uffington in Lincolnshire in October 1678. Next April Shipton collected 4*s*.2¼*d*. for Uffington as well as 5*s*. for a fire at Pattingham in Staffordshire.

[10] S. and B. Webb, *The Parish and the County*, 1906, pp. 30-1.

[11] *The Local Historian's Encyclopedia*, 1974, p. 179.

[12] A nine-day prayer for a special reason.

[13] Jack Howard-Drake, 'John Chapman's Legacy', *Wychwoods History*, Number 14, 1999, pp. 16-19.

[14] Jack Howard-Drake, *Oxford Church Courts, Depositions 1603-1606*, pp. 5-6.

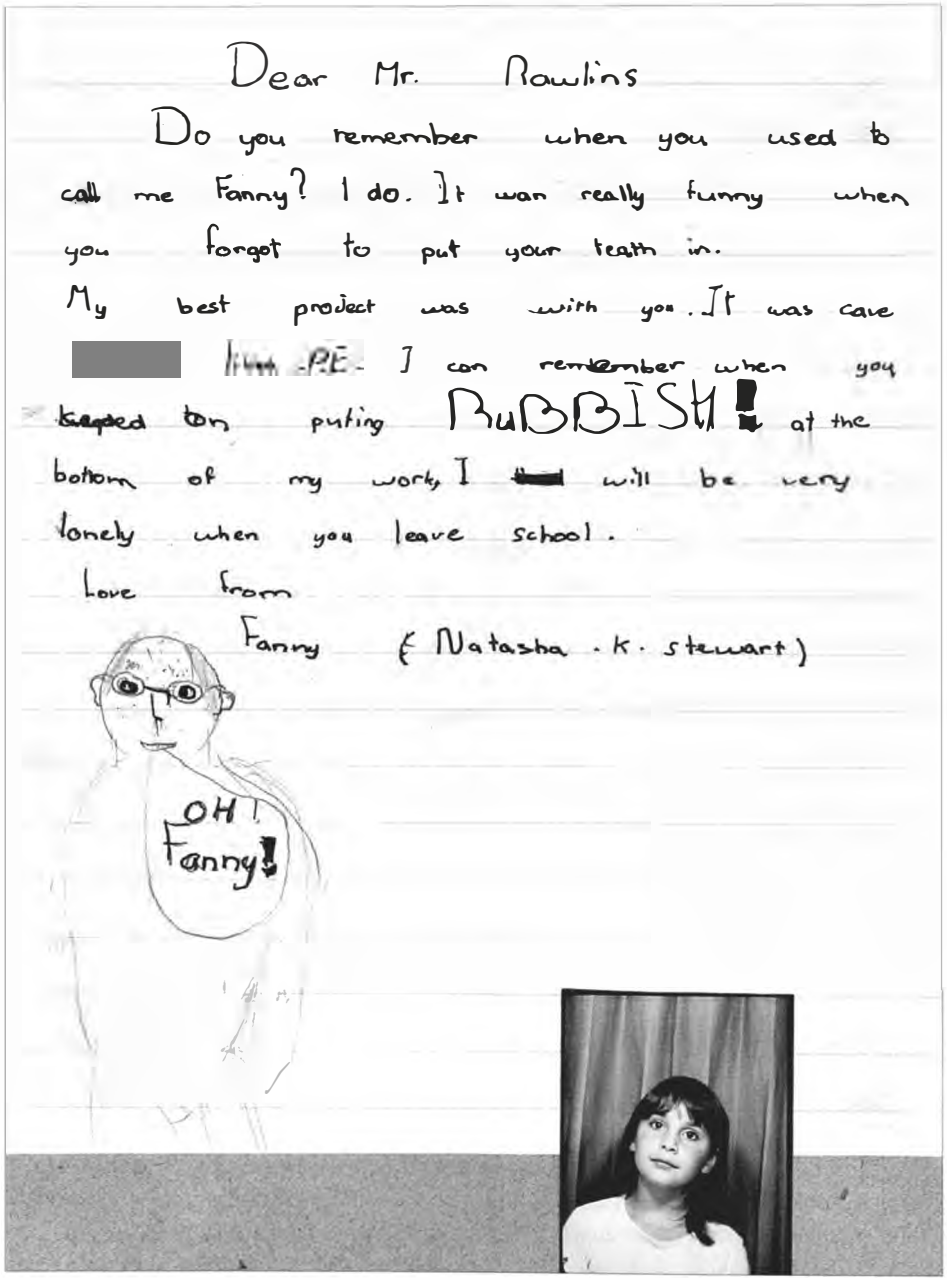
[15] Jack Howard-Drake, 'Henry Mills, Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood 1593-1641' *Wychwoods History*, Number 7, 1992, pp. 45-52.

[16] There were Seacoles among those who signed the Protestation Returns in 1641-2 thereby confirming their allegiance to the Protestant faith. *Oxfordshire Protestation Returns 1641-2*, Oxfordshire Record Society, 1955.

[17] Mary Clapinson ed., *Bishop Fell and Nonconformity: Visitation Documents from the Oxford Diocese 1682-83*, Oxfordshire Record Society Vol. LII, 1980.

[18] David Cressy, *Bonfires & Bells*, 2004.

[19] op.cit. p. 157.


Dear Mr. Rawlins

Do you remember when you used to call me Fanny? I do. It was really funny when you forgot to put your teath in.

My best project was with you. It was cave [redacted] I can remember when you keeped ton puting BuBBISH! at the bottom of my work, I [redacted] will be very lonely when you leave school.

Love from

Fanny (Natasha . K. Stewart)

Natasha Stewart's letter of farewell to her teacher when he retired from Barming School in Kent

Dear Mr Rawlins (Rawlines, Rwalins, Rawling, Rolings)*

Trudy Yates

IN July of 1985, John Rawlins retired from his teaching career after seventeen years at Barming School in Kent. Along with a number of farewell events, his students made him a booklet of their memories of his time with them. Their childish expressions of affection were accompanied by a picture of themselves and a hand drawn 'portrait' of Mr R. as they saw him. Natasha Stewart's depiction is a lovely example.

All of the children mentioned their teacher's pet names for them: Iain was usually 'Iron' in John's classes; Damian was 'Chief', Melanie was 'Melodious' and Adam quite often found himself answering to 'Twit' as did several of the others on the occasion of their teacher's exasperation at inattention or poor written work. What was obvious by the letters was the good humour and sense of fun enjoyed by the class in the time spent with their teacher, Mr. Rawlins.

Natasha Stewart's drawing of her teacher, John Rawlins, in 1985. Note the plaid trousers. Several of the students chose to feature them in their drawings. They were memorable, obviously

What none of the students realised was how very difficult John's last years at the school had been. He suffered increasingly from debilitating migraine headaches, narcolepsy and catalepsy and, on occasion, had a cataleptic seizure

in the classroom. Luckily, the staff at Barming were friendly and understanding. They covered quickly for their stricken colleague as long as they could until it was obvious that the classroom situation was untenable. It wasn't the happiest of retirements but it was the only sensible solution. John packed his belongings and returned to his family home in Milton under Wychwood..

The Rawlins cottage was, and is, called 'Sunnyside' and is located on Shipton Road, Milton. In the early years of the twentieth century it was owned by Isaac Clack, who had a cobbler's shop in the garden. John's father, Kenneth Rawlins (1898-1968) purchased the near derelict property from Clack's sister, after he had married Gladys Ruth Hall (1899-1981) in 1925. She had come to Milton from Littlemore, latterly Cowley, to teach at the local council school in 1918. It was at 'Sunnyside', after many months of work on the house, that Kenneth and Gladys's second son, John, was born on 23 July 1930. Their first child, Richard, had been born in 1928 and died within weeks of his birth.

Kenneth Rawlins was a painter and plasterer before severe arthritis ended his ability to do such work. He turned instead to gardening, and spent a number of years caring for the grounds and animals at Prebendal House. In an article published in Journal Number 4, John utilized his father's diary entries in an article entitled 'My Father's Days.' Kenneth began work at Prebendal just before the outbreak of World War I and, with the exception of two years of military service (1916-18), he continued there until 1926. The description of his many and varied responsibilities makes the reader wonder if this occupation was not far more demanding than plastering and painting.

Master John Rawlins *c.*1931

Kenneth's diaries also make clear his close connection with the Milton Baptist Chapel. On Sundays he attended services morning and evening and Bible classes in the afternoon. After his marriage, he and Gladys were even more involved in chapel activities and outreach projects.

John made clear in his article the extent of Kenneth's arthritic condition. 'Dad was not a fit man, already wearing leg-irons to counteract the crippling effects of rheumatoid arthritis. However, that did not stop him carrying on with his duties, as well as serving on the committees of the Band of Hope and the British Legion.' (Journal 4, 1988, p. 69)

'I grew up in Milton when it was still a farming community,' John recalled. 'The Hartleys had two large farms, the Reynolds had Spring Hill, the Edgintons were at High Lodge, the Ridleys worked Little Hill Farm, the Barretts had Heath Farm on Green Lane and the Ridleys had another Heath Farm on the Lyneham Road. The Wells family had Poplar Farm right in Milton itself and their son, Richard, was my best friend all the way through school.'

Gwen Silman's class at Milton School in 1937. Girls were photographed separately. *Top row, left to right*: Basil Miles, John Rawlins, Wilf Titcombe, Richard Wells, Roy Smith and Stan Dore. *Second row, left to right*: ?, Chris Moss, Horace Arthurs, Richard Mason, ?, David Wilks. *Front row, left to right*. Roy Souch (?), Bill James, Philip Hackling, Colin Souch (?), Pat Waite.

John and Richard played together at Poplar Farm and they also loved make-believe adventures in the old quarry. Gwen Silman, Win Slater and Mrs Pearce were their teachers before both boys went on to Burford Grammar School, aged ten. In 1948, John began his National Service in the Air Force at Oakington.

John in his Air Force uniform in 1949 at the corner of Frog Lane

John had set his heart on a teaching career at secondary level and, after eighteen months of service, he tried to enrol at Goldsmith's in London. Turned down at his first attempt, John waited and applied again the following year. This time

he was successful and, after a two-year course at the highly respected teaching college, John was ready to enter the field of education.

'I began my career at Dartford, Bexley and Swanley in Kent,' John recalled. 'I lived in digs with a Mrs Lane, whose husband, a sub-mariner, had been killed in the war. She was a wonderful cook and I was very comfortable and happy with my living accommodation there for seventeen years.' It wasn't long, however, before John's health began to deteriorate. Severe headaches and the beginnings of narcolepsy plagued the young teacher until he left his schools and sought employment elsewhere. He worked for a time as a postman and also as a hospital porter, trying to regain his health. Eventually he felt strong enough to try supply teaching at Wrotham, also in Kent, for a term. This was not a successful venture and he was hospitalised for a matter of months.

'Eventually I discharged myself,' John continued. 'I was determined to return to teaching. I rented a flat in a largish house in Marden and began with a class at Barming, near Maidstone.'

This proved to be a positive move and, again, John was able to teach for seventeen years before deteriorating health necessitated his final retirement.

'I was only fifty-five when I came back to Milton,' John said. 'I needed to become involved in something worthwhile. As luck would have it, I was introduced to the Wychwoods Local History Society and I joined immediately. My own interest in local history and genealogy had begun when I was at Barming. I saw a programme on television which followed one family through history and I started something similar on a much smaller scale with my class at school. I set the children the task of interviewing their parents and grandparents and collecting family pictures. They enjoyed it and so did I.'

John began with his own Rawlins line. His grandparents were Ernest John Rawlins (1870–1948) and his wife, Hannah Maria Timms (d. 1921). Ernest married (second) Edith Slater.

The children of Ernest and Hannah were Muriel, Kenneth, Ralph and Esther. Kenneth was John's father, of course, and Ralph was the father of Roger Rawlins, John's first cousin.

John worked with the help of other relatives to construct a Rawlins family tree of eleven generations. The progenitor of the clan, Henry Rawlins, lived in the late sixteenth century. He married an Elizabeth Cooke and the couple produced no fewer than ten children. The Society's archivist, Joan Howard-Drake, found the couple easily in our parish records. They were married on 12 April 1591, Henry being from Saresden (now Sarsden) and Elizabeth a resident of Shipton. This is a strong indication that at least a generous segment of the Rawlins family lived, loved, married and procreated in this part of Oxfordshire. Their fourth eldest son, John (1598–1659) and his wife, Alice, followed suit with ten offspring of their own. Their eldest son, another John (1623–1673) and his wife, Idith, managed only seven children but, three generations later, Edward

Rawlins (1708–68) and his wife, Mary Shepherd, produced an unbeatable thirteen sons and daughters – surely enough to swell the population of most, if not all, Oxfordshire villages. There is no doubt that at least four generations did live in Milton. The current John is fortunate to have an excellent picture of his great-grandparents, Joseph Rawlins (1829–1911) and his wife, Mary Gardner (1838–1916) and four members of the family including John's grandfather, Ernest. Ernest and his wife, Hannah are the grandparents of both John and Roger Rawlins.

Back row, left to right: W. H. Rawlins (Rawlins shop, garage, petrol and cars), Nell Rawlins, Margaret Rawlins, and Ernest Rawlins (John's grandfather). *Seated*: Joseph Rawlins (1829–1911) and Mary Gardner Rawlins (1838–1916), John's great-grandparents. Picture is *c.*1900. See cover of Journal 9, W. H. Rawlins standing beside one of his automobiles with Nell Rawlins at the wheel

Roger Rawlins and his wife, the former Grace Leach, are well known Milton residents. Roger is familiar to a generation of Groves' customers, serving as he does as managing director. Roger's Rawlins heritage is complemented by his mother's interesting family. Ralph's wife was Maud Malvina Goss, who was the daughter of Richard William Napoleon Goss and Ellen Powell. R. W. N. Goss received his impressive moniker in order to honour his great-grandfather, Richard Victor Goss, who was coxswain on the *Bellerophon* when the defeated

French general was taken to St Helena Island and incarcerated there. A number of R. V. Goss's descendants carry Napoleon as a second or third name to keep the family story alive. C'est la vie! Roger's mother had a second name that was also meaningful to the family historians: Malvina was chosen to commemorate Maud's father's birthplace, the Falkland Islands.

R. W. N. Goss was not in need of historical embellishment, however. His religious and civic undertakings were listed in his obituary. He was secretary of the Milton Baptist Church, vice-president of the Shipton Parish Council, Secretary of the Wychwood Lodge of Oddfellows, vice-president of both the Shipton Cricket club and football club, etc.! Among the many mourners who attended the funeral were four from. F. W. P. Matthews Ltd, where Mr Goss had served as managing director for many years. Every person who attended the obsequies in 1940 was dutifully listed in the newspaper and the list was long! The family was connected to the Goss China Company of Stoke on Trent, which produced crested china until 1944.

WLHS meetings widened John's interest in local history. 'When we began work on the first Wychwoods Album of pictures, I became very interested in World War Two evacuees to our area,' John said. 'A reunion of evacuees and host families was held in Milton Village Hall and I began to interview people attending, who were primarily from West Ham.' John continues to collect information on this interesting period of Milton and Shipton history. He reminded me that if Mary Bond, a West Ham evacuee, had not decided to marry Les Barnes and stay in the Wychwoods, we would never have benefited from the painting and wall-papering skills of her son Dennis, the community-minded service of her daughter Doreen, or the secretarial abilities of Julie Barnes Hemmings, her other daughter, who serves at our Wychwood C. of E. School.

John's associations with Norman Frost and Mike Linfield were invaluable to him and to the Society. Both were avid collectors of old local photographs and John soon began his own collection. When Mr Frost died, his wife Eileen passed the Frost archive on to John. Mike Linfield did the same some years later after he left the Wychwoods.

Throughout the twenty-eight years of the Society's existence, John has written thirteen articles for the Journal ranging from research on evacuees to a wartime wedding at Prebendal, to Milton's last pupil-teacher, Gwen Silman Morgan. He has given nine talks to the Society and a dozen more to other local organizations. It did not take long until his reputation went before him to other Cotswold villages. His carefully researched illustrated talks have been welcomed in Chipping Norton, Launton, Over Norton, Black Bourton, and Edge Hill, Ormskirk.

He provided a video entitled *Walks in Milton and Shipton* for the Millennium Exhibition, produced the Second Wychwood Album with Sue

Jourdan, interviewed local women for *The Way We Were*, a book of wartime memories, and mounted countless displays for the Society at Milton and Shipton fetes. He holds copies of the Milton and Shipton School Logbooks, and is graciously helpful to others doing research on the school, teachers and pupils. He, along with Joan Howard-Drake, Sue Jourdan and Anthea Jones researched an article entitled 'Some Wychwood Neighbourhoods *c.*1900' for Journals 22 and 23. He was vice-chairman of the Society for many years, is the recognized expert on the history of his home village and the indispensable source of pictures and information for his fellow local historians.

In 2002, John was short-listed by the British Association for Local History for a BALH Publication and Research Award for his article 'Assigning Quarters in the Wychwoods 1939–1945' published in Journal 26. He was honoured at the June 2002 Phillimore Lecture at The British Library Conference Centre. His article described how billeting of evacuees was carried on in Milton during the Second World War. He stressed how official instructions as to what must be done with the evacuees were modified and moulded by local circumstances. He investigated the experiences of individuals, both evacuees and host families, and was congratulated on his meticulous research and organizational talent. This was a fitting culmination to an enormously successful second career as a local historian. Future researchers will owe him a huge debt of gratitude and his WLHS colleagues hold him in high esteem. No talk of a quiet retirement will be entertained!

* The title of this article is enlivened by the innovative spelling of their teacher's last name by students in Barming, Kent, in 1985.

John Rawlins at the British Library Conference Centre on the occasion of the 2002 Phillimore Lecture where he received a certificate honouring him with the Publication and Research runner-up award from the British Association for Local History (BALH)

Intrepid Travellers
Three Wychwoods Women in the 1880s

Wendy Pearse

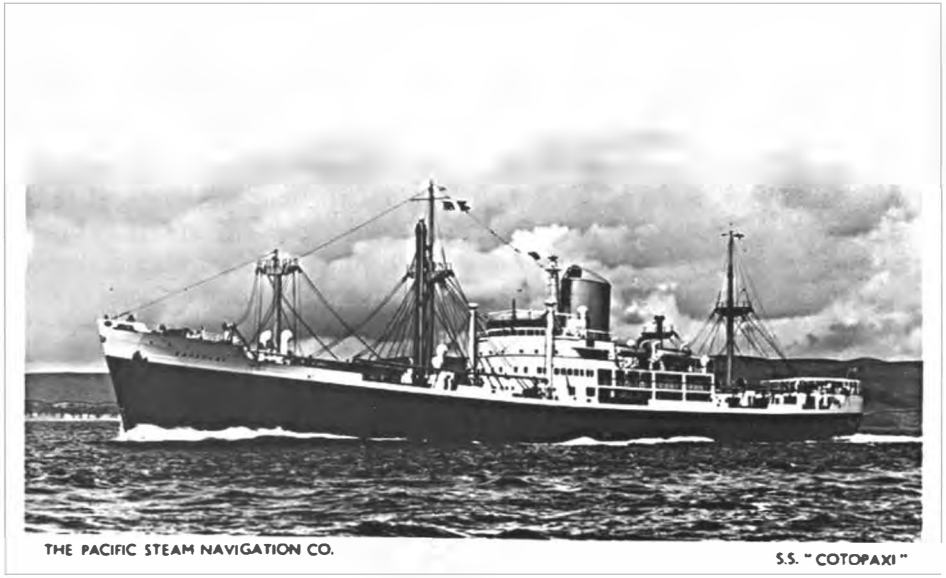
Besssie Bolton née Groves

WHO knows what thoughts must have run through the mind of Mary Groves as she watched the small boat leave Blackwall Pier heading for Gravesend Docks? On board were her eldest daughter Elizabeth (Bessie), aged twenty-one and Bessie's newly wed husband Edward Bolton, a twenty-four-year-old Methodist lay preacher and son of a gentleman farmer from Finstock. Their dream of a new life in far flung New Zealand must have, in 1881, seemed to Mary like an expedition to the moon and the uppermost thought in her mind must have been the question of whether she would ever see her daughter again. Close relatives, in previous months, had expressed severe reservations about Bessie and Edward's emigration and probably even Bessie herself felt some trepidation as she watched the figure of her mother disappearing into the distance. She had taken leave of her father Alfred Groves, a prosperous builder living in 'The Elms' at Milton, two days earlier, for the couple had spent their last night in the Wychwoods area with Edward's family at The Manor in Finstock.

The diary, which Bessie had begun two and a half years earlier, on 3 April 1879, her nineteenth birthday, is rather enigmatic. Despite a seemingly serious nature, at first her deeper feelings are expressed. She had a deep religious conviction, taught Sunday School, played the harmonium at chapel services and attended many and varied services and meetings. The diary is littered with various texts for the day, her regard for the preachers and little prayers of entreaty, thanks and praise for her Maker. Bessie also mentions all kinds of visits about the village, and further afield, to numerous friends and relatives. With, however, the 1881 Census only listing one servant living with the family (there may have been others who came in daily) she also spent a good deal of time assisting her mother with various household chores like washing, ironing and entertaining visitors. Her two elder half-sisters were already married with households of their own, but with one older half-brother and seven younger siblings there must always have been plenty to do.

Edward Bolton had taken her totally by surprise when, in December 1879, on a short journey together, he had asked her to marry him and perhaps go with him to New Zealand. Bessie was apparently speechless and neither referred again to the matter for at least three weeks of private agonising. Bessie's mother, when appealed to, told her she must please herself. But

with the help of Edward's sister, the matter was finally settled, a ring was exchanged and Bessie's life became monopolised with love for her Edward. Probably this is what sustained her over the next two years, for questions were apparently posed by her many relatives about whether she should leave her loving family and secure life and go to the other side of the world with this man, especially when, after eighteen months of courtship, some were also beginning to consider him 'A Laggard in Love and a Dastard in War shall never wed fair Helen etc. ...' This made Bessie so angry that she felt the need to pray to God to take the anger from her heart. These criticisms, however, served only to fuel Bessie's determination and when they were finally married on 4 October 1881, her course was set.



Their passages had been booked on the steamship 'Cotopaxi' waiting at Gravesend and fortunately there was a family named Knight on board with whom they were already acquainted.

Most of Bessie's diary from then on is full of factual descriptions and only very occasionally do her inner feelings emerge in brief sentences. The status of married woman enforced some changes. 25 October: '... there was dancing but I did not dance my dancing days are over I expect.' And 4 November: 'I am never called Bessie now. It is always Mrs B.'

Apart from the Knights the couple soon became acquainted with other fellow travellers, and, after 'a fearful time' in the English Channel, the weather gradually became warmer until on 22 October they cast anchor at St Vincent. There coaling took place over the next day, night and following

day. Precautions were taken but the noise was deafening and everything was covered in coal dust. At least the passengers could go on shore, attend services and briefly explore, but they found the local community very poor and deprived. Then on to Cape Town, the intervening days spent in reading, sewing, games, preparing and performing a concert, and attending services on Sundays.

Bessie gives very little description of the steamship 'Cotopaxi'. The couple were fortunate to have a cabin to themselves where they could have time together, but they also socialised with the other passengers in their class and exercised by frequent strolls around the deck. Their boxes were brought up fom the hold once a week in case they needed any extra items. Edward, however, also kept a diary of this outward journey and he describes a visit to the engine room where he found a number of engines. One made electric light, one forced water around the ship, one pumped water to be condensed into steam which then converted the steam from salt into fresh water, the waste steam being carried back to the boiler as hot water. A long steel shaft was turned by the engines and turned the screw. A nearby dial connected with one beside the officer on the bridge from whom instructions were relayed to the engineer below. There were six boilers and eighteen furnaces and sixty tons of coal were consumed daily. There was a small engine on deck for steering the vessel and the ashes from the furnaces were brought up by steam and thrown into the sea.

Their arrival in Cape Town on 6 November was apparently a 'red-letter day' for Bessie. Amidst the 'uproarius' of coaling, the couple, together with a number of other passengers, left the 'Cotopaxi' early for a day ashore. They were both greatly impressed by Cape Town. It seemed just like an English town. The streets were well arranged, adorned with fine houses, shops and well furnished hotels. Carriages, not out of place in Rotten Row, paraded the streets and the inhabitants were splendidly dressed in the latest fashions. Edward was most intrigued by the new Wesleyan Chapel which had been built at the huge cost of £18,000. A commanding building, the woodwork, carvings, pews and stained glass had all been imported from England. However the labour costs were high and despite the huge congregation of 600 to 1,000, the chapel was still £5,000 in debt. Edward, in his notes, was very much concerned with the price of everything, from 3*s*. for a good tea to the fact that the boat trip to Cape Town from the 'Cotopaxi' cost 6*d*., whilst late arrivals for the return journey were charged 5*s*. and in the process nearly missed the boat. Cape Town's biggest function seemed to be as a coaling port and Edward decided he 'should not like to live there'.

The next few days the ship rolled badly, one of the lady passengers was injured in a fall, and Bessie ended one afternoon in 'having a weep, I must not be so foolish again'. And so the journey continued. Bessie found various ways

of occupying her time with handicrafts, reading, writing, strolling the decks and enjoying the company of her varied fellow passengers.

Making their initial landfall in Australia at Adelaide with a brief trip ashore, on 27 November they arrived at Melbourne. It was a Sunday and they were pleased to be able to attend the Wesleyan Chapel. But Edward was irritated by one lady who 'had a very strong voice and seemed to try to attract notice'. They walked around the beautiful botanical gardens and enjoyed a meal at the Tankard Temperance Hotel. The following afternoon, having collected all their baggage, they left the 'Cotopaxi' for the last time and took a room in the Temperance Hotel in the town where 5*s*. per day for meals and bed 'suited us nicely'.

Two days of sightseeing followed until they were down at the docks once more and taking passage on 'this horrid little steamer "Arawata" packed almost like herrings, Edward away down in the hold while I sleep up here. One has to scramble for dinner like so many hungry schoolchildren, although we are travelling first class. The steamer rocked so fearfully, we were (or seemed to be) in imminent danger of being tossed over.'

Five days later they reached Bluff Harbour on the southern tip of South Island and their first port of call in New Zealand. Edward, who was to undertake a farming partnership with his brother John who had arrived in New Zealand two years previously, was not impressed. '... soil seemed poor, little grass growing, a few cows to be seen & these not the best breed, the weather cold and damp.' Next morning travelling on up the east coast they reached the 'very pretty' Port Chalmers. Dunedin 'the chief city in New Zealand' was about nine miles away by train and 'delightfully situated. The flowers and ferns are prolific and the scenery is indescribably beautiful!' Edward, rather more impressed, 'formed a favourable impression of the soil, the grass very thick & long. The cattle looked well but small.'

On 8 December they reached Lyttleton, the port for Christchurch, and as the train took them to the town Edward noted happily, 'travelled through land laid down with English grass, saw some fine cattle, looked like producing abundance of milk'. In Christchurch they sought out Mr Buller, a Wesleyan minister whom they knew in England, and whose home was 'replete with every European luxury'. He was able to hand over a letter from brother John who said that he had selected land on Foster and Grants block, news which Edward was 'very glad' to know.

The following day they arrived at Wellington, mostly 'built of wood, because of earthquakes'. Bessie noted that the Museum 'was quite worth seeing, a pure white peacock & also the Weka & the Kiwi a thing half bird, half animal, no wings and fur on its back. The Maori house was very interesting. Carving most beautifully done but the subjects very ugly.' They also toured the cathedrals, Houses of Parliament and botanical gardens. There were 'flowers

Lyttleton Harbour

everywhere'. Travelling then up the east coast of North Island they next reached Napier in Hawkes Bay before finally taking leave of the 'horrid little "Arawata" at Gisborne, 'a prettily situated town'. It was a Sunday and they were met by a Mr Kurtain whose house they were due to take over in the next few days. At the service in the Wesleyan Church several people mistook Edward for his brother John who actually arrived in the town on the following Friday 'looking browner & fatter and not quite so quiet as he used to be'. They set about acquiring 'a few things which we should require to keep house on a small scale, bed, mattress, lamp, saucepan, cups, saucers etc.', and Bessie was soon asked to take over playing the harmonium at the chapel. By the end of the following week Bessie and Edward had the whole house to themselves but 'I used to be a bit homesick sometimes in the morning & two or three times had a weep'.

Their circumstances hit Bessie rather hard on Christmas Day, which fell on a Sunday. 'So hot we could hardly bear it. I gave Edward a box of figs & John a pocket diary. I had no presents first Xmas I have ever been able to say that. I felt rather dull, thinking what a splendid time they must all be having at home.' It must have seemed dismal indeed considering the big Christmas family gatherings in her early diary entries and the huge number of wedding presents that the couple received.

Bessie then began sorting the house out and coping with all the accumulated washing, until on Tuesday 3 January, 'we were up early for John and Ed were going up to Tologa Bay to see Mr Stewart's land'. On Thursday 5 January, however, 'Edward and John are home again. They are greatly disappointed with the land they saw up Tologa way, and have determined to go home.'

Perhaps it is not surprising that Edward and John were disappointed by Tologa Bay. Situated forty-five kilometres from Gisborne, the region around the bay is rugged and remote and for many years, certainly in the 1880s, the only access was by boat. Because the bay is so shallow the longest wharf in New Zealand was eventually built there to accommodate vessels. A region of New Zealand mainly populated by Maoris, today it is a popular holiday resort. Not so when the Boltons made their expedition. The remoteness of the bay was further emphasised for the couple when a Mr Clarke visited. He lived at Tologa and only saw his wife about once in three months as she was forced to live in Napier so that their children could be educated.

6 January. 'Edward sent a cablegram home.' Presumably this was to tell their families that they would be returning to England.

On Friday 13 January Bessie finally had news from her family when she received her first letters from home. But preparations were in hand for their return and on 23 January 'We left Gisborne & the many friends we had made there & started for Auckland'. On 25 January they embarked on the 'Hero' for Sydney. During this leg of her journey Bessie reflected on her impression of the colonies. 'There seems so much infidelity & scepticism afloat in the colonies. All men appear to think of is money & pleasure ... All around is beautiful & fair except man who is so marred one can hardly credit he was formed in God's image. So few are there that will own Jesus to be their Lord.' On 31 January, 'A very rough day ... Towards evening it got worse & I was very frightened.'

Arriving in Sydney on 1 February, Bessie and Edward were soon enveloped by Bessie's aunts, Lucy and Kitty, and their families, who had emigrated to Australia some years before. They spent the next fortnight visiting, sightseeing and renewing acquaintance with a number of people before re-embarking on the 'Hero' as it continued its journey westwards along the southern coast of Australia, picking up more passengers at the major ports. On 25 February the 'Hero' left Adelaide and Bessie and Edward took their final leave of the southern continent.

Over the next three weeks the weather was very hot while the 'Hero' steamed northwestwards. On their return the Boltons did not follow the route of their outward journey. Instead of sailing around Africa, the 'Hero' headed for the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean. At times during this rather tedious period when there were few glimpses of land, Bessie recorded that she was very unwell. Perhaps her reserves of determination were gradually diminishing. At last on 16 March they entered the Gulf of Aden and on 22 March she recorded joyfully 'Land again!!! Hurrah. I have just been up on deck to see the place where the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea. It is a right glorious morning. Last night we had a very good concert. I feel very, very much better today'.

Unfortunately Bessie's jubilation met further obstacles on the next day. 'This is the second day we have been stuck in this canal. Neither can we go on

shore as we may have to start at any moment. The cause of our delay is that the 'Rome' is aground. They are unloading her to get her up. She is hindering 13 or 14 steamers the canal is very full now. Everyone is getting very impatient except the Arabs who are doing a good trade in feathers, coral, fancy work, beads, oranges & Turkish delight.'

Two days later: 'We are still in this canal and I am very weary. The heat is intense. I suffer all day from headache. Now we are at a standstill again and shall not reach Port Said tonight. Horror!'

At last they emerged from the canal and proceeded on through the Mediterranean. 'Anything more beautiful than the flowers in Naples couldn't be imagined. We saw Vesuvius by day & night, we saw the flames plainly at night, only smoke in the day.' On 2 April 'We saw Gibraltar last night'.

The next day: 'This morning April 3rd 1882 I am 22. Have been feeling very seasick. Not a very bright birthday. We saw a great many steamers yesterday.' 4 April: 'Our voyage will soon be over we have had fine weather all the way though the head winds and our stoppage in the canal have rendered it somewhat tedious. We shall be in the Bay of Biscay in about an hour. Hope it won't be rough ...'

And with that exclamation Bessie's diary finishes. It is not known whether she ventured abroad again but probably her voyage to the other side of the world remained the adventure of her lifetime.

Alice Ward née Calvertt

In 1875 John Simpson Calvertt came from Lincolnshire to take on the tenancy of Fairspeare, one of the farms created following the disafforestment of Wychwood in 1856–7. These farms were never so productive as the ardent supporters of the disafforestment were led to believe and, in the eighteen years of their availability, two tenants had already decided that this Crown property was not living up to expectations. Despite, however, the double onslaught of a disaster in the farming regime and economy of Britain, and the very worst that the weather could throw at the country, John Simpson Calvertt stuck to his resolve and continued pluckily farming until his sudden death in 1900.

In April 1876 Calvertt's wife Jane and his three sons and three daughters joined him at Fairspeare and shortly afterwards another daughter was born. His two eldest daughters, Alice Louisa Jane and Elizabeth Anne were twenty-one and nineteen respectively at the time of their arrival in the Wychwoods and they were very soon making the acquaintance of their social equals amongst the middle-class society in the neighbourhood. On Sundays they attended various churches in the area. Leafield was their parish church but on other occasions they drove to Charlbury, Ascott, Shipton, Witney, etc. Witney was a favourite town to shop in whilst balls, bazaars, fetes and sporting occasions at locations like Blenheim, Ditchley, Heythrop and Cornbury, were all frequented

by the Calvertts. Hunting was a great passion and this also included a grand social agenda. Around Christmas, Calvertt, accompanied by his wife and one of the older girls, would repair to the imposing, newly built Salisbury Hotel in London and whilst pursuing a shopping spree, they would visit the sights and enjoy theatre visits in the evenings. The diary which Calvertt kept throughout his lifetime mentions numerous friends whom they met frequently on every possible occasion, and the lives of his two eldest daughters appear to have been fully engrossed in the means and manners of their era. Elizabeth Anne (Lizzie) however, may have had more contact with the lower classes since she taught a Sunday School class of girls, presumably from Leafield Church.

John Simpson Calvertt's diary gives all manner of details of his and his family's lives. This is the only source of information that we have about Alice and Lizzie but because of the diary we can follow their movements through the 1880s and, like Bessie, these two young women were soon to leave British shores for a life abroad, one travelling to Belize in Central America and the other to India.

A certain disruption entered the life of the family when Alice met Herbert Marlow Ward sometime before 8 July 1881, the day when Calvertt noted in his diary 'Herbert Marlow Ward, proposed to Alice'. We do not know how Alice and Herbert became acquainted and the first mention of his name in the diary is only three weeks before on 19 June when he came on a visit to Fairspeare. He was a graduate of Christ Church College in Oxford and was then studying for his MA and a life in the ministry. His father was the vicar of Morville and Ashton Eyres, just outside Bridgnorth in Shropshire, and the next January Alice went off to visit his family there.

The engagement was not short. Obviously the couple were waiting for Herbert to finish his studies and it was not until May 1884 that Alice and Herbert travelled to Oxford so Herbert could receive his MA degree.

It seems that plans were then laid for him to pursue his ministry abroad. How the decision to become the vicar at St Mary's Church in Belize City in Central America was decided is unknown, but only a few years earlier the Archbishop of Canterbury had requested the Bishop of British Honduras (Belize) to reorganise the church in the colony. This was accomplished in 1883, the Bishop personally supervising the process and securing the property into the hands of the church. Seemingly a new vicar was soon required at St Mary's, the subordinate church to St John's Cathedral in the city, and it was to there and the neighbouring rectory that Alice and Herbert were destined after their wedding at Leafield Church on 11 March 1885. Calvertt made a grand point of describing all the wedding arrangements and listing all the eighty wedding presents which presumably later travelled across the Atlantic with the young couple. On 3 May Calvertt noted 'At Church & Sact., with Alice – for the last time for some years, if evermore at all!!!...' So like Bessie's mother, Calvertt

and his wife Jane must have found it hard to hold back the tears when on 13 May 1885, 'Jane and I bid the Revd and Mrs Ward "adieu" at the Paddington Stan.'

The family received their first letter from Alice on board the 'Salerno' five days later. This had probably been posted at one of the ports in the south- west of England but it was not until 7 July that a letter from Nassau in the Bahamas arrived.

Salerno

Within six days of sending this letter Alice and Herbert reached Belize City. A former pirate colony at the mouth of the Belize River, the Anglican Church had first sent chaplains to Belize City in 1770 to attend to the spiritual needs of British colonists and a military garrison centred there. Over the next decades the number of nationalities and religions increased in the area until in the 1880s the city was home to a multifaceted population of whites, blacks and coloureds. The whole country is about the size of Wales and is blessed with spectacular scenery. Off shore is the longest barrier reef in the Americas with a chain of islands known as cayes, scattered along its entire distance. It is a technicoloured world of turquoise shallows and cobalt depths populated with numerous varieties of fish and corals. Beyond the city the interior is densely forested, the whole a truly tropical paradise. All this lay before Alice and Herbert as the 'Salerno' negotiated a passage between the islands to dock in the estuary.

In 1871 Belize had become a Crown Colony with a resident governor appointed by Britain, and the town itself was a main centre for logwood and mahogany export. The Cathedral of St John had been consecrated in 1826 but, as the city expanded to the north in the mid 1800s, it was deemed necessary to construct another church. In 1852 a small wooden building dedicated to St Mary the Virgin was built. A rectory was constructed next door. We do not know whether a more substantial building had replaced the original in the ensuing thirty years but these two buildings, constructed along the river frontage amongst colonial style wooden houses, were Alice and Herbert's destination.

Probably Alice found that one of her major problems was coping with the weather conditions. It is always warm in Belize, often hot and humid. The lowest temperature between March and October is 21°C with the maximum about 32°C. July is also near the beginning of the rainy season which lasts through to November, with clear mornings and one to two hours of drenching

rain every afternoon. The worst rain occurs in the height of the hurricane season between September and October. These unfamiliar weather conditions must have made life even more difficult for Alice, then aged thirty, since pregnancy had commenced near the beginning of her marriage. On 12 January 1886 the Calvertt family received a letter from Herbert stating that Alice was dangerously ill. Her son John Sebastian Ward, was born on 22 December 1885, so it would seem likely that she had been ill prior to the birth. How full of anxiety the days must have been for her family at Fairspeare awaiting the arrival of the next letter. Calvertt does not record the date they received better news but on 25 February noted 'Papered Alice', so things had certainly taken a turn for the better by then. 15 June he noted 'letter from Alice - returns via "Salerno", via Nassau, Bermudas & Azores. Will stay in England 3-4 months, and evade the Hot season at Belize.'

The 'Salerno' sailed into West India Docks in London at 5 p.m. on 24 August and by 5.30 p.m. on the following day Alice was at Fairspeare introducing her eight-month-old son John to her family. In fact her journey home had been 'Quick, Calm, Enjoyable, leaving Belize on 21st July, a total of 35 days.' So Calvertt did not have to wait too long to attend Leafield Church again with his eldest child, and the added bonus of his first grandson.

South West India Docks

Alice remained at Fairspeare until 3 February 1887 when Calvertt noted 'Alice & her Son, left Ascott by 1.15 train, direct for "Salerno" in the West India Docks -

they & nurse "Margaret" were all in excellent health.' The next day he continued 'At 9 a.m. the "Salerno" steamed out of W.I. Docks for Dartmouth – Teneriffe, one of the Canary Isles – Nassau, one of the Bahama Isles & they would call also at 1 or 2 Ports at Cuba before they landed at Belize – a long journey across the world.'

Was this parting even more difficult than the first? No-one knows. But by 22 June of the following year, 1888, Calvertt could thankfully write 'The Revd. H. M. Ward, Mrs Ward & Son all safely reached London, from Belize – via Jamaica, Boston and N. York'. Shortly afterwards Alice's second son Reginald was born. And it seems that Alice then remained in England for the rest of her life.

It is difficult to understand how fearful the population in those days was of long sea voyages. It was the only way to travel distances and certainly there were a number of shipping disasters which must have been broadcast to the country through newspapers, and along the multi-routed railways. As with the higher mortality rate at the time, perhaps there was more acceptance of 'acts of God'. But when a dearly loved family member set forth, there must have been much heart searching.

John Simpson Calvertt and his family were doubly affected by this type of situation since his second daughter Elizabeth Anne (Lizzie) was also destined to travel and in her case much longer separations were in store.

Lizzie Abbott née Calvertt

As with Alice the first we learn of Lizzie's future husband is from a brief note in Calvertt's diary for 30 April 1884: 'Mr Abbott wrote me from India'.

Algernon Abbott, who was fifteen years Lizzie's senior, had been born in London around 1842. By 1864 he had married and joined the Indian military forces in India. Together with his wife Sarah he had a son, Algernon William, born 1864, and a daughter Ada. In the latter part of his diary, Calvertt mentions a visit from Algernon William who later became a Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Navy. There is, however, no mention of his sister. Presumably, together with her mother, she succumbed to the hard conditions in India which were particularly harsh on European women and children.

Algernon was obviously a widower by the time he met Lizzie and perhaps met her whilst on leave in England visiting his son, who like so many children born in India was sent back home to be educated. Regardless of the circumstances of their meeting, by 10 October 1884 Lizzie was packing for a journey to Bombay, so probably the note in Calvertt's diary refers to an official proposal of marriage.

The traffic between Britain and India had increased considerably since the early part of the century, especially following the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. This had reduced the length of the journey to four weeks or even less

and led to booklets being produced giving various instructions to travellers. Women were advised to bring out a large number of clothes from England. The heat necessitated frequent changing of clothes and European clothes were not easily procured in India. Besides, it was obligatory amongst the middle class to keep up to date with fashion and dress in the latest mode. As far as household goods were concerned, travellers were advised to keep these to the bare minimum since rough handling in passage frequently led to damage. However it was sensible to take a good supply of household linen.

On 20 October 1884, two days before her ship was due to leave, Lizzie's parents and eldest brother travelled up to London with her for a brief stay at the Salisbury Hotel. The next day they were joined by her younger sister Grace, on leave from boarding school, and the following day by Herbert Ward, Alice and Calvertt's friend, Mr Price. On 22 October this family group accompanied Lizzie to the Royal Albert Docks where they looked over the steamship 'Kerbela' before in 'delightful weather' watching her slip anchor and hauled by two tugs, pennants flying, her rails lined by waving passengers including Lizzie, enter the Thames channel, destination Bombay.

A letter sent by Lizzie from the Isle of Wight, reached Fairspeare three days later and mentioned twenty-five first-class passengers and twelve second-class including three clergymen and their wives, the weather continuing delightful. These passengers contributed to their own social life aboard, something to which they were well accustomed in their normal life at home. There would have been singing, dancing and theatricals, and probably by that date a library had already been established on the 'Kerbela'. The journey through the Mediterranean could well have included a stop at Malta where coral, silver and lace shops were prolific. Then later, Port Said presented rather more of a culture shock to first-time travellers, since beggars, little boys and fortune tellers swarmed around disembarking passengers, and women could only venture forth under escort for fear of cut-throats. In the Suez Canal bumboats swarmed, their owners selling black bread, onions and monkeys, whilst little boys ran alongside the canal begging from the passengers on the ships.

Approximately one month after leaving London the 'Kerbela' approached the handsome curving harbour of Bombay where gently rising hills framed the city. As they drew near the waterfront, wafting on the breeze would have been strange unfamiliar smells of garlic, tobacco, spices, jasmine and sandalwood. European-style buildings crowded the waterfront whilst to their rear stood the densely packed native quarters with narrow streets and gaudy coloured houses. The city would have been full of noise; creaking bullock carts, cackling birds, alien-style music, craftsmen in leather, brass and other metals banging industriously in their tiny shops. The native women would have been bedecked in vivid colours, their glossy black hair and clothes enhanced with gold lace and ornaments. Strange shaped temples would have dotted the horizon and

mounds of flowers and unfamiliar vegetables would have bedecked the streets. Fortunately for Lizzie she arrived in what was known as the cold weather season which ran between October and March.

On Christmas Day 1884 Calvertt noted 'While at church a.m. – the Postman left, the "Times of India" in which we found Elizh. Anne's marriage to Algernon Abbott, GIP Railway: at Christ Church, Bycalla, Bombay'. The Great Indian Peninsular Railway which ran from Bombay north east into the heart of the continent had been established some thirty years earlier and from Calvertt's comment it would appear that Algernon Abbott had left the Indian military forces and taken up a position with this thriving railway company. The company workshops were at Byculla. On the following day, 26 December, Calvertt's diary entry reads 'interesting letter from Mrs Abbott – with particulars of her marriage – Presents – Voyage – Capt. Turner – Her New Home – altogether she has received a very good impression of Bombay, and its Climate'. About 10,000 Europeans were living in Bombay. It was a world of bungalows and clubs, bustle and gossip. The Anglo-Indian society felt themselves to be the most important members of the community and they would have had little contact with native Indians apart from servants and those adding decorative value to their lives. The women's roles were as wives and mothers and the memsahib was not expected to do any work but must be constantly aware of what was going on in her home. Convention was rife and Lizzie, as a newcomer, would have had to learn the ropes quickly, both socially and with regard to a strange house with alien servants whose work was dictated by both caste and religion. A good cook was considered a very valuable asset and a reliable ayah cum ladies maid was most important. The society was highly structured with strong pressure exerted on social preference. Social life ranged around races, parties, concerts, polo matches, dinner parties, amateur dramatics, and balls and dances where men outnumbered the women three to one. Various sports were also considered suitable for women, riding to hounds (jackals), tennis, golf, gymkhanas, cricket and archery.

With April came scorching hot weather with temperatures over 100°F, followed by monsoons in June. For Lizzie, whose first son Gerard was born in the autumn of 1885, the summer of that year must have been a feat of endurance, as for her sister Alice then in Belize. Conventionally dressed in long dresses, petticoats, corsets and stockings, the weather conditions must have been almost unendurable. The monsoons, which lasted between three weeks and two months, left everything covered in a green mould, fabric always felt damp, insects multiplied and ate into everything. After twenty-seven years of an equable English climate, the moths, flies, ants, caterpillars, centipedes, eye fly, scorpions, bees and mosquitoes with their constant threat of malaria, must at times have been hard to bear, let alone the unceasing presence of snakes.

Sadly for Lizzie and her husband, Calvertt's diary entry for 20 July 1886 reads 'Lizzie's son Gerard is dead from Teething eight and a half months old'. A very poignant remark and probably the event made even more so for Lizzie without the support of her family. Childhood illnesses were a constant threat in India, probably much more so than back home in England. There was great concern about whooping cough, dysentery, bronchitis and fevers, and the dreaded effects of teething were always prevalent in babies. Lizzie, however, was probably already pregnant with her second child and her second son, Bernard, was born shortly after this traumatic experience.

The following March an amusing letter arrived at Fairspeare in which Lizzie regaled the family with an account of her meetings with the Duke and Duchess Connaught and Lord and Lady Brassey and their three daughters, at a Jubilee Ball and also at the races. Lord Brassey's brother Albert was the owner of Heythrop House and Master of the Heythrop Hunt with whom Calvertt and his family frequently rode. So Lizzie must have been pleased to renew her acquaintance with the family. Lord Brassey. accompanied by his wife, family and crew, circumnavigated the world in his steam-assisted, three-masted, topsail yard schooner the 'Sunbeam' between 1876 and 1877. This is said to have been the first circumnavigation by a private yacht and it was during this voyage that the family must have met Lizzie in India. Unfortunately, in Sepember, Lady Brassey died of fever off the Australian coast and was buried at sea.

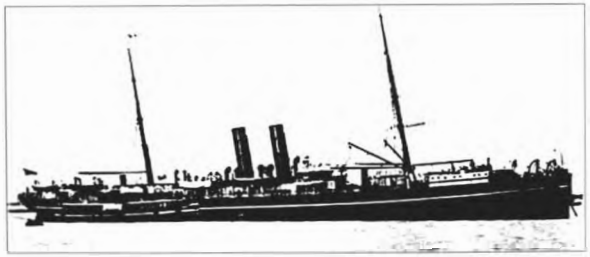
When Alice arrived home in June 1888, she must have been devastated to find her mother seriously ill, and although Jane rallied in the ensuing months, it was only a temporary reprieve and on 10 February 1889 Jane Calvertt died. A difficult homecoming for Alice, but a harsh blow for Lizzie who would never see her mother again.

In April 1891 however, six and a half years after seeing his second daughter off from the Royal Albert Docks, Calvertt could at last look forward to seeing her again. After a twenty-five day journey on the 'Peshawar' through the Suez Canal and Mediterranean, Lizzie, Algernon and their three-year-old son Bernard arrived in London, from whence Lizzie and Bernard travelled on to Fairspeare the following day, to what must have been a great reunion for all concerned. Apparently the next day Lizzie and Bernard accompanied the family to Leafield Church but found the weather so cold that they had to leave before the sermon.

For the next fifteen months the Abbott family remained in England staying with Algernon's relatives in the London area whilst making frequent visits to Fairspeare. In July 1892 Lizzie's younger sister Grace married Frederick Matthews of Fifield at Leafield Church with Lizzie and Bernard in the congregation. In August Algernon returned to India in the 'Asia' leaving Lizzie

to prepare herself for a parting with her son who was to remain in England to be educated, making his base the home of Algernon's sister Edith in Waltham Cross.

On 8 December 1892 Calvertt accompanied Lizzie to the Royal Albert Docks in London as she approached her second sortie abroad. Her heart must have been heavy having already taken leave of her young son. The parting from her father must have been made even more poignant by the fact that eight years earlier her whole family had been there to wave goodbye. Her ship this time was the 'Paramatta', but probably because the ship's destination was Australia, Lizzie was due to change ship in Aden. At the end of March 1893 Calvertt noted 'Mrs Abbott sent me an Indian Guinea 250 years old!!! and a small Time Piece given her by the Marabaune of Baroda on her way out to India in the "Paramatta"'.



Paramatta

At least Calvertt could keep his eye on Lizzie's son over the next four years since Bernard and his Aunt Edith Abbott were frequent visitors to Fairspeare. It must have been comforting to Lizzie to learn about little episodes in her son's life from her father's letters. During this second sojourn in India, the Abbotts moved from Bombay, three hundred miles upcountry to Bhusaval, another major station on the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. The company's lines had by then been driven far into the north of India and also southwards reaching out towards Madras. Lizzie's final three months in the country were spent at Bangalore in the far south during the hot season. So perhaps she was glad to leave the high temperatures behind when she and Algernon departed Indian shores for the final time. On 15 September 1896 Calvertt noted 'Mrs Abbott came from Town after being away 4 years'. By May 1897 Lizzie and family had settled at 6 Norman Avenue, Henley-on-Thames, and on 4 July her daughter Beatrice was born, a blessing to Lizzie, then aged forty. At last her travelling life had been relinquished for a settled home in her own country, with her children close at hand.

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St Michael's: Another Connection

Christine Patrick

MY mother is Muriel Alice Fletcher (née Buchanan). She was born on 18 November 1916 and has very happy memories of her early childhood years when she lived with her parents, brothers and sisters at Lee-on-Solent on the south coast. Her grandmother had a job looking after the bathing huts on the beach and Muriel remembers carefree summer days playing near the huts so that 'granny Duke' could keep an eye on the young grandchildren. Muriel also enjoyed her lessons and other activities at Lee school and has a memory of taking home a dishcloth that she'd knitted and her mother showing it to a neighbour and saying 'Look what Mury's made'. Muriel's father (originally from Donegal) was a carpenter and builder and a photo of the Buchanan family (Muriel on her mother's left) taken around 1919 gives the impression of a settled home life, which is how Muriel remembers it. Sadly there was a tragic series of events which led eventually to the break up of the family, and in 1926 the Buchanan children were dispersed to different residential homes, apart from the eldest two who remained in Lee with their father. Muriel and her sister Flora were sent to St Michael's in Shipton-under-Wychwood whilst the three younger boys (triplets) were sent to a children's home in Bristol. Muriel doesn't know to which home her youngest sister, then aged five, was sent.

Muriel's parents, sisters and brother (1919?)
Standing: Robert Knox Buchanan (Muriel's father)
Middle row, left to right: Flora (sent to St Michael's with Muriel), Alice Maria (Muriel's mother), Muriel Alice, Mathilda Kate *Front row*: Robert Keith

It wasn't until 28 June 2008, when Muriel was ninety-one, that she told me about her years at St Michael's, and it was the first time that she had spoken about it to anyone. She said that for her generation, to come from a broken family and to have lived in a children's home was a source of shame. What follows are Muriel's memories, based on notes that I made on 28 June and during subsequent visits to her home in Doncaster.

Before being sent to St Michael's Muriel has a memory of being baptised and the next door neighbour at Lee, Mrs Hales, acting as godmother. She thinks this may have taken place because St Michael's was a Church of England home. When Muriel and Flora arrived at St Michael's in 1926 they were each given a number (thirty-eight for Flora and thirty-nine for Muriel) and a locker for personal belongings. Muriel cannot recall having anything 'personal' to store in her locker. She does recall the navy blue uniform all inmates of St Michael's were required to wear and the Panama hats they wore in the summer. Muriel remembers that St Michael's had a laundry which was separate from the main building and near to this was a bit of land given over to small gardens should any of the inmates (she thinks forty girls) wish to have one. This garden area was on such a steep slope that Muriel once fell down it.

Muriel has no memories of Shipton-under-Wychwood village apart from the school. This is because the home had its own chapel and inmates were not allowed out except on staff-escorted 'crocodile' walks in the surrounding countryside. She recalls the fields and meadows next to St Michael's as very beautiful, full of wild flowers, including many that are now rare and protected such as cowslips. Muriel was able to name the local Wychwood villages, also Burford and Chipping Norton although she has no memories of the inmates visiting them. She thinks that maybe the inmates learnt about the area through school lessons. What she does remember is one walk when an adult (perhaps a teacher) instructed the inmates (or schoolchildren) to look out for the Roll Right Stones in a field near Chipping Norton.

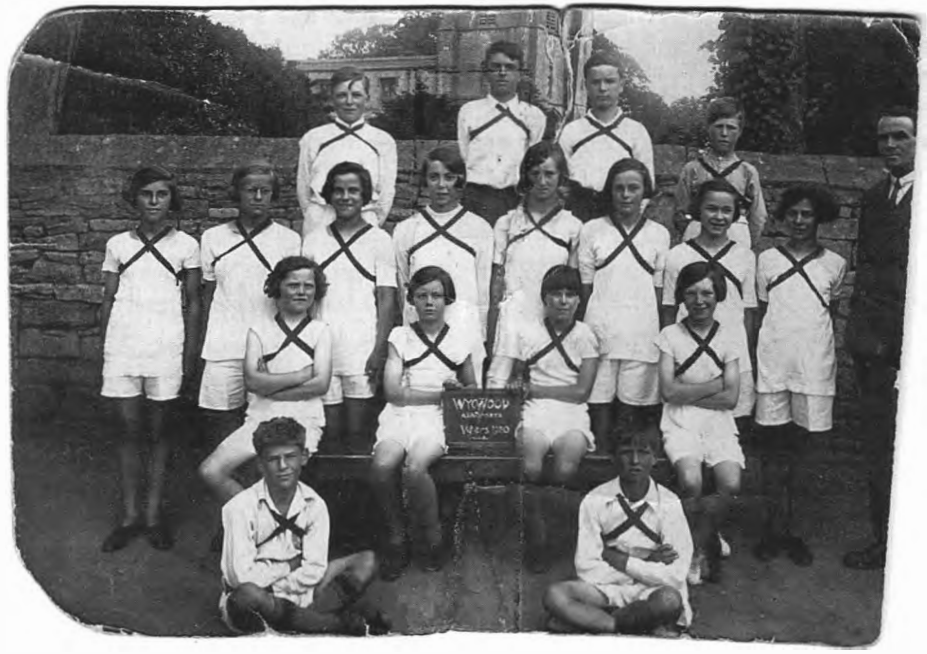
After the relative freedom of her life in Lee, Muriel found the rules and staff at the home very strict, although in her opinion the regime wasn't as strict as remembered by Myrtle Rice (see Wychwoods History Journal No. 23). She missed being with her family especially as no contact with them was allowed. Muriel says that her sister must have found life at St Michael's particularly hard because Flora was often 'naughty', on one occasion losing her temper and smashing her fist against a glass door pane and cutting her hand badly. Neither Muriel nor Flora had a visitor or letter from home during their time at St Michael's. The matron at this time was a Mrs McCall and her assistant was called Miss Walters.

The food at St Michael's was very plain (mostly bread and potatoes) and despite the rural location, Muriel has no memories of the inmates having any fresh fruit or vegetables, nor puddings or sweets of any kind. She remembers always going to bed hungry. Muriel says that the strict, 'no love' regime at St Michael's improved considerably with the arrival of a new, younger matron, Miss Greenough and her young daughter Ann in 1928 . She was very kind to the inmates and even attempted to give each of them a goodnight kiss. Some of the girls rejected this affectionate gesture because 'they didn't want it, they weren't used to it'. Muriel remembers a visit (and overnight stay) to the home during Miss Greenough's tenure by a Dr Westcott from London and she wonders if he was employed by the Waifs and Strays Society as a homes inspector.

Muriel has clear memories of attending Shipton-under-Wychwood village school. For example the teachers were called Mr and Mrs Horne and they had a son called George. She remembers that the local children and the St Michael's inmates mixed well together and were treated equally by the teachers. Muriel's closest friend at the home was Myrtle Rice but through school she also became friendly with Grace Dangerfield, the daughter of a local family whose farmhouse and land was close to St Michael's. She was also friendly with Cissie Small who came from a 'well off' family whose house was near Shipton Court.

It's Muriel's memories of Shipton Court that remain most vivid to her. For example she remembers that the then owner was from Scotland, that he was called John Graeme Thomson and he had two daughters, Joan and Dor. She speaks of Thomson as the most kind, caring and generous of men in that each Christmas he invited the St Michael's inmates to a party at the Court where there would be a huge Christmas tree and a gift for each inmate which had been chosen beforehand from a list. Also, Thomson was great fun and would join in the Christmas party games, once chasing her around the room and making her laugh. She and the other inmates looked forward all year to the Christmas party at Shipton Court and to Easter when Thomson would arrange for Easter eggs to be sent to St Michael's. Muriel also remembers that on certain other days in the year the inmates were allowed (escorted and in crocodile) to walk round Shipton Court's vast, magnificent gardens.

Before leaving the home at age fourteen, Muriel remembers with pride achieving the top grade of Standard X7 which allowed her to teach the younger children. She was also good at sports and was a member of the school athletics team which one year participated in Henley-on-Thames School's annual sports day. She has a photo of the 1930 St Michael's School sports team taken in the playground. (Muriel is middle row, third to the right of Mr Horne). Her proudest moment and major achievement at school, however, was being awarded the annual Bishop's Prize in 1929 or 1930.



Shipton under Wychwood School sports team 1930.
Muriel is in second row from top, third girl in from Mr Horne's right arm/sixth girl in from left of photo

Muriel thinks that the Waifs and Strays Society may have taken responsibility for finding the inmates places of employment once they had reached the leaving age of fourteen. The training at the home was designed to prepare inmates for a working life of domestic service and this is what happened to Muriel's sister Flora who was found work with a family in London. (Flora hated it and ran away, returning to her father in Lee.) Muriel, however, was sent from St Michael's to train as a children's nurse at a boys' home in Chislehurst, which may have been another Society home. She wasn't long at Chislehurst before she became very ill with osteomyelitis and was taken to a hospital at Farnborough where she remained for fifteen months. Muriel doesn't know at what point the Society ceased to have responsibility for her welfare and future.

By contacting The Wychwoods Local History Society I discovered that Muriel had spoken of her time at St Michael's before. In 1999, by chance, she read a letter to the editor of *Yours* magazine written by ex-inmate Nellie Shorter (née French). Nellie wanted to hear from any readers who had been at St Michael's at the same time and Muriel responded. A copy of her letter

to Nellie is in John Rawlins' St Michael's archive and Muriel and I are very grateful to John for sending us a copy, and also for copies of other documents and photos relating to her time at St Michael's. These have revived many more memories for Muriel, some very painful. However, she considers herself a stronger person for having experienced and survived what was a difficult time in her young life.

Acknowledgements
Grateful thanks to John Rawlins, Wendy Pearse and Trudy Yates for all the help and kindness I received during my research visit to Shipton-under-Wychwood in July 2008.

Muriel Alice Buchanan, 2008

St Mary's Church of England Primary School, Shipton under Wychwood

Sue Jourdan

ST Mary's Church of England Primary School, Shipton under Wychwood was built in 1854 and extended in 1887. It closed in December 1984. The older children had already moved to the Wychwood Primary and the five to nine year olds joined them in January 1985.

The two photographs on the following pages show first the school group a hundred years ago and second, the children on the last day of the school. If you can provide any more names, please let us know.

1909

Back row (left to right) S. Peters, David Harris, unknown, Jack Bond, Billy Timms, unknown, ? Siford, Billy Jones

Middle Row Mr Strong, Olive Strong, George Shayler, Frank Longshaw, George Dangerfield, Reg Bradley, Dick Avery, Wilf Powell, Grace Dangerfield, Mabel Pittaway, Gweneth Strong

Front Row Flossie Bridge, Muriel Moss (presumably the same who lived in Rose Cottage next to our house), Dot Bradly, Daisy Moss, Cissie Steel, Hilda Dale, Louise Santer, M. Watts

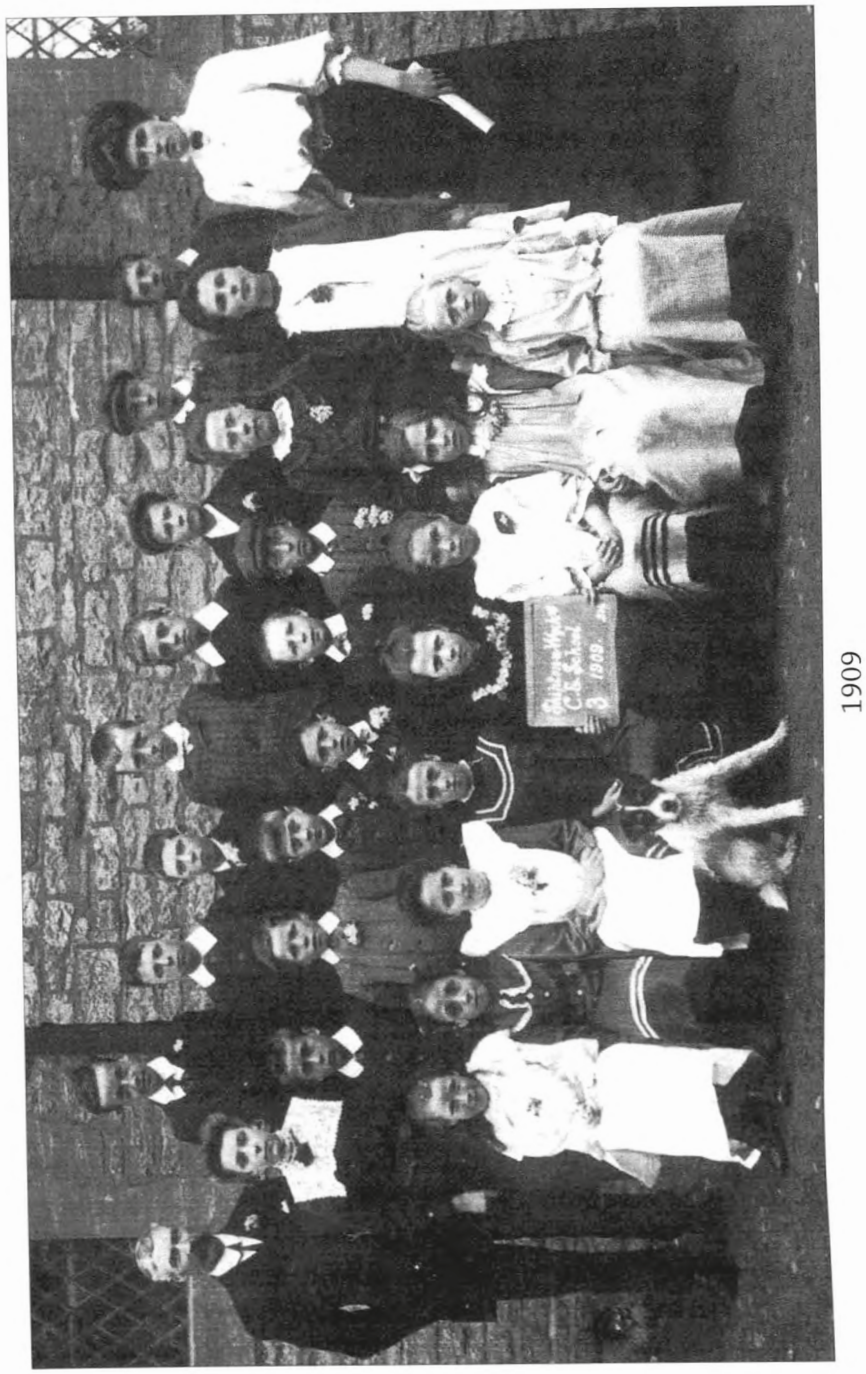
The dog belonged to Mr Strong.

1984

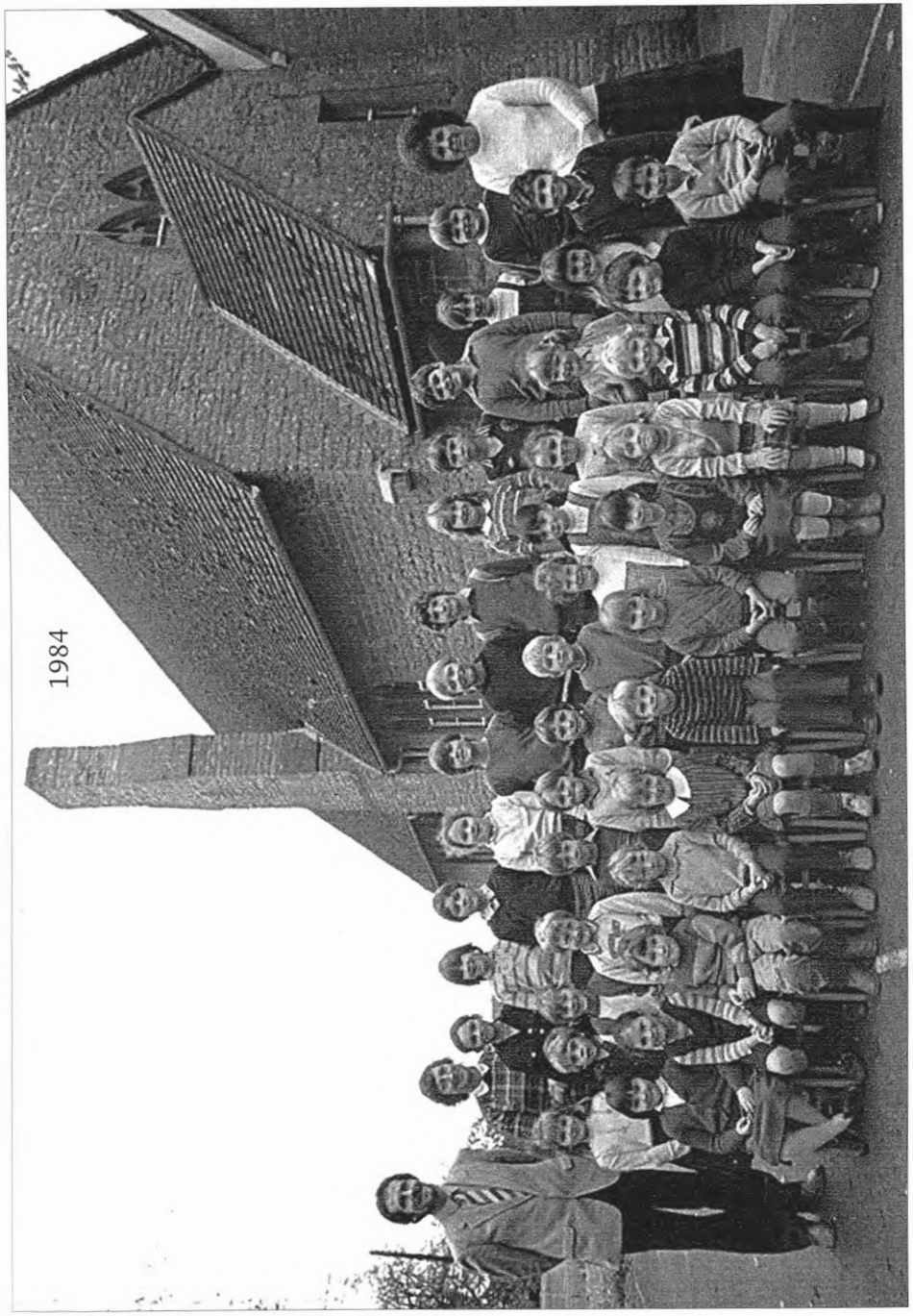
Back row (left to right) Geoff Clifford (Headteacher), Brenda Bean, Ian Fenton, Susan Johnson, Nicholas Miles, Joanna Cliffe, Josh ?, Justin Summers, Kenny Perry, Ilona Mix, Regan Taylor, Paul Underwood, Nicola Elliot, Jason Bridges, Rhona Preston

Middle row Zoe Proffit, Jamie Biles, Nicola McKenzie, Nigel Mullis, Ryan Pierce, Wayne Ford, Stuart Smith, Gavin Hill, Sara Nock, Andromeda ?, Candice Cockburn, Charlotte Townsend, Sarah Thacker, Peter Johnson

Front row Sarah Fletcher, Laura Bradley, Ben ?, Luke Gough, Ella Dore, Warren Elliot, ?Olivia Sutcliffe, Heidi Drewett, Karina Summers, Timothy Jacques, Jonathan Cliffe, Christopher Miles



1909



1984

Wychwoods Local History Society Publications in Print

Wychwoods History, an Index to Journals 1-19 (2004)
All the Society's past *Wychwoods History* journals are in print. An *Index* of articles, contributors, personal names, farms, maps and subjects in journals 1-19 is available free on receipt of a self-addressed C5 (229 × 162mm) envelope with two first class stamps. See www.wychwoodshistory.org

Wychwoods History 20 (2005) £3.50
Joan Rein Remembers; Milton Church; Roman Activity at Swinbrook; Shipton and the Church Courts; One of Yesterday's Heroes - Albert Oliver; The People of the Wychwoods 1881; 'Tripping The Light Fantastic Toe': Traditional Dance Musicians of Finstock

Wychwoods History 21 (2006) £3.50
Reginald Tiddy;The Thomsons and the Walkers of Shipton Court; James Baggs and his Little Black Book; The Manor Courts of Ascott D'Oilly; Gordon and Jean Carpenter; Kelcot House; Gossip in Lyneham

Wychwoods History 22 (2007) £3.50
Bruern Abbey 1147-1536; To the 'Lee' of the Walkers; William Smith, Clock Maker of Milton under Wychwood; The Society's Fieldwalk Programme - The Final Report; The Shipton Tillyards

Wychwoods History 23 (2008) £3.50
Defiant Women; Joan and Ben Townsend and Albert (Bim) Champness; The Society's Fieldwalk Programme - The Final Report Part 2. The Pottery; The Godfrey Case; The Little Girl From Salisbury Place; The St Michael's Connection

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Transcript with comprehensive introduction and personal name index

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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).

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

Cover illustration:
The Rawlins family: *left to right*: W. H. Rawlins (Rawlins' shop, garage, petrol and cars), Nell Rawlins, Margaret Rawlins, and Ernest Rawlins (John's grandfather). *Seated*: Joseph Rawlins (1829–1911) and Mary Gardner Rawlins (1838–1916), John's great-grandparents. Picture is *c.*1900. See cover of Journal 9, W. H. Rawlins standing beside one of his automobiles with Nell Rawlins at the wheel.

WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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