


# WYCHWOODS HISTORY

THE JOURNAL OF THE WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Number Six, 1991



**WYCHWOODS**  
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1 BN 0 9510372 7 7

Printed by Parchment (Oxford) Ltd

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## Foreword

The publication of our sixth journal marks the tenth birthday of the Wychwoods Local History Society. In our first journal published in 1985 I recalled that John Steane had emphasised at our inaugural meeting the importance of research and practical work as part of a society's activities. We have followed his advice to the full and can claim to have made a positive contribution to the history of a part of Oxfordshire about which comparatively little was known. That this has been possible is a tribute to the enthusiasm of members who have equipped themselves with the necessary skills in order to pursue their particular interests in the local history context. The wide range of these interests can be seen in the contents of our six journals to date and the two well researched albums of photographs.

The speakers at our monthly meetings have also covered a wide range of subjects and have sharpened our understanding of the delightful area in which we are lucky enough to live. These meetings and our other activities – field-walking, exhibitions, a Victorian evening, a survey of Shipton Church, the production and sale of mugs and tea towels – all these have had the full support of the membership.

There is still much to be done and many aspects of the history of the Wychwood villages to be explored. Two major gaps are an organised survey of our buildings and a coordinated oral history project, both of which are waiting for volunteers to come forward. Meanwhile it is a pleasure to record my thanks to all those who have contributed in so many different ways to the success of our first ten years and to look forward with optimistic expectation to the next ten.

Jack Howard-Drake  
Chairman

We are grateful to the Greening Lamborn Trust for a very generous grant towards the cost of publishing this issue of *Wychwoods History*, to Mr D.H.Pill and to Alfred Groves & Sons Ltd for their kind donations.

## Editorial

This edition of our journal has been produced 'under new management'. This is a fitting opportunity to pay tribute to our first editor, Sue Richards, for all the time and energy she has invested on the Society's behalf over the years. I am now in a position to appreciate fully how fortunate we have been to have enjoyed the benefit of her professional skills, freely given, in the production of the first five journals. I have a hard task to maintain her high standards.

It is a privilege to welcome James Bond to our pages again. His account of the monastic fishpond at Bruern follows the fascinating weekend of fieldwork carried out by Society members under his supervision. Several of the other contributions give this edition a distinct flavour of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Jack Howard-Drake's painstaking researches have once again demonstrated that Shipton was no rural backwater during this period, but had connections with people of distinction and influence in the land. Wendy Pearse's investigation of Leonard Boxe and his family is a pleasing extension of the Society's work into Ascott parish.

The extracts from Shipton School's log-books bring us firmly up to the nineteenth century, although John Rawlins' comments on the school's problems then with 'buildings, curriculum, financing and staffing' have a curiously contemporary ring. Similarly, certain villagers' earnest deliberations on the best way to achieve desirable improvements to the Beaconsfield Hall also strike a familiar note. Plus ça change...

In the article entitled 'From My Bookshelf', Frank Ware describes some of the books which he has found of particular interest and help in his appreciation of local history. It is to be hoped that this will become a regular feature and that other members will be willing to share the enjoyment of their favourite books with us all.

It is fascinating to read the recollections of a former Wychwoods resident, Mrs Olive Frost; perhaps her account will spur on other folk to record their early memories for us. Our thanks are due too to our other contributors, but we would also like to encourage more people to write for the journal. We are always pleased to consider material for publication.

Margaret Ware  
Editor

## The Untons

JACK HOWARD-DRAKE

In the early years of the reign of Edward VI effective power was in the hands of the King's uncle, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England. In 1550 he was ousted by John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland.

Northumberland at first worked in alliance with Somerset and arranged the marriage of his son John, Earl of Warwick, to Somerset's daughter, Lady Anne Seymour; but in January 1552 Somerset was executed on a charge of conspiracy. In the following year Northumberland was himself executed after the failure of his attempt to put Lady Jane Grey on the throne. John, who had been arrested with him, was imprisoned in the Tower and condemned to death. The sentence was not carried out and he was released in October 1554, only to die ten days later. On 29 April 1555, his widow, the Countess of Warwick, married Edward Unton of Wadley in Berkshire.

Her first marriage had been celebrated in a lavish ceremony at the royal palace of Sheen in the presence of the young King; the second took place in the small church of Hatford, near Wadley. The entry in the parish register reads simply 'Mr Edward Umpton esquire and the Ladie Anne Countesse of Warwick were married in the parish church of Hatford the third calends of May in the first and second yeares of the raignes of Phillip and Marie'. (Umpton is a common variant of Unton).

The marriage of a lady of the rank of countess to a man of the status of esquire was unusual, and the Lady Anne continued to be known as the Countess of Warwick for the rest of her life; but the Untons were of some standing in Oxfordshire and Berkshire in the Tudor period and Edward Unton was knighted at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth in January 1559. It has been suggested that the marriage was arranged by Sir Robert Keilway, Surveyor of the Court of Wards, who married Edward Unton's mother after his father's death. As part of the deal, Keilway acquired the manor of Minster Lovell.

Edward and Anne had seven children, Alexander, Edmund and Francis, who all died young, and Edward, Henry, Anne and Cecily. The family was to play a prominent part in the life of Shipton under Wychwood and the surrounding area in the second half of the 16th century.

In 1550 Northumberland had been granted, among many other estates, the manors of Shipton and Langley and the demesne lands of the recently

dissolved Bruern Abbey.<sup>1</sup> According to *The History of the King's Works*, he settled Langley on Anne as part of her jointure when she married his son John, so that it remained in her possession when she married Edward Unton.<sup>2</sup> It is assumed from this that the Untons occupied 'The Tudor Manor House' in Langley, where Edward is said to have entertained Queen Elizabeth in 1573, 1574 and 1575. There are a number of uncertainties about this because the evidence of royal and manorial property in Langley is unclear. There is not enough space to detail these uncertainties here, but the Pardon Roll for 1559 includes 'Edward Unton of Wadley co. Berks alias of Langley co. Oxford, knight', establishing that at that date he had property in Langley.<sup>3</sup> This would account for the fact that his daughters were baptised in Shipton church, Anne in 1559 and Cecily in 1561, since Langley was in Shipton parish.<sup>4</sup>

In his will, dated 29 May 1582, Edward Unton referred to his leases of Shipton and Bruern as having already been conveyed to his son Henry.<sup>5</sup> The dates of these conveyances are not known but the leases were in other hands when his daughters were baptised in Shipton church. He may have had a residence in Shipton by October 1568 when there is an entry in the parish register recording the burial of 'Mistress Cicilie Fawkner single before attending on my Lady Warwyke in Shipton', at a time when the registers were regularly recording the parts of the parish in which parishioners lived.

Unton's interests in Bruern in the 1560s seem to have been limited to rents from former tenants of the Abbey in Milton under Wychwood and Sandbroke (one of the Abbey's two granges, now Bruern Grange), and from two houses which were tenanted.<sup>6</sup> In 1574 the Unton arms were in a window of Mr Bridges house 'in Bruerne Abbey', and by 1578 the Untons had their own residence there. In that year Henry Unton was described as of Bruern when buying the manor of Marcham in Berkshire, and in 1579 Edward granted an annuity of £140 to his son Edward's wife, 'out of the manor or monastery of Bruern'.<sup>7</sup>

Edward Unton also left Henry 'all my lande in Oxfordshire which apperteyneth to the Manor of Mylton which I bought of the Queene, the whiche did once belong to Bremore'. The Priory of Breamore was in Hampshire where the Untons held property and where there was also a Milton; but the Hampshire Milton, was continuously in the hands of the Tyrell family throughout the 16th century and it does not appear in the list of the possessions of Breamore Priory at its dissolution.<sup>8</sup> Edward places Milton firmly in Oxfordshire and the reference to it is followed immediately by 'my two coppises which I bought of the Osbastons'. These were Haselev and Blackmore coppices in Wychwood, reinforcing the Milton under Wychwood connection. It is therefore tempting to assume that the word Bremore, although clearly written in the copy of the will, is a mistake for Bruern, and that the Untons held Milton under Wychwood as a manor granted by the Crown at the time of Edward's death; but there are no records of Milton under Wychwood being in the hands of the Crown as a separate

manor in the 16th century and the puzzle remains.

Sir Edward Unton had many calls on his time in Berkshire, Oxfordshire, London and elsewhere, being variously Member of Parliament for Malmesbury, Oxfordshire and Berkshire, Commissioner of the Peace for both counties, Commissioner of Musters and Sheriff in Berkshire, Commissioner of Muster of Horses in Oxfordshire, Keeper of Cornbury Park and of Malvern Chase in Worcestershire, and so on. His election as Member of Parliament for Oxfordshire took place at Burford in 1566, when he was elected as knight of the shire 'with such a voyce of the countie the lyke hath not byn sene'. He had apparently nursed his constituency carefully since a note in the Burford Memorandum and Account Books for 1561 records that wine and sugar were being bought constantly for Sir Edward's visits.<sup>9</sup>

Because of these many responsibilities and his peripatetic habits Edward Unton would have needed good agents and servants to look after his affairs. The parish registers give the names of some of those who lived in Shipton, ranging from men and women of gentle birth to the more humble. In 1567 the son of Master Richard Smith, gentleman and servant to Sir Edward, was baptised in Shipton church. Richard Smith went to Italy with Unton in 1564 and wrote a partial account of the tour. Also in 1567, Clodes Tybote, a Frenchman and surgeon to Sir Edward, was buried at Shipton. In 1574, 'Master Thomas Smith, servant to Sir Edward Unton knight and brother to Master Richard Smith of Shipton', was buried at Shipton and so, too, was Joan, the 'wife of George Chapman, shepherd to Sir Edward Unton and of Shipton'. Another of his servants, William Moale, was buried at Shipton in 1578.<sup>1</sup>

### The Burford Living

Edward Unton held Burford as part of his wife's estates and in 1571 he appointed Robert Temple to the living, claiming the advowson in right of his wife, but the claim was not accepted and the patronage was held to lie with the Queen. Temple was ejected and in 1572 the Queen appointed William Master, the Vicar of Shipton from 1564 to 1591, who held the Burford living in plurality. The incident led to an argument about the right to the tithes. Master, in a petition to Burleigh, alleged that Unton was hanging on to them in spite of the judgement against him and was prepared to spend a considerable amount of money to establish his claim. The outcome is not recorded but Master resigned the Burford living in 1578.<sup>10</sup>

Unton's dispute with Master was typical of much Elizabethan litigation and he was also prone to the violence so characteristic of many members of the Tudor nobility and gentry. Being a Commissioner of the Peace in Oxfordshire and Berkshire did not inhibit him from being involved in an affray, outside his house in London in November 1563, with Richard Grenville, later knight of the shire for Cornwall, and others. Grenville killed Roger Bannister, one of Unton's servants, who could perhaps have come from Shipton since Bannister is a name which occurs in the parish registers.<sup>11</sup>

In the autumn of 1571 Unton quarrelled with the Norris family over election to Parliament and his servants attacked those of John Norris at the Abingdon Quarter Sessions. He seems to have had friends in high places to protect him from the consequences of such activities. In his petition to Burleigh about the Burford living, Master asked him to get the Attorney General or the Recorder of London to intervene in the dispute, but not the Solicitor General, who, he understood was 'Sir Edwardes veray Friende'.<sup>10</sup>

### **Sir Edward's Death**

Sir Edward Unton died a very painful death in 1582. One of Sir Francis Walsingham's agents, Geoffey le Brumen, writing to him on 14 June from Wadley, described the appallingly gangrenous state of Unton's leg 'which had to be taken away with great difficulty since it was over the sinews of the foot'. Le Brumen, who is described in a note on another letter of his to Walsingham as 'Mr Geoffrey the Potheary', had 'a sure hope' that Unton would recover, but he died on 16 September.<sup>12</sup> He was not buried until 6 December, possibly in the hope that the delay would enable his eldest son, Edward, who was then in Italy, to attend the funeral. About this time, however, Edward was arrested by the Inquisition and imprisoned in Milan.<sup>13</sup> The dates are uncertain and it is not clear whether the arrest was in itself responsible for his absence; but whatever the reason, the funeral took place in Faringdon church without the eldest son being present. It was attended by, among others, two of the Heralds, Somerset and Portcullis, who issued a certificate recording the event. It says that Unton 'departed this lyf at London' and that 'the corps, well accompanyd, was very orderly from thence conveyed to Wadley aforesaid, and decently enterred according to his estate and degre in the parishe churche of Farington'. Since the certificate was witnessed by Henry Unton and his brother-in-law, Valentine Knightley, as 'in every of the partes and contentes therof ... to be true', it is presumably to be believed; but the thought of Unton being carried to London to die after the amputation of his gangrenous leg at Wadley, and his body being taken back with full ceremony to Wadley for burial nearly three months later, stretches credulity to its limit.

### **Lady Anne's Madness**

Lady Anne is not mentioned in her husband's will and she was not at his funeral. On 8 October 1582, about three weeks after his death and some two months before his burial, an enquiry was ordered into her lunacy. It was held at Burford on 25 October and decided that she had been a lunatic since 1 May 1566.<sup>14</sup> This is a strangely precise date for which no reason is given, but if it has any real significance, suggests that the enquiry was able to link her madness with some particular event in her past, perhaps, for example, with post-natal depression after the birth of her last child. The tragedies in her early life may also have contributed to a general mental instability.<sup>15</sup> The enquiry seems to have been primarily concerned with the way in which the

Lady Anne managed her property during her lunacy and perhaps the precise date was fixed with an eye to this.

At about the time of the enquiry, Henry Unton petitioned the Queen for the custody of his mother, apparently to secure formal authority to administer her estate rather than simple custody, since he says, untruthfully, that his father '... by his last will bequeathed her solely unto me ...'. (Henry was not above pulling a fast one when it suited him—it was said that he '... was soe cunning a bargayner for landes that they which dealt with him were commonly greate loosers...').<sup>16</sup> What does have the ring of truth and is more to Henry's credit is his comment in the petition that his father, in his lifetime, had given him custody of his mother with a competent allowance; but he adds that he had spent 1000 marks (£667) on building a house for her and that his income is such that it would not be easy for him to look after his mother properly from his own resources.<sup>17</sup>

It is difficult to understand why such a substantial sum of money should have been spent on building a house for Lady Anne given the extent of the Unton's property. Perhaps, because of her state of mind, she had to be isolated and a specially built house was needed for the purpose. Unfortunately Henry did not have the foresight to say where it was built, but it could have been in Shipton, since the reference to Lady Fawkner attending on Lady Anne in Shipton is dated 1568, two years after the official start of her lunacy. Henry says that his mother 'hath ben and is best pleased with the place and my government both for her dyett as also for her other entertaynements fitt for her health and quietness which being taken away ... the only meane to shorten her tyme'. This raises the intriguing possibility that Henry took care of his mad mother somewhere in Shipton for some 22 years until her death in February 1588. No record of her burial has been found.

### **Edward Unton**

Edward Unton was about 25 years old when his father died. Son of the Countess of Warwick, married twice into prominent county families, heir to large estates, and friend of the Earl of Leicester and Sir Francis Walsingham, he had every opportunity to make his mark at court and in the affairs of Oxfordshire and Berkshire; but his life was a story of failure. His father recognised his inadequacy in making his will. In his letter to Walsingham reporting on Sir Edward's last illness, Geoffrey le Brumen wrote '... [Sir Edward] made his will ... I see that he wishes to do a good deal for his younger son Mr Henry, especially in ready money, because he cannot make him his heir to the prejudice of his elder brother'.<sup>12</sup> The main cause of Edward's financial ruin was his arrest and treatment in Italy, which also left him a sick man. He was released in the spring of 1584 after a complicated and very expensive rescue operation by Henry. In 1587 he had to sell land to repay Henry's expenses and tried to recover some of his losses in the colonisation of Munster from which he was recalled by the threat of the Armada. In 1589

he went on the expedition to Portugal undertaken to restore Don Antonio to the throne. In one account he was 'slaine in the Portugall voyage': in another he was 'laid low by wounds or disease [and] returned to Plymouth to die intestate on 27 June 1589'. His brother Henry inherited what was left of his estates.

Not surprisingly Edward Unton's involvement in Shipton's affairs was limited. The only direct reference to him in this context is a cryptic entry in the parish register for 4 January 1586 recording the baptism of Edward Coales 'the younger son of Edward of the new Lodge by Ramsden then bap by reason of younge Master Edward Unton at Bruern'.<sup>1</sup>

### Henry Unton

Henry was the member of the Unton family most prominent in Shipton's affairs. According to Fuller's *Worthies of Berkshire*, 'Henry Umpton Knight was born (as by all the indications in the Heralds' Office doth appear) at Wadley in [Berkshire]';<sup>18</sup> and Wadley is given as his birthplace in the Dictionary of National Biography, with the date of ?1557. Other sources give c.1558, which is the better date as Edward, his elder brother, was 25 at the time of the enquiry into his mother's lunacy in October 1582. A musician, linguist and patron of the arts, Henry was educated at Oriel College, Oxford, and the Middle Temple, and entered the service of Sir Christopher Hatton, Vice-Chamberlain and later Lord Chancellor. He and Hatton's nephew, William, became lifelong friends and were together at the battle of Zutphen in the Netherlands where both were knighted and Sir Philip Sidney died of his wounds. At Sidney's funeral they walked together among the 12 knights of Sidney's relatives and friends.

The battle of Zutphen took place on 22 September 1586 and Henry was knighted on 29 September. It is an indication of his interest and close involvement in the life of Shipton that he was back in the parish on 20 October when he signed the Crown Inn Charity deed.<sup>19</sup> He was very much the Elizabethan man of the world, combining his local responsibilities with national and international affairs. He was a Justice of the Peace and Keeper of Cornbury Park in 1583, a year in which he was one of the arbitrators appointed to settle a dispute about estates and wardship between Sir John Conway and Anthony Bowrne in Chipping Norton.<sup>20</sup> He was Member of Parliament for New Woodstock in 1584 and as the representative of a borough much concerned with the wool trade showed himself a supporter of a free market economy, saying in a debate on a cloth bill, 'of this I am sure, what fault so ever is in our cloth ... the merchant doth answer it to the buyer beyond the sea'. In 1585 he was pursuing actions for debt in the Witney Borough Court, against Thomas Taylor, mason, for 17s, and against Mark Fathers, tailor, for 8s. Both actions were conducted by his agents, one of whom was Edward Colles.<sup>21</sup> If this was the Edward Coales whose son was baptised by reason of young Master Edward Unton, it shows Henry Unton of Bruern employing as his agent a man living in Ramsden.

These activities were briefly interrupted by his service in the Netherlands but on his return he continued to carry out his various responsibilities in Oxfordshire and Berkshire. He was Deputy Lieutenant of Oxfordshire from 1587 to 1593. He was also High Constable of Chadlington Hundred and in 1587 appointed John Crodman alias Crowpenny of Minster Lovell and Giles Pirie of Chipping Norton, both gentlemen, as constables.<sup>22</sup> In June 1587 he was ordered by the Privy Council to enquire into a land dispute between William Rainoldes of Faringdon and John Fisher of Longworth. On the 29 July 1588, when the Spanish and English fleets were fighting their last engagement at Gravelines, he was ordered to take charge of 'a certeyn number of lawnces, light horse and petronels (large pistols) on horseback', brought together voluntarily by a number of gentlemen, and to get them to Richmond by 8 August. In October 1590 he was involved in an enquiry into a dispute between Lady Broome, widow of Sir Christopher Broome, and her son George, who had accused her of harbouring persons dangerous to the state. In December of the same year he and others were ordered to investigate allegations by William Merrick of Abingdon that William Androwes of Sutton Courtney was engrossing grain to the detriment of the poor who had to buy at high prices in times of scarcity.<sup>23</sup>

He had another and unusual task to carry out in 1590 which was obviously a busy year. Purveyance was an unpopular arrangement whereby the Crown was entitled to buy provisions at less than the market price as the Court travelled round the country. In Oxford it was forbidden for a purveyor to take provisions within five miles of the city unless the Queen came within seven miles. In 1590 there was a dispute between the Crown and the Vice Chancellor of the University and St John's College about the true measurement of the five miles. It was decreed by a number of learned judges that the distance should be marked by a line around the city measured from the gates. Henry Unton was ordered, 'for the quietness of the said Universitie and decydinge of the said controversie ... to cawse stakes to be sett up accordinglee at th'end of everie of those five myles so measured everie waye from the gates of the said towne that yt may be knowne howe farr they extend'.<sup>24</sup>

In 1591 Henry was appointed ambassador to France leaving to take up his post on 1 July. This involved him in much preparation including the levying of soldiers for service in France;<sup>25</sup> but he still found time in April of that year to convey the chapel, chapelyard and other property in Leafield to Giles Fitchett and five other trustees, that they 'permit and suffer the Chapel to be and continue a Chapel or Church for the performance of Divine Service and administration of the Sacraments ...'.<sup>26</sup>

Henry returned to England in June 1592 and was present when the Queen visited Oxford in September of that year. On 13 August the Oxford City Council had agreed that gloves should be given to noblemen and others present at the forthcoming royal visit and the Chamberlains' accounts record the purchase of two pairs for Sir Henry and his lady at 10 shillings. They may

have been glad of them when the assembled dignitaries greeted Her Majesty at Godstow Bridge as the weather was foul.<sup>27</sup>

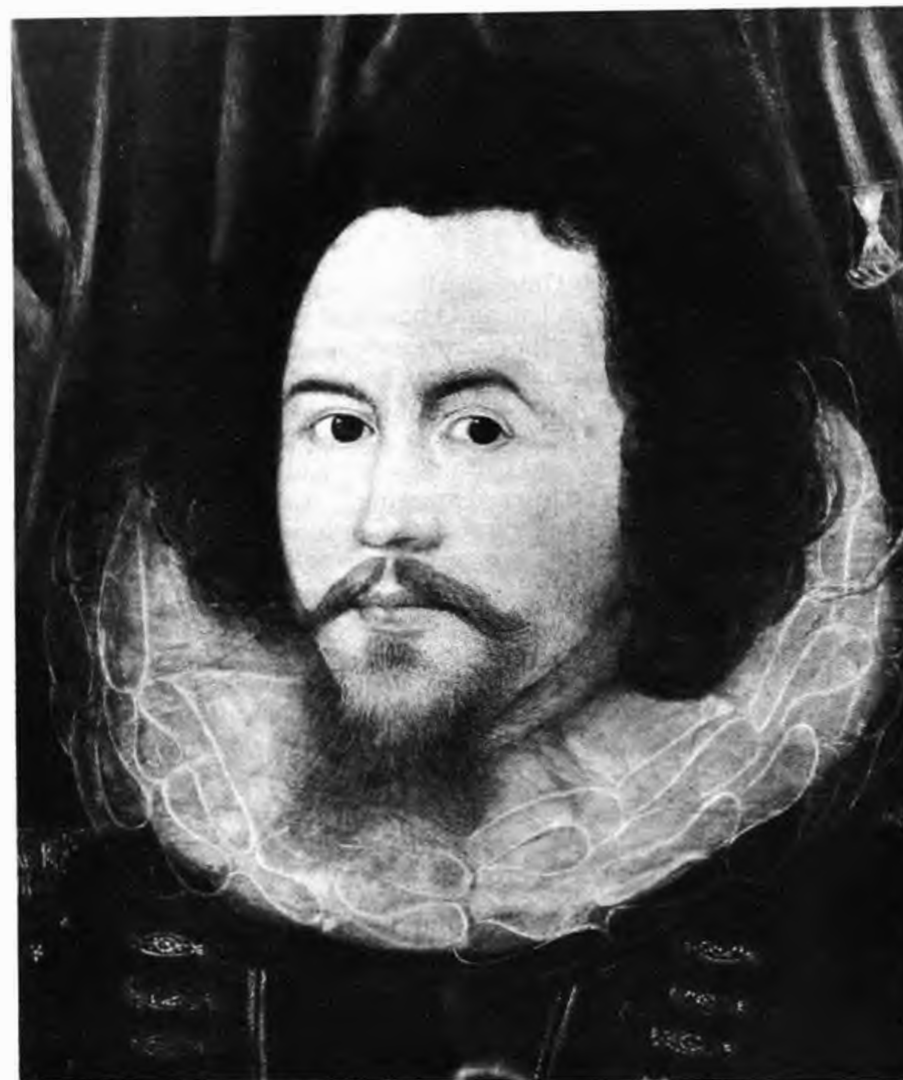
Henry moved to Berkshire where he was Deputy Lieutenant from 1593 and was elected knight of the shire for the 1593 Parliament. He greatly offended the Queen by a speech he made in the course of a debate on the Crown's request for a subsidy and was for a time in disgrace.<sup>28</sup> He was, however, reappointed Ambassador to France in December 1595, but became ill early in 1596 and died at Henri IV's camp before the Spanish held town of La Fere on 23 March. His body was brought home with great ceremony for burial at Faringdon on 8 July.

He died intestate and without children and with debts amounting to £23,000. In spite of his reputation for astuteness in financial affairs, he had suffered the fate of many of Elizabeth's servants and found service to the Crown ruinously expensive. His second embassy to France was particularly so and it is not surprising that he died in debt; but in November 1595, just before leaving for France, he had conveyed most of his estate, by then all in Berkshire, to a number of trustees, subject to his own life's interest. Part of the estate, after his death, was to be held in the interests of his wife and part for the payment of his debts. There was a good deal of family squabbling and litigation after he died and a private bill 'for establishing the Possessions of Sir Henry Unton, Knighte, lately deceased, and for the payment of his Debtes', was introduced in Parliament.<sup>29</sup> The text of the bill has not survived but the family estates were eventually sold and broken up.

### Lady Dorothy

Henry Unton's wife was Dorothy, the eldest daughter of Sir Thomas Wroughton of Broad Hinton in Wiltshire. The date of their marriage is not known. Roy Strong quotes E.K. Chambers who gives it as 1580 but notes that Chambers' reference is not to be found. Otherwise the earliest evidence of their being married is in a letter of the Queen's of 22 August 1591 in which she sends Henry her good wishes for his recovery from an attack of jaundice at Dieppe shortly after his arrival in France '... wishing you to have care of youre owne health, which we desire as much to heare of as any freind youe have, excepting your owne wife'.

The provision which Henry had made for Lady Dorothy before leaving for France had left her a wealthy widow as is shown by the account of his property in Wadley and Faringdon in *The Unton Inventories*. In 1598 she married George Shirley of Northampton but only after laying down some stringent conditions. Dudley Carleton, later ambassador at Venice and the Hague, who was with Unton on his last embassy to France, wrote to John Chamberlain, 'first, she requires to reserve her own living entire to herself, and to bestow it without any control; second, she demands a jointure of £1000 a year; thirdly, £500 in land to be tied upon her son if there shall be one; fourthly, if it should happen that she and her husband fall out, she requires £500 a year out of his living, and to live apart from him, with that added to her living



*Sir Henry Unton—detail from the memorial picture by an unknown artist. Courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London.*

of Faringdon; and fifth, if she chance to find fault with her husband's unsufficiency to choose another bedfellow'. Chamberlain commented that 'as poor a man as I am I would not buy such another of the price'.<sup>30</sup>

The records are strangely silent about her life in Shipton where one would have expected such a formidable lady to have exerted considerable



influence. The only reference to her is in William Master's will. She was among the many people to whom he left books, in her case a copy of a popular general medical work by Alexis of Piedmont, and *The Birth of Mankind or The womans booke*, by Eucharius Roesslin.<sup>31</sup> These books were said to be already in her hands. If Master had only lent them to her in the first place, his nerve may have failed when it was a question of asking for them back.

### The Untons and Religion

There is a reference to Lady Unton in a letter to Henry from the Earl of Essex dated 24 June 1592. 'This gallant and I have had a great deal of discourse. I do assure you he was the best messenger, and the wellcomest you could have sent. He is in the best wayne that ever you had him. The text he doth preach on is my Lady Umpton's nott having of a child...'. There is nothing to identify the gallant or explain why he should have preached about Lady Unton not having a child. Perhaps he was Unton's 'good friend Master Wright, your Worship's most diligent and learned Preacher ... that zealous Trumpettor of God's word ...', who was among the divines mentioned as receiving Sir Henry and Lady Unton's patronage, in a sermon preached at St Paul's Cross in 1594. He was the editor of a book of verses published in Oxford in memory of Unton in 1596, Unton's chaplain in France, and Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry when he died. Unton thought highly of him, referring to him as 'a very honest man and of great learning and discretion, and the greatest comfort of my life'. Others were not so favourably impressed. Wright was appointed at one stage in his career as chaplain in ordinary to James I and in March 1610 an observer wrote that Oxford men had lately proved the most prominent among preachers at court and Wright was reckoned the worst of them. Henry may have been kindly disposed to Wright because of the firm support which he and his father gave to the protestant cause. Sir Edward Unton affirmed in his will his belief in the heavenly life which Christ had prepared for his elect children, the doctrine of predestination which Calvin made a cornerstone of his theology. In his letter to Walsingham, himself a zealous protestant, about Sir Edward's last illness, Geoffrey le Brumen wrote that Henry and his father sought 'to extend the kingdom of Christ, wherat you rejoice as I have heard from you; and indeed they keep good order in their house and establish good ministers here'. He added that Edward had instructed his son to govern himself by Walsingham's advice 'and that of those of the Religion'.<sup>32</sup>

Henry's patronage of protestant clergy showed that he followed these instructions and he would have had much in common with William Master, himself a firm defender of the protestant faith. Master's quarrel with his father over the Burford appointment does not seem to have affected their friendship; Henry too received a book in Master's will, appropriately enough 'Calvins two or three Sermons in French beinge a little red book gilted on the outside of the leaves'.<sup>10</sup> Between them, in the latter half of Master's

ministry, they must have exerted a strong protestant influence on the religious life of Shipton parish.

When Henry's brother, Edward, returned to England in 1584 after his brush with the Inquisition, he was suspected of being a Catholic agent but was twice elected knight of the shire for Berkshire and given responsible military appointments. As he is also on record as examining a suspected papist in 1585 and reporting the discovery of popish relics in 1587 in the house of Francis Yeates of Lyford, it seems that he was at pains to demonstrate his loyalty to the protestant faith.<sup>32</sup>

The extent of Lady Dorothy's loyalty is less certain. When she married George Shirley, he was already suspect as a papist, and when he died in 1622 it was 'in the bosom of his mother the Roman Catholic church'. Dorothy died in 1634 and there is nothing particularly protestant in the preamble to her will; but she was to be buried in Faringdon church by her '... husband Sir Henry Unton ... without any pompe or solemnity, and with as small charge as may be, in the night'. In choosing to be buried in Faringdon and naming Henry as her husband, she was following what appears to have been the not uncommon practice of widows who remarried regarding themselves for the rest of their lives as the widows of their first husbands. There is an example of this in Shipton church where the Reade memorial commemorates Dame Elizabeth Reade as the widow of Sir Edward Reade even though she remarried and outlived Edward by nearly 40 years.

### The Unton Chapel

Whatever her religious sympathies, Lady Dorothy showed a pious face to the world after Henry's death. Dudley Carleton wrote that 'She has very well beautified her sorrow with all the ornaments of an honourable widow. Her black velvet bed, her Cyprus veil, her voice tuned with a mournful accent, and her cupboard (instead of casting bottles) adorned with prayer books, and epitaphs do make her chamber look like the house of sorrow'.<sup>33</sup> The sarcastic tone suggests that Lady Dorothy's grief may not have been entirely genuine; but genuine or not, she erected a monument to Henry's memory in the Unton chapel in Faringdon church, which also contains memorials to his father, grandfather, great-grandfather and various other members of the family. The monument was not completed until 1606 and was badly damaged during the civil war. Henry's memorial now consists of a tablet on the west wall of the chapel erected in 1658. In the words of the editor of *The Unton Inventories*, Lady Dorothy is represented by '... a female effigy, now loose in the chapel, which has been assigned to Lady Dorothy, Sir Henry's wife'. He adds 'This appears not improbable'. Similar lack of conviction about the authenticity of the figure is in a letter in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for 1796 which refers to the 'efflegies (sic) of [Henry's] lady which appears kneeling on the floor ...' and adds that it 'must have been there in Mr Ashmole's time [17th century] ... though he makes no mention of it'.<sup>34</sup> The absence of firm evidence may demand caution in identifying the effigy as that of Lady

Dorothy but it would be sad to shatter the illusion, if illusion it be.

### The Memorial Portrait

Lady Unton also commissioned in memory of her husband the memorial portrait which is the subject of Roy Strong's article in *Archaeologia* 1965. It was among her 'story pictures' and is now in the National Portrait Gallery. It is unfortunately too large and detailed to be used here in full, but the portrait of Sir Henry taken from the middle of the painting is reproduced. As described by Strong, the picture summarises the main events of Henry Unton's life from birth to burial in Faringdon. '[Unton] is depicted in a richly upholstered chair while around him are grouped many extraordinary and wondrous scenes. We see him as a baby nursed by his mother; as a soldier accompanied by the panoply of war with tents, horse, armour and attendant squires; on horseback, sun-shade in hand, riding through Italy, or escorted by trumpeters and servants into France. There are other scenes of banqueting, masquing, and revelry; but the mirth of festival gives way to counsel with learned divines and the solitude of study. There are also more sombre tableaux: a death-bed surrounded by weeping and praying servants and a hearse draped in black being jogged through the bleak English countryside, while beggar women and children, the blind and lame, sit, grief-stricken, watching a gaunt procession of black-clad mourners. These are making their way towards a steeped church to the left, where a large congregation listens attentively to a sermon and before which there stands a splendid tomb, gaily tricked out in scarlet, black, and gold, on which there lies the recumbent effigy of a knight presided over by a lady attired in widow's weeds'.

A detail in the painting is a small area of woodland with the word 'Whichwod' at the bottom. It appears between the representation of Henry's birth and that of his being at Oriel College. This led Strong to conclude that Henry was born at Ascott under Wychwood, for which there is no evidence.<sup>35</sup> It probably refers to the fact that Henry inherited from his father his 'estate and interest in Cornebury Parke in the countie of Oxon, and in the office and of keeping the sayd Park'.

### Conclusion

The memorial portrait provides colourful testimony of Henry Unton's wide range of interests and experience in the course of an active and eventful life. The subject is merely touched on in this article; but enough has been said about him and his family, their friends, their colleagues and their servants, to show that the Untons must have exerted considerable influence on the parish. Perhaps their position in the community is epitomised by Henry Unton and the Crown Inn charity. Here is a man, newly knighted and just returned from the battle of Zutphen where his close friend Sir Philip Sidney died, sitting down with the vicar and twelve other local people to set up a charity for the repair of bridges and the relief of the poor. In this, as in all

he did, Henry Unton displayed the best qualities of the Elizabethan gentleman, at one moment playing his part on the national stage—in Parliament, on the battlefield, in the courts—and at the next, conscientiously carrying out his local responsibilities for church and chapel, for roads and bridges, and for the poor. The close involvement of men like Henry Unton in such local affairs ensured that parishes like Shipton were not the rural backwaters they are often said to have been in the 16th century, but were a living part of the energetic world of Elizabethan England.

### Notes and References

Much of the information in this article is taken from (i) *The Unton Inventories*, edited by J.G.Nichols and published by The Berkshire Ashmolean Society in 1841; (ii) Roy Strong's article 'Sir Henry Unton and his Portrait: An Elizabethan Memorial Picture and its History', *Archaeologia* 1965, and (iii) P.W.Hasler ed., *The House of Commons 1558-1603* (1981), iii, pp.540-54. To save space, references to these sources are not given except where it has been thought necessary to expand or comment on them.

### Abbreviations

APC	Acts of the Privy Council
CPR	Calendar of Patent Rolls
CSPDom	Calendar of State Papers Domestic
CSPFor	Calendar of State Papers Foreign
CSPSp	Calendar of State Papers Spanish
Hasler	P.W.Hasler ed., <i>The House of Commons 1558-1603</i>
Nichols	J.G.Nichols ed., <i>The Unton Inventories</i>
OA	Oxfordshire Archives
PRO	Public Record Office
Strong	Roy Strong, 'Sir Henry Unton and his Portrait', <i>Archaeologia</i> 1965
VCH	Victoria County History

<sup>1</sup> *CPR* 1549, pp.71-74.

<sup>2</sup> H.M.Colvin ed., *The History of the King's Works* (1982), iv, pp.160-61.

<sup>3</sup> *CPR* 1588-60, p.236.

<sup>4</sup> OA, MS.DD.Par. Shipton under Wychwood d.1.

<sup>5</sup> PRO Prob 11/65. Edward Unton wrote 'My lease of Bruerne which I boughte of Mr.Markham, and my lease of Shipton whiche I boughte of Sir Henry Lee knighte, I doe not here mention for that I have allreadye conveyed theme over to my said sonne Henry Unton, and I will that my said sonne Henrye Unton shall houlde and enjoye the same accordinge to my conveyances to him thereof made'. These

conveyances have not survived and it is not known when Edward Unton acquired his leases; but Thomas Markham did not get Bruern until 24 February 1567 and Sir Henry Lee got Shipton on 26 May 1570. (*CPR 1566-69*, p.69, 1569-72, p.69).

<sup>6</sup> *CPR 1560-63*, p.10.

<sup>7</sup> W.H.Turner ed., *Visitations of the County of Oxford*, (1871), pp.19-20; *VCH Berkshire*, iv, pp.355-6; Nichols, p.lxxxii.

<sup>8</sup> *VCH Hampshire*, ii, p.172, v, pp.193-4, p.207.

<sup>9</sup> R.H.Gretton, *The Burford Records* (1920), p.411.

<sup>10</sup> J.Howard-Drake, 'William Master, Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood', *Wychwoods History No.2*, Wychwoods Local History Society (1986).

<sup>11</sup> J.G.Nichols ed., *Diary of Henry Machyn*, Camden Society (1848), p.296; *CPR 1560-63*, p.509.

<sup>12</sup> *CSPFor 1582*, pp.87-88, 1585, p.219.

<sup>13</sup> Strong says that Edward Unton was on his way home from Padua. His source (*CSPSp 1580-86*, p.443) gives Venice.

<sup>14</sup> *CPR 1580-82*, p.248; MS Harley 760, f.252v.

<sup>15</sup> I am indebted to Dr Tom McQuay for this suggestion.

<sup>16</sup> J.Bruce ed., *Diary of John Manningham*, Camden Society (1868), p.136.

<sup>17</sup> *CSPDom 1581-90*, p.74.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (1811), i, p.91.

<sup>19</sup> OA, Shipton P.C. I/i/2.

<sup>20</sup> *CSPDom 1581-90*, p.91.

<sup>21</sup> J.L.Bolton and M.M.Maslem eds., *Calendar of the Court Books of the Borough of Witney*, Oxfordshire Record Society, LIV (1985), p.108. The Calendar contains other references to Henry Unton as Justice of the Peace.

<sup>22</sup> Bodleian Library MS Top Oxon d.169.

<sup>23</sup> *APC 1587-88*, p.121; 1588, p.201; 1590-91, p.36, pp.156-7.

<sup>24</sup> *APC 1590*, pp.318-20.

<sup>25</sup> *CSPDom 1591-94*, p.36.

<sup>26</sup> OA, MSS. DD. Par. Leafield c5, e2.

<sup>27</sup> H.F.Salter ed., *Oxford Council Acts 1583-1626*, Oxford Historical Society, LXXXVII (1928) p.71 and p.372.

<sup>28</sup> J.E.Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments 1584-1601*, (1957) p.306.

<sup>29</sup> *Statutes of the Realm*, iv, pt.2, pp.889-90.

<sup>30</sup> *CSPDom 1598-1601*, p.34; Sarah Williams ed., *Letters of John Chamberlain*, Camden Society (1861), p.33.

<sup>31</sup> In J.Howard-Drake *op. cit.* (n.10), it was suggested that Henry Unton had a wife called Alexis. This was based on a misreading of William Master's will (*mea culpa*, J.H-D). Alexis is an abbreviation for *The secrets of the reverende maister Alexis of Piemount (sic) contayning remedies against diseases*. Translated out of the French by W. Warde. I am grateful to Paul Morgan for this information.

<sup>32</sup> *CSPDom 1581-90*, p.264, p.384.

<sup>33</sup> *CSPDom 1595-97*, p.265.

<sup>34</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1796), pp. 1069-71; Elias Ashmole, *The Antiquities of Berkshire* (1719), pp.184-190.

<sup>35</sup> Strong pp.55-6. Strong says first that Henry Unton was born at Wychwood and then at Ascott under Wychwood. His references do not support his statement and there is nothing in the Ascott parish registers, which date from 1569, to suggest any connection with the family. (OA, MS. DD. Par. Ascott under Wychwood d.1)

## Leonard Boxe Gentleman of Ascott

WENDY PEARSE

If you stand on the southern side of the A361 Shipton-Chipping Norton road opposite the Lyneham turn, and face south-east across the Evenlode valley to the further ridge where the massed regiments of Wychwood Forest crown the horizon, you will notice a group of larger, more individual trees at the western extremity of the forest. These guardians mark the moated site, formerly known as Roger Hill Lodge, where in the early seventeenth century lived a gentleman by the name of Leonard Boxe.

Then, should your eyes follow the line of the main street through Ascott village from the level crossing towards Shipton, again at the western end of the village, you will see a group of trees behind which stands a farmhouse called Goldstone, which was very possibly erected on Leonard Boxe's instructions. At your feet is the boundary of Ascott parish which runs east and west along the A361 and southwards across the valley to the forest limits and just west of the site of the Ascott barrows. Scattered all over this land in the open fields and meadows of the seventeenth century village were the strips of arable and grass, some of which Leonard Boxe rented from Sir Rowland Lacy, lord of the manor of Shipton and builder, in 1603, of Shipton Court. Perhaps Leonard and his wife were amongst some of the first guests to dine amidst the impressive grandeur of that newly erected country house.

Leonard's wife Marve, when she died in 1635, asked to be buried in the chancel of the church at Ascott, presumably to lie near the body of her husband who had predeceased her by twelve years. So it seems likely that beneath the flooring of Ascott church lie some skeletal remains of these seventeenth century parishioners. Today, through a few tantalising survivals of early documents, we are able to envisage something of their life in the seventeenth century.

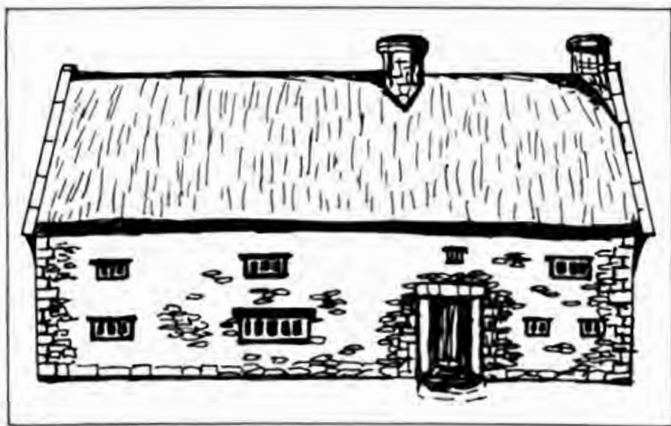
*Leonard Boxe of Roger Hill Lodge, Gentleman*, as his inventory defines him, was just conceivably connected with the Boxes of Witney amongst whom was the founder of Henry Box School, although the only possible reference to Leonard's presence in that town is in a case at Witney Court in 1600, where a Leonard Boxe was to act as umpire in a paternity settlement. To date, the earliest Wychwoods reference to him is for 1605, when together with Lady Saye of Broughton Castle and Lady Tanfield of Burford he stood godparent to Elizabeth, daughter of a William Peesley, at Ascott.

Yet from 1608, when his grandson Thomas Fifeield was baptized at

Shipton, until Leonard's burial in 1623 at Ascou, we can be certain that he was a local resident.

The entry of grandson Thomas's baptism reads as follows 'Thomas, son of Master William Fifefelds at Coldston Master Boxes his house'. Leonard's daughter Anne had married a William Fifefeld and their second son Richard's baptism was also entered as 'at Coldston'. Therefore it seems very likely that the stone farmhouse was erected for Leonard at the beginning of the seventeenth century on land just inside the boundary of Shipton parish, which accounts for the baptisms being conducted in that village. However the subsequent births of three more sons and two daughters to Anne and William are missing from the registers, so perhaps this young couple actually lived or later made their home elsewhere. Even so, one day in December 1608 we may imagine the whole family, Anne and William with baby Thomas, Leonard, wife Marye, and their two other daughters Margaret and Mary, perhaps accompanied by friends and relatives, en route from Coldstone along the lower road to Shipton, for the baptismal service in Shipton church. The men may have worn satin or silk doublets with ruffs, trunk hose, long boots and short cloaks and the women farthingale gowns of velvet or silk with stiff, high backed collars and padded sleeves, probably topped with warm fur-trimmed cloaks.

We can learn a little more about Coldstone from two sources. It would appear from a survey made for Sir Rowland Lacy in 1617 that although Leonard owned the house, the surrounding yard, garden and orchard were Lacy property, together with the closes adjoining, as far as and including those of the present Langley Mill. The plan of the house called Coldstone



*Possible appearance of Coldstone. Shipton Parish Register records 'A Mr Box's House' in 1608. Could this indicate a noted new house of stone, a product of the Great Rebuilding between 1560 and 1640?*

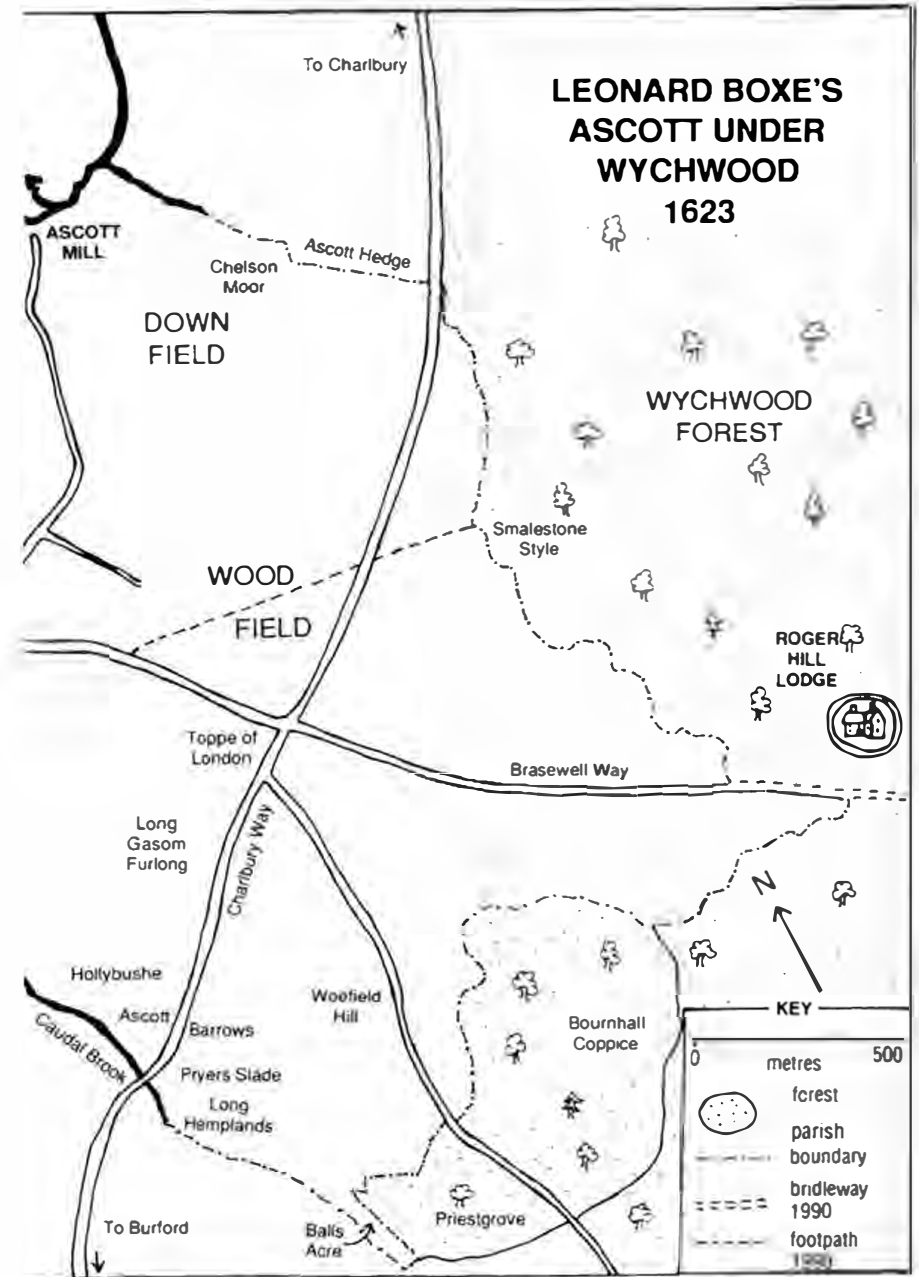
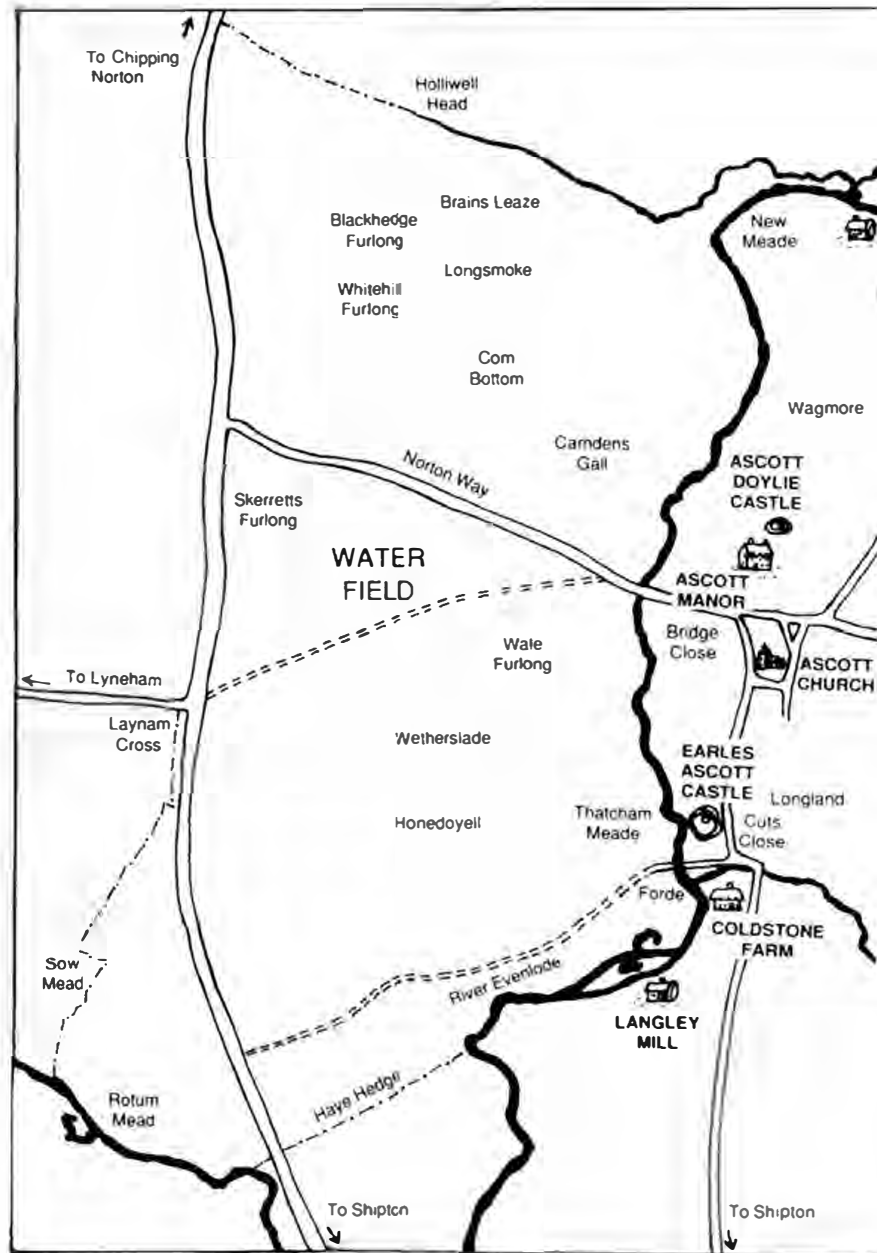
was probably that of a through passage house, a development of the earlier single-storey hall house, comprising a hall, buttery and kitchen on the ground floor and three chambers, the hall chamber, 'kitchinge chamber' and 'maides chamber' upstairs. Adjoining, but possibly also Lacy property, were a brewhouse with separate brewing, corn and cheese chambers, a milk house and a timber house.

After Leonard's death, an inventory was made of his goods and chattels. As the assessors, Edward Irelyn, George Peisley and Edward Tudor, walked Leonard's farm to appraise his possessions, from the kitchen and buttery of the farmhouse, through the brewhouse, corn chamber, cheese chamber and milk house in the inner court, out to the rickyard, then around the cattle yards, stables and pig sheds and other buildings of the outer court, their words of 380 years ago encapsulate a seventeenth century farmer's life. At the time of Leonard's death in March 1623, his stores of threshed and unthreshed barley were worth £16. In the rickyard, on 'stadle' stones, would be thatched ricks of this unthreshed barley. Labourers would be working amongst these stacks, loading the sheaves onto carts and driving them into a threshing barn where others would be using flails to extract the corn from the ears. Some of the barley would be used to produce ale. The 'furnace, van, skreene and malt mill' are all evidence of brewing. The malt mill was in the milk house with a butter churn, so the 'eight rudder (horned) beastes' (probably a type of longhorn) were presumably cows. Although in March, nearly due to produce their yearly calf (three yearlings are also listed), these cows would most likely be dry or producing very little milk to make into butter. Also, cheese is not mentioned in the cheese chamber, no doubt again due to the season, stocks having been depleted during the winter. It seems that the previous year, the hay harvest had been sufficient since a stock of hay was still available to feed these cattle through to the fresh growth of grass in the spring. Since Leonard owned 'six horse beastes', we can assume he did not use oxen to work his land. So during March, apart from threshing work, the horses would have been used to spread manure from the muck carts and to plough certain strips of land in preparation for planting the spring crops of corn, pulse and peas. Only five pigs are listed, but fitches of bacon were still hanging from the rafters, the residue of home-cured bacon prepared during the previous autumn.

Altogether including the closes about his house, Leonard rented three vardlands (about 81 acres) from Sir Rowland Lacy. This comprised 75 strips dotted about the parish of Ascott, including a strip in Skerretts furlong of 3 poles 20 perches beside the present A361, a 1 pole 16 perches strip of land near Ascott Mill, a strip of 1 pole 28 perches beside the forest, a strip of 1 pole 15 perches beside the Charlbury to Shipton road near Ascott Barrows, and a small plot beside Caudell Brook, which itself forms part of the Ascott and Shipton parish boundary.

The definition of a gentleman at this time indicated someone who had no need to work, so we can presume that Leonard employed agricultural

Ascott parish showing furlong and 'land' names from seventeenth century sources



labourers to cultivate his land. The accounts which his wife exhibited at court in Oxford fifteen months after Leonard's death list five male servants, but whether these include farm workers we do not know. Certainly, he would have been employing a carter to care for and work his horses, whilst the pigs may have been kept on Ascott Common in the forest, under the eye of the village swineherd. But it seems likely that his cattle could have been grazed in the closes near to Coldstone, these closes also being used to produce hay to keep the livestock during the winter. In the common arable fields on the rising land on each side of the river wheat, barley, beans and peas were grown and the common meadow land would have produced more hay and perhaps more grazing for the animals. Disease must have been quite prevalent amongst the villagers' commonly-grazed livestock and it seems reasonable to assume that anyone who had enclosed pastures would have preferred to keep his stock segregated. Surprisingly, certainly at the time of his death, Leonard kept no sheep.

When Leonard died, the household equipment listed at Coldstone was very basic, mostly consisting of farming requisites. One explanation is that a foreman was then residing at the house and overseeing the farm management for him. The second possibility, discussed later, is that Leonard's descendants were already in residence and as the more luxurious type of household items were their personal property, these were not listed on Leonard's inventory.

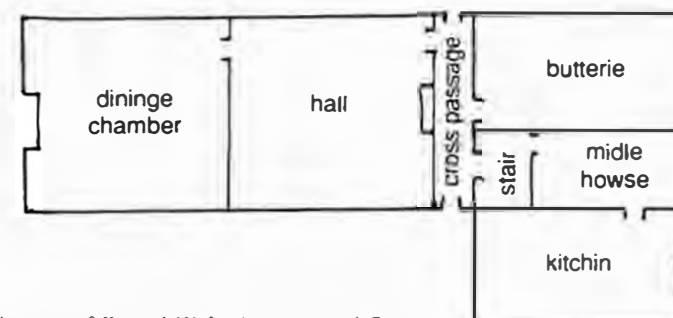
A survey of Wychwood Forest taken in 1609 adds a further dimension to Leonard's life. It seems that he held freehold land in Hailey and Northleigh as well as his holding in Ascott. That at Northleigh consisted of a fairly substantial wood of over 59 acres, the land still traceable today, on the site of the present Osney Hill farm. Does this perhaps indicate a passion for hunting on Leonard's part, and a possible explanation for their eventual departure to Roger Hill Lodge?

We do not know how long Leonard lived at Coldstone, but in 1617 when his third daughter Mary was married at Ascott church, he must by then have been living at Roger Hill Lodge (on the site of the present High Lodge) in the forest of Wychwood, renting the house from Lord Danvers, Ranger of the Forest.

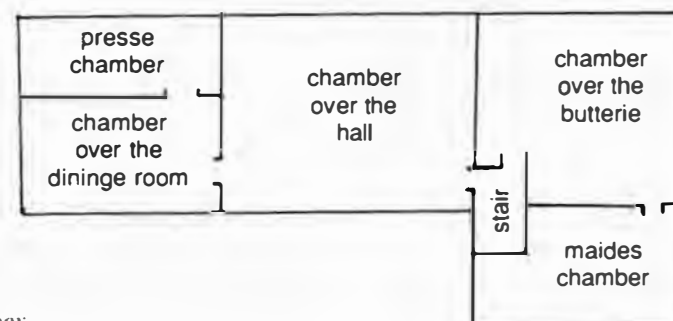
Once established at Roger Hill Lodge, Leonard's and Marye's lives became fairly luxurious. The house, situated in the forest, could have been timber framed and thatched, but was quite large. There was a hall, 'butterie', 'dining chamber' (incidentally this inventory is one of the first known listings of an actual dining chamber in a gentleman's house), 'middle howse' and 'kitchin' on the ground floor and five chambers upstairs. In the hall, as well as tables, chairs and a 'forme', were a glass cupboard, cushions, carpets, a bible and other books, two desks and a pair of playing tables. The hearth implements listed indicate the use of coal as fuel and even include an 'iron to rost apples'. The dining chamber held two tables, fifteen stools, four chairs and a 'forme', apart from a 'courte cubborde', another 'deske boxe' and a



*Rogerhill Lodge could have looked like this—probably timber-framed and thatched*



*Possible layout of Rogerhill Lodge—ground floor*



*Upper floor*



and Leonard. In the Protestation Returns of 1641, Thomas Oven sen., Thomas Oven jun., and Leonard Oven are listed under Shipton, so it is possible that Mary and Thomas Oven may have taken up residence at Coldstone after their marriage. Mary died in 1670 at Ascott, possibly ending her days in her childhood home.

Two of Leonard's grandchildren, his two namesakes, can be followed further. Anne Fifeield's son Leonard entered Exeter College, Oxford and matriculated in 1631, aged 19. After gaining a B.A. two years later, he left this area to become the vicar of Egmonton, Nottinghamshire, in 1637. Mary Oven's son Leonard was definitely residing in his grandfather's house at Coldstone after his marriage, for he and his wife produced eight children there, five daughters and three sons, between 1651 and 1667. The farmhouse at Coldstone was probably enlarged around this time, since the Hearth Tax Returns of 1665 list Leonard Oven, Gent., with eight hearths, indicating a larger building than that listed in Leonard's inventory.

Perversely, the greatest puzzle concerning Leonard Boxe seems inexplicable. His inventory when he died in March 1623 was valued at £226 9s 2d. But on 10th July 1624 Marye appeared before Hugh Barker, Vicar General to the Bishop of Oxford, to present an account of 'all and singular the goodes, rightes, credits, cattells, Chattells & debtes of Leonard Boxe' and to crave allowance of several sums of money which she had expended on her dead husband's behalf. By far the largest sum was £206 5s. paid upon a bond to a Mr Charles Harris and this sum it seems had been decided at an indictment, causing even more expense. Unfortunately this was not the only amount expended on an unspecified matter, for three more gentlemen received nearly £100 between them. But why had Leonard been in debt to these men? Could he have borrowed money for his daughters' dowries or was he, regrettably perhaps, a gambling man? Could his 'pair of playing tables' indicate this tendency? We shall never know. And even more debts had accumulated for Marye to settle. Nearly £15 for rent, another £5 in small debts, £2 for the church's and king's taxes, and nearly £16 in servants' wages, apart from the funeral expenses and the cost of preparing the accounts. It seems that Marye must have had access to undisclosed finance, perhaps through a settlement made for her own dowry. For despite being faced with enormous debt, twelve years later at the time of her death she was able to leave bequests of well over £30.

Which leaves us to ponder the uneasy question. Leonard Boxe—was he entirely a gentleman?

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## The Saga of the Shipton Milestone Part II

NORMAN FROST

In Number 5 of this journal I wrote of the accident that occurred to the old milestone in Station Road, Shipton. I was not aware at the time that this particular milestone had a habit of living dangerously as a letter from the Rev. Ralph Mann of Broadwell will show. I quote:

'In about 1970, when I was a housemaster at Kingham Hill School, one warm day in the summer holidays I stumbled on a cast-iron plaque concealed among the long grass behind the classroom block on top of Kingham Hill. I lifted it out and stood it against a wall and took a photograph of it, which I enclose for your society archives. Presumably some wretched magpie or a schoolboy had unbolted it and carried it off for what purpose I could hardly imagine: possibly a sale to some unscrupulous antique dealer. I calculated that it must have come from Shipton under Wychwood, and sure enough, on inspection I found the support from which it had been taken in Station Road. So I took the cast-iron milestone down to my friend John Jepson in Kingham who worked for the Oxfordshire Highways Department, with the request that they should clean it up and replace it. They certainly did not hurry to do so, and I believe that it was kept for some years in the Highways Department store—indeed, Norman Frost's article is the first evidence that I have had that it had ever been restored.'

I think this letter serves as a warning to all of us that, unless we are ever vigilant, too many historical artefacts will disappear. Besides, a keen look-out for any unusual item can add much to a walk in these so-beautiful villages.



# Infantile Mortality in Shipton under Wychwood 1565–1594

TOM McQUAY

An Elizabethan mother in this parish was 200 times more likely to die in childbirth than a modern mother.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a contemporary infant is just seven times more likely to survive parturition and the lying-in period, and some thirteen times more likely to reach its first birthday, than a baby born 400 years ago.

These figures can confidently be assessed from the parish baptism and burial registers which were carefully maintained by a conscientious Vicar<sup>2</sup> at a time when non-conformity was negligible. In the thirty years between 1565-1594 there were 982 baptisms after 1,015 confinements, which included the still births and babies buried before baptism but faithfully recorded in the registers.

Nineteen babies were certainly stillborn and the Vicar described them variously as 'stillborne', 'nata mortua', 'died in the birth' or 'came dead into the world'. The earliest reference to the use of the word 'stillborn' in the Oxford English Dictionary is dated 1607, but the Shipton Vicar wrote in 1568 'born dead or stillborne as they call it or at least died ymediatlie after the birth'. Five mothers died in labour and none of their infants survived. In two of these maternal deaths there is no corresponding registration of a baptism or separate infant burial. The mother must either have died undelivered or the dead baby shared the same grave, making a total of twenty-one still births.

A further twelve burials have the sad and rueful comments 'died before it was christened' and 'prevented with death before it could be baptised at the church'. Three were christened at home.<sup>3</sup> Other notes in the burial register include 'born the same day', 'born and buried', 'born before the tyme', 'a night oulde', and 'a monster with 4 leeges to teach us to be thankful'. Twenty-two babies did not survive their first day.

The difficulty in estimating the perinatal mortality rate, that is the number of still births plus the number of infant deaths during the first week of life per 1,000 births, is that the dates of baptism and burial do not correspond exactly with the dates of birth and death. There is however a definite minimum of 56 perinatal deaths and a definite maximum of 76 who succumbed in their first week, a mean of 64 per 1,000. There are also anomalies in the present-day figures because some pregnancies can be terminated and modern methods can keep sick babies alive beyond the first week, but nevertheless the sixteenth century figure for this parish of 64

deaths per 1,000 is just seven times the rate of 8.9 for England and Wales in 1987.<sup>4</sup>

The Elizabethan parish infantile mortality rate, that is the number of deaths under one year per 1,000 live births, is much easier to ascertain accurately. There were 994 live births and 123 deaths in the first year, an infantile mortality rate of 121, approximately thirteen times the figure of 9.2 for England and Wales in 1987.<sup>5</sup> Wrigley and Schofield<sup>6</sup> researched the registers of twelve parishes between 1550 and 1599 and found an average infantile mortality rate of 135 per 1,000 live births, some fourteen times the 1987 figure, but very much in line with the Shipton parish rate.

The conclusion is that medical and social advances have reduced maternal mortality rates dramatically, infant mortality less so and first-week deaths which are largely due to birth trauma, prematurity and congenital malformation, least of all. Infantile mortality is related to environmental factors such as infections, nutrition, housing conditions and standards of care and actually was worse in industrialised and urbanised England in 1900 at 154 deaths per 1,000 live births than in rural Shipton 300 years previously, before beginning its continuous fall to the present time.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> T.A.I. McQuay, 'Childbirth deaths in Shipton-under-Wychwood 1565-1665', *Local Population Studies*, no. 42 (1989).
- <sup>2</sup> Jack Howard-Drake, 'William Master, Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood', *Wychwoods History*, no. 2 (1986), p.4.
- <sup>3</sup> 'The Prayer Books of 1549 and 1552 advised the clergy '...that without great cause and necessity they baptize not children at home in their houses'.
- <sup>4</sup> Office of Population Census Survey, 1987.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>6</sup> E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871*, London (1981), pp.311-528.

# The Wharton Charity

JACK CHAPMAN

In 1983 my wife was shown by Mrs Biles of Shipton under Wychwood a Book of Common Prayer embossed in gilt on the cover with the words 'By the will of PHILIP, LORD WHARTON, 1696. Presented 1910.' Knowing our interest in local history we were asked whether we knew anything about Lord Wharton. At that time our answer was a definite 'No', and our local incumbents, Anglican and Baptist, were equally ignorant.

On the inside of the front cover was a longer inscription:-

'The memory of the just is blessed' Prov.x.7

PHILIP, LORD WHARTON,

Died February 4, 1696, aged 83, and by his will left to his Trustees certain estates in Yorkshire, the proceeds of which are to be devoted each year to the distribution of Bibles and other books.

This book is given by direction of present trustees to:-

William Timms  
of the Parish of  
Shipton-under-Wychwood  
1910

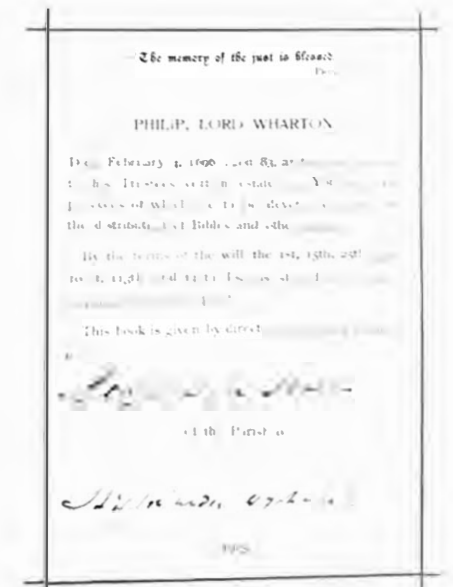
(William Timms was Mrs Biles' grandfather.)

Since then a 'Wharton Bible' has come to light that was presented to George Walter Shayler of Milton under Wychwood in 1915, otherwise inscribed in exactly the same fashion. This had been given to Shipton church and was in the keeping of the sacristan there. There are also several 'Wharton' books in the parish church at Chipping Norton. By coincidence, the priest in charge of that parish was until 1986 the Revd Anthony Wharton; he tells me that he made considerable use of the charity, but claims no link with the family.

A search in the offices of the Charity Commissioners established that the



*George Shayler's Bible—outside front cover*



*—inside front cover*

Wharton charity still existed, but other information about it was sketchy to say the least. In 1985 the last accounts in the file were for 1979 (they should be annual); in that year the Trust had an income of £2,757 and spent just short of £1,800 on bibles and prayer books.

The *Dictionary of National Biography* was more helpful. It contains accounts of several members of the Wharton family, and also provides a useful bibliography. They were originally from Yorkshire, the first Baron having been born 'in about 1495', where the Whartons had held the manor of Wharton on the River Eden 'beyond the date of any records extant'.

Our Lord Wharton, Philip, was the fourth Baron and lived from 1613 to 1696. He succeeded his grandfather in 1625 and inherited £8,000 per annum, worth about £9,000,000 in 1990! At the coronation in 1661 the furnishings of his horse were said to have cost £8,000. In 1637 he married his second wife, and through her obtained manors in Buckinghamshire at Winchendon and Wooburn (near Marlow), where he lived for the rest of his life. Altogether he had three wives and sired fifteen children, of whom nine survived. He organised for them a very strict programme of education under a series of tutors, including detailed instructions for the punishment of any lapses. However it was of little avail: his sons' behaviour was described as turbulent and his grandson, another Philip and the last of the line, was said to be profligate and a wastrel. The fourth Baron was buried in Wooburn parish church with 'an elaborate monument with a Latin inscription' (still to be seen).

Our Philip was a staunch Presbyterian, and in the Civil War raised a regiment that was routed at Edgehill. He was a personal friend of Oliver Cromwell, but disapproved of the execution of Charles I. He welcomed the return of Charles II and evidently got off lightly for his part in the Civil War, although he had to relinquish some lands in Ireland that he had obtained during the Protectorate. According to tradition he buried £60,000 in a wood at Wooburn during the war, but by the restoration had forgotten where he had hidden it. Two acres of ground had to be cleared before it was found.

In 1692 he conveyed certain lands in Yorkshire to trustees for 'buying Bibles and Catechisms for poor children and preaching sermons. 1,050 Bibles (at not over 2/6 each) and as many Catechisms to be given yearly in certain towns and villages of the four counties in which his estates lay, Buckingham, York, Westmoreland and Cumberland, to poor children who had learnt by heart seven specified psalms.'

I have found no further reference to the preaching of sermons. The distribution of Bibles and Catechisms was originally made by dissenting ministers, but over the years the trust deed has been modified (not without some strong objections by the Nonconformists!) and the funds are now divided equally between the Church of England and the Nonconformist churches, with the specific exclusion of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. The distribution is now country-wide. The lands have all been sold and the income is from investments.

It was originally a requirement that the recipient should have learnt by heart the 1st, 15th, 25th, 37th, 101st, 113th and 145th psalms. This has now been reduced to their learning and reciting ('if possible') one of four selected passages of scripture, and in special circumstances the learning and reciting may be dispensed with altogether. From what one discovers of Lord Wharton's character one doubts whether he would have entirely approved. Unhappily there is no record of the criteria that William Timms was required to meet in 1910, or George Shayler in 1915.

Although not of direct relevance to the charity but of local interest is the story that Thomas, the eldest surviving son of Philip, was in 1673 obliged by his father to marry Ann Lee, a girl of fourteen. Her great-grandfather, 'a one-eyed keeper of Wychwood Forest' was adopted by 'old Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley, a supposed brother of Queen Elizabeth' (? an illegitimate son of Henry VIII). She came with a dowry of £2,500 per annum and £10,000 in cash! Her son Philip, the alleged wastrel, was born either at Ditchley or Adderbury.

The Clerk to the Trustees of the Wharton Charity is Mrs R.J.H. Edwards of 30 Prentis Road, London SW16 1QD. Publicity is effected mainly through the churches, occasionally by direct advertising or an article in the church press.

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Printed for J. Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life of the Most Noble Thomas, late Marquis of Wharton*, London (1715).

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# A Medieval Fishpond at Bruern Grange

JAMES BOND

## Introduction

On 8th October 1989 a measured survey was made by members of the Wychwoods Local History Society of a pasture field immediately east of Bruern Grange in the modern civil parish of Bruern, West Oxfordshire (O.S. Parcel no. 7375; National Grid ref. centred SP 257188). The primary purpose of this survey was to record and to gain a fuller understanding of the earthworks observed in the field. A secondary objective was to give society members further practical experience in earthwork survey using the technique of hachuring to portray breaks of slope, as a follow-up to a similar exercise carried out in May 1986 at Upper Milton in Milton under Wychwood. The survey method adopted was the 30m grid and offset system, which has already been described in the report of the Upper Milton project.<sup>1</sup> Information gleaned directly from the survey has received valuable amplification from the recollections of Mr R. Griffin, son of the former tenant farmer, and has been further supplemented by a limited examination of some of the more readily-accessible documentation.

## Discovery of Site

Although the earthworks east of Bruern Grange were known locally and are depicted as an antiquity with the label 'Pond Bays' on the 1980 edition of the Ordnance Survey 1:2500, they were not distinguished on earlier maps. As a result the site was not registered in the County Sites and Monuments Record, operated by the Oxfordshire Museum Service at Woodstock, until 1988. The existence of the earthworks was first reported to the Museum by Ian Burrow, then Director of the Oxford Archaeological Unit, following a visit to the site in December 1987, and it was subsequently indexed under the reference number PRN.13,968.<sup>2</sup> Dr Burrow's intention of surveying the earthworks was thwarted by his departure for the United States, and responsibility for overseeing the survey was then inherited by the present writer.

## Description of Site

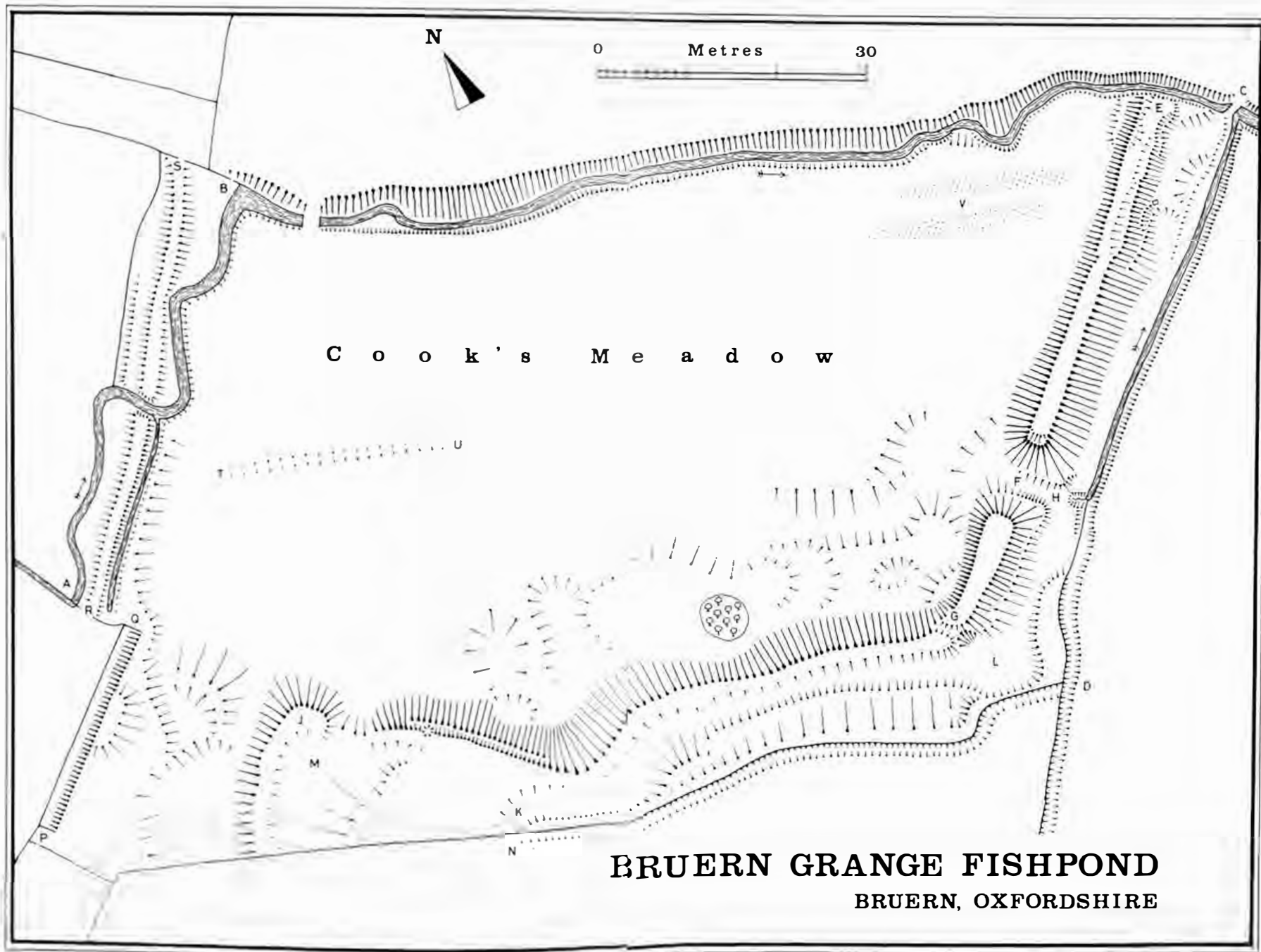
The field surveyed is locally known as Cook's Meadow.<sup>3</sup> The antiquity of this name and the identity of the individual commemorated are both unknown. It does not appear amongst the list of Bruern field-names supplied for the

English Place-Name Society's Oxfordshire volume by Mr W. Mason, nor can it be matched with any of the names published from the 1551-2 survey in the Public Record Office.<sup>4</sup> The *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, Henry VIII's great enquiry into monastic income and ecclesiastical benefices carried out to assess resources taxable under the Act of First Fruits and Tithes of 1535, lists amongst the possessions of Bruern Abbey in Bruern itself a meadow called *Cokkysmore*, but this was only two acres in extent, and an identity between *Cokkysmore* and the present Cook's Meadow, which is more than four times that size, therefore seems unlikely.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately Bruern is not covered by a tithe or enclosure award: being a former Cistercian estate, it was not subject to tithe payments, and it was enclosed before the introduction of the procedure of enclosure by private Act of Parliament. Moreover, no earlier estate maps have been located; so the standard sources which might have provided and located earlier field-names are simply not available.<sup>6</sup> The present name contributes nothing to the understanding of the site.

The field is shaped like a rough parallelogram, 3.47ha (8.58 acres) in extent (fig. 1). A stream now flows along its northern side, rising from springs near Idbury and Fifield 3km to the west and draining eastward<sup>8</sup> to join the River Evenlode a little over 2.5km downstream at Shipton under Wychwood. Immediately east of Bruern Grange, at the point where it enters Cook's Meadow, the stream turns through two opposed right-angled bends (A-B on fig. 1). A steep bluff rises immediately beyond the stream along the margins of the next field to the north. The southern bank of the stream is lined by a hawthorn thicket, which has increased considerably in density within living memory. At the lowest point on the stream in the easternmost corner of the field is a modern footbridge (C), a successor to an earlier bridge a little further upstream. Mr Griffin remembered trout in the stream some 50-60 years ago.

The eastern boundary of Cook's Meadow, orientated from south-west to north-east, today forms part of the boundary between the civil parishes of Bruern and Milton under Wychwood (C-D). Just inside the field is a prominent dam, up to 1.5m high, aligned parallel with the parish boundary, some 65m long, its crest some 7-9m within the field (E-F-G). The profile of the dam is steep on its downstream side, with a slightly gentler gradient to the rear. At several points along the rear of the dam traces of stone revetting could be observed. The dam is cut through by the present stream at its extreme northern end (E), and is also breached at a point some 45m to the south-west (F). A small area of obliquely-pitched stone revetting is also exposed on both sides of this second breach, which appears to be roughly in the lowest point in the cross-section of the valley. A spring seepage (H) immediately below the breach of the dam, feeding into the parish boundary ditch, probably represents a vestige of the original natural watercourse prior to human interference with the valley. The southwestern end of the dam is marked by a third high-level breach (G), but this is only a gully cut through the top of the dam, not extending down to the valley floor. Prior to the

Figure 1



**BRUERN GRANGE FISHPOND**  
**BRUERN, OXFORDSHIRE**

outbreak of myxomatosis in 1953 Mr Griffin recalled that the dam had been occupied by numerous rabbit burrows.

Along the southern side of the field, linking with the dam, is a terrace which similarly rises abruptly some 1-1.5m above the valley floor (G-J). Its edge is defined by a sharp break of slope following a rather sinuous alignment, but roughly parallel with the field boundary hedge, which lies some 6-12m beyond. Between the break of slope and the field boundary a shallow but distinct trough or channel can be traced for a length of some 60m along the top of the terrace (K-L); it then curves around behind the dam, and descends to the level of the spring below the main breach. The source of this channel lies outside the field surveyed, and, due to the ploughing of the adjoining field to the south, its course cannot now be traced on the ground. However, it appears to have originated from a now defunct spring in the adjoining field, some 80m due south of the house of Bruern Grange. Mr Griffin recalled that there was formerly a hollow below this spring roughly in line with the present head of the trough, but that this had been levelled by steam cultivation. The terrace continues westwards for a further 25m beyond the point where the trough enters the field (K-J). Its edge then turns abruptly southwards through an angle of 80 degrees. Along the western end of the terrace is a low but distinct bank which partly encloses a shallow depression on top of the terrace (M). This hollow appears to have had an outlet to the north through a gap in the bank. The southern field boundary itself is accompanied by a narrow, shallow ditch on its southern side, a feature which is of some antiquity, but is clearly subsequent to the trough along the top of the terrace, and is probably no more than a drain to carry off surplus storm water (N-D).

The western edge of the field presented special difficulties to survey and interpret. For about one-third of its length in the south-western corner the original form of the boundary had been completely altered between the end of 1984 and March 1985, when the bounds of the garden of Bruern Grange were redefined in the form of a stone-revetted ha-ha (P-Q). The remaining undisturbed length is now densely overgrown and difficult of access, but it appears to incorporate the remains of a second dam (R-S), breached at about the mid-point of its surviving length by the entry of the stream into Cook's Meadow. Mr Griffin recalled that before the ha-ha was made the dam continued south-westwards, with elms growing along the top, flanked on either side by ditches with willows. The construction of the ha-ha intersected a large stone-lined culvert with well-made voussoirs, the date and alignment of which is unknown.

The interior of the field is low-lying and generally flat, but some slight irregular mounds and hollows were recorded in the southern part; there is also a confused area of hollows in the south-western corner, below the level of the terrace. Other features recorded included a slight gully in the centre of the west end of the field, roughly in the old valley bottom, aligned from north-west to south-east, which was traced for some 25m (T-U). Mr Griffin

recalled that, in addition to numerous anthills (usually a good indicator of old grassland), there had formerly been an artificial mound roughly in the centre of the field, about 4-5m in diameter and a little over 0.5m high. This was levelled during the 1939-45 war, when the interior of the field was skim-ploughed and harrowed in preparation for ploughing for corn, though in the event cereal cultivation never actually took place. Small clumps of tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia caespitosa*) have begun to colonise the lower parts of the field in the recent past.

The most recent significant change in the field occurred in 1980-82 when the Idbury-Shipton main sewer was cut through roughly parallel with its northern boundary, intersecting the dam at the east end. Unfortunately this operation was not watched archaeologically and so it yielded no new information on the nature of the valley floor or the structure of the dam. The profile of the dam was faithfully reinstated after the pipe trench was backfilled, and apart from a manhole in the north-western corner of the field and two parallel bands of parching within the north-east corner (V), the sewer trench has left remarkably little trace of its passing.

#### **Interpretation of Site: Date and Function**

The two dog-leg angles in the course of the stream at the point where it enters Cook's Meadow from the west, and the entrenched character of the stream along the north side of the field, both indicate beyond question that it has been diverted out of its natural course. The gradient across the floor of the valley was very slight, and time did not permit the taking of levelled profiles, but even by visual inspection the general trend of the valley bottom would appear to pass roughly through the long central axis of Cook's Meadow. The eastern dam was clearly intended to hold back the flow of water down the valley, converting the former valley bottom to a pond. The dam at the western end of Cook's Meadow would similarly have retained a second pond immediately upstream, occupying part of the present O.S. parcel no. 4700; a rapid inspection revealed a break of slope along the northern edge of this field which might have represented the edge of the pond, but again there was insufficient time available to include this within the survey.

The valley floor is overlain by a thin layer of alluvium overlying the impermeable Lower Lias Clay.<sup>7</sup> There would be no great difficulty in retaining water within a pond on this site, and probably little need for artificial devices such as puddling.

No ponds have existed on this site within living memory. There is no direct evidence on the site for the absolute date of either their construction or abandonment. A relative date is provided by the fact that the southern boundary hedge of Cook's Meadow cuts across the former course of the channel from the spring to the south, and since this channel is clearly contemporary with the ponds, they must antedate the hedge. However, this does not immediately get us much further, in view of the lack of documentary information on the progress of enclosure in Bruern.

Botanical investigation may offer an alternative approach. No comprehensive examination of Bruern's hedges has yet been carried out, and until this is achieved firm conclusions would be premature. Nonetheless, the hedge in question contained an average of four shrub species per 30m length, based upon eight samples which individually contained from two to eight species. Common hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) occurred in every sample. Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), dogrose (*Rosa canina*) and oak (*Quercus* sp.) were also well-represented, being present in six, five and four of the samples respectively. Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) appeared in three samples, one of the trees being perhaps a couple of hundred years old, and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) appeared in two samples. Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), field rose (*Rosa arvensis*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and midland thorn (*Crataegus laevigata*) were all present in one sample only.<sup>8</sup> Species characteristic of the most ancient hedges in Oxfordshire, such as spindle, were absent. If we adopt Hooper's formula for dating hedgerows by their shrub species content – expressed as 'age of hedge = (110 x number of species) + 30 years',<sup>9</sup> this suggests that the hedge in question may have been planted in the first half of the sixteenth century. Many reservations have been expressed about Hooper's theory, but in the absence of any other dating evidence it always warrants consideration; and it is of interest that its application here yields a date very near the period when the land was passing from monastic to secular hands, an historical context in which reorganisation of the enclosure pattern may have followed the abandonment of the monastic ponds.

The cartographic evidence does not conflict with this view, but it adds no further information. No ponds are shown on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey 1:63,360 map of 1828, or on Richard Davis's county map of 1797 which, in the absence of any tithe, enclosure or estate plans, are the only cartographic sources available on a sufficiently large scale to stand any chance of portraying them, had they still then been in existence.

The general implication is that the ponds have certainly not been maintained as water bodies since the eighteenth century, and very probably went out of use 280 years earlier; but to progress any further we are forced onto the less secure ground of association and analogy, and at this point a consideration of their likely purpose is necessary.

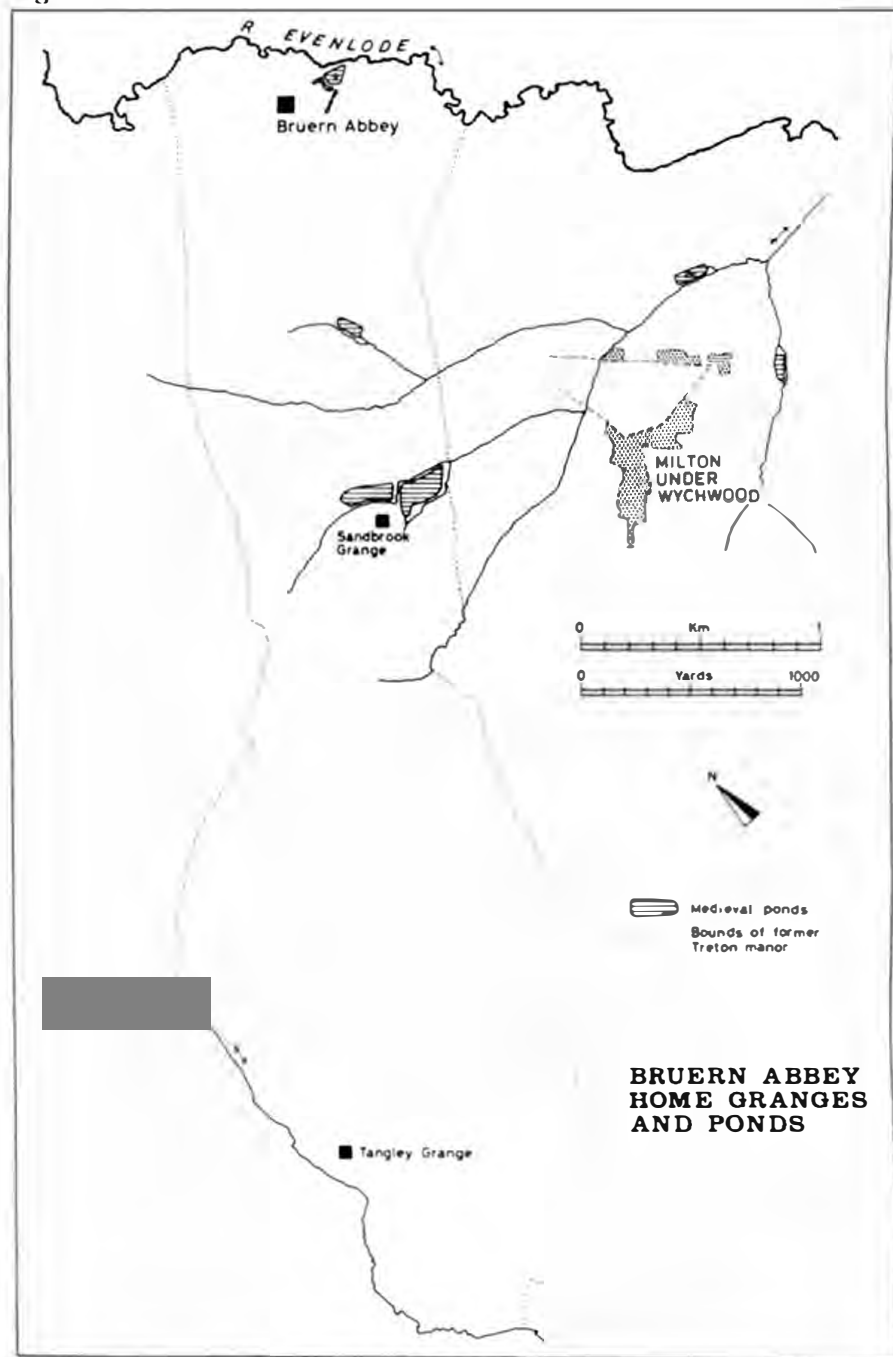
Ponds on the scale of those represented at Bruern Grange are likely to be one of three things: ornamental lakes constructed as part of a landscaping scheme; ponds constructed for industrial purposes, particularly to provide power for water-mills; or ponds constructed for the storage of fish. The first option can probably be ruled out in the absence of any supporting documentation or any other obvious features relating to a local landscaping project. The apparent juxtaposition of two sizeable ponds in the valley bottom, one above the other, and the lack of any evidence for a mill structure, also seem to rule out the industrial interpretation. By a process of elimination, therefore, the most likely explanation of the earthworks is that they are the remains of former fishponds. Moreover, a very plausible context

for fishponds is offered by their location within the former estate of the medieval Cistercian abbey of Bruern and their proximity to a house which still bears the name 'Grange', perpetuating the special Cistercian usage of the term to mean a consolidated monastic estate farm (fig. 2).

The Bruern Grange ponds do, indeed, display many of the standard features of medieval fishponds. The construction and management of medieval fishponds revolved around three basic principles: (i) the water level in each pond had to be controllable; in particular each pond had to be capable of being emptied when necessary; (ii) each pond had to be capable of being managed independently of any others in the system; (iii) there had to be some means of diverting flood waters, normally inherent in any natural stream regime, in order to avoid overtopping the dam.<sup>10</sup> Considerable skills of site selection, surveying of levels, dam and sluice construction were involved. The stream was commonly diverted out of the valley bottom at the initial construction stage, in order to drain the valley floor and to permit the construction of the dam and, where necessary, puddling of the pond bed. Side leats were built to divert surplus water around the edge of the pond, and the shallow channel on top of the terrace south of the Cook's Meadow pond is a classic example of this. The inlet to the pond was normally controlled by a sluice. The bed of medieval ponds quite frequently included an island, the purpose of which is presumed to be to provide safe nesting-sites for wildfowl; though no longer extant, the mound in the centre of the meadow recalled by Mr Griffin might well have been the remains of such an island. The outflow from the pond may have been over a slotted sluice in the middle of the dam, on the site of the present central breach; but this was not normally the most favoured position, since the overflow tended to erode the dam and if the sluice ever failed it released a deluge of water downstream and drained the pond. The shallow breach at the southern end of the dam is perhaps a more likely position, discharging into the side leat. Although the relative levels of water in the pond and side leat would need to be carefully monitored, there would be less erosion and a sluice collapse would be less disastrous. However, on present evidence it does not look as if a sluice here would permit the pond to be drained completely. A third alternative would be an underground culvert beneath the dam from within the pond bed, but this solution does not seem to have been adopted until a comparatively late period. The slight irregularities in the bed of the pond, where they are not due to modern disturbances, possibly result from the quarrying of silt for spreading as a fertiliser after the final draining of the pond.

The main outstanding problems in the interpretation of the earthworks concern the uncertainties over the location and form of the original inlet and outlet. The present stream course obviously post-dates the final draining of the ponds. However, although it must have supplied water to the lower pond, it is now difficult to determine the point of inlet or the arrangements for the diversion of surplus water from this source. The evidence may have

Figure 2



been destroyed in the disturbances in the south-western corner of the field. The lower pond was also clearly supplied from the spring south of Bruern Grange, and here the diversion leat is clearly apparent.

**Medieval Fishponds: Background**

Medieval fishponds as a class of archaeological monument were first recognised and described by Hadrian Allcroft in 1908,<sup>11</sup> but they attracted little general interest before the late 1950s, when there was a new awakening to the potential of field archaeology to illuminate the middle ages. The important contribution of aerial photography was recognised in a volume first published in 1958, in which Professors Maurice Beresford and J.K.S. St Joseph illustrated and discussed the spectacular ponds of Harrington (Northants), along with several other examples included incidentally with other subjects.<sup>12</sup> In 1962 Dr C.F.Hickling published the first book on fish culture to incorporate a description of earlier fishpond management practices.<sup>13</sup> Fishponds were introduced to the local historian in a short article of Dr Brian Roberts published in 1966, in which he discussed their place in the medieval economy and landscape based upon his work in the Forest of Arden.<sup>14</sup> The first attempt to classify fishponds by form was made by Christopher Taylor in 1979.<sup>15</sup> The pace of investigation accelerated rapidly through the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in the publication of a two-volume collection of studies edited by Michael Aston in 1988,<sup>16</sup> which contains extensive bibliographies.

The first attempt to provide a synthesis of the current state of knowledge of fishponds in Oxfordshire was drawn together in 1985 and was published in Aston's 1988 compilation. This identified 148 sites in the (post-1974) county.<sup>17</sup> It was recognised, however, that this total was certainly incomplete, due to the difficulties of carrying out systematic field-work or documentary research on this type of site on a county-wide basis. Indeed, the Bruern Grange pond is one of several examples which have been discovered subsequent to the 1988 publication.

How does the Bruern pond compare with other examples? So far as typology is concerned, it falls into Taylor's Type B, being formed by the construction of a dam across a steep-sided narrow valley, with the additional removal of spoil to make the pond deeper and flat-bottomed; such ponds are characterised by steep artificial scarps along their sides where the natural slope of the valley has been steepened or cut away.<sup>18</sup> The size of ponds created in this way varied enormously, depending on the height of the dam and the configuration of the natural topography. Examples previously examined in Oxfordshire range from 0.2ha to 4ha in extent; the Cook's Meadow pond, therefore, is one of the largest of its class yet identified in the county, though it pales into insignificance compared with the largest pond at Old Warden Abbey (Beds.), where a dam 5m high retained a pond of some 10.5ha,<sup>19</sup> or the monster ponds of Byland Abbey at High Kilburn and Cams Head (N. Yorks), 20ha and 18ha in extent respectively, the latter with a dam



nearly 400m long and nearly 9m high at its centre.<sup>20</sup> Even the largest known monastic ponds in their turn are small compared with the great mere of Kenilworth Castle, which, following the raising of the dam to a height of 4.5m some time prior to 1241, covered some 40ha.<sup>21</sup>

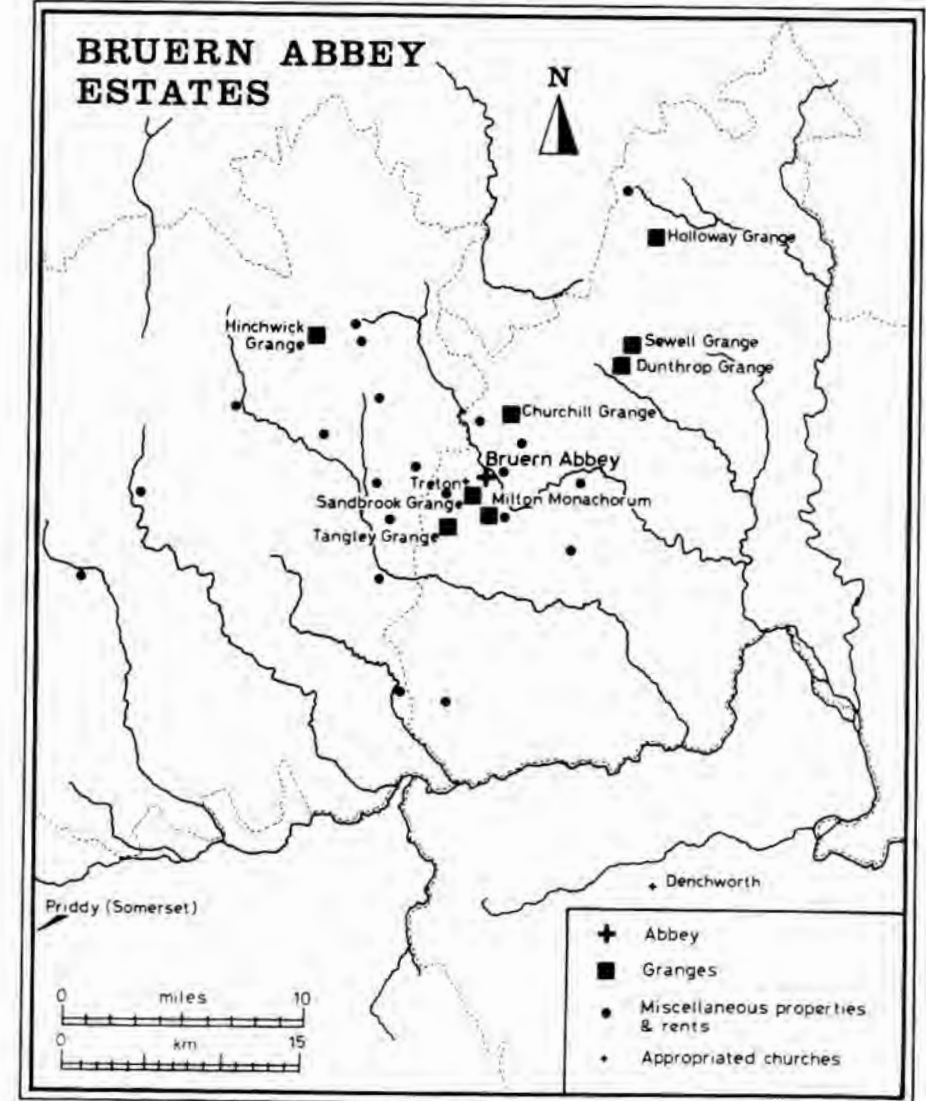
### The Local Context: Bruern Abbey and its Estates

It is well-established that the Cistercian abbey of Bruern was founded on a tract of open pasture or heath (the name is from the Latin *brueria*) by Nicholas Bassett in 1147, and that soon after 1170 the founder gave to the abbey the whole of his manors of Treton (the Domesday *Draitone*) and Nethercote, together with the church of Treton.<sup>22</sup> It appears likely that the bounds of the early medieval manor of Treton were largely coterminous with those of the present parish of Bruern (fig. 2), an area formerly regarded as extra-parochial and first constituted as a civil parish in 1858.<sup>23</sup> The ponds therefore lay on Bruern Abbey property from the later twelfth century to the Dissolution.

Unfortunately no cartulary has survived for Bruern, although a number of deeds relating to its holdings are scattered around the Public Record Office, British Library and Bodleian Library.<sup>24</sup> Because of the paucity of documentation and structural remains, by comparison with many Cistercian monasteries, neither the abbey itself nor its estates have been subjected to intensive study. This deficiency cannot be remedied here. However, some impression of the extent and nature of the abbey's holdings can be built up from standard sources such as the 1291 taxation of Pope Nicholas IV and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* of 1535.<sup>25</sup> From these and other sources it is evident that Bruern Abbey had built up a considerable block of properties in north and west Oxfordshire and east Gloucestershire, with detached holdings as far afield as Priddy and West Harptree in Somerset. These properties were fairly varied in character, including arable land, pasture, meadow, turbaries, rights to wood in Wychwood Forest, houses, dovecotes, cattle-sheds, sheepcotes and mills, appropriated churches and portions of churches. Some of the land was held in demesne, other parts leased out. A significant proportion of the abbey's income was drawn from livestock farming, particularly from wool production on the Cotswold pastures, and in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries the abbey was having dealings with merchants, not only in Flanders, but as far away as Florence, Lucca and Genoa.<sup>26</sup>

Some of the abbey's properties were organised in the form of granges, consolidated blocks of demesne land worked more or less independently of the manorial system of communal agriculture and servile labour. Their function was twofold: (i) to provide food and other raw materials for consumption within the abbey itself and (ii) to produce surpluses for sale for profit. From the very limited study undertaken so far, eight granges can provisionally be identified on the Bruern estates in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire (fig. 3). It seems probable that the present Bruern Grange

Figure 3



stands on or close to the site of the medieval Sandbrook Grange, which took its name from the very stream now passing through the fishponds.<sup>27</sup> The former church of Treton seems to have been maintained as the chapel of Sandbrook Grange up to the Dissolution.<sup>28</sup> Although there were fishponds at Bruern Abbey itself (fig. 2), we should not be surprised to find further

ponds at one of the nearest granges, as fishponds also frequently occur in association with monastic granges. The granges of Stoneleigh Abbey (Warwickshire), for example, display a large number and wide variety of ponds.<sup>29</sup> The most likely probability, therefore, is that the earthworks surveyed were part of a medieval fishpond complex attached to Bruern Abbey's grange of Sandbrook.

As a postscript, it is of some interest to note that in 1480 the monks of Bruern petitioned for licence to eat meat in Lent, claiming that the abbey was so far distant from the sea and from rivers that a sufficiency of fish could not be obtained.<sup>30</sup> In view of the evidence for fishponds at Bruern, it would be easy to dismiss this as yet another example of the cynical compromise of monastic ideals generally held to be characteristic of the later Middle Ages. However, recent work has thrown new emphasis upon the overwhelming importance of sea-fish rather than freshwater fish in the medieval diet. Chris Currie has emphasized the generally low yields of most medieval fishponds, while Chris Dyer has shown that because freshwater fish such as pike and bream were comparatively expensive, their consumption was largely restricted to aristocratic circles and reserved for feasts and special occasions.<sup>31</sup> The monks of Bruern may have been justified in their professed inability to procure sufficient freshwater fish for their needs despite the extensive ponds on their own doorstep. However, their complaint about distance from the sea carries less conviction, in view of the fact that other monastic houses deep in the midlands found no difficulty in obtaining sufficient supplies of sea-fish. In the fourteenth century, for example, Bicester Priory (Oxon.) was purchasing fresh, salt and dried fish from local markets in Bicester, Oxford and Wantage and from Stourbridge Fair near Cambridge. Pershore Abbey (Worcs.) was acquiring fresh sea-fish from Bristol, Gloucester and even Coventry; while Halesowen Abbey (Wores.) was buying sea-fish in bulk from fishmongers in Boston; all three abbeys had fishponds of their own, those of Halesowen being especially elaborate.<sup>32</sup> The evidence of accounts is supported by archaeology; the excavation of the midden of the Austin Friars in Leicester, for example, revealed a total absence of freshwater fish despite the proximity of the River Soar, while salt-water species were represented in some quantity.<sup>33</sup>

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mr David Astor for allowing the survey to be carried out on his land; Mr R.Griffin for much valuable local information; Frank and Margaret Ware and Jack and Joan Howard-Drake for their encouragement and assistance throughout the project; and all members of the Wychwoods Local History Society who took part in the survey.

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<sup>26</sup> R.A.Donkin *The Cistercians: Studies in the Geography of Medieval England and Wales* (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1978), p. 195.

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# Alfred Groves & Sons, LIMITED. BUILDERS, CONTRACTORS & TIMBER MERCHANTS. MILTON UNDER WYCHWOOD.

This photograph, probably taken in the 1930s, shows some of the workforce of Alfred Groves and Sons. Over the years faces have changed but the old skills have been handed on to their successors, who carry on the Cotswold building crafts to this day in the manner of their forefathers.

How many men in this group can be identified, and can anyone remember the name of the dog?



# Shipton School Log Book 1869–1905

JOHN RAWLINS

Two hundred and fifty years ago educational facilities for the poor were minimal, until the introduction of Sunday Schools in the 1770s. Run by various religious bodies, the Sunday Schools' main aim was the teaching of reading and understanding of the Bible. Objections to the education of the poor were voiced from both ends of the social scale. The Establishment thought that it would be expensive, that the poor would become too learned and unsuited to the plough, that cheap labour would become scarce and as a result 'the rest of us would have nothing to eat'. On the other hand the poor thought that education was unnecessary, costly, and that their children should be able to make their contribution to the family income as soon as they were old enough and strong enough. Some of these prejudices and attitudes persisted well into the 19th century and even into the twentieth.

Sunday Schools overcame some of these objections as no working time was lost on a Sunday, teaching staff were plentiful and unpaid and the resulting educational achievement was not thought likely 'to puff up the minds of the lower orders'. Although the scope of these Sunday Schools was limited, their establishment did set the minds of the more progressive members of Church, State and the charity organisations thinking of ways of improving and increasing the education available to the poor.

By 1802, only 101 out of 187 Oxfordshire parishes had either a day or Sunday School of any sort. However, in the first two decades of the 19th century, elementary education for the poor became more widespread due to the efforts of the British and Foreign Society which was strictly non-sectarian, and the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. The latter, usually known as the National Society, was set up to rival the 'British' schools.

By 1858, Oxfordshire had some 400 schools or departments, of which some 370 were run by the National Society, covering both town and countryside. The other schools, run by the British Society and others, were usually confined to the towns where nonconformity was both rich and strong. At this time Oxfordshire had the third highest proportion of public week-day scholars in the whole country, with only Wiltshire and Westmoreland having a better record.

All our local schools—at Ascott, Idbury, Leaffield, Lyneham, Milton and Shipton—were probably built between 1802 and 1858. Unfortunately, records

from this early period are few, only Ascott and Leaffield having Log Books which were started as early as 1863.

This date, 1863, is significant, for the keeping of School Log Books became mandatory after the Revised Code of 1862. This code aimed to provide adequate financial assistance for education in all areas, and to improve the standard of teaching of the elementary subjects (reading, writing and arithmetic). In accepting government grants under this Revised Code the voluntary bodies (usually the National Society in this area), had to agree to receive visits from Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI's) who made regular inspections and conducted annual examinations in the 3 Rs.

The strain of these annual inspections on the Principal or Head Teacher (usually called The Master) can often be seen in the Log Book entries when the Master was trying to raise the educational achievement of his pupils, as well as ensuring their regular attendance—for the amount of Government grant depended on the results of the annual examination and numbers of pupils' attendances (Payment by Results). Under the Revised Code a grant of 12s 0d (60p) was offered for *all* children over the age of six years. Of this sum, 4s 0d (20p) was given for the required number of attendances, and 8s 0d (40p) for passes at the annual examination, with a deduction of 2s 8d (13p) for each failure in any of the 3 Rs. However, government grant did not provide all the necessary money and the balance had to be found by the voluntary society. Some of this was raised through school fees which often varied according to the social and financial standing of the parents—labourers, tradesmen, farmers etc., and the Master was responsible for their collection.

Further improvement followed Forster's Education Act of 1870 which sought to provide every child with a school place. Where voluntary organisations (locally the National Society) were unable or unwilling to meet this need, ratepayers were to elect a School Board to do so. Most voluntary schools tried to stave off the School Boards, regarded by many as 'godless' and which, it was feared, would lessen the powers of the Establishment. In Oxfordshire most were successful and by 1899 only 25 out of 241 (10.4%) of the County's elementary day schools on the annual grant list had become Board Schools. Milton (and probably Lyneham) was one of these, becoming a non-denominational Board School in 1874 whereas Shipton remained National, as did the other local schools at Ascott, Idbury and Leaffield.

Shipton School Log Book begins in 1869, presumably when the school had its first certificated teacher, another of the pre-requisites of the 1862 Revised Code and qualification for a Government grant—as was the writing of a Log Book.

In the Log Book the Principal Teacher was expected to keep 'a regular record of school activities' but 'no reflections or opinions'. Into it would be copied the reports of the HMI's and Diocesan Inspectors (in the first place appointed by the Church of England to counteract the possible non-sectarian influence of the HMI's). In 1862 the Secretary to the Education

Office wrote 'The Log Book is not meant to contain essays... but to collect items of experience' and his letter ends 'a teacher who performs this duty simply, regularly and with discrimination, will find it a powerful help in mastering his profession, and as an honourable monument of his labours'.

Perhaps the following extracts from the Shipton Log Book, written by the then Master, Mr John Peirce, do indeed serve as his monument. They certainly provide an insight into some of the problems facing those involved in education in the latter half of the last century—problems of constant changes of buildings, curriculum, financing and staffing, and the never-ending battle against poor attendance (for a variety of reasons). Mr Peirce began in 1869 by making daily entries into the Log Book but had given this up by 1873. The following extracts are only a small proportion of the records kept, which filled 450 pages. The entries are usually Mr Peirce's own, but also include some made by one of the School's Managers, usually the Vicar, when registers were checked, and when Inspectors' reports were copied into the Log Book. Towards the end of this Log Book it would appear that the copying of the various reports was entrusted to one of the pupils whose handwriting was of a superior quality.

### Sources and Acknowledgements

The Log Book of Shipton under Wychwood School 1869-1905 (later a National School, then Shipton under Wychwood C.E.School and most recently called St Mary's School before its closure)—by courtesy of Mr G. Padmore, present Headteacher of Wychwood C.E. Primary School.

Pamela Horn, *Village Education in Nineteenth-century Oxfordshire*, Oxfordshire Record Society, Vol LI (1979).

The Plan and photographs are reproduced by courtesy of the Oxfordshire County Education Department.

(See also Growing up in Milton and Shipton one hundred years ago, *Wychwoods History* No. 3 (1987), p.53.)

### 1869

- Sep 27 Opened school after holidays.
- 28 Examined the school.
- 29 Attempted to alter 'sing song' reading.
- 30 Gave more time to arithmetic and practice in simple sums in the 1st class.

- Oct 4 Began admit better children at 6d. per week. Began night school.
- 5 Visit of Mr I about Robert's admission.
- 6 Gave simultaneous spelling instead of Reading lessons.
- 7 Sent for 'Martins' registers.
- 8 Began to teach the 3rd class to write the Lords Prayer.
- 11 Harold E admitted.
- 12 Began the system of payment for *belonging* to the school.
- 13 The school windows repaired.
- 14 The men began to change the closets to the dry earth system.
- 15 Began Home lessons to some of the 1st class.

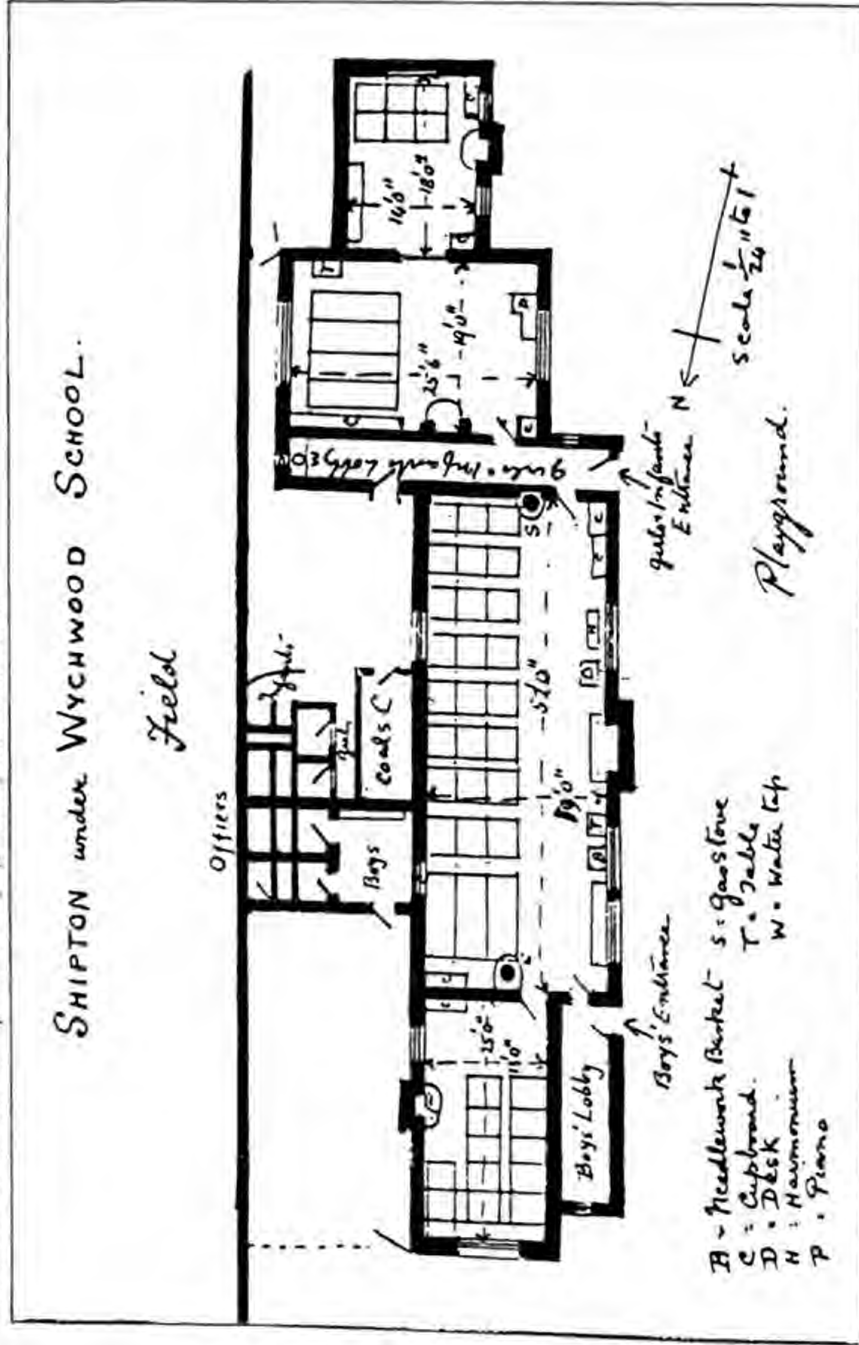
### 1870

- Jan 24 Thos and Henry B returned after illness.
- 25 Changed the teachers of each class in scripture.
- 26 John U sent home with the itch.
- 27 Visit of his mother. Sent her to the Vicar.
- 28 Got the ages of the children from their parents upon paper.
- Nov 29 I. absent in the afternoon. Visit to Mrs Upstone about Percy T.
- 30 Alb M sent home for misconduct of self and Grandmother.
- Dec 1 The 1st class learn to find G.C.M. Had in 1 ton 1 cwt of coal.
- The 1st class begin 'America' in their Geography lessons.
- 5 Infant school proposed.
- 6 Geo M expelled from night school.
- 7 Began dictation at night school.
- 8 Emma T began map drawing.
- 9 Ivo T punished for defacing the school walls with filthy words.

### 1873

- Mar 26 (*Part of HMI's report regarding examination on Feb 21*) I am directed to request attention to Article 17(g). The whole grant may be forfeited on a future occasion unless HM Inspectors can report better of the Infants. The room in which they are at present instructed is too small.
- Nov 20 Entertainment in the evening. Day School children sing rounds, catches, canons and songs. Vicar and others Read. Visit to several parents for keeping their children at home 'to see a funeral'. School to be examined by Dioc. Inspector on the 27th. inst.
- 26 Private examination by the Vicar. 47 presented passed 107 subjects. Arithmetic of upper standards found weak. Standard II girls with the boys instead of needlework in the afternoon.
- Dec 27 Diocesan examination. Registers not marked.

Plan of school, drawn about 1906. The rooms were called (from left to right) 'class room', 'main school', 'infants' room' and 'babies' room'. Find the one tap—did the boys go thirsty and unwashed?



1874

- Mar 20 Admitted two children under 3 years of age, others invited in order to fill up the infant class. Standard VI begin addition of vulgar fractions.
- Apr 7 By the admission of infants the numbers rise to over 90 in ordinary attendance. Received 14 doz new reading books. Had no Easter holiday. Infants supplied with boxes of letters, colours, forms with pictures for lessons on animals. Sent copies of the 'Act to regulate the employment of Children in Agriculture' to each of the parents.

1875

- Sep 20 Opened school after 5 weeks holiday. 50 children present in the morning. Many not done 'picking'.
- 28 Half holiday for school treat:- Upper classes have more dictation.
- Oct 8 ED begins to learn Euclid. Mrs Peirce gave more time to the infants arithmetic (old Standard I).
- 15 Extraordinary rain thins the School. Visit to Mrs U--Ann U allowed to come at 9.55 AM.
- 21 Wet weather continues. The flood risen within about a chain of the school.
- 29 Visit of Mrs G; her two children admitted; Sarah 11 years. Alice 9 years never been to school before (lived too far from one).

1878

- Jan 4 As three parents of Milton were fined for not sending their children to school several absentees turn up this week.
- 7 Milton private school supply several to this school as 'Mr Gardener died last week'. George and Edward E not to learn the church catechism.
- 11 Private examination of extra subjects by the Revd H Barter. 37 examined. Passed in Grammar 21, Needlework 11, History etc. 5. Needlework judged by Mrs Barter.

1879

- Aug 28 School feast put off until 29th then vacation for six weeks.
- Oct 13 Opened school. 56 present at morning meeting. Sent to many of the parents for cause of children's absence. Three boys under 10 at work 'leading foremost'.
- Oct 24 Had a meeting of night boys. Night school to begin Nov 3rd five times weekly. Gave Labour Certificate to Thos G (written). Boys with the above allowed to attend night school.
- Nov 28 Many still away at harvest work. Received a new supply of slates, pens and paper...

**1880**

- Jul 8 The first class have more time at reading individually.  
 12 Sent papers to all parents in arrears with school money stating the amount.  
 Nov 4 Visit of Vicar who numbered those present viz 100 only 98 marked two girls being late afternoon meeting.  
 8 Reuben U reported left—again attends day school.  
 9 Reu U and Geo C assist in night school.  
 10 Having passed three winters without corporal punishment in the night school began now to try day school without.  
 Dec 17 Broke rule of Nov 10th last.

**1881**

- Jul 20 Sickness brings the numbers down to 30 less than usual.  
 22 Visit of inspector of nuisances. He recommends disinfectious fluid for school room and closets.  
 26 Visit to Mrs E. George and Thomas at work until after harvest.

*Shipton School from the south, May 1906, showing (from left to right) the main school, girls' and infants' lobby, infants' room and babies' room. Hayricks stand in what was once Parsonage Farm and is now part of Tithings' garden. The southern end of the main school now forms St. Mary's Cottage, while the infants' and babies' rooms make up Victoria House.*

**1883**

- May 23 JI summoned for not sending children to school; case dismissed.  
 Jun 1 Harry D punished 4 strokes for rebellion. JI receives another summons.  
 6 Convicted and fined 5/- (and costs?).  
 7 Mary I admitted this week but came twice only in first six meetings of the week.  
 10 Tested the whole school in Dictation. Passed 31 out of 55 present.  
 25 *(Part of HMI's report, copied Aug 3)*  
 Nothing like the proper percentage of papers is gained in English to justify the mark good, but the full grant is recommended to encourage the managers and teacher. The needlework is very good...  
 Nov 15 Began secular work at 9.30 (Concert) no school in the afternoon in consequence. Visit of attendance officer. I, U and U reported. Agnes U's absence 'being through illness of mother'.  
 23 Visit to Mr U:- George required at home. Joseph D slept out this week! after being away from school three days.  
 27 The numbers were taken and compared with the Registers and found correct. H. Barter  
 30 One of the Ls let out at 4.30<sup>o</sup> to carry brothers tea to station.  
 \*4.5 p.m. not 4.30.

**1884**

- Jan 23 Richard I. punished twice today for disobedience. Four strokes each time. F T absent without leave in the afternoon.  
 Feb 1 Began new attendance system of 1/4d (*one farthing*) for every unbroken week of attendance. Tickets to be given out monthly.  
 Mar 28 Standard V worked with IV at arithmetic this week, and found wanting. Second distribution of attendance cards. 81 having been earned in two months each ticket value one penny. See Feb 1st. entry.

**1885**

- Jul 10 School tested by self. 51 examined. Passed in Reading 45, Writing 40, Arithmetic 41. Or 82%. Standard V arithmetic still weak.  
 14 School tested by Rev H Barter. 61 examined. Passed in Reading 58, Writing 46, Arithmetic 52. Or 85%.  
 17 Visit to Mr T:- Gertrude 'will come next week'. Also to Mrs I:- 'Letty in London'. George I attends two days this week making 2 1/2 days in 9 weeks! Visit and help of the Revd. H. Barter.

**1887**

- Jul 22 Received the Duplicate Schedule this week showing 89% of passes. Thirteen infants promoted to this room. Began to enforce school fees.  
 29 All brought school fees, some brought arrears. Mrs Samuda gave tea to needlework children and nineteen prizes to the best ditto.

**1888**

- Jul 17 Death of son.  
 18 School closed:- Received duplicate schedule 85% passes.  
 20 Mrs Peirce did not attend school. Her daughter came instead.  
 27 Standard I promoted from infant class:- Wrote certificate for James D:-  
 Aug 3 Mrs Samuda discontinued her treat to needlework children, and no prizes given by her. Needlework having been examined by Mrs Barter only.  
 Sep 6 Sale of needlework in school from 6 to 9 pm.  
 Oct 26 Visit to several homes this week. Frederic M at work for Mr T Brookes.  
 30 Mary X presents one penny instead two for school fee.  
 Nov 1 Visit of attendance officer. Children reported FM, TD, Wm Q, Annie S and Mary X. Mary Jane Q, Charlotte I.  
 9 All but the first mentioned (FM) attend this week. Another call of attendance officer.

**1890**

- Jul 22 *(Part of HMI's report, copied out Aug 11)*  
 Both Managers and Teachers are to be congratulated on the marked improvement of the school in both order and attainments. Repetition and Music are both very good subjects. Reading is deliberate and correct.  
 Nov 28 Mrs Peirce too unwell to attend to her duties. Only two dozen infants present.  
 Dec 5 Many infants on sick list. The best boys begin drawing books.  
 8 Mrs Peirce again able to attend.  
 10 P(upil) T(eacher) too unwell to attend.  
 15 Only eleven boys and no girls in infant class on account of sickness and severe weather. Two infant girls dead.  
 16 Harry T punished for disobedience defiance of teacher.  
 19 Heavy fall of snow. Only 26 present in the morning. No afternoon meeting.  
 26 Xmas vacation.



*The northern half of the main school in 1906 with the playground on the left. The entrance to the boys' lobby is on the left and the other door leads into the class room. Note the high ceiling and absence of artificial light. The pictures on the walls were used in the object lessons. The room now forms part of St. Mary's House.*

**1891**

- Jul 10 Albert I punished for disobedience.  
 11 Received duplicate Schedule:- Standard IV with only one pass in writing out of *twelve*.  
 13 John Henry T reported for non-attendance. 'Dr Roberts certifies that he is unable to bear the strain of more than two days per week'. Yet his parents apply for leave for him to work at hay harvest. Frank and Alfred N also reported.  
 16 Visit of attendance officer. The Ns present.

**1892**

- Apr 8 Received new set of arithmetic tests.  
 12 John K punished for leaving school without leave. Six strokes.  
 27 School closed in order to attend a summons before the Justices at Chipping Norton:- see April 12th. Case dismissed:- punishment just.



- 1893**
- Nov 13 Visit of attendance officer. Five children reported as not regular.
- 14 Visit of the Bishop of Oxford to open new bells and restored tower.  
No afternoon meeting.
- 21 Diocesan examination by the Rev S York did not take place.
- 24 Received notice from Rev S York of examination by him on Dec 8th at 9.30 AM.
- Dec 1 Three girls receive especial lessons who are to compete for County Council Scholarship.

- 1895**
- Oct 4 Standard I to V to have arithmetic to work correctly, in open classes, from this week. On Wednesdays, until further notice, varied occupations and object lessons take the place of needlework and drawing, for I, II and III. Standard IV and upwards Girls cooking at the Beaconsfield Hall.
- 10 Diocesan examination.
- 11 First attempt at rush plaiting. Standard I have split cane.
- 18 First object lesson to Standard I II and III on Shipton-under-Wychwood.

- 1897**
- Oct 4 Began to use new Time Table. Musical drill on Wednesdays. Object lessons without objects etc. Seven families not yet allowed to attend school.
- 15 Children of Henry S and Reuben U allowed to attend school on the 18th (Monday). Reported eight children, to attendance officer. Three of whom employed by a magistrate!

- 1898**
- Jan 21 Four families not allowed by Sanitary Authority to attend until further notice.
- 24 The parents of Thomas U claim exemption from all Religious teaching.  
Notice was received from the Department that a grant had been made to this school of £30 for strengthening + maintaining staff and effecting repairs. *H. Barter*
- Sep 30 New class room finished during vacation. Also desks lowered and lock on door repaired. Visit to parents of children absent.
- Oct 3 Vis(it) of attendance officer. Three children reported.
- 7 William George U received his Labour Certificate.
- 14 Reported Thomas U who has made but 30 attendances out of the last 92 meetings. Running the streets.

- 1899**
- Jan 30 Mr Q withdraws his children from all religious instruction.
- Feb 2 Visit to Daisy T's parents. 'Daisy too weak to attend school?'
- 3 Received medical certificate that the above child was unfit to attend school.
- 10 School elms down this week.
- 17 Tested Standard IV in arithmetic.

- 1900**
- Jan 5 Victoria X admitted aged 13 years and unable to do Standard I work (From the back woods of America). Tested the whole school in Reading, writing and arithmetic. Weakest point Standard II writing (boys). M Stribblehill unable to attend this week. My two certificated daughters assisted in arithmetic lessons.
- 12 M Stribblehill returned on the 8th. Sent to parents the number of attendances made by their children up to Jan 5th 1900.
- 19 Rev W.C. Carter succeeds the Rev H. Barter as Correspondent. Visit to the I family.
- Sep 21 Robert N, by the help of Lady Reade's charity, passes on to Burford Grammar School.
- 28 Order of school stationery requested of the managers. Needlework cupboard placed in the main room.

- 1901**
- Oct 4 Visit of Mrs I (Charles). Received circular on management of oil lamps.
- 8 Amount of Aid Grant £35. Teaching Power £30. Desks £5.
- 11 Lesson on 'Oil lamps'. Older children copy the precautions.
- 18 Standard IV composition on 'Cultivation' twice this week.
- 23 Visit of Vicar. Churchyard rails (boys).

- 1902**
- Jul 4 Children received tickets showing times present and absent during past school year. R Perkins succeeds E Watson. Received £2 8 0d Lady Reade's charity.
- 11 Gave notice of needlework sale.
- 18 The above £2 8 0d distributed at Id for every four complete weeks. Three children attended all the year receive extra from Vicar.
- Sep 26 R Perkins away at Oxford. Received 27 Coronation cups for children admitted this year (remnants). Sergeant Pittaway drills the boys this week.
- Oct 3 Drill continued as above. Sent stationery order.
- 10 On Tuesday of this week R Pittaway amends the 'musical drill'

and receives the thanks of master and children.

- 17 Fairs, potatoes and disregard of 'Attendance orders' lowers the average.

1903

- Jun 11 *(Part of HMI's report, copied out Aug 6)*  
Infant class. These children are carefully and kindly managed, but the Mistress should personally take a larger share in the games and occupations of the babies, and not entrust them too much to indifferent monitorial supervision.

1904

- Apr 8 *(Entry written by the incoming Head Teacher, John Strong)*  
Mr Peirce was presented this afternoon with a handsome clock, subscribed for by the past + present pupils and teachers in recognition of nearly 35 years' service in this School.

*The class room, at the northern end of the school. The window once overlooked the rockyard of Parsonage Farm, and now the garden of Barn Piece. The room is now part of St. Mary's House.*



## A Hundred and one Years Ago

From the *Oxford Times*, Saturday 31 May 1890.

### SHIPTON UNDER WYCHWOOD

On Wednesday week a meeting of the Beaconsfield Hall Committee of Management was held in the hall to consider the best and cheapest way of completing the arrangements to provide for a reading-room, entertainments, balls, etc. The hall is a first-class room, second to that in no other village in the county, and is found to be extremely useful for the purpose it was intended, but as yet no conveniences such as an ante-room, lavatory, etc. have been added. After suggesting several plans it was unanimously agreed to add a smaller kitchen to the north-east end, and to convert the present kitchen into a reading-room when not in use for other purposes, the cost of which would be about £35. The question then arose how the money could be raised, and it was decided as there were yet many gentlemen in the neighbourhood favourable to the cause whose names were not at present on the honorary list of subscribers, they should be solicited by circular to assist in completing the work. If this appeal should succeed, it was decided that the work should be commenced at once. Mr Brooks said if the money could be raised he would give the land required, and if Mr J. Reade would give the stones from the old building close by the work could be done before harvest. He would guarantee the hauling to be done free of cost, which offer was gladly received. The Committee then separated, in the earnest hope that under so favourable circumstances friends would help them to complete a good rendezvous for the polling district of Shipton-under-Wychwood.

*The 'cause' referred to was, of course, that of the local Conservatives who built the hall, opened five years earlier.*

*Ed.*

# Life in Old Milton

OLIVE FROST

*Olive Barnes, now Mrs Olive Frost, was born in The Square, Milton under Wychwood in 1907 and later lived in Calais Cottage, Frog Lane.*

I was born in The Square on 1 August 1907. My Mother rented three cottages which stood apart because, as she said, she wouldn't have other peoples' noise and stinks. In 1914 we moved to the last house in Frogmore Lane, which had a drive and stood in an acre of ground. My Mother Lizzy Barnes, formerly Lizzy Norgrove of Shipton, was a very clean and hard working woman, very well known and respected. She married Henry Barnes in Milton Church in 1888. She refused to use the work 'obey' in the marriage service and said instead 'to love honour and nobay'.

*Olive Barnes, aged 3 years (1910)*



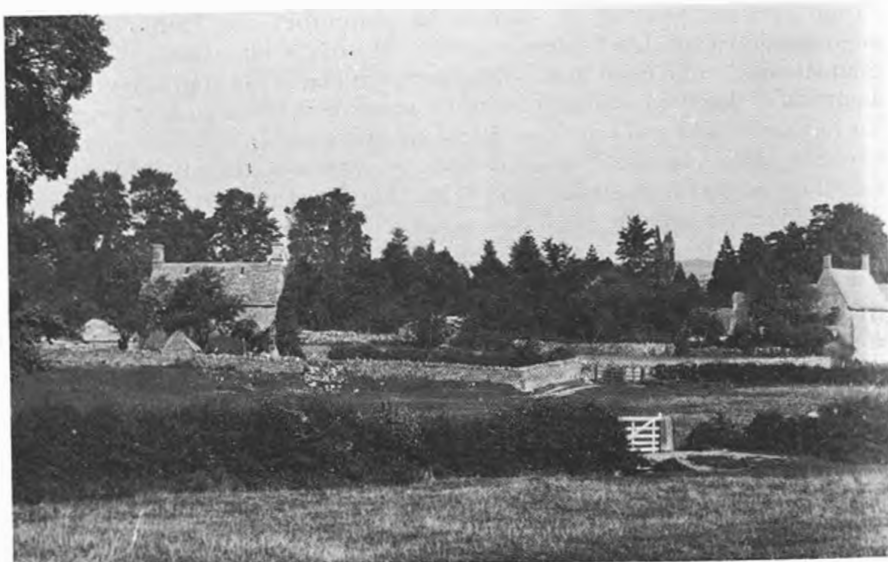
Until 1910 we were quite well off; I remember my Father dropping sovereigns through his fingers into my Mother's lap. Groves' men did contract work at that time. (I am delighted that Dad's photograph is on page twenty-six of the Wychwoods Album; he is on the extreme right front.) He was very smart and good looking and I adored him. In 1910 he met with a terrible accident. He went with other Groves' men to dig gravel from a pit near the top of Milton High Street. They hadn't been working long when the walls caved in and Dad was completely buried. His friend Percy Greenaway dug with his hands to find Dad's face so that he could breathe. Dad never worked again and from then on we were very poor. Half his basic wage was paid to him weekly, amounting to 11s. 3d. (56p).

Mother was very proud and although she had six children at school, not earning, she refused to allow the powers that were to put us into a home. She did all sorts of work to keep us fed and clothed. What wonderful people they all were, helping each other in every possible way, day and night. As we all nine grew up we became better off, and indeed our home was a palace. The gardens were a joy to behold and it was usual to see people standing at the bottom of the drive admiring the beauty. Mother would go to furniture sales at the big houses and buy beautiful furniture. She would bid against Marky Bunting, a well known furniture dealer of Shipton. Mother always won. I still have a large mirror she bought at Shipton Court. The stories Dad told us on winter nights around a big fire, some handed down the generations, were a great joy to us children. Stories of local ghosts, highwaymen and murders; rather different to today's television as our stories were all true.

When my Mother was eight years old she called at 'The Lodge' at Shipton and asked a lady if she would teach her to sew. 'What a dear little girl', said the lady, 'ask your Mother if you can spend half an hour each afternoon and I will teach you to sew'. What a blessing that turned out to be. In our badly-off days Mother would buy clothes from rummage sales, given by the gentry, and reshape them into clothes for us. She made beautiful bedspreads for Mrs Samuda of Bruern Abbey who was very much looked up to.

My sister Dolly Barnes used to get smacks from my Mother because she refused to curtsy to Mrs Samuda. Dolly was a character and no mistake. She died in 1985 at the age of 88. Her real name was May Diamond Jubilee because of her date of birth. I remember at her wedding, Molly Timms (later Mrs Jim Puddle) shouting 'Good old Doll, keep your pecker up', as my sister walked down the aisle of Milton Church on Dad's arm. The whole village turned out for weddings and funerals then and we all went to church or chapel on Sundays. A very united village was Milton in those days.

Our house was known as Calais Cottage, pronounced Callis. The fields were First, Second and Third Callis. Dog Kennel Lane was so called because the Peppers of Shipton Court had kept dogs there. The cricket ground at Shipton was known as Shortcraft, the best cricket pitch in Oxfordshire. The fields nearby were called Diggerspit, Cow Common and Forty-eight Acres.



*Calais Cottage looking towards Frog Lane, Milton, before 1914*

The paths through Bruern Wood were called the Vestry Light and Unkid Light.

When war broke out in 1914 the Milton men left their ploughs in the fields and went to join up. I remember standing outside the Baptist Chapel one Sunday afternoon watching young men sign their lives away. Some were only seventeen. There were 827 inhabitants in Milton at that time and we lost 48 of our lovely boys. Some also died later of their wounds.

Our Vicar Mr Horlock was very much loved. As he lay dying he said 'Bury me near the organ so that I can hear it'. I was taken to see his corpse by Louie Pittaway of Shipton. I could never understand a word Mr Shildrick the curate said. When we sang the hymn *Make mine eyelids close* I sang with much feeling thinking it meant a girl named Eyelid was needing clothes. Shipton had much-loved vicars too: Mr Carter who christened me in Shipton Church in 1907, then Mr Nixon, a big man who went about on a bicycle and greeted everyone he met. People came from miles around to hear him preach. I was in Shipton Church when Miss Dee fell dead as she sang a hymn. They carried her body home on a hurdle. How sad we all were.

Milton was a wonderful village in those days. Mr Guy Mayman was the tallest man in the village and Mr Dorset, the smallest man, worked for him. It was a common sight to see Mr Mayman being driven about in his pony and tub by Mr 'Dosset'. The Maymans lived in Kohima, now Heath House. In the High Street lived old Mr Wright who had fought in the battle of Balaclava in

1855. Walking or running home I would pass the blacksmith's and at the end of Jubilee Lane was the wheelwright's where Mr Keen made lovely yellow wheels for tubs or traps. Roy Ridley was the carrier and I was often sent to Chipping Norton by carrier to collect goods Mother had ordered. We went through Churchill and the horse knew all the stops.

I knew Alfred Groves well; he was bent double with age, a nice looking old gentleman with a stick. He used to put pears on the spiked railings for us children to find. Taking a short cut home from school through The Square,

*Mr Keen, wheelwright, in Jubilee Lane, Milton, 1929*



I would pass Renee Hedges' house with her 13 cats. Her brother Jessie who had been a sailor lived with her and he wore his seaman's hat until he died. There was no money for his funeral so he was buried by the parish. The coffin was a cheap one and we could see his hair through the cracks. There was no one to follow him to the grave so kind Hilda Rathband said 'I'll get my hat and follow the poor old b-', and follow him she did. I remember her Mother always standing by the Methodist Chapel.

We used to go to Tangley for picnics during the long summer holidays and one day we ventured down the tunnel that leads from Tangley Farm to Bruern Abbey. When we came upon a dead sheep we beat a hasty retreat. There is a chapel in this tunnel under Two Bush Hill, and Dad used to tell us of two poachers who had a smoke in it. I think part of this tunnel formed Granny Green's cave on Chipping Norton Hill and then went on to Chadlington House. Our Mother took us to tea with Granny Green. Granny used to smoke a clay pipe, just like a man. There was a beautiful beech tree over the cave. I asked her if she was nervous, living all alone up there and felt very humble when she answered 'My dear, the Good Lord looks after me'. As we used to whizz down Chipping Norton Hill on dark nights with our shopping, we would call out 'Good night, Granny' and she would answer 'Good night my darlings, God bless you'. The hedges were aglow with glow-worms. A bygone age.

## Codswallop

A few months ago, speculation about the derivation of this delightful term was being aired in the correspondence columns of a London evening newspaper. It appeared to be connected with the process, developed by one Hiram Codd in 1875, whereby a marble was enclosed in the specially shaped neck of a glass lemonade or ginger beer bottle to keep the contents fizzy. One correspondent maintained that, since the marble had to be struck smartly into the neck with a small wooden implement to release the bottle's contents, this was the origin of the expression.

Another reader disputed this, saying that it was in fact a derogatory description of mineral waters in general, bestowed by the drinkers of proper 'wallop' i.e. beer. Yet another pointed out that any true cockney would know the meaning of the term since the kind of wallop (drink) preferred by a codfish is the stagnant water found in the bottom of boats-bilge.

Serious students of history may prefer to carry out further research into this subject before making up their own minds, but perhaps these speculations will enliven the Society's fieldwalks when bottle marbles are often among the artefacts recovered.

## Mary Moss A Lass of the Wychwoods

WENDY PEARSE

I was born and brought up in the Wychwoods,  
More than three score and ten I be now,  
And dear Lord, all the changes I've witnessed,  
Would you like me to tell of them, now?

I was christened the month of October  
In the year 1802,  
At the old Holy Trinity, Ascott,  
And later, were married there too.

Mary Moss was my name at my christening,  
Mary Moss, when I'd married my John.  
You see, Ascott were full of them Moss's,  
The stones there did gather them on.

'Ag. Labs.' were the family status,  
My father, sons, husband, each one  
And, we women, we worked there beside them  
Whenever the job needed some.

When I were a girl in this valley,  
The fields were all open and free,  
Few hedges and walls subdivided  
The vale of the Wychwoods, you see.

Then along came Lord Churchill to change it.  
A private enclosure, said he,  
And Ascott erected its fences  
And restricted its freedom from me.

No commons to collect the firing,  
And nowhere to pasture the cow,  
And fleas in the ears of the urchins  
Who defied the barriers now.

Then later, to Shipton and Milton,  
The selfsame divisions arrived.  
The quickthorn and drystone defences  
Erupted upon every side.

But, fast on the heels of enclosure  
Another quite monstrous idea.  
They said, a fire-eating maurauder  
With designs on our valley, drew near.

The cattle and horses would scatter  
At first sight of its gigantic head  
And fiery doom, death and disaster  
Would threaten good folks in their beds.

The vicar, he preached in the pulpit.  
Dire fears for our morals, he said.  
The monster would reap dreadful vengeance  
On all those too easily led.

Men with long sticks and chain measures.  
Along by the river were seen.  
Surely no smaller divisions  
Would alter our valley so green?

Yes, the railway. It captured our village  
With its great mounds of earth topped with rails  
And shattered the peaceful surroundings  
With the sound of loud clatters and wails.

And then, they disrupted our forest.  
The Queen, they said, ordered it so.  
The farmers demanded new cornfields  
So much of our greenwood must go.

Another devouring monster  
Gourged up all the bushes and shrubs.  
Two horses, a winch and long hawsers  
Created great chasms of mud.

And then, all the men with their breastploughs  
Tackled the roots, stumps and stones  
To make land fit for cultivation  
Where past forest life had its home.

All children to school, was the order.  
To learn sums, write letters and read,  
But the farmers, they knew where to find them,  
To pick up stones, scare crows and weed.

We Moss's was mostly illit'rate,  
Our marks in the church books sufficed,  
But my grandchildren all knows their letters  
And writes their names, ever so nice.

Later, with the rise of Trade Unions,  
The Wychwoods provided the core  
Of a drastic and strong confrontation,  
The women, the ones to the fore.

My son's wife, Charlotte, were a Martyr,  
To Oxford, the women were sped.  
A week passed afore they released them,  
But the Queen praised their efforts, t'was said.

But the times just gets harder and harder.  
Near eighty are me and my John.  
I just hopes the Union don't get us,  
That damn workhouse at Chipping Norton.

## From my Bookshelf

FRANK WARE

As a student of history I have always been fascinated by the medieval and earlier periods, with a leaning towards archaeology rather than to documents. This interest is reflected in the following selection of books and papers, mostly taken from my own bookshelves.

My practical involvement in local history has been stimulated and influenced by the work in landscape history of **Professor Hoskins** and his colleagues at Leicester University. His *The Making of the English Landscape*, first published in 1955, has opened the eyes of a whole generation of local historians, and persuaded many people to appreciate the evidence of what is to be seen on the ground as well as in documentary sources. A new lavishly

illustrated edition, published in 1988, has a foreword and a commentary by way of footnotes by **Christopher Taylor**. This repeats the assertion in the first edition that there is a reference to Shipton in an eighth century Saxon charter. I found no trace of this in **Margaret Gelling's** *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley*, and had presumed this was a mistaken attribution of a charter relating to Shipton on Cherwell. But *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region* supports Hoskins' assertion—clearly this point needs more research.

**Christopher Taylor's** own *Village and Farmstead* expounds his theories about the continuity of estates from Roman and Iron Age times into the medieval and later periods. **Margaret Gelling** is an Early English linguist who has been very influential with her research on both charters and place-names of Anglo-Saxon origin. Among her many works *Signposts to the Past* is of particular interest to us, because it contains a translation of the bounds of the Witney manor in its charter of 969; along its northern side this is also the boundary of the Royal Manor of Sciptone, and members of the Society will remember walking this some years ago.

Another seminal work in local history was **Maurice Beresford's** *The Lost Villages of England*, first published in 1954, which contains passing references to Ascott and Bruern. It had not previously been recognised how common deserted medieval villages were, and how often their remains are visible in the landscape. *The Deserted Villages of Oxfordshire* by **Allison et al** was published in 1965 and summarised the extent of knowledge then on this subject. Local entries include Bruern, Langley, Widford, the Chalfords, Little Rollright and Walcot near Charlbury (the latter was a vill on the Royal Manor of Sciptone at the eastern end of the arm of its land which lay north of Wychwood Forest).

Much work has followed in the school of Hoskins and Beresford, bridging the gap between local history and archaeology. **Michael Aston**, who used to live in Milton, cites the village several times in *Interpreting the Landscape*, and uses maps of its fields in 1850 and 1970 to illustrate how changes in field systems have altered the landscape over the last two centuries.

In the 1970's Hoskins edited a series of books on county landscapes, including **Frank Emery's** *The Oxfordshire Landscape*, which contains much of interest about how our local settlements have evolved. There is a section on Wychwood Forest. But it is **Beryl Schumer** who has made the Forest the subject of her special study over many years, and her *Evolution of Wychwood to 1400* is packed with nuggets of information and references. Earlier **Mrs Wickham Steed** had described the bounds of the Forest in *Top Oxon*, based on the Perambulation of 1300.

There has been a lack of major archaeological excavations in our area, which is reflected in the relative paucity of references in the literature. Soon after the war, **Professor Jope** excavated the d'Oilly Castle at Ascott, and **Don Benson** the long barrow on the Charlbury road in the 1960's. There has also been some work in the Iron Age fort above Lynham. During the last decade **George Lambrick** of the Oxford Archaeological Unit excavated at the Rollright Stones, and undertook surveys and fieldwalking in their vicinity.

while an OAU team directed by **Brian Durham** excavated the Bishop's Palace at Witney. For the most part, however, the OAU has concentrated its activities on rescue work, in the face of development in Oxford City and other towns like Abingdon, or of gravel extraction in the Thames Valley.

An invaluable summary of sites and finds in the county is contained in *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region*, a symposium published by the Oxford University Department for External Studies in 1986, but some of it written a few years earlier. This contains a report on the Don Benson dig. There are also distribution maps of finds from different periods, and it is noteworthy that under Neolithic flints these maps show only 'other implements' (no arrowheads) and neither sites nor finds for the Romano-British period in Shipton and Milton. This shows how quickly this sort of survey can get out of date. We now know of two Romano-British settlement sites in Shipton, and have recovered considerable quantities of R-B pottery and two coins on the Society's fieldwalks, as well as five flint arrowheads. But this is a matter of detail: in general this book is an excellent survey and invaluable for anyone interested in the archaeological aspects of local history.

This is a very personal choice of books. I hope other members will feel inspired to compile completely different selections, reflecting their own interests in local history.

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George Lambrick, *The Rollright Stones* (1988), English Heritage.  
Beryl Schumer, *The Evolution of Wychwood to 1400: Pioneers, Frontiers and Forests* (1984), Leicester University Press.  
Christopher Taylor, *Village and Farmstead* (1983), George Philip.  
Mrs V.S.Wickham Steed, 'The Bounds of Wychwood Forest' (1961), *Top. Oxon.*, No 7.

## Other Publications in Print

**The Second Wychwoods Album** £5.00

By Sue Jourdan and John Rawlins (1990)

A selection of 80 photographs illustrating life in Milton, Shipton and neighbouring villages, with emphasis on the impact of the two World Wars.

**Wychwoods History, Number 1 (1985)** £2.50

Hedge Survey of Shipton & Milton, Pt 1; Milton Graveyard Survey; Railway Timetable 1853; Cotham Cottage, Milton; Royal Manor of Sciptone in Domesday, Pt 1; Probate Inventory of William Hyatt, 1587.

**Wychwoods History, Number 2 (1986)** £2.50

William Master, Vicar of Shipton 1564-91; A Milton Field, 1842-1985; Survey of Baptist Burial Ground, Milton; Letters of Thomas & Hannah Groves; Royal Manor of Sciptone in Domesday, Pt 2; Hedge Survey, Pt 2.

**Wychwoods History, Number 3 (1987)** £2.50

Published in conjunction with Oxford University Department for External Studies and edited by Kate Tiller.

Milton & Shipton in the Nineteenth Century—Farming and community before 1850; Village government; Decade of change, the 1850s; Decade of decisions, the 1870s; Growing up 100 years ago; Life and work 1880-1914.

**Wychwoods History, Number 4 (1988)** £2.50

Earthworks at Lower Farm, Upper Milton (survey by James Bond); Fieldwalking in Evenlode Valley; Prebendal House, Shipton (excavation by Brian Durham); My Father's Days; Wartime Wedding.

**Wychwoods History, Number 5 (1989)** £3.00

The Poor of Shipton 1740-62; Shipton Milestone; St Mary's Church, Shipton; The Reade Chapel; Plague Tyme; Fifty Years of Change in the Villages, to 1988; Medieval Pottery Finds at St Mary's School, Shipton.

The above and further copies of this Journal may be obtained from Frank Ware, Monks Gate, Shipton under Wychwood, Oxford OX7 6BA (telephone Shipton (0993) 830494). P&P is 60p for the first book plus 25p for each additional book. Cheques payable to Wychwoods Local History Society.



The Wychwoods Local History Society meets once a month from September through to May. Meetings alternate between the village halls at Shipton and Milton. Current membership is £4 for an individual member and £6 for a couple, 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, Oxford OX7 6BJ (telephone Shipton under Wychwood (0993) 831023).

Further copies and back numbers of *Wychwoods History* may be obtained from Frank Ware, Monks Gate, High Street, Shipton under Wychwood, Oxford OX7 6BA (telephone Shipton under Wychwood (0993) 830494). Postage and packing is 60p for the first copy plus 25p for each additional copy. Cheques payable to Wychwoods Local History Society. See inside for full list of publications in print.

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Cover illustration: *Holy Trinity Church, Ascott under Wychwood, about 1900.*