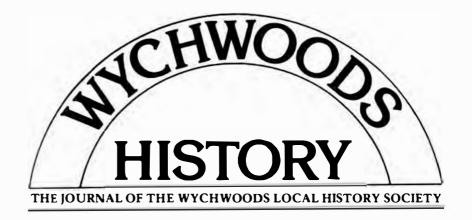
CHWO S HISTORY

THE JOURNAL OF THE WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY





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Contents

Editorial	3
The Origins of the Minster Church at Shipton under Wychwood: Human Burials from Prebendal House	4
The Groves Family of Milton: Cotswold Stonemasons for 400 Years	10
Death by Misadventure	29
Letters	33
Early Days at Shipton	34
Observations on Ridge and Furrow in Honeydale Field	42
One Hundred Years Ago	44
Henry Mills, Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood, 1593-1641	45
A Cottage on the Waste	53
The Milton under Wychwood Murder	58
From My Bookshelf	64
Death of a Schoolmaster	67
Other Publications in Print	68

Editorial

We are particularly fortunate once again to be able to welcome a professional historian as a guest contributor to this edition of our journal. Dr John Blair has followed up one aspect of the study at Prebendal House carried out four years ago by the Oxford Archaeological Unit, already reported in *Wychwoods History no. 4*. The dating of some of the human burials from the site now throws exciting new light on the early history of Shipton parish. The Society is grateful to the W.A.Pantin Trust for a generous grant which enabled the radiocarbon dating to be undertaken.

Norman Frost's long-awaited history of the Groves family is the culmination of years of investigation and should provoke much interest both here and abroad. The first part appears in this edition with more to follow. Mrs Dorothy Brookes, although no longer resident in Shipton, has written extensively about her childhood memories and later experiences, and we are very pleased to publish some of these.

It is particularly valuable to have the comments of Jim Pearse, a working farmer, on the ridge and furrow feature with which he is so familiar, while once again Tom McQuay brings his medical expertise to an analysis of parish records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In our second journal, Jack Howard-Drake wrote of William Master, a sixteenth-century vicar of Shipton. He now follows this up with fascinating glimpses of the life and times of Henry Mills, another, later vicar who was accused of obscenity in the church court by one of his parishioners. (The first part of our Chairman's extensive researches on the business of the church courts of the period have just been published (1991) by Oxfordshire County Council, Dept. of Leisure and Arts, entitled Oxford Church Courts Depositions, 1542-1550.)

Joan Howard-Drake continues our 'Bookshelf feature with a comprehensive survey of titles for anyone engaged in or contemplating research into family history. 'A Cottage on the Waste' is a short history of a house compiled from its deeds. Our locality abounds in interesting buildings from all periods; perhaps this article will inspire someone else to delve into their records and write us a similar account.

Margaret Ware Editor

The Origins of the Minster Church at Shipton under Wychwood: Human Burials from Prebendal House

JOHN BLAIR

The parish church of Shipton under Wychwood displays some of the clearest marks of a former Anglo-Saxon minster. It was attached to an eleventh-century royal manor; it was used to endow a cathedral prebend; and through the later middle ages it retained links with several daughter churches founded within its 'mother-parish'. Yet its history before the twelfth century is obscure. Like most Oxfordshire churches it is not mentioned in Domesday Book, and it is first recorded shortly after 1100 when one Joseph held it of the king. From him it evidently passed to another of Henry I's servants, Arnold (or Arnulf) the Falconer, who by 1116 had given it to Salisbury Cathedral as part of a prebend.²

Any new evidence for the origins of the church must come from archaeological sources. During the 1970s and 1980s, building works and landscaping in and around the Prebendal House which adjoins the churchyard on the north-eastern side disturbed at least thirty, and perhaps many more, inhumations. It was decided to test the possibility that these might be pre-Conquest burials by taking samples for radiocarbon dating, an exercise which proved to be richly justified by the results.

Topography (Figs. 1 and 2)

Shipton parish church lies near the west bank of the Evenlode, on the edge of a thin tongue of gravel between the alluvial floodplain and the Lower Lias which rises up westwards. This sort of river-side location is characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon minster churches of Oxfordshire, which are concentrated in the valleys of the Evenlode (Charlbury and Shipton), the Windrush (Minster Lovell), the Thame (Thame) and above all the Thames (Bampton, Eynsham, Oxford and Dorchester). Fig. 1 shows the similarity of the location of Shipton church to that of Charlbury, a minster which housed the relics of an early Anglo-Saxon saint. Throughout Britain, in fact, the favoured locations for early minsters are the summits or shoulders of low hills and promontories, islands in marshy floodplains and headlands in the bends of rivers or on the sea-coast. The location of Shipton church, and of the village

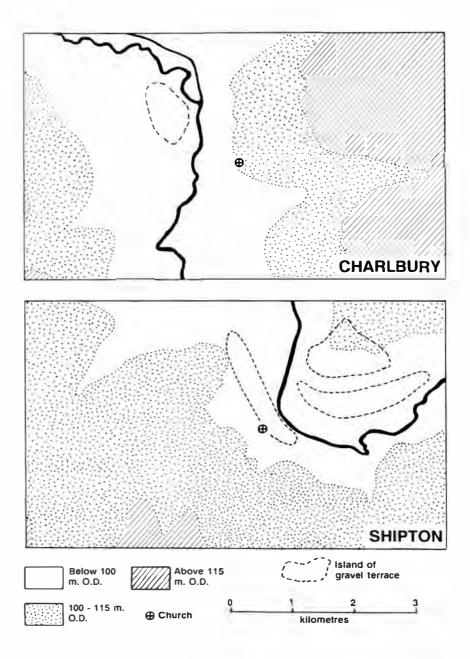


Fig. 1. The locations of Shipton under Wychwood and Charlbury, two minster churches in the Evenlode Valley.

or small town which grew around it, are therefore entirely consistent with a minster-generated settlement.

The churchyard is one of a number of rectilinear enclosures between the village and the Even lode. Separating it from the river is the Prebendal House, a large complex, still retaining a late medieval barn and fragments of a thirteenth- or fourteenth-century domestic range, which housed the visiting canons of Salisbury. The layout of the existing boundaries (Fig. 2) suggests that the churchyard and the grounds of the Prebendal House once formed a single rhomboidal enclosure which was divided when the Prebendal House was built, presumably no earlier than the twelfth century, over part of the graveyard.

The excavations described below revealed a ditch two metres wide and running from north-west to south-east, located in two places (marked A⁴ and B on Fig. 2), and a ditch of unknown width, at right-angles to the first, located in one place (C). The first of these ditches must be relatively early, since it underlies the medieval house and one burial (5) was cut into it. It is therefore clear that the prevailing alignment of rectilinear enclosures and boundaries, to which the burials seem to have conformed, was established by at least the twelfth century. By contrast the standing church, in which no visible fabric dates from before c.1200, is much closer to a true west-east alignment. This fact suggests a total rebuilding in the Romanesque period, on a different alignment from the Anglo-Saxon church and perhaps even on a slightly different site.

The burials (Fig. 2)

Except for one group found in the early 1970s, the occasion of the disturbance of these burials was the refurbishment and extension of the Prebendal House, and associated laying of services, in 1987-8. Limited excavation and salvage recording was carried out by Brian Durham of the Oxford Archaeological Unit, with the help of members of the Wychwoods Local History Society, and a report has already appeared in this journal.⁵ In conjunction with this work, further burials were observed in contractors' trenches by John Rawlins and Margaret Ware. The following list, in which the numbers refer to the symbols marked on Fig. 2, summarises these various records, the three informants being identified by their initials:

- 1. Fibula, ex situ (BD).
- 2. Humerus, ex situ (BD).
- 3. Two in situ burials, one probably an infant; a little further south 'more skulls and bones, exact number not known' (BD₂JR).
- 4. Four in situ burials (JR).
- 5. In ditch fill, in situ burial, head to south (BD); two more nearby, rather lower down (JR).
- 6. Probably one burial, disturbed, found during terrace widening (MW).
- 7. During the digging of a north-south water-main trench in the early 1970s 'several skeletons were disturbed 15+ at a conservative estimate. The trench

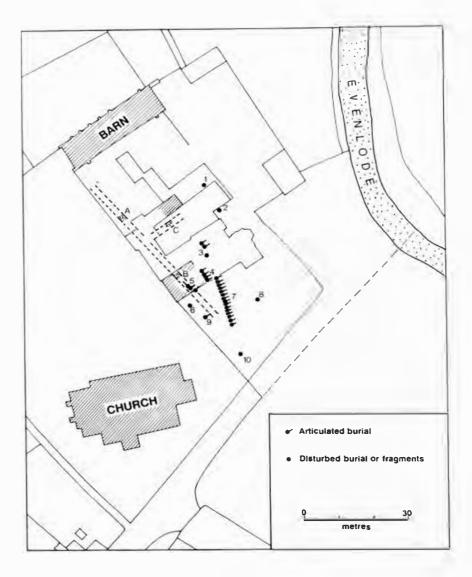


Fig. 2. The churchyard and Prebendal House, Shipton under Wychwood, showing the locations of burials observed and excavated. Standing medieval buildings are shaded.

went through the centre part of most of the skeletons disturbed. It would seem that their skulls were facing the church [i.e. heads to west], and all had been buried face-downwards.' (JR, from information provided by J.Busby and S.Nix).

8. Probably one burial, disturbed, found during digging of pond (MW). 9 and 10. Each of these was probably one individual, disturbed, cut by electricity cable-trench parallel with churchyard wall (MW).

Apart from the abnormal burial 5, which lay with its head to the south, all inhumations which were *in situ* and accurately observed lay with their heads to the west in the normal Christian fashion. The bodies observed in 1988-9 lay between c.50 cm. and c.75 cm. below modern ground level, and at least some of them, like the row cut by the water-main in the early 1970s, are reported to have lain face-downwards.

The radiocarbon dates

Three bone samples were collected: a group of small bones from the disarticulated burial(s) at location 8, a similar group from location 6, and a single femur, again from location 6, which was analysed as a separate sample. These were submitted to Radiocarbon Dating (Downs Croft, The Holloway, Harwell), and analysed by Drs R.L.Otlet and A.J.Walker. The following table sets out the radiocarbon ages (years b.p.) derived from the measurement results, together with calibrated AD date-ranges from the Washington University intercept method using the data of Stuiver and Pearson:⁶

Location	RCD ref.	Years b.p.	Calibrated dates AD	
		-	68% conf.	95% conf.
6 (frags.)	RCD-344	1200 ± 90	685-950	650-1010
8 (frags.)	RCD-291	1200 ± 60	725-890	670-980
6 (femur)	RCD-292	1140 ± 50	825-970	780-1000

There is at least a 68 per cent likelihood that the reading with the earliest range (sample 8) dates from before 890, and a 95 per cent likelihood that it dates from before 980. Furthermore, all three readings centre on dates within the ninth century. The radiocarbon evidence therefore amounts to a strong likelihood that the graveyard was established before AD 900, and a virtual certainty that it was established before AD 1000 at the very latest.

Conclusion

It is now abundantly clear that the area outside the churchyard wall to the north-east of the church was once an intensively used cemetery of unaccompanied, mainly west-east inhumations. Both the single south-north burial and the several which evidently lay face-downwards are abnormal features, and suggest some irregularity in the use of this graveyard. Carelessness in burial has been noted as a characteristic of several

'final-phase' (i.e. seventh-century) pagan cemeteries,⁷ but the radiocarbon determinations imply that the Shipton graves are at least two centuries later. The possibility that these are Viking-period burials naturally suggests itself, but in the absence of grave-goods this must remain the merest hypothesis.

At all events the dated burials corroborate the hints, conveyed in much later written sources, that the church was established by at least the late Anglo-Saxon period, enjoying the burial rights which in the ninth century were still largely the prerogative of minsters. This in turn reinforces the topographical impression of Shipton as a 'minster town', a settlement which has coalesced between the ninth and twelfth centuries around the ritual and economic focus provided by an important church. Unexpectedly, therefore, the burials take the history of Shipton under Wychwood back by a good two centuries before the first reference to it in 1086.

Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to Brian Durham, John Rawlins and Margaret Ware for making the results of their excavations and observations available to me. The radiocarbon work was financed by a generous grant from the W.A.Pantin Trust.

Notes

- 1 For the criteria for identifying minsters see especially the essays in J.Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: the Local Church in Transition 950-1200* (1988), and earlier works cited there.
- 2 This story is reconstructed from documents printed in *The Register of St Osmund*, ed. W.H.R.Jones, i (Rolls Ser. 78,1883), 383,196 and 201; for the dates of these texts see E.J.Kealey, *Roger of Salisbury* (1972), 234-5.
- 3 J.Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon Minsters: a Topographical Review', in J.Blair and R.Sharpe (eds.), Pastoral Care Before the Parish (1992), 227.
- 4 Durham op. cit. note 5 below, feature 404 on Fig. 1.
- 5 B.Durham, 'Prebendal House, Shipton under Wychwood', Wychwoods History no.4 (1988), 50-60.
- 6 M.Stuiver and P.J.Reimer, 'A Computer Program for Radiocarbon Dating', *Radiocarbon*, xxviii, no.2B, 1022-9; M.Stuiver and G.W.Pearson, 'High-Precision Calibration of the Radiocarbon Time-Scale AD 1950-500 BC', *Radiocarbon*, xxviii, no.2B, 805-38.
- 7 See for instance A.L.Meancy and S.C.Hawkes. *The Anglo-Saxon Cemeteries at Winnall* (1970), 29-31.

Dr Blair is a Fellow of The Queen's College, Oxford



Alfred Groves and Sons Ltd. are pleased to be associated with the following article, which records the history of the Groves family from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. Rarely has one family been associated with the stonemason's craft for so long a period and contributed so much to the appearance of the present-day Cotswold towns and villages. The next two hundred years of the Groves family history will appear in a future issue of this journal.

The Groves Family of Milton Cotswold Stonemasons for 400 Years

NORMAN FROST

Introduction

After a life in the armed forces, I came to Milton under Wychwood in 1968 to run the post office and grocery stores. I was able to pursue my interest in local history and old buildings, thanks to the kindness and interest of the people of Milton, and soon became aware of the firm of Alfred Groves and Sons, specialists in high-quality building and restoration work. This had been founded by members of a family who had lived here since the time of the first Queen Elizabeth. Although the family name no longer exists in the village, many people living in Milton now are direct descendants and the company is still owned by the family of Samuel Groves, the last of that name in the business. My search for information has also led me to contact many people bearing the Groves name in the USA (where a Groves Society exists), Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

With so many local people employed in the building trade, the Groves family has had a great influence on village life over the years, as well as on buildings for many miles around. They were not a titled family with a large estate. Their history is that of a family of artisans, farmers, often farm

labourers and house servants, some of them even receiving assistance under the provisions of the Poor Law. But they were always at the core of village life, along with other equally old families such as Rawlins, Seacole, Barnes, Burson, Silman, Shayler and Mace, some of whom married into the Groves family.

Since the fortunes of the family and of the firm are based solidly upon the local building stone, a brief consideration of this is relevant.

Milton Stone

The Cotswold Hills make up the central part of the Jurassic limestone belt which runs north-east south-west from the York hire Wolds to Portland. From the earliest times this has provided valuable stone for building and other purposes. In the past, many local quarries were quite shallow and only used intermittently, producing stone for walling and road surfacing as required. Few of these are used today and they survive as shallow, grassed depressions in many fields adjacent to the A36l between Burford and Chipping Norton. The much more valuable stone, freestone, was to be found on Milton Downs to the east of A424 between Burford and Milton; similarly, west of A424 and north of Taynton lay a group of quarries known collectively as Taynton quarries. Several more freestone quarries were in use in the area but these two groups are the ones with which this account is concerned.

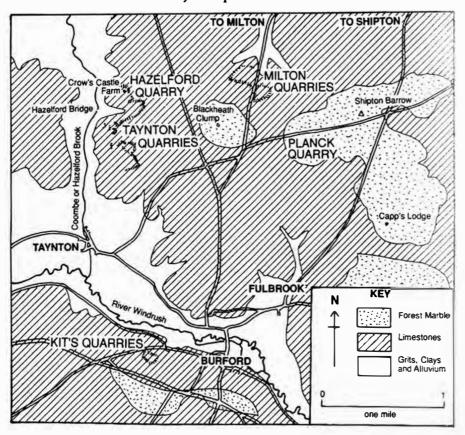
From the Merton College Rolls of 1307 we see that Hugo Gryffyn had the Milton quarries, and he is mentioned again in 1310. The name Griffin is still found locally as well as among the slatters in the Stonesfield quarries. Headington quarries near Oxford supplied much of the stone for the Oxford colleges and churches but the demand was so great that additional stone had to be bought from Taynton and Milton, for Magdalen and Christ Church colleges, as well as St. Mary's church, Thame and St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

Over the years it was found that, despite their proximity, Milton stone was inferior to that from Taynton. Although it was a good colour and carved well, when used for exterior work the surface of Milton stone hardened and flaked off thus needing replacement after a relatively short time at no little cost. This fact was sometimes forgotten in Oxford with the passage of years and some heavy expenses for repairs were incurred. The eventual unpopularity of Milton stone may have been a contributory factor in the closure of Milton quarries. Another reason was the depth at which the freestone lay, as forty-five feet of overburden had to be cleared before the stone could be quarried. As we will see later, Alfred Groves and Son were well aware of the deficiencies of Milton stone and by 1720 were leasing Hazelford Quarry which lies right alongside Taynton Quarries. Hazelford was still producing stone for Groves in the early years of the present century.

The earliest records - John and Alice Grove

By the reign of Queen Elizabeth the First in the second half of the sixteenth

Map showing the position of Groves' quarries (Milton, Planck and Hazelford) in relation to Burford and Taynton quarries



century, great families no longer felt the need to live protected by castle walls, but demanded more comfortable accommodation in fine houses. The bigger and grander the house, the more it added to the family's standing. Many old houses were rebuilt in stone and many new ones constructed: the building of the present Shipton Court belongs to this period. The demand for building stone was immense and there was plenty of work for masons in areas like the Cotswolds. Local legend has it that the Grove (or Groave) family came to Milton from Chipping Norton to work in the Milton quarries. So far I have not been able to verify this as an ordinary artisan family left few traces, but on 15 January 1576 the Shipton parish register recorded the baptism of a daughter Agnes to John and Alice Grove. This was the first appearance of the family name since the keeping of the parish records had begun in 1538. The records appear in Shipton parish papers since Milton at

that time was a township within the great ecclesiastical parish of Shipton.

Over the next quarter-century, eight more children were born to John and Alice Grove, making a family of four boys and five girls altogether (see family tree A). The eldest boy John died only four weeks after his baptism, while only the death is recorded in 1600 of the youngest child Frisses, an abbreviation of the name Frideswide. The surviving eldest son Andrew evidently married in another parish, probably that of his wife Elizabeth but the Shipton baptismal records show them living at Ramsden, which also formed part of the parish of Shipton, at the birth of their three children William, Andrew and Katherine. Family tree A shows that between 1629 and 1635, all five of this family had died, the children in their teens, with Andrew and Katherine being orphaned first.

With the exception of Leonard, there are no further entries in the parish registers pertaining to the children of John and Alice Grove. John is described as 'an old blind man of Milton' in his burial record of 29 March, 1627, and his wife Alice as 'an old poor widow of Milton' when she was buried four years later on 8 April 1631. From the baptismal records of their children one could deduce that John and Alice had been born around 1550, so that at their deaths they could both have been in their late seventies, thus meriting the description 'old'.

Leonard Grove and his family

Leonard (1594-1662), sometimes spelled Lennord, was John and Alice's youngest son (family tree A). Once again we have no local record of his marriage so his wife probably came from another parish. (It is still common practice, as it was then, to be married in the bride's home town or village.) What is so strange to us is that not once when Leonard registered the baptism of his four children was the name of his wife recorded. His eldest daughter Elizabeth, born in 1622, had an illegitimate daughter Ann when she was thirty-two and died three years later. Little Ann was probably raised by Leonard and his wife, and died a spinster at the age of forty-four. Their second daughter Katherine married Richard Clift of Shorthampton, where they then lived. Clift appears later as executor of Leonard's will. Leonard's third child, a son, William was baptised in 1630 and married Elizabeth Phipps (alias Weaver) of Milton when he was thirty-one. It is through this marriage that the Groves family line continues to the present day. (Several members of Elizabeth's family seem to use the alias Weaver, for reasons unknown.) Leonard's last child, Marie was born in 1635 and died a spinster at the age of twenty-five, being buried at Shipton.

In February 1641 by order of Parliament, all men were asked to sign a document to make known their opposition to the King's attempts to further catholicise the church services. 'Lennord Grove' with 91 other Milton men (just about the whole male population of the township) duly made their protests. Leonard's life of sixty-eight years must have seemed quite eventful, having lived during the reigns of Elizabeth I, James I, Charles I, the Civil War

and the Commonwealth, as well as the restoration of Charles II. It must have been a terrifying day during the Civil War when the King's soldiers came to Milton and shot Thomas Rawlins, who had added his name to Leonard's on the Protestation Rolls three years before.

It is through Leonard Groves' burial record that we have our first definite clue as to his trade: he is described as 'a mason of Milton'. As was customary, an inventory of Leonard's possessions was made after his death, and a copy of this list still exists in the Probate Record Office. It reads:

Leonard Groves, of Milton paroch' de Shipton, his Enmetary made the 27th day of September in the yeare of oure lord God 1664

his purs and Gordell and wearing Clothes	0-3-4
Item the lease	3-0-()
In the hall one Cobard one tabell bord	
to Cottels one pewter platter one flaging	
to potes	0-15-7
In the Butterry	
one drinke Barrill one donbener(2) one Ceaver	0- 3- ()

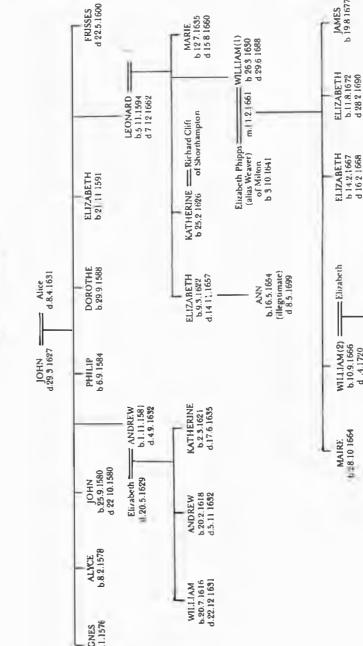
one drinke Barrill one donbener(?) one Ceaver	()- 3- 0
Item for one cow	1- ()- ()
one Bedsteed one flocke bed one feather pellow	
one sheet to Blancotes to Coverleds	()-18- ()
and all other lomber what soever	()- ()- 6

The whole sum is 5-19-10

Nicolas Perry Robert Patten John Bailies

(Note: gordell = girdle, cottels = kettles, flaging = flagon, donbener = a dough-trough?, ceaver = sieve).

From this inventory, some insight into Leonard's life and condition may be deduced. The residual value of the lease of his dwelling was £3, indicating that it was probably a stone cottage. It seems to me that one would not pay such a large sum as this was in those days for anything other than a stone structure. It had at least two rooms. Today there is considerable evidence of these former two-room structures in the village of Milton, dating back to the mid-sixteenth century. A timber structure of this period would be light and flimsy, probably lasting only for the lifetime of the occupants; any evidence of it would only remain if the timbers were incorporated into the house later rebuilt in stone. I know of only one example still existing. Leonard probably lived in the type of cottage typical of this period with a central cross-passage, unglazed shuttered windows to front and rear of each room and with a small lean-to building at the back for cooking purposes. We just do not know where



THE FAMILY OF JOHN AND ALICE GROVE

Ä

= date of bapt = date of buri

14

this cottage was in Milton, which even a hundred years later can be seen on Jefferys' map of 1768 to have been still a very scattered village, with four isolated groups of dwellings, Upper End (now Upper Milton), Lower End (Frog Lane), Green Lane and Dick's Lane (High St.)

The contents of Leonard's cottage seem sparse enough but in comparison with some of his village neighbours he would have lived in fairly comfortable circumstances as befitted a craftsman, a little above the peasant level. One must also take into account that fact that the inventory was taken nearly two years after Leonard's death. In the way of human nature I am quite sure that many small but useful items would have disappeared in that time, including the tools of his trade which would have been very useful to his family. It is unfortunate that no information exists about his wife so her part in his life is quite unknown.

William Grove(1) and Elizabeth Phipps

Returning now to Leonard's son William(1), he married Elizabeth Phipps (alias Weaver) on 11 February, 1661 and they went on to have five children: Maire, William, two girls called Elizabeth and James. From family tree A it will be seen that the baptismal dates of William and the first Elizabeth are less than six months apart, so the boy must have been already several months old at the time. The first Elizabeth died a year and two days after her baptism and the second at age eighteen. No further records have been found of Maire and James, leaving only the eldest son William to continue the line in Milton

At this period, the mid-seventeenth century, the family's records can be quite confusing as we have grandfather, father and later, son, all called William Groves. Two of these Williams married an Elizabeth, furthermore the same two christian names appear at almost every stage throughout the continuing history of the Grove/Groves family.

William Grove(2) and Elizabeth

William (2) was baptised on 10 September 1666; the approximate date of his death is presumed from his will dated 13 April 1720 in which he describes himself as sound and perfect in memory but weak in body. A copy of the will is shown in the Appendix. It would seem from this will that he had prospered and was living in greatly different circumstances compared to his great grandfather John Grove. William not only owned a small farm in the Lower Heath at Milton but also a further house described as 'a house and ground sold to one Forde and bought back again'. He also had a lease on two quarries and owned a third. This is important information for several reasons. It shows William to be first of all a farmer; in keeping with the times farming provided the food and living for the family, a lifestyle which continued for at least four or five more generations. Apart from being a stonemason, William was also a quarryman. While quarrying and masonry were skilled trades which yielded a much better standard of living than farming alone, they were occupations which could only be pursued while work was available. Although

many stone buildings in the Cotsweld villages date from around this time, there were masons in every village, and most places had one if not several small quarries near at hand. Horse cartage was costly, so the nearest quarry that could provide the stone would be used.

From his will it is seen that William owned Planck Quarry. Planck is the term for the large flat stone slabs used for flooring in many old cottages. It was also employed to make garden walls and is still in evidence today. Planck has not been quarried since the later part of the nineteenth century and is derelict and overgrown, but it is still in the ownership of a member of the Groves family.

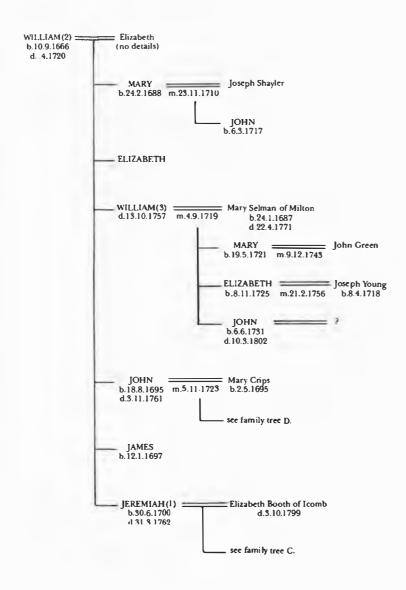
The name 'Pavement Quarry' is difficult to identify but could refer to what is now known as Milton Quarries. These are two quarries on Milton Downs quite near to Planck, said to cover twelve acres and are known to have been worked by the Groves family for many years. They have been disused since early this century, one part being now filled and returned to agriculture and the rest quite overgrown.

The other quarry leased by William was Hasleford, lying just inside the south-west boundary of Milton parish and immediately to the north of Taynton Quarries. These were freestone quarries, the best and most valuable of building stone which was hand-quarried in large blocks for later shaping by hand. The Taynton stone was always said to be superior to Milton stone which did not weather so well, although the latter was quarried only a short distance over the hill from Taynton. From this will we now know that Groves did quarry from the Taynton beds and local knowledge maintains that this continued until the beginning of the present century. Perhaps the old stories of Groves supplying inferior Milton stone as Taynton stone may not be true after all.

William's will also provides an interesting comparison with the condition of his grandfather Leonard, although money hardly figures in William's will except for four small bequests of one shilling each. The document describes his family, giving their order of birth as well as the disposal of his property. William and his wife Elizabeth had six children (family tree B), quite remarkably for those times they all appear to have survived to adulthood. Mary his eldest child was baptised in 1688 and in 1710 married Joseph Shayler, a local man whose family name still survives in this area. Seven years later they had a son, John. Mary is the only child not mentioned in William's will, although her husband Joseph received one of the shillings, which leads me to suspect that Mary may have died in or soon after childbirth. So far, no further reference to this family has been uncovered.

The next two children were Elizabeth and William(3). Their baptisms were not recorded in the Shipton parish register until much later, but as their father's will clearly indicates the order of his sons' birth they must both have been born between 1689 and 1694. In the will Elizabeth was due to receive £10 from her brother William 'at the end of twelve month next' after the decease of her mother, also named Elizabeth. (In this family of mother, aunts

B. THE FAMILY OF WILLIAM GROVE(2) AND ELIZABETH



Note: The births of Elizabeth and William(3) are recorded after the event on 11.3.1698. As the will of William(2) clearly defines the order of his family, their actual birth dates must be between 1689 and 1694.

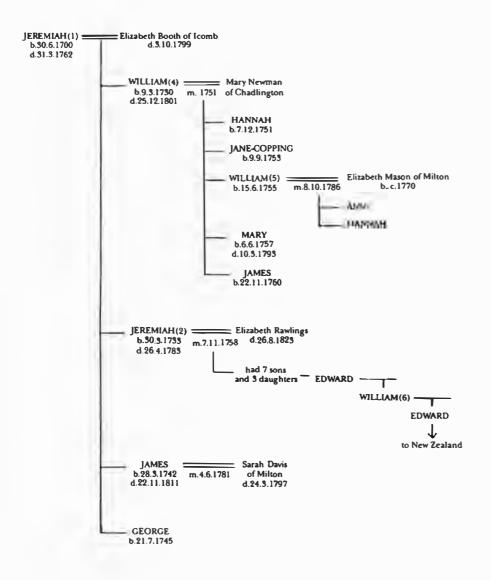
and daughters there were five Elizabeths and four Marys.) William (3) as the eldest son clearly has the lion's share of the estate. He received the house and farm in the Lower Heath and also, together with his younger brother James, a half-share each in the Pavement and Planck quarries. In 1719 he married Mary Selman (otherwise Sylman or Silman), the daughter of Richard Silman. This was a long-established Milton family whose descendants still live in the area. They had three children, the eldest of whom was Mary who married John Green in 1743. They and their descendants continued to live in the Lower Heath Farm until the mid-nineteenth century. Returning to the will of William Grove(2), he next leaves his remaining lease in Hasleford Quarry to his second son John, to be owned jointly with his mother during her lifetime and thereafter in John's sole tenure. As John and his family continue the main line of descent down to the present day I will return to them later. The third son James who, we have already seen, received a half-share with his elder brother in the Planck and Pavement quarries, was also left the other house in Milton which had been sold to the man Forde and then bought back. He was to receive the house when he had done two years' service to his mother, during which time she would find his maintenance. To date this is the last mention of James.

The youngest son of the family was Jeremiah, baptised in 1700. He was nineteen years old at the death of his father. Like his elder sister Elizabeth, he was to be paid £10 by his eldest brother William(3), twelve months after the decease of his mother. As I have so far found no record of their mother's death, I do not know when or if ever they received their ten pounds. Jeremiah did however remain in Milton and became moderately prosperous. He described himself as a yeoman although perhaps he did not technically qualify for that description. It appears that he did not rent or own enough land to be registered in the Poll Book of Freeholders of Oxfordshire of 17 April 1754 and was in fact a husbandman. His elder brothers William and John are so registered and both are recorded as having voted for Viscount Parker and Sir Edward Turner, the Whig candidates. Nevertheless, Jeremiah was a respected member of the Milton community and was an overseer of the poor. A framed document hanging in the offices of Alfred Groves and Sons dated 1740 was signed by Jeremiah in that capacity and records the binding of a poor boy of Milton to twelve years apprenticeship to a Burford broad weaver. In short, Jeremiah was continuing the family tradition as a mason and husbandman just as his brothers were doing. He was not averse to making a living where he could as Shipton records show payments to him for the supply of lime. Somewhere on his property he was operating a small lime kiln and had access to a supply of limestone, which would be a simple matter in an area where small quarries abounded.

The Family of Jeremiah Grove and Elizabeth Booth

Jeremiah Grove married Elizabeth Booth of Icomb early in the eighteenth century and had four sons, thereby creating a family line which is traceable

C. THE FAMILY OF JEREMIAH GROVE AND ELIZABETH BOOTH



to the present day as far away as New Zealand (family tree C). Their youngest son George was born in 1745 but so far no further mention of him has been found in local records. The third son James, born in 1742, married Sarah Davis of Milton.

The eldest son William (4) married Mary Newman of Chadlington in 1751 and produced two sons and three daughters. Their eldest son, another William (5) married Elizabeth Mason of Milton in 1786. Ann, the elder of their two daughters, married William Mullis, a wheelwright of Milton. After her husband William (5)'s death Elizabeth lived in her cottage at the far end of Green Lane where she was later joined by her grandson, William Mullis (2) and his family. After the death of his grandmother he moved to premises in the High Street where he was still continuing the wheelwright's trade in 1881. William (5)'s younger daughter Hannah married another wheelwright, William Couling (or Coulting) who also traded in Milton High Street near the Butcher's Arms. His descendants were still there at the time of the 1881 census.

Jeremiah and Elizabeth's second son Jeremiah (2) was born in 1733, married Elizabeth Rawlings in 1758 and had ten children. Very few details of them have been found but at least two daughters died in infancy. However their seventh child Edward (1770-1878) married Ann Rawlings in 1796 and had six children, two again dying in infancy. Their eldest son William (6) (1806-1878) married Ann Preston of Condicote and they lived in part of a small cottage which is still to be seen today in Upper High Street just beyond Westfields. The occupant of the other part of the cottage at that time was also named William Groves (a distant cousin) and he and his wife Catherine raised seven children. I would imagine that the rest of the village had just as much difficulty sorting out the two families as I did since both Williams were agricultural labourers or masons depending on what work was available.

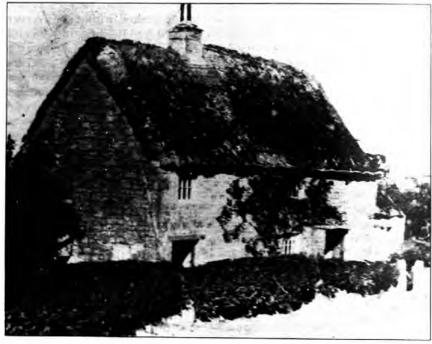
William (6)'s fifth child Edward, born in 1837 and an agricultural labourer, married Eliza Ann Ryman, a dressmaker from Fifield. On the 22 November 1873 they and their five children sailed to New Zealand on the SS Invererne. Two daughters were born in New Zealand, the family prospered and their descendants still live there. The widow of one of their descendants has visited this country on several occasions and in 1990 I was able to show her the former family home and describe the old village to her. No doubt Edward's letters home persuaded his elder brother to follow them and in February 1874 Alfred Groves and his wife Leah Cox, daughter of William and Rachel Cox of the Green, Milton, sailed for New Zealand on the SS Ballochmyle together with their six children. This family too continues to live in New Zealand and together with their cousins form a large group of Milton ex-patriates.

I am sorry that this was such a long diversion, but at the time, the family of the original Jeremiah and Elizabeth Grove formed the greater part of the Grove family. I was extremely fortunate to be able to trace them through to the present day and eventually correspond with them and meet them. Now

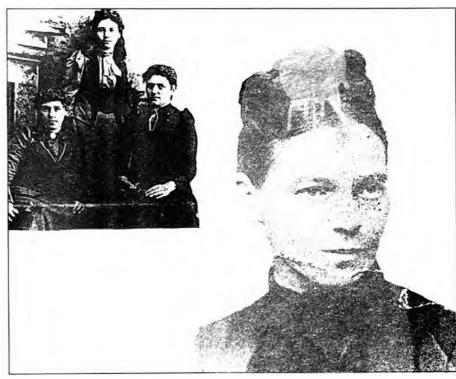
it is time to return to Jeremiah (1)'s elder brother, John who was the second son of William Groves (2) and his wife Elizabeth (family tree B).

John Grove (1695-1761)

William Grove(2) in his will bequeathed to John his time and lease in Hasleford freestone quarry, modern spelling Hazelford. This lies near Crow's Castle Farm, just within the southern boundary of Milton parish. There is no doubt that this quarry was the basis of John's business. He is reputed to have been the builder of the stables at Shipton Court in 1727, quite a large undertaking for the time and there is no doubt that John called upon other members of the family to work with him. This family cooperation was normal practice since we know of actual examples. The Shipton parish records show various out-payments for works done between 1737 and 1804 by William, John and Jeremiah Groves. For instance on 14 April 1737 Shipton parish paid John 8s 6d for 'macking the bridge at Little Hill'. This must refer to the bridge in Church Road, Milton and is probably a sum for repairs only, not for building the whole bridge. In April 1746 'William Groves' was paid



An old cottage in Upper Dick's Lane (now High Street, near Westfields) Milton. In the mid-eighteenth century it was subdivided and occupied by William and Ann Groves with their six children and William and Catherine Groves and their seven children. It is now lived in by a single family.



Eliza Ann Groves in later life when she was Mrs Enoch Walker of Woodville NZ

4s 0d for work done on Stoke Bridge, which may have been the same bridge that John was paid for i.e. the bridge over the Little Stoke or Littlestock stream. It was the parish responsibility to maintain the bridges within its own boundaries; according to the Milton Brooking Wardens' minutes during the nineteenth century they had the upkeep of eight bridges, most of which are readily identifiable today. On 19 April 1759 Shipton parish paid John his bill for stone supplied, and on the same day they also paid 'William' for his share of the bill: 9s 6d. In fact most of the entries refer to half bills.

W.J.Arkell in his book Oxford Stone states that 'there is no record of Milton stone being used in Oxford between 1525 and 1850 but about the middle of



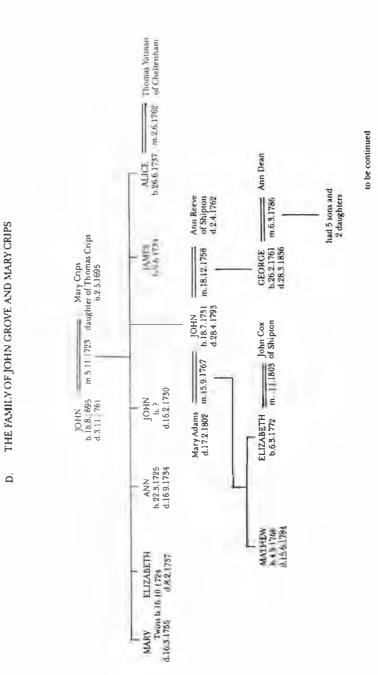
Shipton Court Stables, reputedly built by John Groves in 1727 and restored by Alfred Groves and Sons in 1910

the nineteenth century great activity seems to have broken out in Milton Quarries and the stone began to come into Oxford in large quantities'. Given the fact that we know these local quarries were only worked as required it is fortunate that we have these records of the supply of Milton stone during much of the period when Milton stone was out of favour with the Oxford masons.

The 'William' receiving the earlier payments could have been John and Jeremiah's elder brother William(3), although he died in 1757 before the last payment quoted. The work done in 1759 was probably carried out by William(4), John's nephew, his brother Jeremiah's eldest boy, who would have been twenty-nine at the time. John died in 1761 but payments continue to be made to his eldest son John and then to his grandson George, a very good record of three generations of Milton masons. The not-so-pleasant aspect of the contemporary parish records is that seven years after William(3)'s death his widow Mary was receiving poor relief, the payments of which went on until June 1769. She died in 1771 at the age of eighty-four.

The family of John Grove and Mary Crips

John Grove had married Mary Crips, the daughter of Thomas Crips, in 1723 and they went on to have seven children (family tree D). The eldest were



24

twins, Mary and Elizabeth; Mary died unmarried at the age of thirty and Elizabeth at twelve, while a younger sister Ann died at age nine. A son John died in infancy. James married and had eight children. His three daughters died spinsters and two sons died in infancy. I have found no record of any marriage of the other sons, two of whom were buried at Shipton while the other disappears from our records.

John's youngest child Alice married Thomas Yatman of Cheltenham in 1762 where they lived afterwards. They are not featured again locally although there is an entry in the Gloucestershire Probate Records for Thomas Yatman husband of Alice Yatman (nee Groves) being granted probate of the will of the late John Groves of Milton under Wychwood on 11 April 1763. To date I have not established any relationship between Thomas Yatman and the family of that name then living in Milton although such a relationship is possible.

John's eldest surviving son born in 1731 and also named John, continued the family tradition as a mason and continued to work Hasleford Quarry. It is a pity that no records are known of these old quarries if indeed any were kept. I have however been told by Mrs Kitchen of Chipping Norton that her father Samuel Miles of Milton told her that he worked in this quarry up to the early part of this century. It is also known that the Milton quarries came into the possession of this line of the Groves family about this same time and I have documentary evidence of their being worked about the middle of the nineteenth century.

John(2) married twice: first to Ann Reeve of Shipton in 1758. They had a son George just over two years later but unfortunately Ann died the following year. In 1767 John married Mary Adams of Shipton and by her had two children, Matthew (1768) and Elizabeth (1772) who married John Cox of Shipton in 1803.

As we have already seen, both John (2) and his son George featured in the parish accounts, receiving payment for work carried out for the parish, thus carrying on the family business as stonemasons.

To be concluded

Appendix

The Will of William Grove (2)

In The Name of God Amen this thirteenth day of April one Thousand Seven hundred and Twenty I William Grove of Milton in the parish of Shipton under w.chwood in the County of Oxord (sic) Mason being wake in body

but of Sound and perfect memory thanks be given to Almighty God do make and ordaine this my will and Testamt, in manner and forme following (that is to say) first I committ my Soul into the hands of almighty God my Creator hopeing through the death and Meritts of my Saviour Jesus Christ to have for giveness of all my Sinns and my body to the Earth to be deciently Buried at the discretion of my Excetrix herein after named and As for my wordly Estate which it hath pleased God to bestow upon me I give and devise as followeth my debts and funerall Expense being first discharged Item I give and devise unto my Eldest Son William Grove the House wherein I now dwell with the outhouses backside orchard and Garden ground Cows Common and fewell in the Lower heath of Milton with the Appurtenences thereunto belonging at the death of his Mother he paying to my youngest Son Jeremiah Grove of Lawfull money tenn pound to him and his heires for ever at the end of twelve month next after her decease and to my Daughter Elizabeth Grove tenn pounds of Lawfull money at the end of twelve month next after her decease Itm I give unto my Son John Grove my time and Lease in Hasleford free Stone Quarry to pay himselfe the money he hath Laid down for me And when Such money So laid down Shall be to him raised there out, that then my Said Son John Grove and his mother shall have the Said freestone Quarry between them dureing the Said Lease if She Shall So long live and at the decease of his Said Mother It Shall be and remaine to my Said Son John Grove Itm I give and devise unto my Son James Grove the House and Ground belonging thereunto which I Sold to one Forde and bought it againe of the Said Forde when he Shall have done his Mother two years Service She finding him maintenance for the Said terme to him the Said James Grove and his heires for ever. Itm I give and devise unto my Said Eldest Son Willim Grove and my third Son James Grove my time in my pavemt. Quarry Equally between them and in my planck Quarry Itm I give unto my Son in Law Joseph Shayler one Shilling of Lawfull money at twelve months end next after my decease Itm I give unto my daughter in Law Mary Grove one shilling of Lawfull money at twelve month end next after my decease And Lastly I doe make constitute and ordaine my Loveing wife Elizabeth Grove Whole Execritrix of this my will and testamt, and all my Goods Cattle of what nature and kinde soever undevised I doe give and devise unto her my Said wife and all wills by me made heretofore I do utterly revoke and do publish and declare this my will to be my Last will and Testamt. In witness whereof I have hereunto Set my hand and Seale the day and year above written Signed Sealed and published by the Testator in the presence of us

George White Mary M Hollis her marke Tho Morton

April 1720

Willam Grove

Granted Probate 27 April 1720 to Elizabeth Grove.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge with grateful thanks the endeavours of Joan Howard-Drake in helping to trace entries in the parish registers. Also I would like to thank Sue Jourdan for her help in retrieving many documents from the Oxford Record Office and for transcribing them.

I could not have received more help from the people of Milton, who have invited me into their homes, showing me the old buildings and regaling me with old stories and family history. I was lent photographs, deeds, wills, letters and company records. At times I was almost overwhelmed. In particular I wish to thank the many members of the Groves family, namely: Mrs Marjorie Rathbone and Mrs Doris Williams both of Milton; Mrs Ruth Parsons of Radford; Mrs Nancy Rycroft of Stainland; Miss A.Groves of Cheltenham; Mrs Linda Moffatt of Winchester; Mrs A.C.Hellier of Exmouth; Mrs Honor Walker of Hamilton, New Zealand; Mr Keith Barrie of Newport Beach, N.S.W., Australia; Miss Paula Wilson of Adelaide, Australia; Mr Roy Groves of Normal, Illinois, U.S.A.; Mrs Marylin McCulley of Friendswood, Texas, U.S.A. and Mrs Judith Svobada of Santa Clara, California, U.S.A.

I would also like to thank the staff of Alfred Groves and Sons who have done so much to help me prepare this history of the family who were so important to the economy and welfare of Milton under Wychwood.

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This curious stone vessel standing 8in high is the largest of a set of three found in Milton Quarries by a labourer, George Graves in 1814. Their origin and use were unknown but they were illustrated in Skelton's Antiquities of Oxfordshire, 1823. They were presented to the Revd Phillimore, then Vicar of Shipton.

Death by Misadventure

TOM MCQUAY

During the hundred years 1568-1668 the Shipton under Wychwood burial register ¹ was kept with great care and the vicars' notes and comments are the source material for this paper. At that time Shipton parish also included Milton, Lyncham, Leafield, Langley, Ramsden and Bruern. The total parish population, assessed by multiplying the decennial averages of baptisms by thirty,² appears to have been 800 in 1568 and 1250 in 1668, an average of approximately 1000. There were 2980 burials in that hundred years with thirty seven entries indicating a violent death.

Eleven people died as the result of falls. Six drowned including two possible suicides and there were three other probable suicides. Five were slain, three died travelling, two were scalded, two defy classification and there were five Civil War fatalities.

Falls

Carting accidents at harvest time account for five of the eleven deaths in this group, such as 'a husbandman that tooke his death by a fall from his carte' and 'Thomas Greene of Shipton who tooke his death by the fall of corne upon hym from a carte'. One of these accidents was in the month of June, three in August and one in September. And in September 1618 'falling downe from a lofte dved immediately' records vet another harvest fatality.

Master John Ardes 'was kild by a faul from his horse gallowping from Chippingnorton late in the evning' and John Lea 'tooke his death by the fall of a skaffould whereon he stoode as hee was building an house', while another 'househoulder who as hee was digging stones out of the myne the earth fell doune upon hym and kild hym'.

Two appear to have been drunk when they fell. One unfortunate gardener 'fell downe a pair of stayers being as it is reported drunke and brak his head and so died' and Leonard Price in 1620 'being drunked fell doune on his taylers sheres and so was slaine'.

Drowning and Suicide

Of the six deaths from drowning, two were children: a three-year-old was found drowned at Bruern and little Anne Rafe 'drouned in a payle of water' at Lyneham in 1639. Two were bathing fatalities in the Evenlode in summer, one at Chilson, and in July 1625 'a youth of Shipton who venturing to farr

in the tyme of a floode at Shipton bridge was there drouned against his will'. This specifically states that he was 'drouned against his will', whereas two women, one 'found drouwned in a well' in 1604 and one 'found drowned in her well' in 1668 have no such comment and may have been cases of suicide. With this meagre information it is impossible to be definite, but to a depressed woman four hundred years ago, suicide by drowning in her well was the equivalent of today's drug overdose. A 1340 statute ruled that 'If a person were drowned in a well the Coroner has to order the well to be filled in at the expense of the Lord of the Well'.³

A further three entries strongly suggest suicide. 'Wrist alias True Thomas son of Richard lately hanged', and 'a keper slayne with his owne gunn in his chamber'. Andrew Mitchell who was buried on the first of December 1590 'bereft of his wits after his imprisonment' may also have committed suicide. 'Bereft of his wits' is the equivalent of the modern euphemism 'while the balance of his mind was disturbed', frequently recorded at present-day

Before the Suicide Act 1961, suicide was a crime and the Church expressed its abhorrence by refusing Christian burial in consecrated ground. The custom of burying the offending corpse at the crossroads was not abolished until 1823.⁵ No such cases are mentioned in the Shipton burial register; all the evidence points to successive vicars being more than willing to give the deceased the benefit of the doubt. There were probably at least two cases of suicide in Shipton parish in those hundred years and, at the most, five cases.

Slain

Only two inquests are mentioned in the burial register. John Wheeler, 'on whom the crouner sate before his burial', presumably came to a violent end, and an unidentified 'man cruellie wounded was found dead on Shipton Downes and was buried Dec 16 on whome the Crowner sate before his buriall'. Three other violent deaths are recorded making five in all. A 'joyner which was slaine by another icoyner in quarelinge and fightinge together as it is commonly reported att the building of Bruerne' in 1589, and the unfortunate peacemaker in 1670 'who in seeking to make peace received an ownd with a sword in the ankly and thereof died' while the clearest record of all is 'Master Timothy Wright who was murdered in his bed' in 1658.

Travelling

While the bathing fatalities were in the summer, winter often made travelling hazardous. In December 1620 'Richard Bunting dyed in the snow cumming from Burford market'. In that bitter winter the Thames froze sufficiently for a Frost Fair to be held on the ice. In January 1627 'a weaver of Chippingnorton was found frozen and dead in the snow in ye lane and highway going homewards'. An unfortunate stranger from Ditchley was

found dead on an April day in 1628 'traveiling towards Burford on our common'.

Scalding

Two children were fatally scalded, a common accident when kettles and pots hung over open fires. One 'dyed of skalding in whot licor' and one 'died through skalding in a kettell of milke'.

Miscellaneous

In January 1635 'a pore girle of Milton starved with honger and could to death as the report goeth'. In that January heavy snow accompanied by frost occurred in Southern England followed by a thaw which produced a great flood. In 1637 Anne Eades presumably choked, 'dyed sodenly with foode in her mouth'.

Civil War

The first burial associated with the Civil War was on 26 April 1642 when 'Thomas Smith of Branton, Devon was pressed for the Kings Majesties service in the Northerne partes and at his return from thence dyed at Lineham and was buried'. A bill had been passed in February 1642 'impressing' soldiers for the King's service and in the same month King Charles marched north from London to rally support for the Royalist cause. Precisely what happened to Thomas Smith the following April in Lyneham is of course unknown, nor do we know the exact fate of 'John Laud a soldier under the comand of Liftenant-Col Harris' who was buried in Shipton churchyard on 11 October 1643. He may have died from injury or disease after a Royalist Army marched south through Stow and Burford in September 1643 between the siege of Gloucester and the battle of Newbury.

But the burial register is quite clear about Thomas Rawlins who was 'slaine by one of the Kings souldiers' and buried on 9 June 1644. Six thousand of the King's troops came north from Burford to Stow in June 1644, having left the Royalist headquarters at Oxford on the third and fighting the battle of Cropredy Bridge near Banbury on the 29 June. 10

'Master Henslee quartermaster to Major Reckclift and under the comand of Sir Thomas Aston who died 27th Dec at Milton' was buried the following day at Shipton. By the end of 1644 the King had lost control of the north and withdrawn to Oxford and most of the fighting was quite close to the city. There was a Royalist garrison at Witney until the spring of 1645 but there is no information about exactly what Sir Thomas Aston's troop was doing in Milton under Wychwood at Christmas 1644.

Nor have we any information about the final Civil War burial in Shipton Burges Richard a souldier (and under the comande of Colonel Jackson)' on 6 January 1647. By that time King Charles was a prisoner in Holmby House in Northamptonshire and the end of hostilities was nigh.

Conclusion

From the remarkably complete and detailed Shipton under Wychwood parish burial register we have excellent data for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But comparison with twentieth century mortality statistics is inconclusive and unsatisfactory. Would the Registrar-General of today classify the unfortunate husbandman who fell from his cart as an accidental fall or a road traffic accident? Was the inebriated tailor who fell on his scissors an industrial accident? What was the blood-alcohol level of that galloping horseman late on an April evening long ago?

One inescapable conclusion is that cases of suicide have always been substantially under-recorded. ¹⁸ Peter Laslett points out 'that many or even all of the people classified in the bills of mortality as lunatic at death were in fact suicides'. ¹⁴ However the Shipton figures suggest a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 50 suicide cases per annum per million live, very much lower than the 1988 figure of 84 per million live for England and Wales. ¹⁵

The Registrar-General classifies 'Homicide and Injury purposely inflicted' and 'Injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted' separately in the annual mortality statistics. How would the 'man cruellic wounded on Shipton Downes' be classified? The 1988 rate for both 'purposely' and 'undetermined' homicides was 48 per million live per annum, ¹⁶ while the figure for rural Shipton four centuries ago was some 50 per million live. This sample is too small to be statistically valid but there are certainly no grounds for concluding that our predecessors in the Wychwoods behaved more violently towards one another than we do.

There is little doubt too that the Civil War was fought with considerably less ferocity than contemporary wars on the continent.¹⁷ Royalist armies twice passed through this part of West Oxfordshire, where there was substantial parliamentary support¹⁸ and only two burials in Shipton churchyard ensued. These are very low casualty figures compared with most similar conflicts and infinitely lower than those inflicted by Union armies passing through Confederate states in the American Civil War two hundred years later.

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Letters

After reading in 'Wychwoods History no. 6' the extracts from the Shipton School Log Books spanning the period from 1869 to 1905, Mrs Dorothy Brookes (nee Coombes) unites:-

The school plan is interesting as, in my day (1914-1926), there was no gas heating but open fires until the 'tortoise' stoves came during the twenties. A glass partition was put across the big room and a Mr Lawrence appointed teacher instead of a pupil teacher or monitor. I remember him very clearly as he was over six feet tall and wore a bow-tie. Most mothers defied their children to use the school lavvies; the paper provided was old shiny exercise books and underneath was a huge, cellar-like vault. As to the water supply, it was almost non-existent; a shallow trickle of gas-tasting water with no soap or drinking vessel; this was the only supply to the school. This did not affect the children much as most came from homes where water had to be carried some distance from pumps or wells.

Before my time, a gift of a grand piano was made to the school and we were very proud of this. I did hear that it got smashed up during the last war. There was also a huge flag given by the Revd Collingwood Carter which was 'run up' on Empire Day. The girls' lobby was very narrow: imagine it with winter coats on both sides at two heights. If the door was left open the friendly wolf-hound, Gilbert, from the Court would wander in and steal the bread and dripping some children from a way off had brought for their dinner. Attendance was compulsory from three years old, I believe it to have been better than today's play-schools. We were well looked after and since living up here (Great Milton) I have met an old lady who once taught me and my brother.

Early Days at Shipton

DOROTHY BROOKES

I was born Dorothy Mary Coombes in 1911 in a small cottage, the last in a row of stone-built houses called Blenheim Cottages erected on land known as 'manorial waste' alongside the Burford Road. The top three were much older than the others: ours, 'Top House', the one nearest Burford, had a stone staircase. None of them had back doors. Farther down the road there was a common wash-house and drying ground. The cottages faced west and from their tiny bedroom windows could be seen Icomb Roundhouse, Stow-on-the-Wold and, away in the distance, Batsford Park. Tiny gardens and a rough pathway separated the cottages from the road which went up the hill to Burford or downhill through Shipton village, past the railway station and then on to Chipping Norton.

My mother always said that history unfolded itself on the Burford Road. There was no railway at Burford so people from there had to travel the four miles over the Downs to Shipton Station. There were carriages from the big houses, carters from the farms with their teams and huge wagons loaded with corn, cattle being driven, a horse-drawn bus and a few people on foot.

When I was three years old we moved just down the road to a better cottage. My father made many journeys to the new home with a truck he had made, my brother and sister helping him each time to push the load while I rode on top as I was the youngest. Mother scrubbed out as each small room became empty. A new tenant would make a thorough inspection of the vacant house and report to the neighbours if it had been left dirty.

The new house was a 'back-to-back', ours facing the west and the Burford Road like the one we had left, the back tenant facing east with their garden path going into a small lane. It was a much nicer house than the old one; there was a good garden with a pig sty, a good shed and our own 'lavy'. But it had its drawbacks: there was no pump, so water had to be fetched from the stand-pipe some distance away. When it rained hard my mother had to stand at the door with a broom to turn away the water that cascaded madly down the steps. However, enough rainwater could be collected in a huge tub for washing the clothes, ourselves and for boiling the pig-swill.

I am told that the day I was three years old, I demanded a clean 'pinny' and a note for the teacher as I was now old enough to go to school. It seems that at two years old I had followed my sister and brother the mile to school and I vividly remember my mother snatching me away from the wallboard



'Top house', Blenheim Cottages, Burford Road about 1945

where I was making an effort at writing my name. I was scolded all the way home with Mother saying 'You shall go the day you are three my girl, I'll have no more of this worry'. And go I did, although I must confess I don't remember that day.

The Great War had started on August 4th of that year and our dad had volunteered for service on September 5th. My mother told us of the day he left home in his best suit to catch the train to Oxford. Here he enlisted in the 2/4th Oxon. and Bucks. Light Infantry. After a few weeks' training and embarkation leave he was soon en route for France. It was a long time before we saw him again and each night Mother led us, her three children, in prayer for his safe return. One night I was watching her brush and comb her lovely long hair when she said 'It's moonlight, the same moon that is shining on your dad. I wonder where he is tonight?' We soon found out, for in a few hours' time there was a shout from the garden of 'Mother, open the door!'

Mother lit the candle and, carrying it downstairs, opened the door to a weary, muddy and pack-laden soldier. In a very short while she had our dad into clean clothes and, sitting by a blazing fire over a cup of strong tea, he told us how a few days' leave had been granted following a terrible battle. A troop train had brought the soldiers from the Channel boat at Dover, up to London and then down to Oxford. From there, there had been no further

transport. The men could either sleep on the platform or find their own way home; some lived in Oxford but others out in the villages. Dad and his companion, a young man from Taynton, had walked to Shipton. The young man had come Shipton way to see Dad indoors and then had the long, cold walk over the Downs to his own home at Taynton. While Dad was at home he helped Mother with the garden and mended our shoes and boots. Mother ironed his uniform to kill the many fleas he had brought back with him, and then left us at Granny's while she went to the station to see him off again. In a few days' time she took us to stay at Chippenham with her brother Walter Longshaw and his four children. We lived there for almost a year.

I was six when we returned home – too young to know anything of war? Our schoolmaster didn't think so. There was no radio or television in those days, but Mr Strong read the war reports to us from his newspaper. He told us when local young men were killed in action and who was badly wounded; we were taught to sing patriotic songs and to hate the Kaiser and his people. None of the schoolchildren had ever seen the sea but we were taught that the navy was playing a vital role in the defence of our island. To illustrate this, my dad sent me a *Navy ABC for Little Britons*. I took this book to school many times and have it to this day.

The way to school led through the churchyard. One morning I had raced ahead of my brother and sister and turned the corner into the narrow path. There, leaning against the wall was a familiar figure – it was 'our Dad'. He had travelled down on the first available train from Oxford and was waiting near the school to see his 'mites' before walking the last mile home. The schoolmaster met him too and said that we children could go home. We heard that he had been awarded the DCM and were very proud to read the following week in the Oxford Times.—

Lance-Corporal T.T. Coombes of the 2/4th Oxford and Bucks. Light Infantry has been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal for Auspicious Gallantry. When an enemy torpedo knocked a man over the parapet severely wounding him, Coombes went out in full view of the enemy at 150 yards range and lifted the man back into the trenches. Lance-Corporal Coombes is an Oxfordshire man – his home being at Shipton under Wychwood.

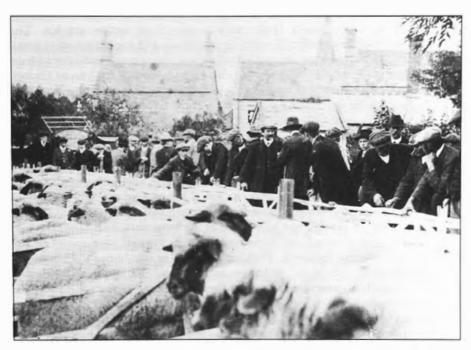
We were soon to hear that he had been promoted to the rank of Sergeant. Later I remember the lovely Easter egg Dad sent us from Eastbourne, where he was recovering from burns from a discharged Very pistol. My brother saved most of his share to give to Mother the next Sunday. At times, food was not very plentiful but Donald never started his dinner until he was sure that 'our Mam' had hers on the table. He helped her in the garden, ran errands,

cleaned the shoes and knives and was generally the 'man of the house'. He was still only nine when Dad came home from active service. The schoolmaster told us about the coming Armistice and explained what it was. We expected Dad to come at once but of course this was not to be for a while. There were great celebrations in the village and Mother took us to Oxford to see the victory parade. I remember the decorated trellis arches and Dad waving to us as he marched by.

Eventually Dad resumed his work as a stonemason at Groves' but, once home in the evening and in by the fire, he did not want to go out. He slept badly, haunted by the spectres of his young comrades dying in the mud and filth of Flanders, of the countless women and little children fleeing before the battles, the many screaming horses and cattle and miles of the cruel barbed wire that tore at flesh and clothes. I heard Dad say 'The man who invented barbed wire should have been hanged with it'. The world 'Fit for Heroes' to live in proved not to be so. Before long, men and boys who had been feted and cheered on their return from France were roaming the countryside looking for work. They often called at our house for hot water, tea, bread and cheese or perhaps an old pair of shoes or a jacket. Homelessness is no new thing: some of these men were on the road for years, and soon whole families were tramping, making their way to Northleach or Chipping Norton workhouse. There were hard hills to climb to get to either of these places where the men were expected to work for their supper. This may seem practical to tho e who have never known poverty, but these people were hungry, cold and ill-clad against the weather. They were in no shape to do much wood-chopping or scrubbing. No wonder they preferred to find a dry barn in which to bed down for the night.

Once a month there was a cattle sale down in the village; the sale ground was where the Bowls Club now have their green. Most of the cattle drovers were men who 'lived rough'; they started early in the morning bringing the cattle in from neighbouring farms. Some came from villages many miles away: we could hear cows and sheep coming over the hill from Burford: not much time was wasted getting ready for school on sale day. Plenty of help was needed with the droving once the animals got near the village. With my friends I stood at road junctions and open gateways to prevent the awkward cows straying off the road. At dinnertime we helped drive animals up the Burford road, very reluctant to go in to our dinner which Mother had cooling on the plates so that we could get quickly back down to the sale where we mingled with the grown-ups until the second bell for school. We went back again after school, and this time helped a drover take cattle to the crossroads on the Downs. These men were paid a few shillings for this work and they usually gave a penny to any young child who would go up the hill with them. At Fulbrook, school-children would be waiting there to carry on to Burford. This continued until the cattle reached their new home, often miles out over the Cotswold Hills.

From these huge farms, corn was brought to the mill at Shipton Station.



Shipton livestock sale, 1930's, held regularly at the back of the Crown Inn, now the vegetable garden and bowling green

The carters had to make an early start and usually got to Shipton as we were ready for school. Their wagons were piled high with great loads of corn, and each drawn by a team of enormous but very gentle shire horses. The horses were decked out in well-shone brasses and some wore little caps on their ears. The wagoner had a 'bolton' of straw he could sell to provide his dinner money; it went to the first pig-keeper who had a shilling to spare. We school-children followed the wagons down the street, hanging on to the tail-board and lifting our feet off the ground, thus getting a ride for a few yards. Envious school-mates would soon cry 'whip behind' and the wagoner would grin and curl his whip over his shoulder, trying to tickle someone's ears. Later in the day the wagons had to make the long journey back to their farms. I was very friendly with one of the carters and instead of riding on the wagon he would walk up the hill towards Burford chatting to me. He wanted to hear bits about the world we had learnt at geography lessons and said he wished he had got a bit of learning. He liked to hear the recitations and songs and would make the cart horses stand until he had heard the last verse.

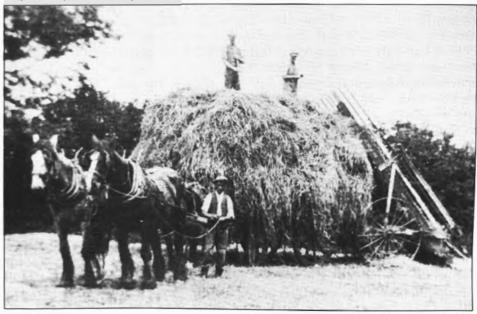
The horse-drawn bus made regular trips to Shipton Station to meet the trains. It came from Burford, picking up passengers from Fulbrook and the

top end of Shipton on the way. The coachman was fond of ale and often stopped at the Red Horse too long so prudent passengers alighted here and walked the last quarter mile to the station. The once-talked-of branch line to Burford was never built although it was mentioned on the deeds of a cottage my father once owned as it might have gone through that cottage garden.

Other vehicles came up and down the 'Turnpike' (now the A361), mostly horse-drawn. There were the gaily-painted caravans of the fair people who came to the village twice a year and put up roundabouts, swinging-boats and stalls. The women folk went round the houses with baskets of pegs and cottons; if you bought from them you had a lucky face; should you refuse, calamity or sudden death were forecast. We knew one of the men with the fair as he came into the village in spring and autumn to sweep the cottage chimneys.

One year there was a constant stream of Foden lorries through the village, all heavily laden on the southbound journey, with their loads hidden under tarpaulins. We wondered what they were and finally found out that surplus shells and ammunition from the war were being taken to Bristol to be dumped in the Channel. These lorries had to pass close to our gate and one day the road surface gave way and the wheel sank in, firmly stuck in the clay. My mother went out to see what was the matter and made cocoa for the man

Haymaking in the early thirties



and boy while it was decided what to do. In those days the only telephone in the village was at the Post Office, so a telegram was sent for help but it was three days before a relief with hauling tackle arrived, during which time the lorry had sunk even deeper into the clay. The driver slept in the cab and the boy in our wash-house and Mother helped with the food situation: the driver did have a tin of bully and some bread with him. The village children swarmed around to look at the shells and we wondered if we might get blown to bits in our beds. The first rescue attempt was a wash-out; the thick steel rope broke and bits flew far and wide: it was lucky no-one watching was hurt. We children were sorry to see 'our Foden' finally rescued as it had been quite an exciting few days. The Fodens were steam wagons and ran on coal: the driver gave Mother a bit of coal for her kindness.

Other events came along to claim our attention. Sparks from the chimney of the Foden belonging to Groves the builders set fire to a barn up the Station Road; the horse-drawn bus turned over and people were injured; a school-friend was impaled on the spiked railings outside the Baptist Chapel; one night a terrific gale brought many trees down, blocking roads and lanes; torrential rain or melting snow caused the River Evenlode to flood the meadows and Station Road so that we were sorry that the school wasn't on the other side of the river.

On the whole though, school-days passed pleasantly enough, and it was soon time for those not lucky enough to go to Burford Grammar School to think about looking for work. The girls mostly went into domestic service and the boys either to the farms or, if they were lucky, to an apprenticeship to a carpenter or into the building trade. There were a variety of ways of getting to the Grammar School, mostly scholarships of one sort or another. Boys walked to Burford from the villages and those from Kingham came to Shipton on the train and then on by foot or bicycle. The Girls' Grammar School had only just been opened then (1922); previous to this, a favoured few who could afford the train fare went to Oxford with forgotten scholarships somehow brought out into daylight for these lucky ones. My brother won a scholarship to Burford: I missed the exam because I caught the dreaded scarlet fever. No-one knew where I caught it as there was not another case in the district. It was contagious and, in those days often fatal, but my mother said she would nurse me at home as the nearest isolation hospital was many miles away at Reading. She faithfully carried out the strict rules laid down by the village Doctor and as a result I recovered and no-one else caught the complaint from me. I got the rest of my education when and how I could, reading books considered too old for me, watching others and, later on, attending W.E.A. classes and taking full advantage of anything offered by the Women's Institute and their wonderful Denman College.

But before that, there were changes at home. Dad bought Rock Cottage round the corner and we moved our bits and pieces to a much larger place. Mother got the pig to move by rattling his food bucket; not having been fed all day he was no trouble to get into his new home. There was a lot of work

to do on this old cottage but with Mother as labourer it soon became a good home. Dad dug stone from the garden to build the garden wall. This cottage had a tithe on it and after quite a battle with the powers-that-be Mother and I went to the Old Bailey in London and finally got it redeemed. It was many years before there was a water supply – I had left home long before that came about.



The Burford horse-drawn bus at Shipton station, about 1910

Observations on Ridge and Furrow in Honeydale Field

JIM PEARSE

Honeydale Farm lies on a spur of the Cotswold limestone, looking southeast over the valley of the River Evenlode, in the parish of Ascott under Wychwood. The farm takes its name from the seventeen-acre field known as Honeydale since the Enclosure of 1838. Prior to this, Honeydale furlong within this same area dates back to at least the fifteenth century. The origin of the name stems from the nature of the soil which is sticky yellow clay. I ploughed, cultivated and harvested Honeydale field between 1954 and 1967, after which it was laid down to permanent grass. Although using a tractor and three-furrowed plough, I maintained the old ridge and furrow system because of its advantages. No drainage system, however modern or efficiently laid, will remove large quantities of surface water as quickly as ridge and furrow. Excess water is immediately transferred down the gradient of the ridges to the furrows which become temporary ditches carrying water downhill to the nearest watercourse. Land drains, though very effective in the long term, only work by removing water after it has soaked down through the soil. This takes time on clay, so that in a wet season with rain nearly every day, the surface of a flat field will remain wet.

A continuing tendency for ridges to level down each time the ground is cultivated results in an infill in the furrows making it necessary to ridge up the field once in every three years. That is done starting at the central backbone of each ridge, turning the soil upwards to form a peak and working outwards to the furrow thus leaving the furrow open. In the remaining years the field would be ploughed as normal with wider lands as on a flat field.

In wet years furrows produced a poorer crop whilst ridges did well; in dry years the reverse occurred. On average only a quarter of the land, the extremes, was badly affected, three quarters producing a fair crop.

When corn was harvested in sheaves and needed to be left standing in stooks to dry, oats which had very green stems required the longest drying time and needed to stand in the fields 'while the bells were rung on three Sundays'. In wet summers it was an advantage to stand the stooks on the ridges to catch the drying wind. Carrying the corn was also made easier when wagons could be drawn along the furrow allowing the load to be built with less effort. If sheaves were stacked too damp or green they would either go mouldy or ferment, possibly sufficiently to produce spontaneous combustion.

When the soil was loosely cultivated or freshly planted, it did tend to wash down the furrows, but the curving shape of the ridge and furrow slowed the flow of water which left some of the moving soil on the sides of the furrows instead of washing it down the field. It is frequently stated that the curving shape of the ridge and furrow arose by the manoeuvring of the ox ploughs at the ends of the fields. But I wonder if it was partly deliberate through the desire to prevent soil erosion as suggested. It would be interesting to test this theory by checking slopes for curved ridges and flat land for straight ridges. From our view of the valley, only the former are in evidence.

I am convinced that the ridge and furrow system was created deliberately and not as an accidental effect of ploughs repeatedly cultivating individual strips. If the ploughmen of the past knew how to plough, they also knew how to keep the field level if they had wanted to. This is reinforced by the fact that oxen could have pulled a plough on a flat plane across a slope much more easily compared with the effort required to plough up and down which was the normal practice.

Ridge and furrow in the Evenlode valley – not Honeydale Field, but looking south from the Ascott Road near Shipton. Ridge and furrow often shows up clearly in frost or snow (as here), or in the early morning or late evening in oblique, low sunlight.



43

42

The width of modern machinery – drills, sprayers and combines – causes difficulties on ridge and furrowed land. They hit the ridges too hard and miss the furrows. This is the main reason for the modern levelling of these fields. But flat fields displaying large pools of water in winter and early spring are quite possibly levelled ridge and furrow. Of course, nowadays modern fertilisers can normally revive crops affected by waterlogged soil.

The deeper, more fertile soil under ridge and furrow was better suited to wheat production than was the surrounding stonebrash. When wheat was making very high prices at the beginning of the nineteenth century, my guess is that most of these ridge and furrow lands were growing the crop for high profit. But ridge and furrow is still an advantage on grassland since, after prolonged heavy rain, a flat field will be waterlogged whilst furrows channel away all the excess water allowing the ridges to dry more rapidly.

There is no doubt that the ridge and furrow system as practised in the past with a large workforce and mostly manual farming methods was a practicable proposition but one which is not compatible with modern arable farming.

One Hundred Years Ago

From the Oxford Times January 2 1892.

MILTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD

Marriage of Miss H.M.Groves - On Monday was celebrated at the church of St.Mary Magdalene, Oxford, by the Revd H.E.Clayton, the marriage of Mr R.W.Sampson, of Sidmouth, Devon, and Miss Helen M.Groves, fourth daughter of Mr A.Groves, Milton-under-Wychwood. The bride was attired in blue velvet, trimmed with silver and blue brocade, and was accompanied by two bridesmaids, who wore pretty dresses of cream-coloured serge, trimmed with yellow sashes and ribbons, and felt hats to match. The wedding was followed by a breakfast at the Randolph Hotel, and the happy couple left at two o'clock for London. There were numerous and costly presents, among which we would especially mention a handsome upholstered chair, given by Mr Groves' workmen, an album by the Sunday School class, and a magnificent clock by the committee and officers of the Temperance Society, Sunday School teachers and congregation.

Henry Mills Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood 1593-1641

JACK HOWARD-DRAKE

On 5 September 1538 Thomas Cromwell ordered every parson, vicar or curate to enter in a book every wedding, christening and burial in his parish with the names of the parties. These entries were generally made on paper, sometimes on loose sheets. In 1598 Queen Elizabeth approved instructions drawn up by the Church that every parish should buy a parchment register and copy into it all the names in the earlier registers from the beginning, 'but especially since the first year of her Majesty's reign'. The more idle clergy settled for the later date and copied their records from 1558, the year of the Queen's succession. Henry Mills, the vicar of Shipton at the time, was among the more conscientious and had the Shipton records copied from 1538 and carefully checked.

At the top of page one in the new register is the following note:-

'This boke of Regester agreeth with the boke of Regester, made the 8 daye of the moneth of october in the yeare of our Lorde god 1538 and in the yeare of the Raigne of our late soveraine Lorde King Henry the 8 the only supreme head under Christ of the church of englande and Irelande whearin is Regestered the names of all those that have been christened maried and buried in the parish of Shipton under wichwood verbatim as followeth'.

On the last page is written:-

'This booke was written out of two paper bookes which remained in the Register office at Oxford and was examined with foresaid paper bookes before they were delivered up by Henrie Mills Vicar and Thomas Damport scholemaster who writ out this booke and it doth agree verbatim with the originall. *Ita est Henricus Mills*'.'

Henry Mills was instituted to the parish of Shipton in May 1593, just in time to deal with a severe outbreak of plague which may have killed his predecessor, Richard Hopkins.² He died after forty-eight years as vicar and was buried on 12 February 1641. The entry in the parish register, which seems to have the arithmetic wrong by a year, reads: 'Master Henry Mills who had continued fortie and nine years viccar of this parish dyed the tenth day of February beinge fourescore and eight yeares old and odd monthes.....'.

Mills was therefore forty years old when he came to Shipton. So far nothing has been found about his life before then or why he was appointed to the Shipton living. He had eight children baptised in Shipton church while he was vicar—Anne (1595), Michael (1596), Edmond (1598), Margaret (1600), Rowland (1602), Alicia (1605), Timothy (1607) and Abigail (1610); but there were at least three children born before he came to Shipton, as he mentions in his will two other sons, Henry and Thomas, and another daughter, Marie Clench. His wife does not appear in the registers. His daughter Anne died as an infant in 1596, and he buried his mother Elizabeth in 1600.

In naming a son Rowland in 1602, Mills was using a family name of the Lacys who were busy building Shipton Court at the time. Rowland Mills, in his turn, named one of his sons Rowland and it would seem that there was a close connection between vicarage and court in Shipton in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Five of Rowland's children were baptised in Shipton church, Elizabeth (1637), Abigail (1638), Henry (1639), Rowland (1641) and Ann (1643). Abigail and Henry both lived for only a few weeks. Up to 1639 Rowland is described as parish clerk in the parish register. He is no longer so described at the baptisms of Rowland and Ann in 1641 and 1643, and after 1643 the name Mills disappears from the registers and does not occur again until 1795. In 1663 the Lacys sold the Court to the Reades and moved to Pudlicote bringing to an end a period in which they and the Mills must have played an important part in Shipton's affairs.

William Master's Will

It is not possible to obtain more than a few snapshots of Henry Mills as vicar of Shipton, but those that there are reveal him as a conscientious and intriguing figure. His careful approach to his duties, evident in the copying of the early registers, is also seen in the administration of the charity established by one of his predecessors, William Master. Master was vicar of Shipton from 1564 to 1591 and had left twenty milking cows for the relief of the poor of the parish. Twenty poor households were to have a cow each at a rent of 3s 4d a year and to enter into a bond to find a replacement every four or five years or 40s to buy one. Ten of the rents were to be paid to the churchwardens for the relief of the poorest of the parish; the other ten were to go to the Warden of Merton College and the Provost of the Queen's College in Oxford for the benefit of one or two poor scholars. In the event

the churchwardens received a capital sum of £53 6s 8d in lieu of the twenty cows.

The administration of the charity caused a good deal of trouble over the years. There were enquiries in 1617 and 1702 and as late as 1895 the Charity Commission was optimistically suggesting that 'careful enquiries should be made with a view to ascertaining, if possible, whether any trace of the sum of £53 6s 8d can be found'.³

The enquiry in 1617 was conducted by four commissioners, including Anthony Blincowe, the chancellor of the diocese, under the authority of a commission from the Court of Chancery to enquire into the misuse of charitable money. It found that the £53 6s 8d was in the hands of Edward Tenand, Leonard Boxe, widow Whiting and Richard Shealar, and ordered that it should be used for the purposes of the charity, either by buying and renting out cows or by investment.

The initiative for the enquiry may have come from Queen's College; there is a memorandum in their papers about expenses claimed by Thomas Shewell for going to London and discovering Master's will, which was said to have 'lain hidden and dead for many years'. Shewell said he had done so 'in mere good will to his neighbours', which rings a little hollow given that there is a note on the memorandum that his son was 'nominated exhibitioner' by the Provost of Queen's, Dr Potter.

In October 1618 Mills wrote to Potter about the charity. He first referred to Thomas Shewell and his son, Michael, both of whom were of Shipton, and reminded Potter that Michael had been granted an exhibition at Queen's as a poor scholar, and that Mills had his receipt to prove it. By chance he had seen Sir Shewell, a courtesy title for a priest without a degree, 'following a millars horse laded with sackes and demaunding of hym whether he had left Oxford he answered me yea and is become a Loder (carrier) to a mill'.

Having reported this without comment, Mills got to the main point of his letter. He referred to the 1617 enquiry and said that the matter had been dealt with by Edward Tenand, 'a gentleman of our parish', who had come back from Oxford with a copy of the Commission's order 'ingrossed in parchment', and had certified to the parish that dealing with the case, dining the commissioners, and writing out the judgement had cost him £4 5s 4d, which he wanted repaid. They had considered three ways of doing this. The first was to take the money out of the charity's reserves; the second, which Mills favoured, was to make a collection throughout the parish. Neither of these had been agreed so they had settled on the third method. Tenand had taken the rents and had recovered his expenses from them a year ago last Michaelmas. This had left 15s of that year's rent in hand, which had been divided in half, 7s 6d for the poor of Shipton and 7s 6d for the poor scholars. The six months' rent due on Lady Day had been collected so there was another 16s 8d available for the scholars, but he had not yet bothered to collect the rents due at Michaelmas just past. Certain money was already at Potter's disposal and Mills hoped he would let his son, the bearer of the letter,

have some of it as he was in great need. He would have sent the 24s 2d now collected with his son if he could have been sure of Potter being in Oxford. He and his son had both gone to Oxford in August hoping to see Potter and the Warden of Merton College but they were both away. He would let Potter have the money as soon as he sent for it.

Mills then changed his mind and added a postscript that he would after all send the money with his son to save further journeys and would also get on with collecting the rents now due. He asked Potter for a receipt for the church accounts.

There were more problems in 1626. Potter had written to Mills about the money for the poor scholars and Mills, in reply, acknowledged that Thomas Ashfield and William Altoffe, who were holding the funds, were some six years in arrears. He had shown them Potter's letters and Ashfield had said he would ride to Oxford and speak to Potter within a fortnight. Altoffe had said he would call on Mills and advise him what to say to Potter but never came. Mills offered to send Potter a copy of the relevant extract from Master's will and a copy of the Commissioners' decree if it would help him 'find more ways than one' to get Ashfield and Altoffe to pay over the money. Potter apparently took up this offer as the copies are in Queen's College archives, together with another copy of the extract from Master's will which Mills sent him with his letter in 1618. Mills was most anxious that 'this guifte of Mr Masters might not be lost though it be but smale'.

Things were still in a muddle in 1636 when there is a note that Master's money had not been used for twelve years. The 'stock' of £53 6s 8d was held in two halves, £26 13s 4d for the poor scholars and £26 13s 4d for the poor of Shipton. Half the scholars' money was in the hands of Thomas Ashfield, lately deceased, half in the hands of William Altoffe. The £26 13s 4d for the poor of Shipton was in the hands of various parishioners and the churchwardens.

This time Mills' involvement is shown in a letter to the Warden of Merton College. He had spoken to Thomas Ashfield's widow about the Master money which her late husband had received from his father Michael Ashfield. She had told him she thought she had nothing to do with the payment of her husband's debts as she was neither executor nor administrator of his goods and he had died leaving nothing to pay them with. Mills had told her that as her husband and his mother were both dead she was now in possession of her husband's lands and could pay the poor's money. She said she would find out from counsel what reply to make. Mills added that not long before his death, Thomas Ashfield had sold land to pay his debts and had given his wife £200 to maintain herself and their children. He had paid some debts but 'being a bad husband' he had spent the rest, living in hope of more after his mother's death. He had died before his mother and the lands came to his widow.

At this point Queen's College seems to have lost patience as their records contain a note 'Recovered by me against the Parish by a suit in Chancery 1637 and 1638 and paid at Easter 1639 to Rallingson of Qu. College and Merton C.— to both 33s 9d p.an.'; and there are notes of futher payments to scholars of the two colleges in 1642 and 1646. The 1702 enquiry shows that the saga dragged on and that for the last thirty years of the seventeenth century, the colleges got their money but the poor of Shipton got nothing.

The Turkish Lady

In Man and the Natural World Keith Thomas describes the 'baffled contempt' with which the people of Tudor and Stuart England greeted reports by returning travellers of the way in which Eastern religions respected the lives of animals. He quotes a sermon preached by Henry Mills in 1615 in which he illustrated the profaneness of the Turkish religion by telling his parishioners 'of a woman that, travelling a long journey, should make water in her hand and give it her dog that fainted, to restore him, and how that this woman in the Turkish religion was taken up to heaven for the same deed'.

The sermon, preached during morning prayers in mid-Lent, caused something of a stir in Shipton because one of the parishioners, Henry Rawlings, brought an action about it in the church court. The record is not complete and it is not possible to work out the full story; but it appears that Rawlings accused Mills of obscenity and that his motive had less to do with moral outrage than with personal pique. Rawlings had taken communion at 'the hands of Master Mills' at least once a year for seven years, but this last year Mills had refused him communion until he produced 'a certain certificate'. All the witnesses testified that Rawlings was of 'honest name and fame' and 'not suspected of any notorious crime'; but he got little support beyond these tributes to his character. None of the witnesses suggested that Mills had caused any offence. William Tomson of Shipton, yeoman, said that there was 'a common report beleeved by most of the parishioners', that Mills had used the obscene words of which he was now accused, but he had listened to his sermons for twenty years and had never before heard him use such words. John Smith of Shipton, a weaver who had been parish clerk for forty years but signed his evidence with a mark, had been sent by Mills to tell Rawlings that he was not being admitted to communion. He had also heard Mills' sermons for twenty years without apparently being offended by them, although he seems to have hedged his bets a little. William (?) Grey of Milton, a labourer, said the parishioners had smiled; William Chapman of Milton, 'cakemealman', who remembered that among others John Smith and John Shaler had heard the sermon with him, said the parishioners had laughed at it. Thomas Reason alias Huckes, husbandman, thought the sermon suited the text very well. Thomas Shelar of Lyneham said that he liked the sermon and 'did not att any tyme perceave that the said wordes did offend any other that was present thereat the said church being full of the parishioners there very many of them being men of good worth and understanding'. James Hyatt of Lyneham, husbandman, did not find the words in any way offensive

and neither, he said, did the parishioners present, among whom were Sir Rowland Lacy, Master Christopher Lacy, Master John Lacy, William(?) Tapsley, and 'others of good understanding'. Arthur Smith of Shipton summed up the general reaction – '... he well remembereth that the said words were delivered by the said Master Mills to such good sense & purpose & with such gravity that this deponent who was then present did like well thereof for his owne parte & he remembereth that Sir Rowland Lacy, knight, & divers other men of good sorte & understanding of their parte were there also present & he did not heare from then or since at any tyme to use any words of mislike of any parte of the doctrine of the said Master Mills in that sermon'. Sadly the outcome of the case is not known.

Mills had taken as his text St Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 5 – 'By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God'. In Hebrews 11 Paul was writing about faith as 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen', and it was on his teaching that the fundamental protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone was largely based. It would seem that Mills may have been explaining this doctrine to his parishioners and making fun of those who believed that good works rather than faith were the true path to salvation. The story of the Turkish lady would have been used to show that in some religions even such eccentric behaviour as being kind to a thirsty dog – and in a very odd way at that – was thought to be a good deed of sufficient merit to ensure a place in heaven.

Mills' Will and Inventory

The preamble to Henry Mills' will, the text of which is in the Appendix, is in typical protestant form, and Mills appears to have continued in the firmly protestant tradition of Shipton evident in the life of William Master.⁸ His reference to Henry VIII in the introduction to the new parish register quoted above, as the only supreme head under Christ of the Church of England. shows where his sympathies lay. Between them he and Master were responsible for the spiritual life of Shipton for seventy-five years, both of them educated and conscientious protestant vicars, preaching regularly to their congregations; but their life styles seem to have differed considerably. When he died William Master, childless, had a substantial measure of the world's goods including a house in Oxford and a sizeable library. Mills, the father of at least 11 children and one of whose sons, he had told the Provost of Queen's, was in great need of money, wrote in his will that he had very little worldly substance because he had already given almost everything away with the marriage of his youngest daughter Abigail. The truth of this is borne out by the inventory (at Appendix) where his meagre goods are valued at £10 10s 2d. He refers to his study and was presumably living in the vicarage where his predecessor, William Master, had lived in some style; but the extraordinary picture emerges of Mills, lying on his feather bed, which he left to one of his daughters, in an almost empty vicarage, leaving forty shillings to the poor of the parish, a little money and a few old clothes to two of his sons, both of whom were ministers, and one or two pieces of furniture to other members of his family. A modest end to nearly fifty years of service to the parish.

Appendix

In the name of God Amen I Henry Mills vicar of Shipton under witchwood in the countie of Oxford being antient in yeres wasted in bodie, feeble in limbs, decayed in senses & yet I praise God of sound and perfect memorie do make this my last will & testament this xvth of October Anno domini 1640 in forme and manner following. Imprimis I bequeath my soule unto the handes of Almightie god my heavenly Father to be saved through the only merites of my Lord and saviour Jesus Christ & not by myne owne.

Item I bequeath my bodie to the earth from whiche man was first taken to be buried in the churchyard of Shipton aforesaide in hope of resurrecion to eternall lyfe at the last day. Concerning my wordely substance which is very smale having given almost all a way before with the marriag of my youngest daughter Abigail, I depose thereof in manner following.

First I give & bequeath unto my two sonnes the ministers Henry Mills & Michael Mills all my apparell to be equally divided between them. Item I give & bequeath unto my sonne Thomas Mills, Marie Clench & Timothy Mills iijs. Item I give & bequeath unto my daughter Alice Hill my feather bed whereon I ly with the bedsted, coverlet, blankets curtaines sheetes & all thinges thereto belonging. Item I give unto her a coffer with two paire of sheetes & ix table napkins there in. Item I give & bequeath unto my daughter Margaret Tomson my cupbord standing in my chamber. And to my daughter Abigail Jones xijd. Item I give and bequeath unto my sonne Timothie Mills my little round table standing in my studie.

Item I give unto little Alice Hill my coffer wherein my linnen lyeth in my studie. Item I give unto the pore of the whole parishe fortie shillinges.

Lastly I give & bequeath unto my sonne Rowland Mills my table, chaier stooles & Truckle bed with all therto belonging standing & being in my chamber whom also I make my sole executor.

Item I appoint my sonne Michall Milles my overseer. By me Henry Mills vicar of Shipton under witchwood

Richard Shailare his mark

Thomas Clench witnesses

A True Inventorie of all the goods and chattels of Henry Mills vicar of Shipton under Whichwood deceased; taken by Richard Hicks and Peter Chemner the 13th day of Feb 1640 [1641]

In primis his purse and wearing Apparell	5.0.0
Item in the chamber over the hall one truckle bed	
One blankett one coverlid one pillow and bed matt	
& bed tick	0.8.0
Item one Joyned Bedsteed one coverlid one blankett	
one pillow & pillowbeer Fower paire of sheetes	
one bolster and one feather beed & bedmatt one coffer	
& syx Napkins	4.0.0
Item one coffer	0.2.6
Item one cupbord & cloath	0.5.0
Item one Tablebord and to chairs and The stools	
one fier shovel and a chamber potte and other lumber	0.6.8
Item in the studie one Table one straw chair one presse	
with other Lumber	0.8.0
Summa 10li-10s-2d	

Richard Hickes Peter Chemmer his mark Witnesses Michaell Mills Rolandus Jones

Mills' will and inventory were proved at Chipping Norton on 30 April 1641

Notes

- 1 For this and subsequent references to the parish registers see Oxfordshire Archives, MSS. DD. Par. Shipton under Wychwood c.2, d.1 and d.2.
- 2 Oxfordshire Archaeological Society Report (1916), p.33. Richard Hopkins, a graduate of St Alban Hall, Oxford, was appointed vicar of Burford in 1586 but is known to have been also vicar of Shipton before Mills since the latter's institution was 'on the death of Richard Hopkins, the last vicar'. There is no record of Hopkins' burial but the administration of his goods is dated 12 November 1593. For the outbreak of plague in Shipton see Tom McQuay, 'Plague Tyme', Wychwoods History No.5, Wychwoods Local History Society (1989), pp.51-2.
- 3 J.Howard-Drake, 'William Master, Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood', Wychwoods History No. 2 (1986).
- 4 Queen's College archives, 2S2 to 2S12.
- 5 Merton College archives, el35.
- 6 Keith Thomas, Man and the Natural World (1983) (Penguin edition 1984, p.21).
- 7 Oxfordshire Archives, MS. Oxf. dioc. papers c.25, ff. 248-250, 265y-267.
- 8 Oxfordshire Archives, MS. Wills Oxon., 44/3/9; J.Howard-Drake, op. cit.
- 9 The two sons who were ministers were Henry and Michael, both Oxford graduates. Henry received his B.A. from All Souls' College in 1613 and Michael received his from Gloucester Hall in 1619 having matriculated at All Souls in 1615. He was vicar of East and West Rudham, Norfolk, in 1640. See J. Foster, *Alumni Oxonienses* 1500-1714 (1891-2).

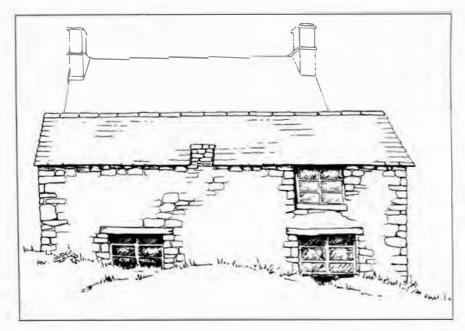
A Cottage on the Waste

FRANK WARE

An examination of the deeds of one's house – assuming they go back to the period before title was registered – can yield unexpected nuggets of local history. Quite often, of course, they are never seen or they are inaccessible for convenient examination – they go straight into a building society or are deposited with a bank. Recently I received my deeds on completion of the mortgage and took the opportunity to study them and take an extract before redepositing them.

Title commenced with a Conveyance of 16th April 1864, between William Carpenter and Thomas Carpenter of the first part and Robert Gorton of the second part. The Carpenters conveyed a cottage and premises at Shipton for £56 13s 6d. Human interest shines straight away through the dry legal phraseology. William Carpenter was a labourer and widower, aged 80, the eldest son of a Thomas Carpenter (deceased) who had occupied the cottage for many years as a freehold of inheritance subject to a quit-rent of 1s 6d per annum payable to the Lord of the Manor of Shipton under Wychwood. The Thomas Carpenter who was a party to the deed was William's son, described as a tenant of part of the premises (this may have been a legal fiction to justify what follows). The consideration was divided as to £30 paid to William and £26 13s 6d to Thomas, being the amount of a debt due by the latter for goods sold and delivered by Robert Gorton, the purchaser, who was a grocer and draper from Milton. One is left to imagine what pressure was put on the old man to sell his home and what was probably his only asset to cover his son's debts, and whether it was his son Thomas or Gorton with his £30 who did most of the pressing.

The property was described as a cottage, garden and appurtenances, lying on the west side of and bounded by the Burford and Chipping Norton Turnpike Road and by a private road leading from it to the Crown Inn premises belonging to the Shipton under Wychwood Charity Trustees. The other sides were bounded by part of the Crown Inn premises and by part of the garden formerly belonging to William Carpenter but lately sold by him to William Coombes. William Carpenter executed by his mark, but Thomas like Robert Gorton appended a proper signature. A William Scarlett Price, Gentleman of Burford, also executed the deed as a third party, but his role and interest is unclear, and possibly he was no more than a witness (or the lawyer who drew the deed).



William Carpenter's cottage from the rear, as it looked in 1979. In the 1930s it had a very tall chimney – just visible in the background of the photograph of Shipton livestock sale (see 'Early Days at Shipton').

Robert Gorton then set about improving his title. The next deed is an Indenture of 24th September 1864, between John Kilby of Banbury, Solicitor, of the first part and Robert Gorton of the second part. This recited that under a previous Indenture of 5th November 1862 John Kilby had acquired the Lordship of the Manor of Shipton under Wychwood from George Payne Kitson and Richard Snead (or Head?) Cox, and as such was entitled to the wastelands with the cottages and buildings thereon. The cottage in question had some time before been erected on wasteland in the Manor and had been occupied for some years by William Carpenter as tenant at the annual rent of 1s 6d; Robert Gorton had purchased the tenantright and interest of William Carpenter. He now purchased the interest of John Kilby for £5, effectively acquiring the freehold. The release specifically excluded a cottage erected by William Coombes on land formerly part of William Carpenter's garden.

These two deeds give different descriptions of the title to the cottage claimed for William Carpenter (tenantright as opposed to freehold by inheritance), but the September Indenture reads as a much more professional document than the April Conveyance and was probably more

correct. The insight into the ownership of the Lordship of Shipton Manor is perplexing, but we may be looking here at legal as opposed to beneficial ownership. Kitson and Cox sound like the executors of somebody's estate, and Kilby may have held as a trustee or nominee for someone else. I would have expected the Lordship to have belonged to the Reade family of Shipton Court and understand the last baronet, Sir John Chandos, did not die until 1868. This, and what later happened to the Lordship of the Manor, are mysteries I must leave to the research of others.

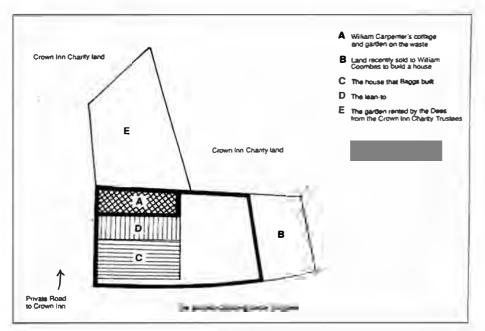
By 24th June 1865 Robert Gorton succeeded in realising his investment when he sold the property to James Baggs, plumber and glazier of Shipton. The consideration was £100, so Gorton must have made a good return on his outlay, even after allowing for legal costs. William Scarlett Price was again joined as the third party to the Conveyance. There is a hint that the Carpenters may still have occupied the cottage, but of course they would have had no security of tenure in those days.

The next document was a Memorandum of Agreement of 15th June 1866, between William Coombes and James Baggs. Baggs permitted a sewer to be laid through his garden from Coombes' adjacent cottage, in consideration for which Coombes paid Baggs 5s and permitted him to erect a greenhouse or nail trees against Coombes' cottage wall (the latter being a right still exercised today!).

James Baggs now proceeded to build a completely new house in front of the old cottage, facing the Turnpike Road. By a Mortgage dated 15th December 1868 he conveyed the property to Miss Elisabeth Ann Harris of Stow on the Wold to secure the sum of £190 plus interest at five per cent. The property was now described as a newly erected Messuage or Tenement with outbuildings, yard and garden. The loan was repaid by 16th November 1874, as recorded by a reconveyance to James Baggs endorsed on the Mortgage. The Mortgage itself was witnessed by Geo. Pill of Shipton, clerk to Messrs Brookes & Son, solicitors of Stow, and the Reconveyance by Robert Brookes, solicitor, of Stow.

A considerable period passed before the next deed, which was a Conveyance of 14th October 1915 by which Mrs Elizabeth Baggs, widow, sold the property to Ernest Harold Dee, grocer of Shipton. James Baggs had died on 6th December 1903, and his widow was his sole executrix and beneficiary. The consideration was £200.

By an Agreement of 8th January 1919 Ernest Dee rented about 140 square yards from the Trustees of the Shipton Crown Inn Charity, at a rent of 9s a year. The garden was described as being at the back of the dwelling house and what was now called a workshop. By a Conveyance of 5th August 1930 the Trustees sold the garden to Rebecca Margery Dee, widow, for the sum of £10. From supplementary papers it appears that the sale was actually by auction, even though the Dees had already been renting it for eleven years. F.W.Norris, Town Clerk of Chipping Norton, witnessed both documents, in the Conveyance only on behalf of the Trustees (he is there described as Clerk



Plan of William Carpenter's cottage and garden, with subsequent additions

to the Trustees), while William Edwin Coombes, company director of Shipton, witnessed for Mrs Dee.

By a Conveyance of 1st August 1958 Mrs Rebecca Dee sold the house to Ian Roy Townsend of Harveys Farm, Fifield, for £1,500. For the first time, the property is given a name, 'Qu'Appelle'. Mrs Dee's address was in Southbourne, Bournemouth. The Abstract of her Title recites that Ernest Harold Dee died in the Radcliffe Infirmary on 18th September 1925, that Mrs Dee was his widow and beneficiary, the personal representatives being William Edwin Coombes of Shipton and Alexander Coombes of West Ham, the latter having signed the Conveyance as her witness.

I purchased Qu'Appelle from Ian Roy Townsend for £4,150 by a Conveyance dated 23rd May 1966.

We can of course fill in some of the details behind the bald facts recited in the Deeds themselves. Ernest Harold Dee built the shop now known as Shipton House in about 1908 and lived there 'over the shop' before purchasing Qu'Appelle which was directly opposite. The move was probably made in order to expand the business premises, as there was a drapery business as well as a grocery. Mr Dee married Rebecca Margery Coombes in 1920 and their daughter Mary was born in 1921. Two present residents of Shipton remember visiting the house as children: Mr Cyril Lane, a nephew of the owner, and Mrs Elma Williams who recollects playing in the attics. Her

father was the William Edwin (Ted) Coombes who witnessed the conveyance of 1930 for his sister Margery Dee.

The name of the house, Qu'Appelle, was that of a missionary station in Canada where a brother and sister of Mr Dee worked for a time among the Indians. After the Second World War, before its conveyance to Mr Townsend, the house was rented out to American servicemen and their families, one of whose children was heard to state proudly that she lived at 'Q-Apple'. When we bought the house we did not like the name Qu'Appelle, not appreciating its significance. We re-named it 'Monks' Gate' – a historical inaccuracy, since The Shaven Crown is a relatively recent (1930s) version of the neighbouring inn's name.

Today the facade facing the High Street is the house that James Baggs built. The cottage on the waste where William Carpenter lived is our garage which lies behind it – we have raised the roof and converted the upper storey into a sitting room with a door opening into the garden, first rented and then bought from the Crown Inn Charity. At some stage the yard between the house and cottage was roofed over with a lean-to linking up the two original buildings and which now contains our kitchen, bathroom and spare bedroom.

William Coombes' cottage next door, now called 'The Links', was still owned by the Coombes family until the late 1970s.

The house that Baggs had built by 1868. William Carpenter's original cottage can be seen behind and William Coombes' house to the right.



The Milton under Wychwood Murder

NORMAN FROST

Thus ran the headline of a special edition of the Oxford Times dated 17 July 1888. The following day the Oxfordshire Weekly News which incorporated the Banbury Herald reprinted the original report in an article of some 12,000 words. It is from this edition, very fragile and near to disintegration, which is in the hands of the author, that this summary is taken.

'This morning at eight o'clock Robert Upton paid the last penalty of the law, for the murder of his wife at Milton under Wychwood on the 23rd May. There were features about the crime itself, and the demeanour of the accused before the magistrates and the judge, which take the case out of the ordinary run of murders. It was a sudden furious onslaught, interrupted by onlookers, and the supreme act was done in view of several persons. The murderer was secured before the victim was dead, and from first to last the culprit has expressed his willingness to bear the consequences of his acts. Nor does there seem to be any adequate motive for the crime, beyond a blind, unreasoning fury which seized upon the murderer, who found a weapon ready to his hand, and violently put his wife to death. It is quite unprecedented in this county... for three successive executions to have taken place within four months, for at least a century, but a hundred years ago criminals were hanged for a great number of offences: as lately as 1832 arson and highway robbery were among them. Only three executions took place between 1863 and 1887. There have been murders no doubt, but those found guilty have been dealt with by penal servitude.'

The newspaper account merely referred to the witnesses as Mr. Groves etc., but with some searching their full names and that of the victim were found. Those involved were: Robert Upton, a mason's labourer aged 61, living with his wife Emma, also 61 and born in Shipton, in a cottage in Groves' yard, Milton behind The Elms farmhouse. As a boy Robert lived with his parents John and Alice Upton in a cottage in what is now the post office garden. He had a younger brother Charles. Robert was described as unsociable and illiterate. In April 1862 the Milton Allotments committee made him forfeit his plot because he had committed a felony. This was probably the occasion he was sent to gaol for ill-treating his wife. So that she would not gain from his absence he hid a bag said to contain £50 by tying it to a gatepost in Frog Lane. He also buried a side of bacon in his garden. When he came out of prison he recovered the money but the bacon had decomposed and was unfit

to eat. His wife was said to be a mild, self-effacing woman, which was probably just as well. They had a daughter who, at the time of the execution, was aged 28 and married. Witnesses to the murder were: Alfred Groves, a stonemason of The Elms and his wife Mary; Alfred Miles, a carter of Hawkes Yard; Mark Miles, a labourer of Hawkes Yard; Abraham Cox, a labourer of High Street; Mr Maddox, a farmer and PC George King of Church Street, Shipton.

On the day of the murder Robert Upton, who had worked for Alfred Groves and Sons for many years, had been carrying out repairs at Shipton Court. At the close of the day's work he walked home with his fellow workmen, Mark Miles and Abraham Cox. The three of them stopped for a drink in the ordinary bar of the *Crown Inn* and Mark Miles told how, as they were leaving, Upton remarked 'There will be a rum job presently'. The three men walked to Milton in a friendly spirit and, after stopping to admire Upton's pigs which were flourishing, they parted and Upton went into his house.

At the time Alfred Miles was attending to his horses in stables nearby when he heard sounds of an argument in Upton's house. Mrs Upton came out and told Miles that her husband was threatening to kill her. Miles, thinking it was just a family row remarked 'It will be all right presently' and laughed the matter off. Mrs Upton went back indoors but very soon re-emerged apparently fleeing for her life. Upton followed her carrying an iron bar. On hearing the shouting and screaming, Mr and Mrs Alfred Groves came out into the yard and joined Alfred Miles.

The three of them, by now seriously alarmed stopped Upton, took the iron bar from him, threw it on the ground and tried to persuade him to calm himself. Emma Upton began to walk away towards the highroad in order to get out of his reach but Upton began striking her in the face with his fist. In a flash he picked up the iron bar and, getting in front of her, dealt her a fearful blow in the face with it which broke her nasal and cheek bones and knocked her insensible to the ground. He then dealt her more blows as she lay on the ground but, in the doctor's later opinion, she was dead when she hit the ground. In later evidence Alfred Miles said he picked up the iron bar and dealt Upton one or two blows: 'I was thinking it would steady him up a bit.' Several of the witnesses heard Upton reply rather savagely 'I would have steadied thee if I get at thee'. This exchange led several people who had by this time gathered around to get a rope and bind Upton securely.

The doctor was sent for and also PC King from Shipton. The doctor's name is not mentioned, only the remark that he was soon on the scene. This suggests that it could have been Dr Haigh from nearby Hillingdon House by the Green. PC King arrived much later giving the excuse that Shipton Club Feast was in full swing and he was delayed. Upon the doctor telling PC King that Emma Upton was undoubtedly dead she was carried into her cottage and left until an inquest could be held. PC King then hired a horse and vehicle and took Upton to Chipping Norton police station. On the road the constable, seeing Upton had calmed down, warned him of the gravity of the

situation. Upton replied 'Ah well, it done, and done for, and I meant to do it. I shall go to the gallows like a prince'.

The following Wednesday Upton was brought before the Chadlington magistrates and when asked to plead he replied 'I did it and hope she's gone to heaven'. He was then formally committed for trial at Oxford Castle. During his time awaiting trial Upton was said to have eaten and slept well and displayed the same want of feeling which characterised him throughout. The prison chaplain found him to be extremely ignorant and to have only a vague notion of religion. He had never been to church but understood vaguely that there was a supreme being to whom we must all answer. He knew he had killed his wife and for that he must hang.

He appeared before Mr Justice Denman at the Summer Assize Court at Oxford and when asked by the clerk of the court how he pleaded, Upton surprised everybody by pleading guilty. Only twice before in living memory had this happened. From this point on the reporter's account is a masterpiece which is seldom seen today. I quote in full:

'Surprise by this time had deepened into awe, and for one awful moment there was that general feeling of undefined fear which sometimes seizes upon an audience by common impulse, every nerve in one's body telling him that others are feeling very much as he is. His Lordship sat and looked at the prisoner in the dock, as if his first feeling was that it was useless to go further and that the plea should be accepted, and once more those familiar with the proceedings in a court of justice trembled lest Lord Denman should assume the black cap and that a human being might be hurried from the dock to the condemned cell only to emerge thence to expiate his foul and self-confessed crime on the scaffold. But this was not to be, for his Lordship interposed and there was a sigh of relief when the first few words fell from his lips intimating that he was not disposed to accept the plea.'

Following a long dialogue with the prisoner the judge ordered a plea of 'not guilty' to be entered. When asked if he wanted counsel to represent him, Upton replied 'I would sooner have it now and be done with it. I don't want anybody to plead anything for me sir, nothing at all'. Upton was then informed that as a plea of 'not guilty' had been entered he would be tried on the following day.

It was announced that a Mr Sims, one of the leading juniors of the Oxford circuit, had been retained for the Crown and Mr Mackarness, a junior of almost equal standing, was assigned for the defence. The trial commenced with an examination of the witnesses already mentioned and then followed a very long and learned argument as to whether a plea of manslaughter could be accepted. This brought Upton's character into question and his previous conviction for assault on his wife. This settled the argument and the jury were asked to decide the case. They were out for only five minutes and returned to give a verdict of guilty. Sentence was passed by Lord Denman in the following words: 'Prisoner at the bar, yesterday you were anxious to plead guilty to this offence and it was only from a feeling that it might just be



Cottage in Groves' Yard, Milton under Wychwood, occupied by Mr and Mrs Robert Upton at the time of the murder in 1888

possible that some fact might emerge in your favour which might conceivably have been evidence to reduce the offence to manslaughter that I thought it right to advise you to stand your trial. I hope that I have not done you wrong by doing this. I did not intend it if I have done so. On the contrary it was my desire to be merciful to you when I assigned the most able counsel, who has in a feeling and skilful manner conducted this case on your behalf, to defend you upon this charge. The jury have, and I feel certain you feel it to be the truth, found you guilty of the offence of wilful murder, that you did kill your wife with that terrible weapon, intending that she should meet her death at your hands. I will say no more. I know from what has already passed that your conscience tells you that this is a just and true verdict, and that it remains only for me to pass the sentence of the law upon you that you may be taken from hence to the place from whence you came and thence to a place of execution, that there you be hanged by the neck until you shall be dead, and your body afterwards shall be buried within the precincts of the prison in which you shall have been last confined after your conviction, and may the Lord God Almighty have mercy on your soul'.

While awaiting execution, Upton is said to have behaved quietly and decorously and listened attentively to the ministrations of the prison chaplain, the Revd J.Knight Newton. He was visited by his daughter and her husband as well as his wife's sister. These visits must have caused pain on both sides but hopefully showed some comfort and forgiveness towards the unfortunate man. The jury at his trial could find no grounds for recommending mercy and as far as is known no attempts were made to secure a reprieve.

The Revd D.Horlock, the curate of Milton under Wychwood church let it be known that on Sunday 1 July he would make some allusion to this tragic event in his evening sermon. Despite the inclement weather the church had a large congregation, who heard Mr Horlock take his text from Psalm 51, verse 14, deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God. His sermon was a very lengthy one.

Early on the morning of 17 July 1888, the day of the execution, a small crowd of not more than a hundred people, mainly members of the working classes, gathered outside Oxford Gaol in New Street. Gone were the days of public executions: it was now a much more sober affair with only certain people allowed in. Among them on this day were the Under-Sheriff of Oxfordshire, the prison governor, chaplain and chief warder, a sub-editor of the Oxford Times, a reporter from the Oxford Journal and another from the Oxford Chronicle as well as a prison warder. Also in attendance was the prison surgeon in order to certify that the sentence had been carried out. The black flag was raised as the prison clock struck eight showing that justice had been done. Immediately after the hanging a coroner and jury were summoned in order to certify that the sentence had been properly carried out and, what is more important, to determine that the correct man had been hanged.

From this account, condensed from the Oxford Weekly News, many points of interest arise. To the writer's knowledge this is the only account of a murder within the village of Milton: indeed there seemed to be very few even in the whole county. Furthermore the crime took place before so many witnesses that there was no doubt about the intent and actions of the culprit. It gave the defence counsel almost no scope to enter a plea in mitigation. Mr Justice Denman showed great compassion when he initially refused Upton's admission of guilt in order to ensure a full trial and allow the defence counsel to make a case for the accused to try to avoid the death penalty. But it was just too much to expect: the sentence was inevitable.

The behaviour of the witnesses is a sign of the times, when the keeping of the peace in the last century in any community was largely a matter for the local inhabitants. The actions of Alfred Groves and his three employees were plucky indeed, in facing a man wielding an iron bar and bent on murder. Upton still had to be restrained and held until the very late arrival of PC King. He seemed to have taken his duties at Shipton Club Day very seriously, or was he waiting until the action had subsided? As a representative of the law he was not in an enviable position. It would be two hours or more before

he could deliver his prisoner to Chipping Norton police station and doubtless PC King was well aware that many a lone village policemen had died in an effort to apprehend even a single lawbreaker.

The reporter at the trial was quick to perceive that all four of the local witnesses were most uncomfortable to be giving evidence against a neighbour even when the crime was murder. Their answers said nothing to incriminate Upton any further than was necessary. The report refers to both Alfred Groves and Alfred Miles as kind hearted and good natured men. A further aspect of this case which would be unusual today is the short period between the committing of the crime (23 May) and the execution (17 July), only fifty-six days.

As was the style in Victorian times, the case was reported in great detail, especially the legal arguments, but the characters definitely played a minor role in the reports. Even the name of the victim Emma Upton was not mentioned until the closing phases of the trial. That preoccupation of the modern reporter with the names and ages of all and sundry has no place in this report, neither are occupations or addresses given. It is only at the final inquest that personal details of Robert Upton are disclosed, for the benefit of the public hangman. Upton was a tall thin man aged 61, 5ft.10 in. tall and weighing 147 lb. A man of this stature today would average 168 lb. – a telling comment on the standard of living a hundred years ago.

From My Bookshelf

JOAN HOWARD-DRAKE

Widespread interest in family history was in its infancy twenty-five years ago when I started my research and there were few guides or aids for the researcher. My local library had about four books for a family historian on the shelves; the rest were on the genealogy and heraldry of the more superior county families. Nowadays we are spoilt for choice.

I have two titles of general interest and would recommend George Pelling's Beginning Your Family History for beginners, and Colin Rogers' The Family Tree Detective for the more experienced researcher. These two books explain how to use the many sources available. Jeremy Gibson has published General Register Office and International Genealogical Indexes as a guide to these valuable aids. The General Register Office indexes give the dates of births, marriages and deaths from 1837 and the necessary references for getting certificates. The indexes are held in London but increasingly local record offices are holding microfiche copies. The International Genealogical Index (I.G.I.) of baptisms and marriages for all periods is produced by the Church of the Latter Day Saints in America and covers the whole of the British Isles. Their microfiches can be seen at local record offices and in their own Family Centres throughout the country.

After 1857 wills were proved centrally and copies are held in Somerset House, London, but before that date probate was proved in church courts and finding them can be difficult. Wills and their Whereabouts by Anthony Camp and Probate Jurisdictions: where to look for wills by Jeremy Gibson are guides through this jungle. Among the many publications of The Society of Genealogists the series The National Index of Parish Registers provides useful information on such sources as parish registers, marriage licences and bonds, names and abbreviations, divorce papers, wills and other records before 1837. They also include references to non-conformist and Roman Catholic archives which can be hard to find. An indispensable volume is The Phillimore Atlas and Index to Parish Registers edited by Cecil Humphery-Smith. It has county and parish maps and an index of every parish in England and Wales.

Census records give invaluable information about individuals and show where they lived, what their families were, what their work was, and where they were born. The Census & Social Structure edited by Richard Lawton explains how the census was taken, what you can expect to find and how reliable it is. The census returns on microfilm from 1841 are in the Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, London, but most large county libraries and

county record offices now have microfilms of their own areas. Census Returns 1841-1881 on Microfilm by Jeremy Gibson is a useful guide.

Tracing your Family in the Public Record Office by Amanda Bevan and Andrea Duncan is for the more experienced researcher, covering official records of the armed forces, taxation, emigration and much more. Many of the early records are at Chancery Lane, the rest are at the P.R.O. at Kew. The P.R.O. publishes very good free leaflets on many of the subjects covered by their records. The Family Historian's Enquire Within by F.C. Markwell and Pauline Saul is a reference book which helps with tricky little problems which often take a long time to sort out. Computers and word-processors are increasingly used as a tool by family historians and there is a useful introductory guide in Computers for Family Historians by David Hawgood.

As soon as you get back a generation or two you will find your family has links with other parts of the country and overseas. In the nineteenth century many people emigrated from places such as Milton and Shipton, especially to Australia, New Zealand and Canada. For example in my case I am researching not only in Oxfordshire but in Cheshire, Gloucestershire, Lancashire, London, Hampshire, Somerset, Staffordshire and Canada. This spread of interest is by no means unusual; most family historians I know have this problem and many have connections overseas. It is therefore important to join not only your local family history society but those in other counties whose journals may throw up useful information and put you in touch with long-lost family members. On my shelves I have many journals and members' interest booklets and research indexes from other societies beside the Oxfordshire Family History Society. The Oxfordshire society began in 1976 and I have all their publications including my own Directory of Members' Research 1976-1987. I also have books produced by the Federation of Family History Societies on various family history research subjects but there are too many to mention here.

Producing a family tree with just names and dates of births, marriages and deaths is only half the story; the other half is learning as much as possible about the daily lives of your ancestors. Many of my family lived in Oxford and most of the men were freemen of the city. One was the first Superintendent of the City Day Police in 1834, another was the Overseer of the Learned Press and Manager of the Bible Press at the Oxford University Press. One great-grandfather was a bookbinder and I have one or two of the books he bound on my shelves. With this background and having been born in Oxford myself I have a special interest in books about the city and county. My collection of local books ranges from nineteenth century titles to the recent The Encyclopaedia of Oxford edited by Christopher Hibbert. Oxford Historical Society publications describe many aspects of Oxford life and their City Council Acts and Apprenticeship Records have given me much valuable information about my Oxford city ancestors. In the county, the Cleavers, well-known masons in North Oxfordshire and part of my family, appear in The Wigginton Constables' Book edited by F.D. Price.

My interests outside Oxford and Oxfordshire have led me to buy books covering a wide-range of subjects, such as *The History of the Staffordshire Potteries* by **Simeon Shaw**, since one of my ancestors was Felix Pratt who made pot-lids and other wares. My Moger family of Somerset is mentioned in the *Journal of a Somerset Rector* by **John Skinner**. Once you are involved with family history the only limitations on book buying are money and shelf space; but I have had to find room for one work of fiction, *John Halifax*, *Gentleman* by Mrs. Craik. She was the daughter of Thomas Mulock, an eccentric non-conformist minister whose doctrines of free love led to an uproar in Oxford, and who left the city under a cloud accompanied by one of his followers, my great-great-grandfather.

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[O.H.S. = Oxford Historical Society]

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Death of a Schoolmaster

From Jackson's Oxford Journal 1820

Departed this transitory life at Shipton near Burford in the County on 27th ultimo (October) in the 63rd year of his age, Mr John FRANKLIN, Schoolmaster, this Gentleman possessed and practised every qualification that renders a companion truly agreeable: as a husband was endearing, as a parent tender, as a friend faithful, unaffected and accomodating, in fact, he was possessed of every praiseworthy quality which could adorn the character of his sex, closing a well spent life.

His corpse was conveyed from his residence to the place of interment by a large assemblage of persons of the first character in the neighbourhood, where they dropped the sympathising tear with his disconsolate family as the last tribute of respect due to their departed friend whose memory will be ever dear to all who had the happiness of his acquaintance.

(Died) at Shipton 27 October 1820 (aged 63). Date of Burial 2 November 1820 at Shipton.

Obviously a man of some standing in the community, we have a record of John Franklin serving as a member of Shipton Court Leet, a surviving relic of medieval administration, for several years between 1808 and 1820. His name appears among those 'allowing' the Parish Constable's accounts for the year and nominating the new Constable for the ensuing year. He was also a substantial creditor in the accounts until his death, although the goods or services he supplied to the Parish are not specified. After his death in 1820 the bill continued to be rendered by his son Robert, also an important man in the community.

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.

Wychwoods History, Number 6 (1991)

£3.00

The Unions; Leonard Boxe, Gentleman of Ascott; Infantile Mortality 1565-94; The Wharton Charity; Medieval Fishpond at Bruern (survey by James Bond); Shipton School Log Book 1869-1905; Mary Moss; Life in Old Milton.

These may be obtained from Frank Ware, Monks Gate, Shipton under Wychwood, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 6BA (telephone Shipton (0993) 830494). P&P is 70p for the first book plus 30p 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, Chipping Norton, Oxon, 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, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 6BA (telephone Shipton under Wychwood (0993) 830494). Postage and packing is 70p for the first copy plus 30p for each additional copy. Cheques payable to Wychwoods Local History Society. See inside for full list of publications in print.

Cover illustration: A fine example of the work of a banker mason. This decoration, the work of George Groves (1886-1972) while manager of Clipsham Quarries, Rutland, was used in the post-war restoration of the House of Commons. George was awarded the MBE, for his work. He was brought up in Milton and worked for a short time in the Milton Quarries before they closed. These had been owned by his grandfather, also a George Groves.