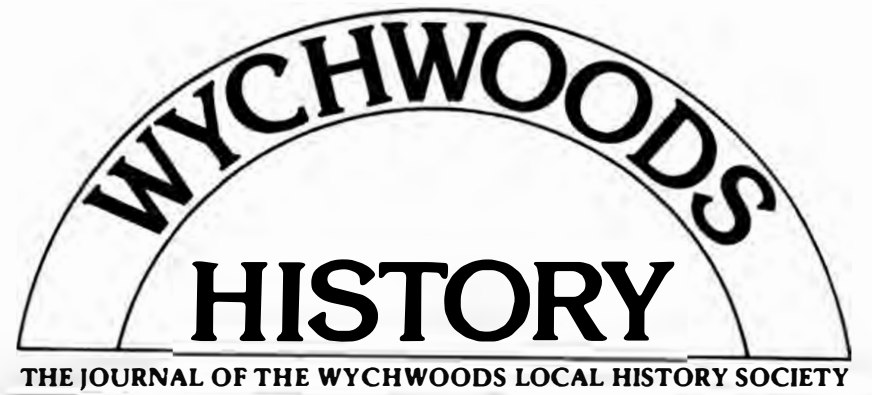


# WYCHWOODS HISTORY

THE JOURNAL OF THE WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Number Eight, 1993



**WYCHWOODS**  
**HISTORY**  
THE JOURNAL OF THE WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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ISBN 0 9510372 9 3

Printed by Parchment (Oxford) Ltd

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We are grateful to the Greening Lamborn Trust for a very generous grant towards the cost of publishing this issue of *Wychwoods History*.

## Foreword

After nine years, Jack Howard-Drake has retired as chairman of the Society. We are most grateful for all his hard work in helping to establish a thriving and admirable society and for his witty and succinct votes of thanks at the many meetings he has chaired. He was determined that the Society should have a journal for recording members’ local history studies, and the high regard in which it is held is largely due to his guiding hand and eye. This job is now ably continued by Margaret Ware as editor.

This edition follows the previous pattern with articles by members reflecting the Society’s wide range of interests and activities. One of the first projects undertaken by Joan and Jack Howard-Drake was the transcribing of Shipton’s registers. A small group of members has been working on these vital statistics under the leadership of Anthea Jones and the resulting report appears in this Journal. Dr Jones has retired to Shipton from being Head of History and Director of Studies at Cheltenham Ladies College and her great expertise in local history has already been put to good use. Tom McQuay has also used the registers for his article on the study of illegitimacy in Shipton parish. Margaret and Frank Ware, who are now undertaking a certificate course in Archaeology at the Oxford University Department for Continuing Education at Rewley House, have described the Society’s fieldwalking project at a local Romano-British site. Norman Frost continues his account of the Groves family and the large part they have played in the history of Milton and John Rawlins writes about the local Royal Observer Corps and their role in the Second World War.

There are already two new projects under way. Dr Jones’ group are attempting to place in their houses the residents of Shipton listed in the Hearth Tax of 1662. The group would be grateful for access to any old deeds of Shipton properties. It is also good to report that Trudy Yates has started the time-consuming job of recording oral history, people’s memories of life in the past.

I am honoured to take over as chairman of the Society and trust that we will long continue our many successful and enjoyable activities.

Sue Jourdan  
Chairman

# Royal Observer Corps, Shipton 'The Hut up the Chippy Road'

JOHN RAWLINS

## Early Days

On 31 May 1915 the German airship LZ 238 dropped bombs on East London, and on 3 January 1936 Charles A.Wells of Poplar Farm, Milton under Wychwood became a Special Constable in the Oxfordshire Constabulary. This article attempts to show the connection between the two events.

As a result of that airship's attack on London and those by German aircraft in 1917 schemes were initiated to find ways of countering any future attack and of alleviating the calculated results of widespread damage, casualties, panic and civil disorder which might follow. These included plans for Civil Defence which included the evacuation of non-essential persons from likely target areas, and the organisation of an Air Defence system.

In the early days of the Air Defence system it was assumed that 'the bomber will get through'. Therefore early detection of these bombers was essential so that the likely target areas could be warned.

Initially this detection was effected by observers using their eyesight and a direction finder. Having plotted the position of the aircraft on a squared or gridded map, this position was then passed on, by telephone, to HQ, where it was added to information from other observers. The collated information was then passed on to the relevant authorities – Civil Defence, anti-aircraft guns and searchlights. So successful was an experiment in 1924, that the Committee for Imperial Defence approved the establishment of an Observer Corps.

Most of the original planning for the Air Defence system had been concentrated on the defence of London. But with Hitler's rise to power, it was decided in 1934 that the Air Defence system should cover the whole country by 1939. So it was in 1935 that the first Observer Corps posts were set up in Oxfordshire as No 4 Group with its Centre (or HQ) in the GPO buildings in Oxford.

However, by 1935, the plans for Air Defence had been drastically changed. Due to the success of the Observer Corps, and of experiments with radar, the assumption that 'the bomber will get through' became the policy of 'stop the bomber'. Stopping the bomber required early detection, clear reporting and accurate analysis, and the speedy relay of that information to the defence system which now included fighter aircraft. Early detection came from radar

and the Observer Corps.

The fighter aircraft were being built, and possible air crew recruited. So began construction work on Brize Norton and Little Rissington airfields in 1936 which were to be used for the flying training of air crews, and which were also to have separate Maintenance Units on the airfields for aircraft repair. 1936 also saw the expansion of No 4 Observer Group, Oxford with new posts at Filkins, Shipton under Wychwood (actually located in Ascott parish) and Swalcliffe, and this is presumably why Charles A.Wells had become a Special Constable in January of that year.

The whole of the Air Defence system was cloaked in secrecy. The Observer Corps made no mention of their duties, nor were their activities reported in the newspapers or technical press. Due to this secrecy recruitment to the Observer Corps could not be advertised and took place by word of mouth. In 1924 recruitment had been by Head Constables and so the first Observers appear as Special Constables. One writer recalls notices which appeared in the Post Office window where he lived. One such notice read 'Forewarned is fore-armed 7.30 Friday' – there was no other wording. Much later the author discovered that 'Forewarned is fore-armed' was the motto of the Observer Corps, that there was to be an air exercise on the date and time stated and that Observers were expected to turn out. Even later the author found out that it was his own brother who had been putting up this and similar notices (*see Hogg – acknowledgements*).

## The Establishment of the Shipton Post

With no written records and no local surviving members from those days in 1936 one can only surmise how the Observer Corps Post Y1 was set up at Shipton under Wychwood. I would *guess* that much of the work was done by the local postmasters as both those from Shipton (George Wiggins) and Milton (Alf Moss) appear as Observers in the early days and can be seen in the group photograph. Although the local telephone exchange was not in the Post Office, George Wiggins would have been able to make the vital but secret telephone links with the Oxford Group Centre (at Oxford GPO buildings).

Early recruitment in the Wychwoods must have been in January 1936 and by December of that year the post became operational. The men who formed the complement at the post were probably the same as those in the earliest surviving list (1941) and would appear to have been men of some integrity and particular suitability as Observers – small businessmen, craftsmen and artisans who were used to the modern technology of that time – radios, cameras, electricity. Several were also on the telephone and owned binoculars. Were they also recruited and contacted by word of mouth and a notice in the Post Office window?

Strangely enough, many of those early Observers at Post Y1 also had some form of mechanical transport when motor vehicles were not common in this area. However, cycles appear to have been used, perhaps to avoid undue



Observers C.A. Wells (left) and G. Harris outside the hut which formed Post Y1. Both are wearing Special Constable's armbands and Charles Wells may have the early Corps badge in his lapel.

attention which may have been created by a collection of motor vehicles parked in a very visible field. Likewise, the wearing of a Special Constable armband provoked less comment than the wearing of a uniform.

Post Y1 at Shipton under Wychwood was positioned where the TV repeater mast now stands just above the present trackway to Honeydale Farm on the A 361 to Chipping Norton. It afforded excellent views, except to the north. But that was of no great consequence in 1936 as Shipton was the most north-westerly post of No 4 Group, Oxford. Subsequently, in 1938, posts were established at Stow on the Wold and Long Compton.

In the first years of its life, Observers at Post Y1 carried out their duties in the open air. But, with the ever-increasing possibility of war, the number of air exercises when the Observers were on duty increased from six in 1936 to fifty-eight in 1938. Therefore some form of accommodation was needed for Observers and their equipment.

This became more obvious when air exercises became 'Full Alert and Call Out' from 26 September to 1 October 1938 due to the Munich crisis. This necessitated 24-hour manning of the post when shelter, storage, cooking and toilet facilities were required, and was probably when the hut was erected. It had no water, gas or electricity, but it did have the most necessary connection by telephone to Group Centre at Oxford and to sister posts at Stow on the Wold and Filkins. Heating was probably on a solid fuel stove which also served for cooking, and lighting was by torches, trolley lamp and car battery.

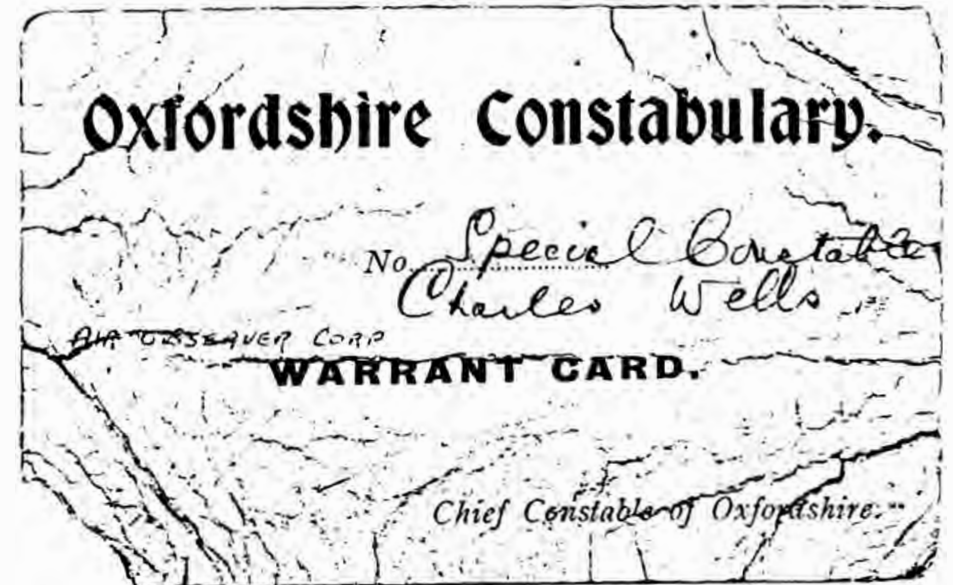
There was a chemical closet surrounded by a canvas screen alongside the field wall. Observations were made in the field outside the hut door at the Shipton end. Later, the height/position finder was surrounded by sandbags for protection.

Air exercises continued into 1939 with each exercise used to discover faults which could be eliminated in time for the next.

### The Outbreak of War

On 3 September 1939 Mr Chamberlain made his announcement of the Declaration of War. However, by then all Observer Corps posts had already been on continuous watch for eight days and nights. But not all wrinkles had been removed from the reporting system. For later that same morning the air raid warning siren wailed out from Groves' works hooter causing a certain amount of consternation among the local citizens at church or cooking the Sunday joint. Some felt it necessary to don gas masks. In fact, the alert siren had sounded throughout the country because one plane had been reported flying towards London from the south-east. But reporting procedures did not require mention of the type of aircraft. So, one friendly plane caused the whole country to take cover. This incident and others like it led to a change in procedure – all reporting was to include the type of aircraft.

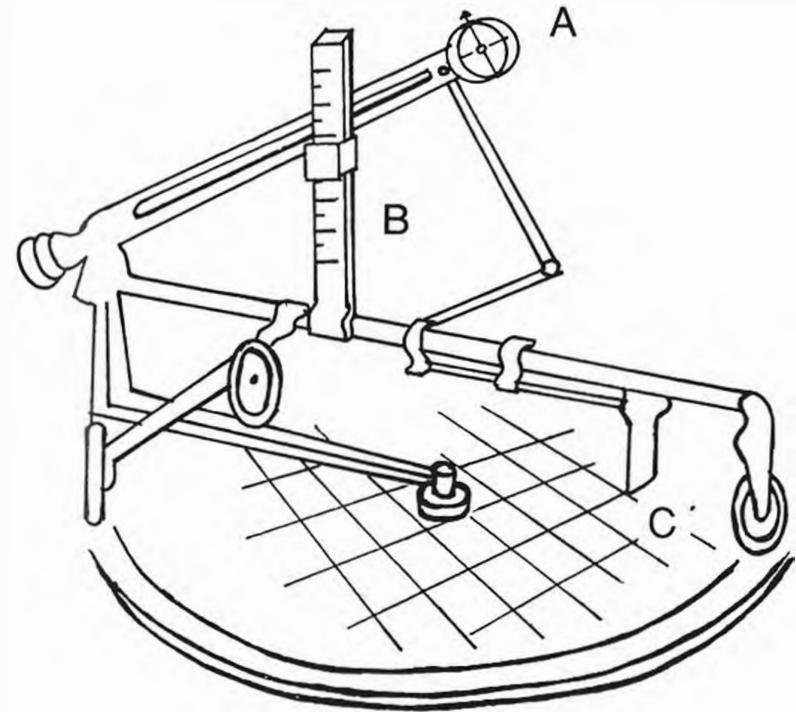
*This warrant card is dated on the reverse 3-1-1936*



For the next five and a half years two men were always on duty at Post Y1 with at least one of them peering into the skies in all weathers. These men, all volunteers, were unpaid apart from making up loss of earnings, and initially without uniform apart from the Special Constable's armbands and waterproofs. They operated a shift system of four day-shifts of four hours each and one eight hour night-shift. With the men available this probably meant eighteen shifts per month, of which four or five were the long night-shifts – this was in addition to their normal day-time work.

And how did these men of Post Y1 fit into the Air Defence system of this country? Their job was the observation, recording and reporting of all aircraft movements. All aircraft seen, or heard in cloud or at night, were identified by number and type. The height and position was calculated with the instrument seen in the group photograph and the position located on a gridded or squared map. All this information was then telephoned to No 4 Group Centre at Oxford using the head and breast telephone set as worn by Alf Moss on the right of the photograph. In the Oxford Group Centre a plotter would be listening to the posts in Cluster Y (Shipton, Filkins and Stow on the Wold) and would plot the information on a gridded map table.

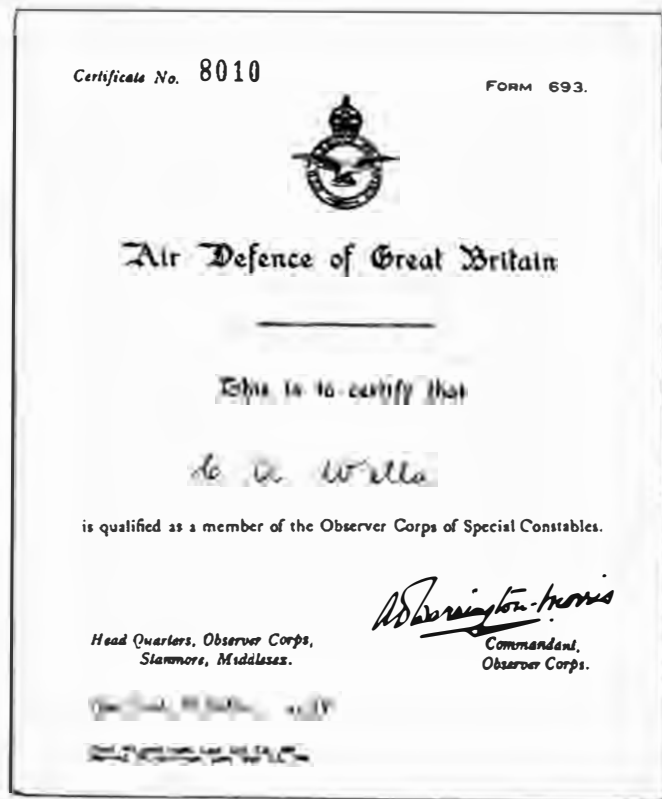
*Shipton Post Y1 Observers with height/position finder. Standing: Reg Bradley and George Wiggins. Seated: Charles Shepard, Laurie Pittaway and Alf Moss wearing head- and breast-set telephone. Probably a pre-war photograph.*



*Height/position finder, seen in the Observers' group photograph. By sighting the aircraft along arm A, its height could be read off on B and its position located on the gridded map C.*

Together with information from other Observer Corps posts in the Group it would be passed on to HQ Fighter Command RAF at Stanmore, Middlesex. Here the information was added to that from other sources – radar stations, coastguards, other Observer Corps centres and from the secret intelligence networks. It was then 'filtered' – i.e. sorted, sifted and checked – and then presented on another gridded map table, with all information being continually updated.

From the 'picture' shown on the map table the Duty Controller was able to assess the overall situation of air activity over the whole country. His special interest was the movements of enemy aircraft and from the display in front of him he was able to calculate likely target areas. Orders could then be given for fighter aircraft to intercept, to guns, searchlights and barrage balloons and to the Civil Defence who were responsible for giving air raid warnings (sirens).



*This certificate, dated the day after the Munich crisis, carries the RAF badge, although the Observer Corps were originally Special Constables.*

Throughout 1939 local air activity had increased with Brize Norton and Little Rissington airfields now operating as Flying Training Schools, with both now having their Maintenance Units also in business. Men from Post Y1 may have recorded the crash of an Avro Anson near Shipton Station.

The winter which followed was to be the worst in living memory but probably Post Y1 was still manned twenty-four hours a day. Not an easy task when snow frequently blocked the road over the wolds, and ice brought down the telephone lines. Nor can it have been easy sitting on the bleak hillside trying to keep warm and alert when there was little activity in the air for the bad weather reduced and even caused the cessation of flying training.

The first casualty in Great Britain was caused when bombs were dropped on the Orkneys in March 1940. In that same month more Observer Corps posts became operational at Enstone and Hailey.

The first enemy bomb on the British mainland fell at Canterbury, Kent on 9 May. But it was enemy air action on the continent which had the greater impact when the results of the bombing of Rotterdam could be seen. This, combined with the capitulation of Holland on 14 May meant that the possibility of air attack and/or invasion was imminent. On 14 May local men were asked to join the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), which later became the Home Guard. On 18 May the Observer Corps was issued with rifles, long before the LDV – in fact the only civilian organisation apart from the police to be issued with weapons.

June 1940 saw the fall of France and the arrival in this area of troops after their evacuation through Dunkirk, and of children evacuated from Dagenham. Post Y1 Observers were now issued with identity cards, berets and a uniform, albeit only of the overall type.

### **The Air Defence System Tested**

The harsh winter had now become a blazing summer and still the men of Post Y1 kept watch although some distance from the aerial combat of the Battle of Britain being fought out over south-east England. The Shipton post was now also required to report all balloons and all crashed aircraft, together with their type and number of survivors – the information coming from their own observations and from the local LDV platoons. With the need to train more air crews the number of local airfields was increased. One consequence was an increasing number of crashes for Y1 to report – two Airspeed Oxfords collided over Little Rissington in May, two more over Field Assarts and two more over Charlbury in July.

There was also enemy activity to be reported: bombs fell on Little Rissington airfield in May, one at Westcote in June, and five bombs were dropped on Ascott under Wychwood in August and some near Leafield Radio Station. There was also a spectacular attack on Brize Norton airfield when forty-six planes were destroyed in a raid of thirty seconds' duration, and in the same month a German Heinkel 111 collided with or was rammed by an Avro Anson over Windrush airfield.

The beginning of the London Blitz on 7 September 1940 put further strains on the Air Defence system. Although concentrated over south-east England it did have its effects locally. More children arrived as evacuees, and Post Y1 was kept busy, not only with flying training activity but also enemy aircraft which dropped bombs on the Foscot/Bledington area, Bruern, Leafield Radio Station, Witney and Chipping Norton airfield. On the night of 14 November German bombers could be heard overhead for one and a half hours as they made their way to the first night raid on an English city – Coventry – one bomb was dropped on Fifield as they returned.

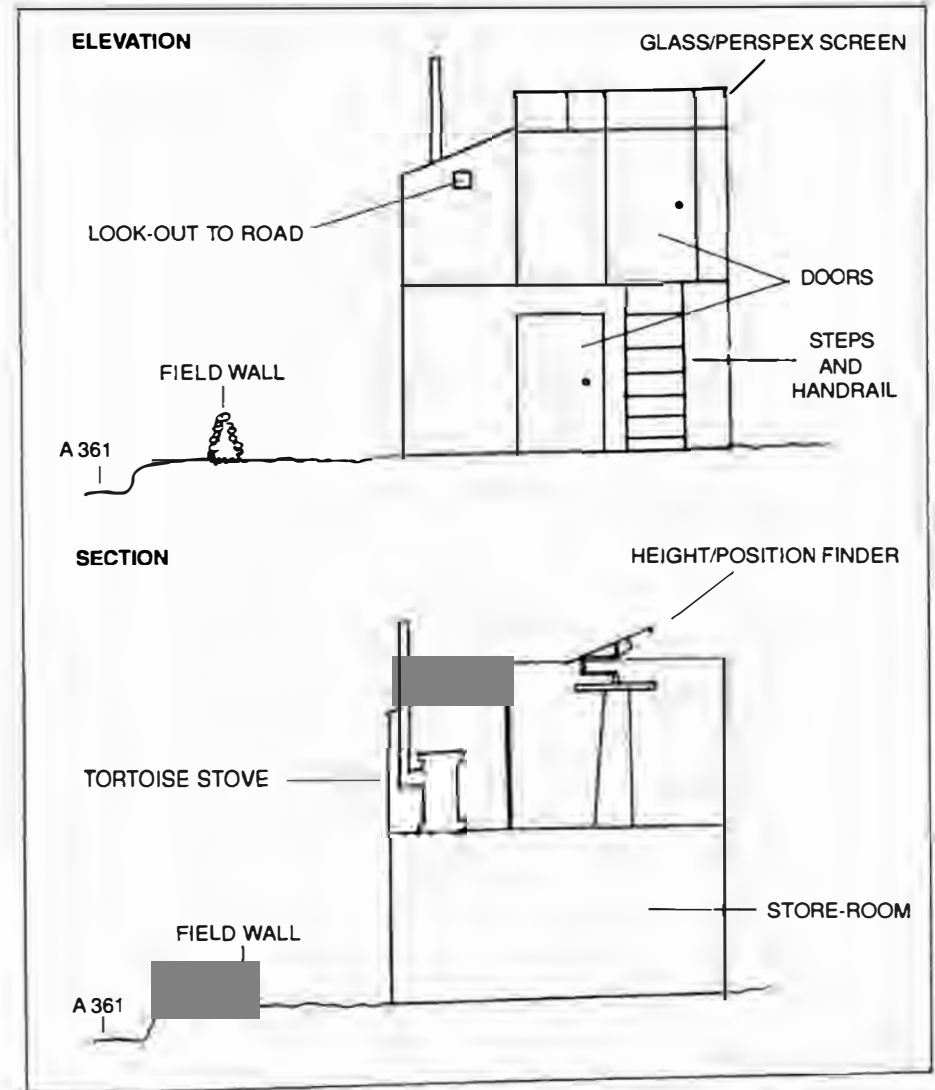
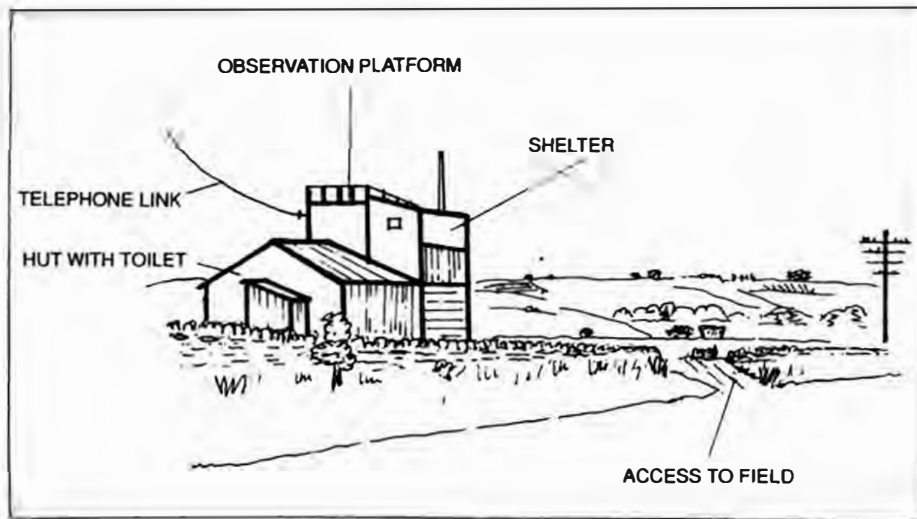
As well as aerial bombardment, the risk of enemy invasion, by sea and air, was a very real threat. Post Y1 now had to include reports of sightings of any parachutists – their number and position – including information passed by the local LDV platoons. In case enemy action cut the telephone link to

Oxford, Post Y1 was now equipped with red star rocket flares which were to be released to inform of an enemy aerial invasion.

The winter of 1940/41 brought more terrible weather conditions, but the Observers were now better protected, although observation still had to be carried out in the open air. It is presumed that the observation tower/platform had been built by this time at the Shipton end of the hut. Its design had taxed the ingenuity of its builder (unknown) in his attempts to cope with the vagaries of the weather and the Observers. The height/position finder had to be at a height at which the shortest Observer could make his observations. This meant that the walls to the platform had to be reduced in height, which then let the wind blow more sharply onto the taller Observers – so a perplex/glass screen was added to the wall of the platform (see diagram).

Very careful use was made of the space on the observation platform which was divided into two parts – for observation and for shelter. The observation part had the height/position finder in the centre with sufficient space all round for access. On the side opposite to the road were two small corner seats which could be stood upon to gain extra height. On the other, road, side was a roofed shelter, low enough for observations to be made over it. Inside were two car seats, as there was insufficient head room for ordinary chairs, and a solid fuel tortoise stove. Two small windows looked up and down the road to Chipping Norton and the shelter was divided from the observation platform by a door and glass screen.

*Post Y1 (based on Hope Bourne's drawing in 'Records of Milton and Shipton under Wychwood during the War', p. 19)*



*Observation Platform/Tower. Post Y1 c. 1945 (looking north from Shipton).*



### The Royal Observer Corps

The Air Defence system was still being thoroughly tested by the Germans in 1941 although attacks reduced from May onwards. Locally, the Oxford Group Centre moved from the GPO buildings to the New Bodleian Library, and nationally the work of the Observer Corps gained more recognition with the title of The Royal Observer Corps.

Also recognised was the The Royal Observer Corps Club which produced aircraft recognition cards of British and foreign aircraft. Graded tests of aircraft silhouettes accompanied these cards – all to improve the standard of aircraft recognition – but all had to be bought by the unpaid Observers who also had to pay a subscription to the ROC Club. To improve standards at Post Y1 Reg Bradley constructed his own epidiascope from a wooden box and cardboard tubes to flash the silhouettes on the wall of his front room.

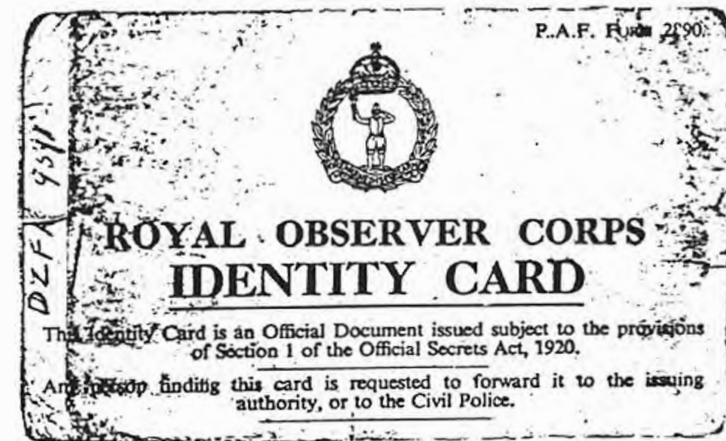
At this time (1941) there was some discussion that the ROC should be disbanded, as it was considered by some to have outlived its usefulness now that the enemy attacks were decreasing and radar became more efficient. But the ROC did score over radar in that it could see planes which flew at below 500 feet, i.e. below the radar screen, and could distinguish between aircraft types. The ROC provided an alarm within an alert. After a warning siren had been sounded to announce the possibility of an air attack, workers could continue with production for the war-effort until the ROC gave another, later alarm when an attack was imminent (within five minutes). Only then would workers take shelter, so saving many man-hours.

*The badge of the Observer Corps (left) before it became Royal and (right) the Royal Observer Corps cap badge, issued after Dec. 1941*



Flying training increased and resulted in a Vickers Wellington crashing at Cornwell and an Oxford at Fordwells. There was enemy activity – bombs fell on Kingham, an Oxford was shot down near Leafield and parachute mines fell at Swinbrook.

By December 1941 the ROC began to receive its first proper uniforms, some two years after the war had begun. It consisted of forage cap and battle dress in RAF blue with ROC buttons and insignia, as worn by Jack Young of Post Y1 in 1942. With the reorganisation of the ROC in 1942 rank was



*This must have been issued after 1942*



*Jack (John) Young wearing ROC insignia. Taken from a 1942 photograph of Ascott Home Guard.*



One of the aircraft recognition proficiency test cards – the name actually appeared on the reverse. This aircraft was the forerunner of the Wellington Mark III which crashed in Calais Fields, Milton in 1942.

introduced so Reg Bradley now had the non-commissioned rank of Chief Observer with George Wiggins as Leading Observer. Chief Observer Bradley was the Head of Post Y1 and did most of the organising. Previously he had done his own training and testing of aircraft recognition at his own expense. But now, rather belatedly, it was decided necessary for all ranks to be officially trained and tested. So members of Post Y1 had to travel to the Regal Cinema, Cowley Road, Oxford for this purpose. It is recalled that on one occasion Reg Bradley's son, then aged seven, scored consistently higher than members of the ROC. Perhaps he should have replaced one of the older Observers at Post Y1 who, under new regulations of 1942, should have retired at the age of fifty years. But this rule seems to have been ignored at Post Y1, as it was throughout the ROC nationwide.

In 1942 enemy air attacks and flights grew fewer, but friendly training flights from even more local airfields continued, with continuing casualties: a Wellington and Oxford collided over Chipping Norton and another Wellington crashed in Calais fields, Upper Milton (see *Wychwoods History 4* (1988), p. 28).

As the war progressed there was less emphasis on defence and more on attack with an increase in the number of planes flying from this country to targets in Europe. The ROC played an increasing role in helping returning bombers which had been damaged and had lost their navigational equipment. As part of this organisation Post Y1 became a 'Granite Post' in 1943. This meant that it was one of the Observer Corps posts along the

Cotswolds (with Stow on the Wold, Broadway, Andoversford etc.) equipped with red flares which were released into the air to warn incoming aircraft of high ground. These flares together with searchlights were used to guide aircraft towards the landing lights on airfields, helping at least 7,000 planes with navigational difficulties to find an airfield on which to land in 1945.

During 1943/44 the number of training airfields increased and now included the training of air crews for gliders and their tug aircraft – with consequent crashes at Leafield and Sarsden. Later this training included that for airborne troops. From local airfields flew out men and equipment for airborne landings at Normandy, Arnheim and the Rhine, and the return flights brought back the injured.

*The certificate awarded for the correct recognition of 25 or more aircraft silhouettes out of 31, selected from a total of 195.*

**ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS CLUB**  
 FAIR OAKS AERODROME, CHOBHAM, SURREY.

President General  
 AIR COMMODORE A. D. WARRINGTON MORRIS, C.M.G., O.B.E.

Vice Presidents  
 AIR COMMODORE S. A. D. MASTERMAN, C.R., C.M.G., C.P.F., I.F.C.      AIR COMMODORE A. L. GOODMAN, C.A.F.E., D.S.O.  
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 GROUP CAPTAIN V. G. REILLY, O.B.E.      COLONEL V. O. ROBINSON, O.B.E., M.C.

Chairman  
 Air Commodore H. Le M. Brock, C.B., D.S.O.

Honorary Observer Secretary  
 H. JAMES LOPWELL

Joint Honorary General Secretaries  
 R. O. DOWDESWELL  
 G. W. GIBSON

Honorary General Treasurer  
 G. C. CLARKE

**This is to Certify**

*that G. Wells*

*of Post Y1      Group A*

*having satisfied the Examiners with his*

*ability to identify not less than twenty-*

*five out of thirty-one different aircraft as*

*determined by the General Council is*

*herely admitted to the Third Grade of*

*the Royal Observer Corps Club.*

*A. D. Warrington-Morris*  
 President General

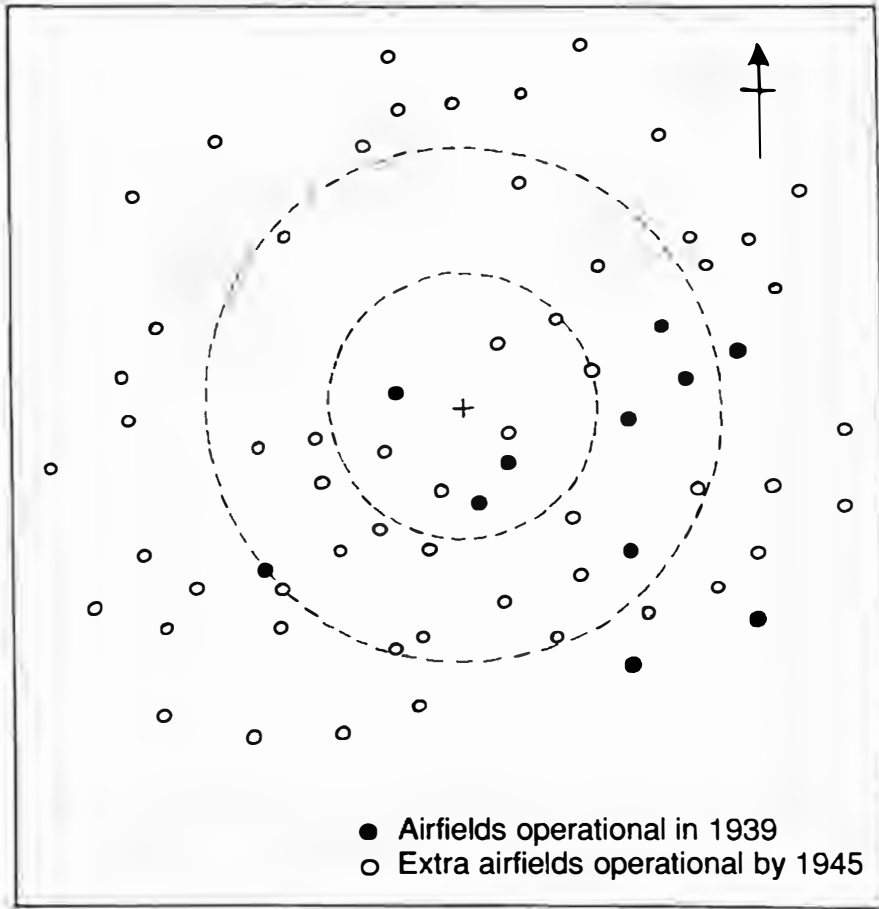
*W. J. James*  
 Honorary Secretary No. 36 Bristol

*R. O. Dowdswell*  
 Honorary Secretary No. 36 Bristol

*G. W. Gibson*  
 Honorary Secretary No. 36 Bristol

DATE OF EXAMINATION *4/10/1941*  
 CERTIFICATE NO. *7866*  
 DATE OF REGISTRATION *11-12-41*

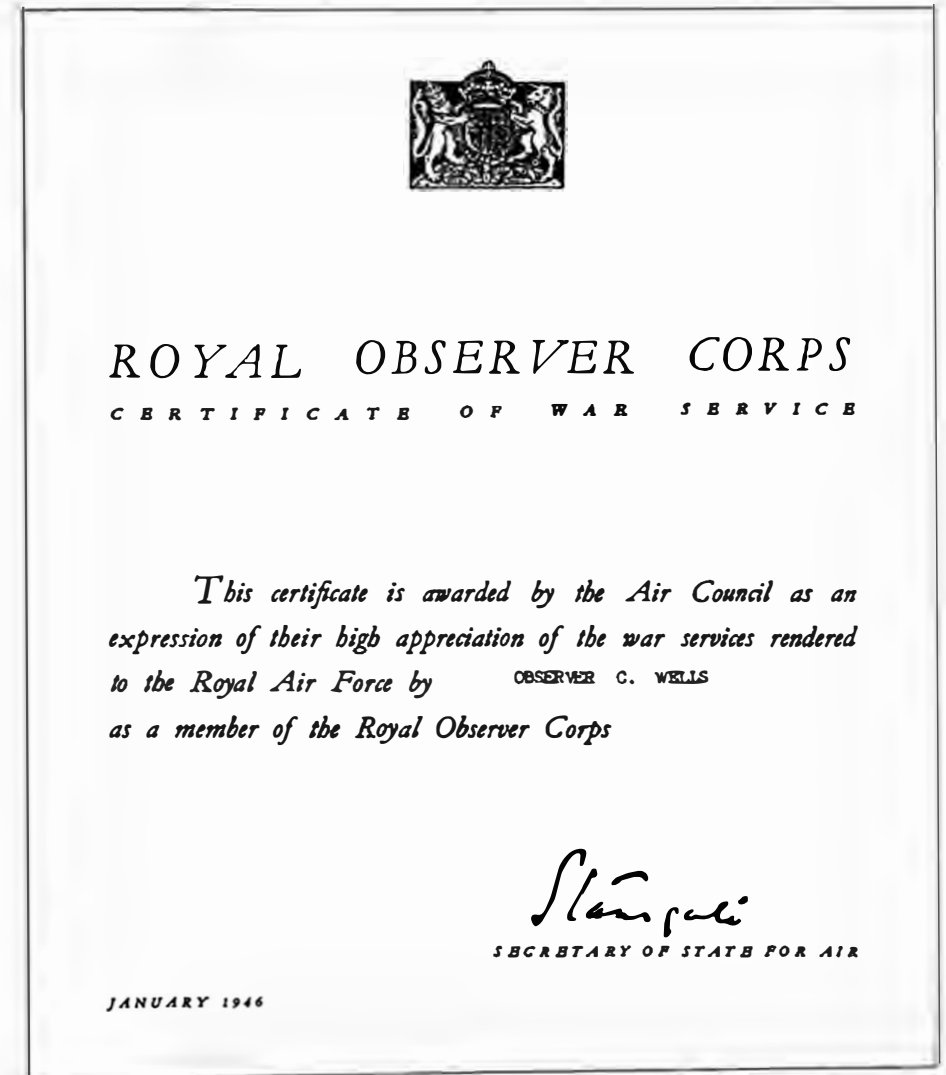
Map of RAF airfields operational in 1939 and 1945 showing 10- and 20-mile radii from Shipton Church.



#### After the War

War in Europe finally came to an end and, four days after VE Day, on 12 May 1945 the Royal Observer Corps was stood down, after five and a half years of constant watch. Local Observers received the Defence Medal and a Certificate from the Secretary of State for Air and some may have attended the various parades and services to commemorate the war's end.

However, 'stand down' was not for long. Due to the worsening international situation, especially the tension with the Iron Curtain countries, the ROC had orders to begin active training in January 1947. So Post Y1 was back in business with George Wiggins as Chief Observer.



By the 1950s the ROC was still able to detect and report low-flying aircraft, but totally incapable of detecting high-flying weaponry travelling at very high speeds, bearing in mind the advent of jet engines, rockets and nuclear weapons. There was constant testing, appraisal and re-organisation of the Air Defence system. One test exercise involved the firing of Verey flares to assist friendly aircraft in pursuit of 'hostiles'. At Shipton, Verey lights were shot into the air, only to double back to earth, disturbing a treeful of roosting pigeons. Verey lights used at the sister post at Filkins succeeded in setting the post itself on fire. This experiment was not repeated. There was some reorganisation in 1953 of the local structure of the ROC. Shipton Y1 Post now became Post L2 but still in the same cluster as Filkins Post L3 and Stow on the Wold Post L1 – but now in the re-designated Oxford No 3 Group whose centre had now moved from the Bodleian.

Due to the possible threat of nuclear fall-out, Shipton Post L2 went underground in 1959 and her sister posts at Filkins (1961) and Stow (1960) did likewise. The old wooden structure was demolished to make way for the underground monitoring post and was last seen serving as an aviary in the Newbarn area of Shipton.

By 1965 it was decided that the ROC was no longer required for the low-level reporting of aircraft, instead it would measure the position of any nuclear explosion, the power of the blast and the amount of radio-active fall-out. This information was then to be passed to Oxford No 3 Group Centre which had also gone underground at Cowley Barracks. At this time the Post L2 had a strength of some twelve Observers who operated in teams of three. When on watch they were equipped with beds and emergency rations, with power produced by a petrol-driven generator.

Further reorganisation of the local ROC in 1968 meant the final closure of the Royal Observer Corps Post at Shipton under Wychwood. The underground bunker was eventually demolished and later a TV relay repeater mast erected on the same site.

The remaining ROC posts, the nearest at Enstone, continued to measure nuclear fall-out etc. until, with the easing of the international situation and the reduced possibility of war, the ROC was again 'stood down' in 1991.

### Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Bob Bradley, Betty Griffiths (nee Wells) and Bill Kimber for local information and for the loan of photographs and documents.

I also acknowledge the following books which provided information on the national scene:

Derek Wood, *Attack, Warning, Red. The Royal Observer Corps and the Defence of Britain, 1925-1975*, MacDonalds and Janes (1976).

I.V.Hogg, *Anti Aircraft. A History of Air Defence*, MacDonalds and Janes (1978).

## Base-born in Shipton

TOM MCQUAY

### Introduction

This is a study of illegitimacy in the Shipton under Wychwood parish between 1566 and 1866 based on the parish baptism, marriage and burial registers.<sup>1</sup> Originally this extensive parish included not only the nearby villages of Milton and Lyneham but also forest hamlets at Leafield, Ramsden and Langley. In the nineteenth century churches were built at Milton, Leafield and Ramsden, and there are separate baptism registers for Leafield<sup>2</sup> from 1784, for Ramsden<sup>3</sup> from 1842 and for Milton<sup>4</sup> from 1854. These were used in the later part of this study.

During the three centuries under review 12,002 baptisms were registered in Shipton and 2,837 in the three new parishes, a total of 14,839 christenings. Of these, 688 (4.6%) appear to have been illegitimate, a rather higher ratio than the average of 3.1% for 98 English parishes assessed by Peter Laslett between 1540 and 1840.<sup>5</sup>

### Identification of Illegitimacy

Both the church and the community unequivocally condemned sexual activity outside marriage and the baptism registers recorded the illegitimate children resulting from such illicit behaviour. In the sixteenth century some 5% of the babies baptised were stigmatised as illegitimate by comments such as 'Willm s of Edyth a single woman at Lyneham his father is not it known she had 1 or 2 before it is said' and in 1579 'Phillip s of Joane an unmarried wench – he base born but supposed to be begotten by Arthur Parot.'

In the last decade of that century a new vicar condemned illegitimate babies even more emphatically. The Revd Henry Mills<sup>6</sup> baptized a baby in 1594 and wrote 'Harrie s of Elizabeth a bastard childe.' There are pathetic little epitaphs in the burial register, 'a childe unchristened d of Marie of Lynam a bastard.' By 1630 there is a note of exasperation 'Thomas a bastard s of Marie widdow and as they saith of Thomas Varney going God knows where.' Henry Mills died in 1640 and an era of frank and uninhibited comment in the parish registers came to an end.

The rate of bastardy had halved during his ministry, fell further during the Civil War and the Cromwellian period, and remained at just 1.5% of all baptisms for the next hundred years. 'Base-born' was the commonest indication of illegitimacy in the registers between 1640 and 1680 e.g. 'Henry

baseborn s of Elizabeth Clarke and as she affirms of Henry Whiting of Shipton’.

After 1680 there is minimal vicars’ comment and identification of children born out of wedlock is more difficult. The register lists the baptisms under the paternal surname and bastardy has to be inferred when the mother’s name alone is given, as in 1689, ‘Berryman Robert s of Anne.’ Approximately 70 illegitimacies were identified in this way although some have the putative father’s name incorporated at the baptism, such as ‘Crips John Hambridge s of Elizabeth.’

In the middle of the eighteenth century the proportion of illegitimate babies in the baptism register rose sharply, from 1.5% in 1750 to 4% in 1775 and 11% in 1785. Possibly more accurate registration following the introduction of Hardwicke’s Marriage Act in 1754 affected the figures.<sup>7</sup> From 1773 a new vicar, Thomas Brookes, labelled the illegitimates more emphatically than formerly. He used the term ‘illegal’ one hundred times during his ministry. ‘Elizabeth ye illegal d of Mary’ and ‘John the illegal s of Sarah’ are typical registrations at this time, with no reference to possible or presumptive paternity.

By the year 1800 illegitimate babies accounted for some 6% of all baptisms and that was the ratio until the end of this study. In Shipton the vicar reverted to registration simply as ‘Daniel illegitimate s of Alice’ and ‘Mary illegitimate d of Jane’ and registration in Ramsden was similar. In Milton and Leaffield the word ‘illegitimate’ is frequently used but otherwise has to be inferred from registration in the maternal name.

**Table 1: Illegitimate births as percentage of total baptisms**

	Shipton	Milton	Leaffield	Lyneham	Ramsden
1566-1615	4.9	4.0	3.7	7.1	3.7
1616-1665	3.0	2.3	2.9	0.9	2.8
1666-1715	1.8	1.4	2.3	1.3	1.2
1716-1765	4.3	1.1	1.4	1.5	0.4
1766-1815	6.7	7.4	3.7	11.1	6.5
1816-1866	6.3	7.0	6.5	10.0	6.3
Average	4.8	4.3	4.8	5.9	4.3

### Variation between the villages

The forest villages at Leaffield and Ramsden, with their own character and subculture, remote from their ‘minster’ church at Shipton, might have been expected to have a high proportion of bastards, but Ramsden is below the parish average and Leaffield is exactly the same as Shipton (Table 1).

There is some evidence of a bastardy-prone subculture<sup>8</sup> in Leaffield early in the nineteenth century, when one woman had seven illegitimate children, two of whom in turn had bastards a generation later. Another woman bore five illegitimate babies, two mothers had four bastards, one had three and eight had two such babies, so that 36 maternal names account for no less than 123 illegitimacies. Nevertheless the bastardy ratio is the same as for the rest of the parish.

But Lyneham had a bastardy ratio considerably above the rest of the parish (Table 1). Between 1750 and 1866 proportionately almost twice as many illegitimate babies were born in this purely agricultural village as in the parish as a whole. Here again there seems to have been a bastardy-prone subculture. One woman had six illegitimate babies, one had three and a further two women each bore two bastards. Thirteen maternal names account for 29 illegitimate births. Forty women each had one bastard.

### Occupation

The registration of a baptism after 1813 included the father’s occupation, but when the baby was illegitimate the mother’s work or status was also usually recorded. There were 113 such illegitimacies between 1813 and 1866 and in 42 of these cases both maternal and paternal occupations are given (Table 2).

**Table 2: Record of occupations of parents of bastards**

Work or status	Mothers’ work only	Both parents’ work or status known	
		Father	Mother
1. Landowners, professions	—	1	—
2. Farmers, officers	1	9	1
3. Business owners	2	8	—
4. Craftsmen	5	7	4
5. Labourers, servants	105	17	37
Total of bastards	113	42	42

Of the women who bore bastards 93% came from social class five, 71% being field labourers and 14% servants. Where both the maternal and paternal occupations have been recorded, over half of these propertyless, poor women had illegitimate babies fathered by a man of a higher social class. A 'gent', a naval lieutenant, a baker, a publican, a pig-dealer, a groom, a carpenter, a glazier, an apothecary, three shoemakers and seven farmers appear to have fathered the illegitimate babies of nineteen servants or field workers.

### Pre-Nuptial Pregnancy

According to the marriage register there were 74 weddings in the first decade of this study and according to the baptism register 18 (24%) of the brides were pregnant at marriage. By 1600 this ratio had increased to one third. The vicar wrote 'gravida' in the marriage register on seven occasions, but no other comment although two of the brides reached the altar in the eighth month of their gestation.

After 1600 fewer brides appear to have been pregnant at marriage, the ratio falling to approximately 10% and remaining at this level for 150 years. For example in the decade 1640 to 1650 there were 56 weddings but only six of the brides had conceived before the marriage ceremony, the average gestation being six months. Between 1750 and 1760 there were 127 weddings and only 12 pre-nuptial pregnancies. There was a gradual increase after 1760 so that between 1760 and 1866 14% of the brides in this parish were certainly pregnant on their wedding day.

### Incest

One baptism registered in 1609 reads 'William s of Jane of Ramsden base borne begotten by her own brother in incest.' Twenty years earlier there had been another possible case 'Osmore Joane d of Georgh. It was a base child and besides the common brute is that the father Robert Osmore of this George kept and abused the mother of this infant horribly and incestuously soe that it is doubtful who is the father of the childe.' The unfortunate infant was buried twenty months later 'daughter of Robt or of George his son.'

### Infantile Mortality

Of the 688 illegitimate babies born between 1566 and 1866, 98 died in their first twelve months, an infantile mortality rate of 142 per 1000 live births. The infantile mortality rate for the period as a whole was approximately 120 per 1000<sup>9</sup> so that a legitimate infant was 15% less likely to die in the first 12 months of life than a base-born baby.

### Discussion

Although 688 illegitimate babies have been traced, only 457 mothers were involved as many bore more than one bastard (Table 3). Peter Laslett used the term 'repeaters' for these mothers.<sup>10</sup>

**Table 3: Mothers having more than one illegitimate child**

No. of 'Repeater' Mothers	No. of bastards borne by each 'Repeater'
25	2
13	3
5	4
2	5
2	6
1	7

The recurrence of the same surnames in Leaffield, where 43 illegitimate babies shared four names, suggests that sisters were involved, probably in an impoverished bastardy-prone sub-society as the words 'pauper' and 'poor woman' also recur at this time.

In the early modern period the vicar enquired into paternity e.g. in 1570 'Bryze Agnes d of Katheryne Tooley and of one William Bryze as it is said' and in 1604 'Benson Richard s of Joan a deaf and dumb whore by John Adams as she maketh signs.' But there is very little information about paternity after 1650 and reconstruction of the relationships within the bastard-bearing subcultures proved impossible. It was also impossible to determine the number of mothers who subsequently married the father of their bastard child despite exhaustive comparison of the baptism and marriage registers. Whether the mothers who bore a succession of bastards had a constant relationship or had multiple partners also remains a mystery.

Whereas Lyneham remained a purely agricultural village, rather remote from the Anglican churches and with no resident squire, Milton underwent some degree of industrialisation and an artisan class emerged with strong Nonconformist links. Lyneham lacked both this puritan influence and the influence of the upper classes to whom legitimacy was very important when the inheritance of land or titles was involved, and this must account for the bastardy-prone subculture that emerged in Lyneham in the eighteenth century.

Rich women of the upper classes could afford to go secretly to another parish for an illegitimate confinement and such extra-parochial maternities could affect our figures. On the other hand there are examples in the baptism register of strangers being confined in the parish, as in 1601 'the mother came great with child to Shipton and was delivered here being also unmarried.' But in 1826 the Leaffield vicar noted 'The prescribed cert of the bap of this child was sent to the Minister of Witney.'

In the sixteenth century a formal agreement between a man and a woman before witnesses to take each other as man and wife was sufficient to establish a legally binding contract of matrimony.<sup>11</sup> At this ceremony hands were

clasped and unclasped, faith and troth were plighted, the bargain sealed with a kiss and co-habitation could follow. But in order to be fully acceptable to the church and the community it became increasingly the practice to follow this contract with the calling of banns and a marriage in church.<sup>12</sup> This probably accounts for the high percentage of pregnant brides at sixteenth century church weddings, but as the Anglican church tightened its grip on society after 1600 the proportion of pre-nuptial pregnancies fell.

Peter Laslett divides pre-nuptial pregnancies into three classes, 'shot-gun' weddings, cases of 'spouse entrapment' and 'fertility testing.'<sup>13</sup> But such a classification could not be used here because of the limited data available from the parish registers.

It also proved impossible to tell why so many mothers of multiple bastards remained unmarried. Nor was it possible to ascertain the number of illegitimate babies who remained un-baptised, although the burial of an un-baptised baby was noted as such in the register e.g. 'a child unchristened d of Marie of Lynam a bastard.' There are only eight such comments in 300 years, suggesting that mothers were probably punctilious about bringing their illegitimate offspring for baptism.

And it must have taken considerable courage to bring a bastard for baptism, to face a resentful congregation and a reproachful vicar. That poor brother and sister with their child 'begotten in incest', their reluctant relatives and their anxious godparents, must have had a bleak six-mile walk through the Wychwood Forest from Ramsden on a mid-winter Sunday long ago.

#### Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Joan Howard-Drake, Jack Howard-Drake, Anthea Jones and Margaret Ware for their help in compiling and publishing this paper.

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## The Groves Family of Milton under Wychwood Cotswold Stonemasons for 400 years Part 2

NORMAN FROST

Part 1 of this history<sup>1</sup> concluded with George Groves(1), born in 1761 to John Grove and Ann Reeve, gradually taking over the masonry business from his father. There is still scant evidence of actual work carried out; indeed in this largely illiterate age most agreements were probably by word of mouth only. But scraps of records begin to appear, like the entries in the Shipton parish minutes for the mid-eighteenth century for the upkeep of parish bridges described at the end of Part 1.

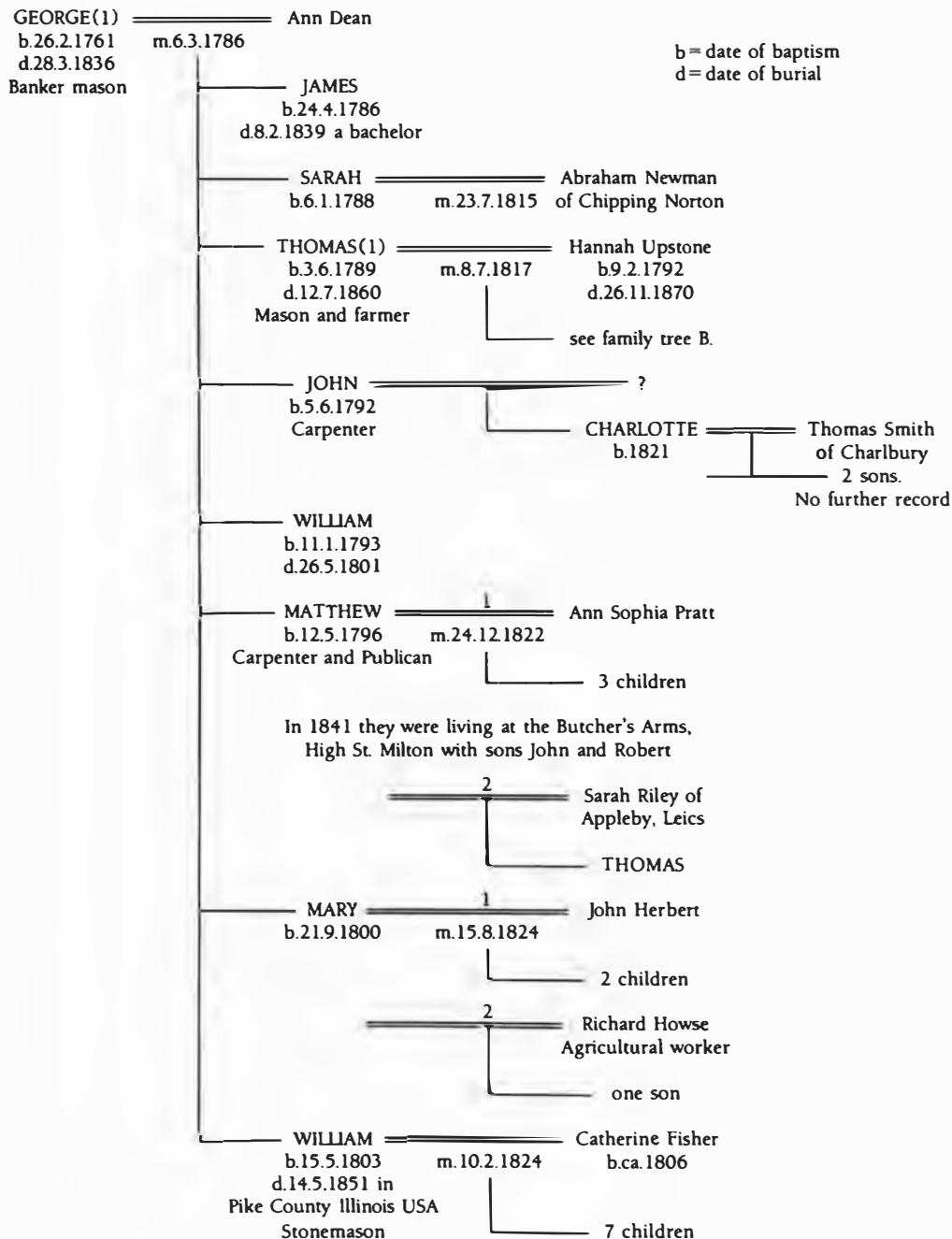
#### George Groves

We know that George lived in what is now Elm Cottage in the present Groves' works yard; the end wall of the cottage bears his name and the date 1816. Here lived George, his wife Ann and eight children (see Family Tree A), while part of the building was used as his workshop.

George was a 'banker mason', a highly skilled workman, the name deriving from the 'bank' on which he worked. A 'bank' is a large slab of stone used as a workbench and covered by a hide to protect the stone being worked. The working stone had to be squared and trued by hand to the required shape. It would have come to the mason from the quarry, roughly cut by a handsaw. Today this would be done by a power-operated diamond or carborundum saw, but then it was all hand-power, and very hard work – I've tried it! The banker mason would take from the architect's plan a template for the work to be done and then roughly shape the stone with a waster, a cutting chisel. Larger chisels would then be used to obtain the final shape which was smoothly finished with a drag or rasp.

The cottage in which George worked has recently been restored and

A. THE FAMILY OF GEORGE GROVES(1) AND ANN DEAN



modernised but can still be recognised as it used to be. George died in 1836 and is buried in Shipton churchyard.

**Thomas Groves**

George's eldest son Thomas married Hannah Upstone on 8 July 1817 at St Peter the Bailey, Oxford (see Family Tree B). The Upstones were a local family of some means, which possibly explains why Thomas was able to take up residence in the Elms Farmhouse, next door to his old family cottage. This was a substantial property with twelve acres of farmland attached. Milton's 1851 Census describes Thomas as a mason employing 16 men and as a farmer employing one man. At this time he was also a trustee of Milton Baptist Chapel. These little details indicate that Thomas was becoming a substantial man in the community. In 1851 he had to visit a doctor in London to have a growth removed from his face. The letters he wrote back to his family give us a fascinating insight into his family and village life at that time. Extracts from these letters have already been published.<sup>2</sup>

An old cash book dated 1855 belonging to Thomas Groves still survives. It covers the complete year and includes both household and business transactions in the same account. Items for the weekly groceries (usually under £1 a week), the household coal and the servants' wages are shown. The business entries do not specify the work involved, but there is a weekly entry for workers' wages. This sum varies between £14 and £50 and possibly reflects those days when, if the weather was too bad for outdoor work, the men were not paid. Usually the wages total averaged £25-£30 per week.

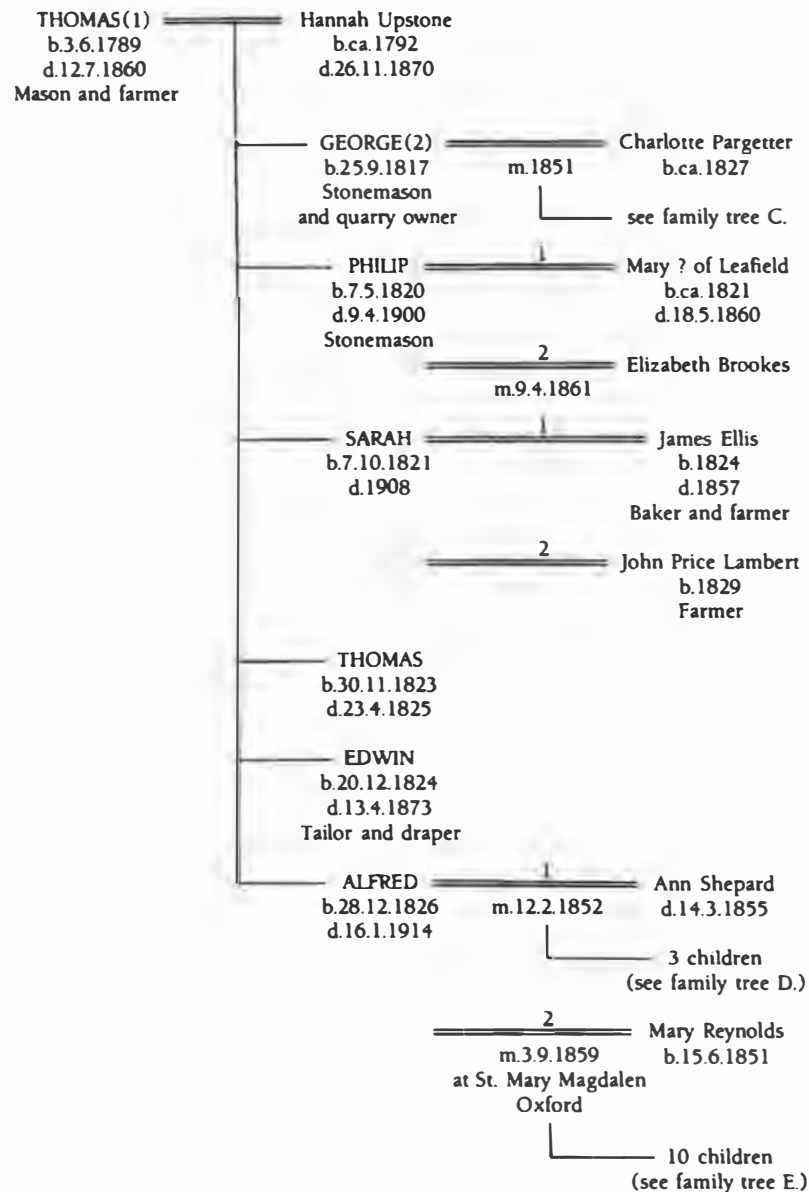
The balance of cash kept in hand is surprisingly small, sometimes less than £20 and only occasionally rising above £100. There is no reference to any money being banked although some accounts were paid by cheque. It appears that the cheques were treated as cash and used to meet outgoings. Occasionally there was insufficient cash for this purpose and recourse was had to borrowing from relatives in business and living in the village. This borrowing was a two-way business and seems to have oiled the wheels of local commerce.

I have also had the opportunity to scrutinise several of Thomas Groves' old ledgers, and for the first time we have a day by day account of his business. One entry states 'Hired John Hill for third carters place from Michaelmas 1859 to Michaelmas 1860 at five shillings and sixpence per week and £1 over at Michaelmas next'. A footnote refers to Michaelmas day as Old Michaelmas, 11 October. There is no record of where the transaction took place but I presume it was Burford Hiring Fair as Thomas' aforementioned letters suggest that he hired staff there, and Burford Fair took place at this time.

Further entries read: 'Hired James Averis for one year at seven shillings per week and one pound over at the end of the year and find him lodging' and 'Samuel Millen hired till Michaelmas 1860 for one year at seven shillings per week and one pound over at the end of the year and to have a month



B. THE FAMILY OF THOMAS GROVES(1) AND HANNAH UPSTONE



supper in the lambing time and also his supper when we are shearing and to have some vituals (sic) when we are sheep washing if the other men have theirs'. The slight differences in each contract indicate the bargaining that went with each one. This ledger then lists the wages paid to some ninety workers over the next five years. It is difficult to draw many conclusions from much of this information as many dates are omitted but it gives an idea of the rapid turnover of the workforce. Few of the men are to be found living in the village at the time of the 1861 Census, suggesting that many of them were itinerant workers.

A second ledger of 742 pages details over a period of about ten years the work that Thomas Groves was contracting for, with costings. Much of it was of a day to day nature such as stone carting, or repairs and improvements to buildings in Milton and surrounding villages. However, a good many entries are of special interest.

1854. 'An estimate to the Rev. Charles Barter of Shipton for taking down an old cottage and building a house for the local schoolmaster' (no sum quoted).

1855. 'Supplied 2,800 cu. feet of stone to William Bliss of Chipping Norton for foundation of steam driven machinery...£51 13s 10½d.' This entry marks the beginning of a long connection with William Bliss as there are many records for stone deliveries and other building work over the next five years. In 1865 'The sum of £6098 19s 6d for building a mill'. This account was paid by instalments, the final settlement being made on 15 October 1867. It seems that two years was about the usual time taken to settle a large account at this time. Further work for William Bliss included laying an engine bed for £325 Os 8d in April 1865 and sundry work at Lower Mill.

Work was also carried out on Sir John Reade's Shipton Court estate on a long-term basis, for which sums around £1000 were paid each year. In 1866 'repairs at Chastleton House £542 9s 5d.'

1856. 'To the Trustees of Shipton Turnpike Road, specification for the erection of Turnpike House, Shipton Bridge. Dig and draw wallstones from Five Shilling Corner Quarry...' 'Pike House' still stands by Shipton Station bridge, while the quarry is still visible by A361 at the northernmost boundary of Ascott parish.

In 1857 much work was done for the Road Commissioners: 'Repairing bridges at Lyneham £1 17s 0d.' 'Repairing bridge at Caudle (Coldwell) Brook 6s 9d.' 'July 11. Chopping out stones and ground pinning the wing walls of Shipton bridge. 3 masons - 3½ days £3 15s 6d. 1 wagon load of wallstone from Freestone Quarry.' 'Building wall between Mr Kimbers corner and Court gateway in Burford Road, Shipton, cost to be divided between Sir John Reade and Road Commissioners, £80 1s 0d.'

From May 1856 to Dec. 1857 Groves were engaged to cart 2,500 cu. ft. of stone to Lucas Bros. for the 'Oxford Museum' at a cost of £217 9s 11d.

1860. 'Estimate for Mr East of Burford to provide and deliver to Burford freestone required for erection of school according to plan and

specification, free from damage and ready for setting including carving of cherubs or heads for large window for a sum of £8 7s 2d. This contract does not include freestone or cross £80 7s 2d.'

Several entries refer to work carried out in local public houses. Thus in 1857 Mr T.Hopkins paid £35 5s 0d for repairs at the Coach and Horses at Milton, now a private dwelling at the junction of Green Lane and Shipton Road. In 1867 Shillingford Brothers, owners of the Quart Pot, paid Groves £164 15s 9d to provide a seat around the tap room and in the bay window, a new floor in the parlour and a planck floor (stones) in the kitchen.

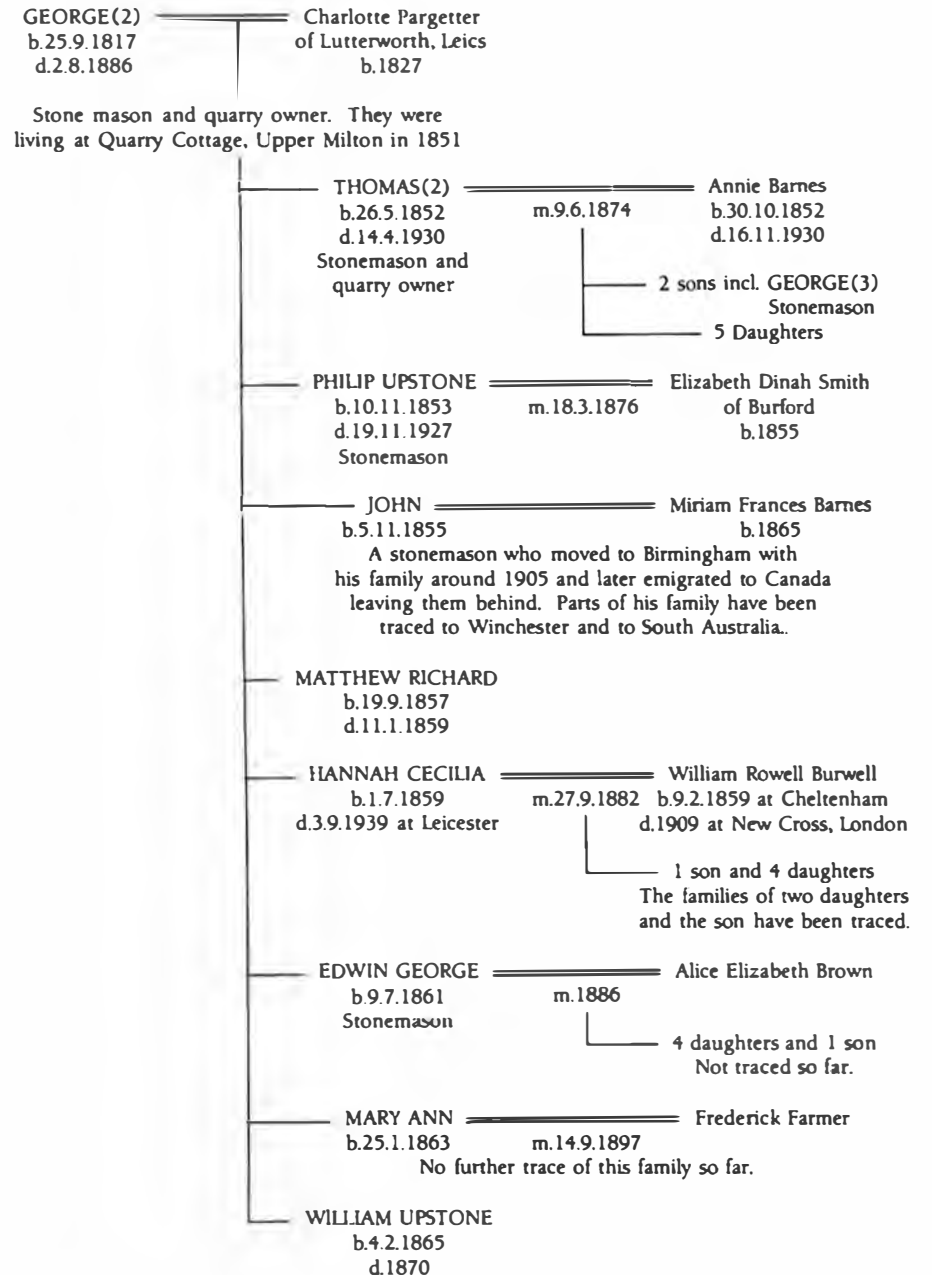
The records clearly show a vigorous phase of ecclesiastical building from the middle of the nineteenth century. A separate document found with the old ledgers was part of the building plan of St Simon and St Jude, Milton, designed by the Oxford Diocesan architect George Edward Street, dated 28 June 1853. Adjoining the church was to be a school and schoolmaster's house, which were built at the same time. The work was largely funded by a donation of £5000 by J.H.Langston MP of Sarsden House and a further contribution of £1000 from his brother-in-law, Archdeacon Huxtable of Oxford.

From the ledgers, we find that from Aug. 1858 to Nov. 1859 £1100 3s 8d was paid for carting stone for the new church at Leafield, although there is no mention of further work being done. During the same period restoration work was done in Shipton church for which Revd Carter paid £1540. This account was not settled until Jan. 9 1862 and interest was charged on part of the money outstanding. In Feb. 1863, to the order of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England 'to restore the chancel at Idbury church..£125', while in 1865, restoration and repairs to North Leigh church cost £1393 1s. There are interesting entries in 1862-3 regarding 'building of Swanbourne church £1235 19s 0d' and repairs to Claydon church, to the order of Sir Thomas Freemantle. These were two neighbouring parishes in Buckinghamshire some forty miles from Milton, although travel was doubtless facilitated by the coming of the railway.

The flowering of nonconformity during the same period is also reflected in the ledgers of Thomas Groves. In 1860, restoration of the Baptist chapel at Burford cost the Trustees £119. In 1859 Mr Pratley paid £54 18s 5d for taking down an old cottage and hovels in The Square, Milton and building the Wesleyan chapel. It opened a year later but closed in 1986. In 1860 Mr Maddox engaged Groves to build a Baptist chapel at Shipton for £131 1s 2d, paid in 1862. In 1862 'repairs to Milton Baptist Chapel at a contract price of £100 with extras of £31 3s 2d. for the provision of lamps, tables, chairs and a new cover for the baptistry and painting the front gates.' In 1867 they required a schoolroom at a cost of £250, while in 1868 Leafield chapel with vestry and baptistry was built for £327 14s 2d.

It is clear that considerable quantities of stone were being carted at this time from Five Shilling Corner Quarry at Ascott and Planck Quarry on Milton Downs, both long-since closed. Thomas Groves died in 1860 and it is

### C. THE FAMILY OF GEORGE GROVES(2) AND CHARLOTTE PARGETTER



interesting to note that, for a period, all payments were made to his widow, Hannah. She died ten years later: both are buried in Milton churchyard.

### **George Groves(2) and his family**

After the death of Hannah Groves in 1870, their eldest son George(2) who had worked in the Milton Quarries since around 1850, took over their management and continued to work them with the help of his brother Philip (Family Tree B). During this period the quarrying expanded: the 1881 census shows George employing twenty men. George's sons (Family Tree C) all worked in the quarries which were very prosperous at this time. They built and occupied a number of large houses in Barnes Corner Lane, which soon became known as Groves Lane. Later, at the time of the Jubilee of the nearby Baptist chapel, it was renamed Jubilee Lane, the name it bears to this day.

George died in August 1886 and his eldest son Thomas(2) took over the quarries. An 1890s photograph shows a workforce of twenty-six men. The earlier criticisms of Milton stone appear to have been forgotten and large quantities were being dug for the Oxford colleges and churches. But it is said that by 1893 St Mary's Church at Oxford was in a poor state due to erosion of the exterior stonework.<sup>3</sup> No more stone was sent to Oxford although a great deal was still being quarried for interior work and for local building. However, by the turn of the century local stone was becoming very expensive to extract, being about forty-five feet below the surface. So, early this century, Thomas closed the Milton quarry and moved to Tally Ho quarry near Naunton in Gloucestershire, taking with him some of his workmen. But the day of the independent quarry was passing and the large concerns at Portland and Bath were beginning to dominate the market. It was also heavy and sometimes dangerous work quarrying stones by hand. Local records tell of men being killed: one man was sadly run over in Milton by his own cart loaded with stone.

Thomas shortly moved on to become manager of Clipsham Quarries in Rutland, from which he retired sixteen years later. His younger son George(3), another stonemason, took over as manager and only retired in 1959 when the quarry closed. During that time he was awarded the MBE for his work on stone carvings supplied for the post-war restoration of the House of Commons. His work is illustrated on the cover of *Wychwoods History*<sup>7</sup>. After Milton quarry closed, the remaining family of George Groves(2) moved away: a sad loss to Milton.

As far as can be traced, this is the end of the line for the Groves family in the work of actual stone quarrying. However, as we shall see, a younger branch of the family was to continue with the building work in natural stone.

### **Edwin Groves**

The third surviving son of Thomas Groves(1) (Family Tree B) was Edwin who had started work in the family business, but left the mason's trade and by 1871 was in business as a tailor and draper. He lived at 'Roseneath' next



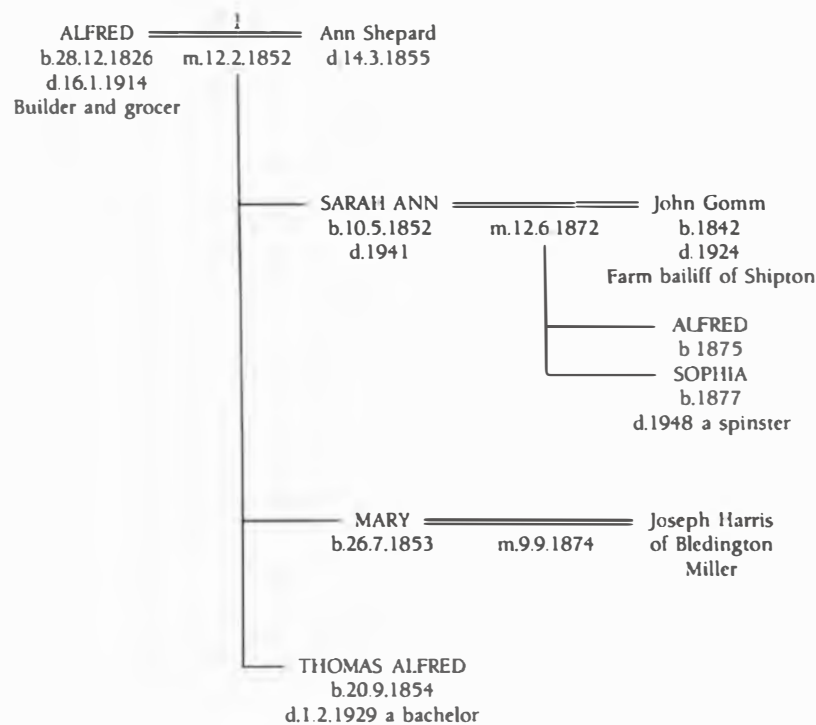
*George Groves (1817-1886), owner of Milton Quarries after his father Thomas' death and Charlotte Groves (nee Pargetter), who married George in 1851.*

door to the Baptist chapel at Milton and for many years was the much liked and respected Sunday School superintendent. His niece Mary, daughter of his younger brother Alfred, was his housekeeper for most of his time in this house. He died at the age of forty-eight and was buried in the chapel graveyard where his memorial stone can still be seen next to the path.

### **Alfred Groves and his Family**

The story of the Groves family now continues with Thomas' youngest son, Alfred (see Family Trees B and D). On the death of his mother Hannah, Alfred and his family moved into 'The Elms' and continued the building business from there. He was an energetic and far-seeing man and the business prospered under his guidance. In the 1871 census Alfred is described as a builder and grocer. The grocery business was developed for his workmen so that their wives could obtain credit in the company shop all week and payment could be made on payday, no doubt a great help in those times. It was not a 'Tommy shop' with the workers being forced to buy from their employer at inflated prices, since it traded fairly alongside the village shops of the time. However by 1881 no more mention is made of it.

#### D. THE FAMILY OF ALFRED GROVES AND ANN SHEPARD



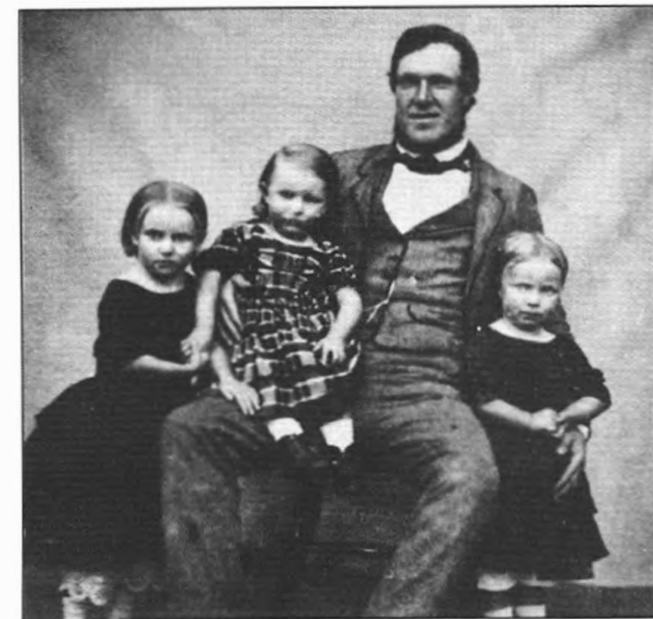
The increasing prosperity of the Groves family is apparent from the style in which they lived, 'The Elms' being a large house worthy of a gentleman. By contrast, Alfred's aunt Mary married a farm labourer and lived in a tiny single-storey thatched cottage next to what is now Milton Post Office. This cottage is still owned and lived in by Mrs Doris Williams, her great granddaughter. Alfred's uncle William was a labourer, a stonemason who also raised a family in a tiny one-up, one-down cottage. He eventually emigrated to America with part of his family to seek a better living and died in Pike County, Illinois in 1851 (Family Tree A).

Alfred's family circumstances were very different (Family Tree D). Sarah Ann his eldest daughter married John Gomm, a farm bailiff from Shipton and lived the latter part of her life in Terrace House, Milton. Thomas Alfred, his eldest son attended a private school, Staple Hall Academy in Witney. He must have been a star pupil: I have his arithmetic book for 1867 when he was twelve. It reveals no alteration or crossing-out and he uses immaculate

copperplate writing throughout. Thomas went on to work with his father and eventually became managing director of the family business. He enjoyed cricket at which he was a good bat and a useful medium-pace bowler who represented his county. He died a bachelor; his obituary states that he captained Milton Cricket Club for fifty-one years, surely a record by any standards.

After the death of Alfred's first wife, he married Mary Reynolds of Stow on the Wold (Family Tree E). Some of Mary's family moved to Upper Milton and eventually took over Spring Hill Farm, which the Reynolds family farms today. Alfred's eldest daughter by his second marriage, Elizabeth, has left us a diary of the years 1880-82. It paints a picture of a young lady who spent her early life at home doing good works e.g. she was a Sunday school teacher. In 1881 she married Edward Bolton, son of a well-known West Oxfordshire family, a JP and Methodist lay-preacher. They emigrated briefly to Australia but returned to farm in their native county. Alfred had nine more children by his second wife, five of whom married, and including two sons who remained in the family business. The report of his fifth daughter's wedding was given in *Wychwoods History* 7.<sup>4</sup>

*Alfred Groves (1826-1914) with his three children by his first wife Ann Shepard: Sarah Ann, Thomas Alfred and Mary. From an original Ambrotype photograph dated to 1856-7.*

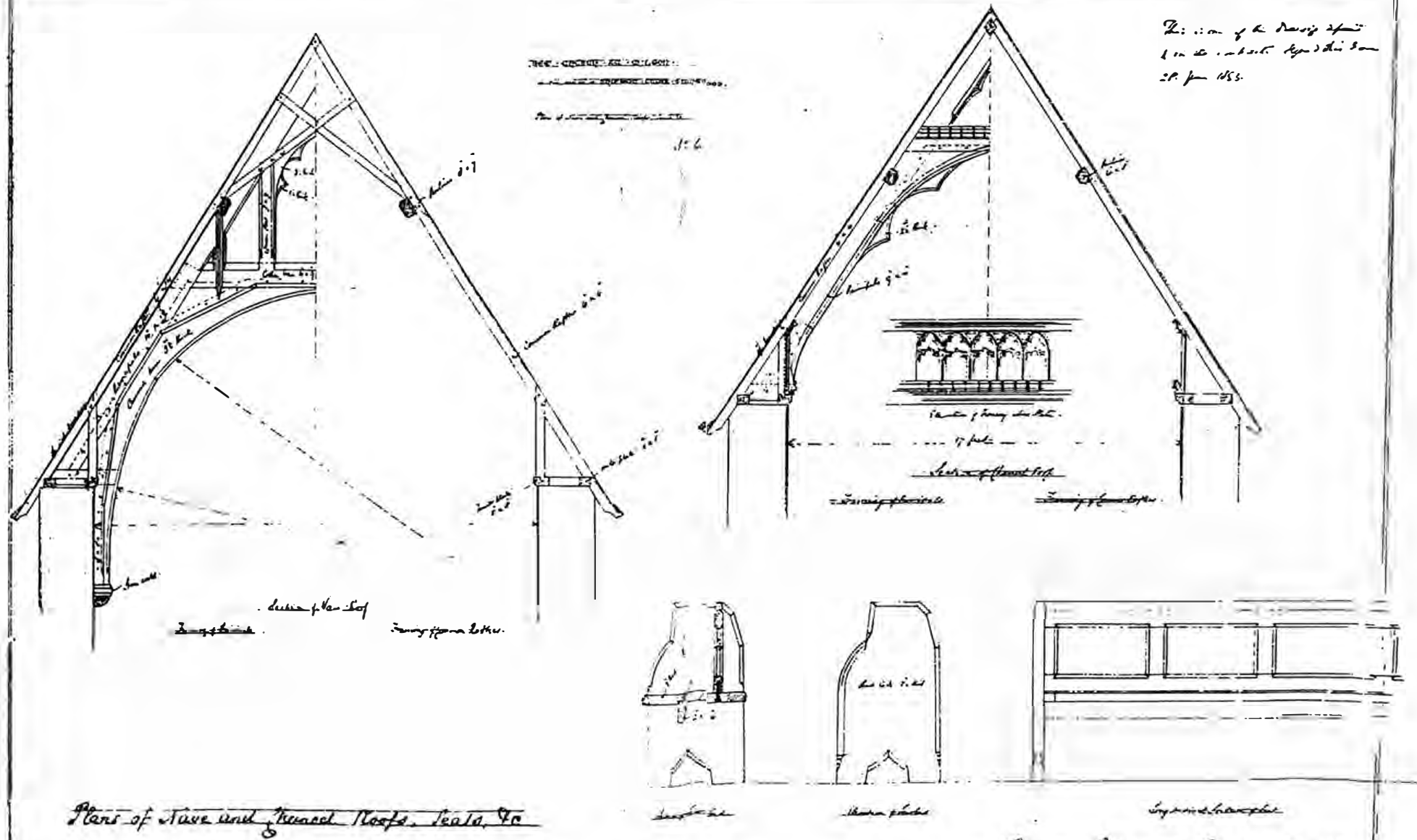


Part of G.E. Street's original plan for the building of Milton Church. The work was carried out in 1853-4 by Alfred Groves, in whose offices the plan recently came to light.

MILTON CHURCH - A.D. 1853-4

IN THE PARISH OF ST. PETER - WINDSOR

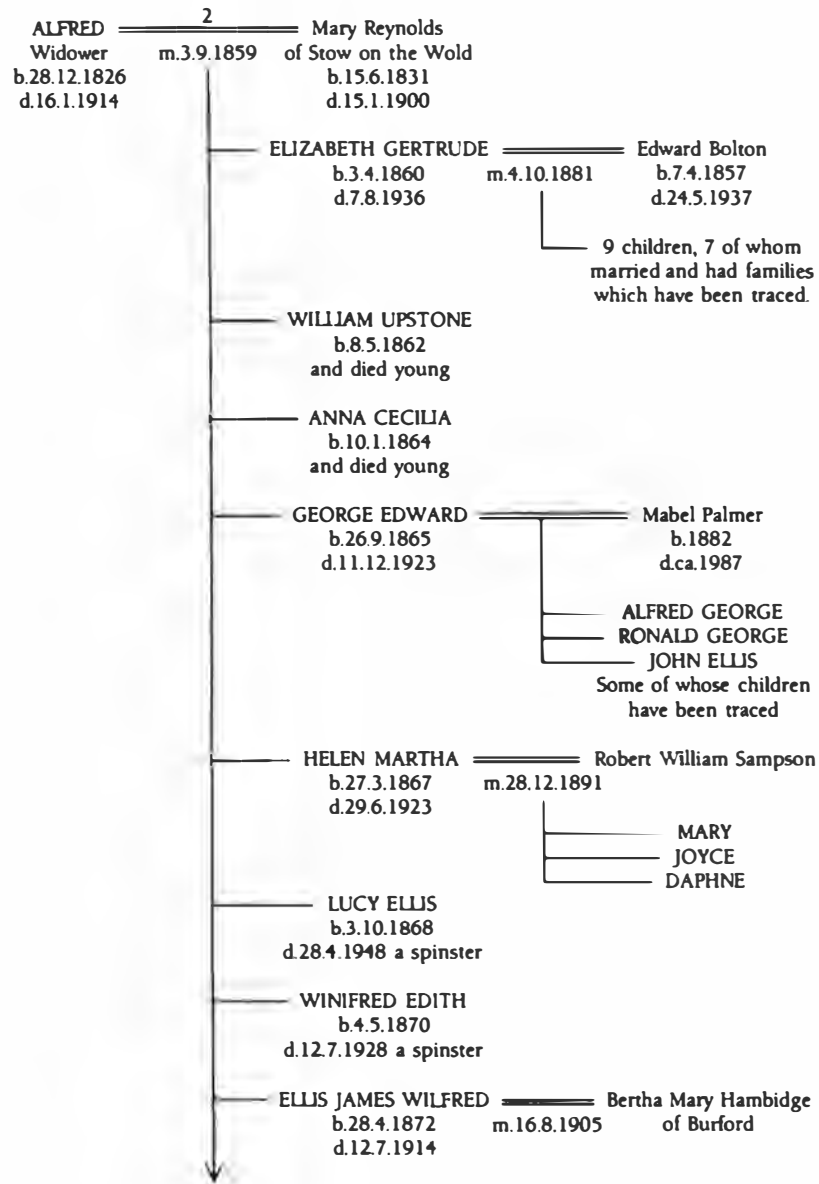
Division of the Design of the  
 Church of St. Peter, Windsor  
 29. Jan 1853.



Plans of Truss and Truss Roof, Scale, &c

George Edmund Street, Archt.  
 5, Beaumont St. Oxford.

E. THE FAMILY OF ALFRED GROVES AND MARY REYNOLDS

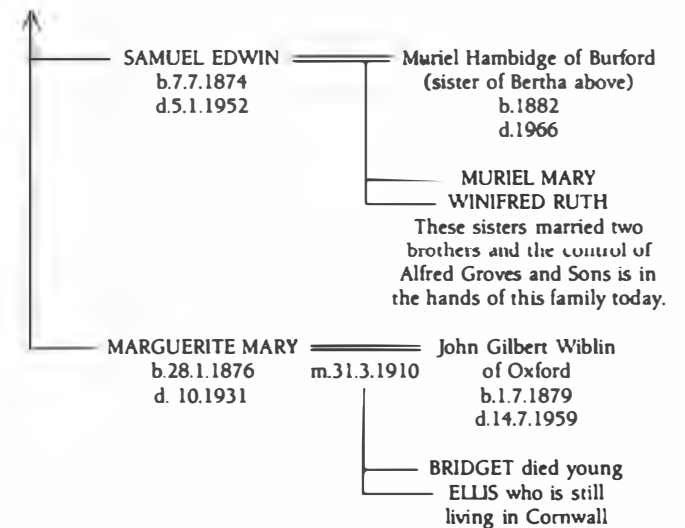


This then was a further period of expansion of the business. I have been able to examine the ledger kept by Alfred from the time he took over the business on his mother's death in 1870 until 1887, which again most fortunately survives. The first item of note is that labour charges had been increased to four shillings per day.

Work on local churches and chapels continued: Revd R.L.Baker of Ramsden paid £1 10s for a new house with an extra 6s 3d for a bedroom grate. In 1884 at Milton church the Revd Alfred Deacon paid £20 for a new reredos and the provision of some boys' seats and other work. In 1880 Groves were paid £2600 for taking down the old church at Heythrop. On Aug. 20 1885 J. Norgrove spent the day pointing windows in Shipton church at a charge of 4s. In 1881 Revd J.H.Hodges paid £1 14s 2s 6d to restore Eastleach rectory; Lechlade church restoration cost £984 12s in 1882 while in the following year improvements were carried out at churches at Churchill, Compton Abdale and Shilton.

Much work was still being done for the Surveyor of Roads for in March 1882 there were orders for: repair to wall of Langley Bridge £23 14s 3d; Meadow Bridge at Lyneham £1 10s; bridge at Hawcutts Mill (Shipton Mill) £1 1s 7d; 35 loads stone to Frog Lane, Milton £3 6s (presumably for road repair).

E. THE FAMILY OF ALFRED GROVES AND MARY REYNOLDS (continued)





*Mary Reynolds (1831-1900), second wife of Alfred Groves, who bore him ten children*

Around 1880 Alfred's business was further extended by the leasing of Franklin's Leaffield pottery. Ledger entries of Sept. 1880 record the sale of 1500 bricks to James Holloway at a cost of £2 5s; in Jan. 1881 Milton Allotments were charged £6 18s 1d for 5000 agricultural drainage pipes. A billhead dated 1908 advertises their manufacture of lime, bricks, tiles, draining pipes, glazed ware, seakale pots, flower pots, chimney pots, vases and other earthenware goods. The pottery works became uneconomical in the 1920s and the site was sold in 1921. The works were demolished in the 1930s.<sup>5</sup>

The ledger also records work at South Lawn, Swinbrook, Barrington Park and also Wilcote House where, in 1880, C.Sartoris Esq required Groves to build a coachman's lodge, a summer house and wall. He made Groves a gift of one elm tree for superintending the work in the house. There are also two entries for timber purchased by Alfred Groves. In July 1881 he received two oak trees together with the top wood and ten fir trees for which he paid Lady Churchill of Cornbury Park £16 17s 4d. In the same year Lord Churchill sold Alfred Groves 51 oak trees, and later a further 15, for which Alfred paid £855 6s. These are the only entries relating to timber in the ledger, which generally details work being done, rather than stock purchased. However it does give some indication of the stock that the timberyard could handle. There is also a record of Carter Radband being used to take a load of sand and gravel from the pits in the Sands to Churchill church, illustrating that these pits were still in use at this time.

I make no apology for quoting so many ledger entries, which only amount to less than 1% of the 10,000 or so that I have examined so far. I have only quoted items of local interest or work on the major houses and churches in the area, but the examples given emphasise very clearly the vast amount of building work undertaken by this family in the second half of the nineteenth century – a period which was probably near the peak of their operations.

In spite of this the Groves family maintained their interest in village affairs. In the 1850s Alfred's elder brothers Philip and Edwin had attended Vestry meetings, the forerunner of today's Parish Council, but in 1857 Alfred Groves took his seat and attended its meetings for the next thirty years. He continued to serve as a Brooking Warden until 1897, when he was 71 years old, but made a further appearance as a Warden in 1904.

In that year, at the age of 77, Alfred Groves formed the present-day business of Alfred Groves and Sons. He died just short of ten years later at the age of 87.

Some insight into the character of Alfred Groves is given by John Kibble of Charlbury.<sup>6</sup> Under the heading *A Wychwood Builder* he writes 'Milton owes much to the fact that the late Mr Alfred Groves conducted an extensive building business there, which is still continued by his sons at the village. He was a remarkable man. His knowledge of the art of building, coupled with gifts and qualities of a high order, a keen sense of humour and a great love for little children, made him quite a man above the average... his fine

*The Elms, Milton under Wychwood, a farmhouse and also the site of Groves' masonry business*





*Thomas Alfred Groves (1854-1929) became managing director of Alfred Groves and Sons after his father Alfred's death*

commanding presence and his tall white hat made him so conspicuous that once seen he was never forgotten.'

By the time of his death in 1914, Alfred's eldest son Thomas Alfred had taken over the management of the business, to be followed at his death in 1929 by his youngest and only surviving brother Samuel Edwin (Family Trees D and E). These were again prosperous years for the family. In 1914 Samuel founded the timber department. He had an expert knowledge of the timber business and Groves became the country's largest supplier of English timber to the trade. Unfortunately Dutch Elm disease was to decimate their main supply of English timber and this side of the business closed in 1983.

During the early decades of the present century Groves carried out many large contracts: Leaffield Radio Station was built in 1919-20. Soon afterwards, Mr Anthony Gillson asked Groves to restore both the Manor and the whole village of Cornwell under the direction of the architect Clough Williams-Ellis of Portmeirion fame.

An article in *The Illustrated Carpenter and Builder* for 1964<sup>7</sup> claims that at one time Alfred Groves and Sons employed 300 men, although by the time of publication the workforce was down to 130. The reason for this large

workforce was that it was the firm's policy to carry out all the work using their own staff, with nothing contracted out. They employed labourers, banker masons, masons and wallers, carpenters, joiners, slaters, plumbers, blacksmiths, iron-founders, painters, glaziers and a bell-hanger. It was also the firm's normal practice to employ succeeding generations of local families, so the old skills were handed on from father to son and even to grandsons. It is not surprising therefore that many of these men could claim long periods of employment with Groves. *The Carpenter and Builder* quoted the example of David Miles who, including his time as a Groves' pensioner, was on their books for 78 years. He was born in 1835 and died at the age of 91, having worked as a carter; in his early days he drove wagons carrying stone to Radcot Bridge for loading onto Thames barges. The longevity of service contrasts markedly with the rapid turnover of Thomas Groves' workforce noted in the last century.

Like their father, Thomas and Samuel Groves both played their part in parish affairs. Thomas took over from him as Brooking Warden in 1897 but handed the position over to his younger brother George three years later. However, Thomas continued his duties on the Parish Council until his death in 1929, when he was succeeded by his younger brother Samuel. Samuel was

*Alfred Groves' workforce in the timberyard in the 1920s. T.A. Groves is on the left. Other members of the group include Don Miles, Harry Smith, Jack Baldwin, Roland Stroud and 'Ogger' Wilks.*







*Samuel Edwin Groves (1874-1952), youngest son of Alfred Groves. He became managing director of the business after his step-brother Thomas Alfred's death, and was the last of the family to fill that position.*

chairman of the Parish Council at the end of World War Two when a Welcome Home committee was formed to greet the returning members of the forces. In 1945 the question of a village hall was raised under his chairmanship and in 1947 he gave the plot of land at Milton on which the present hall was built, an impossible task had it not been for his generosity.

#### **Alfred Groves & Sons Ltd. today**

After Samuel's death in 1952 there was no male member of the Groves family to take over the management of the business. Ownership passed to Samuel's daughters, Muriel Parsons and Winifred Ruth Parsons (Family Tree D), while the day to day running was vested in a manager, W.W.Forsythe. He left shortly afterwards, to be followed by a succession of managers until in 1970 the present managing director Mr Roger Rawlins was appointed. Mr Rawlins had joined the business in 1954 as an articled pupil and studied at the School of Architecture and Building in Oxford. After gaining many building qualifications he became a director a year or so after taking over as manager.

During Mr Rawlins' association with Groves the firm has been called upon to carry out many prestigious projects including alterations and refurbishments to Gatcombe Park, Glos. for HRH The Princess Royal, and

to Nether Lypiatt Manor, Glos., for Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, and extensive works for the late Hon Michael Astor, The National Trust, Lady Robson, The Duchess of Devonshire, Alan Bond, Cartiers of London, Mr and Mrs Gummer, a member of the Kashoggi family and numerous others. Perhaps the most demanding of these projects was the restoration for Jesus College of nos. 26 and 27 Cornmarket, Oxford, formerly the premises of Zacharias & Co., gentlemen's outfitters. Together with the shop next door, this was all that remained of one of Oxford's finest medieval inns, dating from the fourteenth century. Alfred Groves had to take out the Victorian brickwork covering the old timbers which then had to be removed for treatment at Groves' works. The building had to be supported throughout to prevent collapse while the old timbers were replaced and some new timbering inserted. One of the craftsmen involved, Mr P.Simms made a valuable photographic record of the work in progress: the finished building reveals many historical and archaeological features.

Over these years the tradition of long service with the company has continued with such people as the late Geoffrey Rathbone who started with Samuel Groves as an office clerk, later to become company secretary and a director until his retirement. F.E.Bolter joined the firm in 1942 and successfully managed the English timber department until it closed in 1983. Ivor Jennings was the foreman/supervisor for much of the more prestigious work carried out between 1920 and the 1950s.

The company still employs stonemasons as they have throughout the

*Nos. 26 and 27 Cornmarket, Oxford, formerly the premises of Zacharias & Co, gentlemen's tailors, and all that remained of a fourteenth-century inn. Seen here after restoration by Alfred Groves and Sons.*



centuries, but in these years of recession the workforce is only a fraction of what it once was. The old, highly skilled trade of banker mason has almost ceased to exist here: the large quarry companies with their powered machinery can supply stone cut to requirements so that a true banker mason is only called in for very special work.

What the future holds for such a traditional business is very hard to foresee but I believe and sincerely hope that, after nearly four centuries, Groves will still be there to carry on an industry which has not only made Milton under Wychwood what it is, but has made an outstanding and unique contribution to the architectural heritage of the entire Cotswold region.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to repeat the acknowledgements contained at the end of Part I of this Groves Family History. If I have omitted anyone from the list I do beg their pardon. So much has been contributed by so many it is difficult to remember all. Let us just say that over the past twelve years this has been truly a village contribution to our history.

### References

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  - 2 Norman Frost, 'The Letters of Thomas and Hannah Groves', *Wychwoods History* 2 (1986), pp. 32-6.
  - 3 W.J.Arkell, *Oxford Stone*, Faber and Faber (1947), republished by S.R.Publishers (1970), p. 66.
  - 4 'One Hundred Years Ago', *Wychwoods History* 7 (1992), p. 44.
  - 5 Nancy Stebbing, John Rhodes and Maureen Mellor, *Oxfordshire Potters*, Oxfordshire Museums Service Publication 13 (1980), p. 24.
  - 6 John Kibble, *Historical and Other Notes on Wychwood Forest*, Charlbury (1928), p. 83.
  - 7 John Slee, 'Over 300 years of building work', *The Illustrated Carpenter and Builder*, (11 Sept. 1964), pp. 2998-3000.
- I have also made extensive use of the following:-  
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Official Census Returns 1841, 1851, 1871, 1881.  
Milton under Wychwood Enclosure Awards 1849.  
Minutes of the Milton under Wychwood Vestry Meetings.  
Minutes of the Milton under Wychwood Parish Council Meetings from 1894.  
Minutes of the Brooking Wardens Meetings 1854-1913.  
The diary of Elizabeth Groves 1879-1882.  
Freda Derrick, *Cotswold Stone* (1948).  
The old business records, books and other documents of Alfred Groves & Sons dating from the mid-nineteenth century.

## An Anglo-Saxon Charter for Shipton?

In his article 'From my Bookshelf' in *Wychwoods History* 6, Frank Ware referred to a local mystery about whether there is an Anglo-Saxon Charter for Shipton. W.G.Hoskins referred to one in his important book *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955), and it was also shown on a map in *The Archaeology of the Oxford Region* (1986). The only apparent candidate was a Charter of 777 by King Offa of Mercia, giving land at 'Deilesford. Funelade. Ceasteltone. Cornwelle. Salford. Deorneford. Siptone.' to Evesham Abbey, quoted by Margaret Gelling in *Early Charters of the Thames Valley* at p. 125. There was a suggestion that this referred to Shipton on Cherwell, not Shipton under Wychwood.

Dr Gelling writes:

'The only reason for preferring Shipton on Cherwell to Shipton under Wychwood seems to be that the sequence Cornwell-Salford-Dornford-Shipton suggests a movement away from the Evenlode towards the Cherwell. Nobody regards the charter as genuine, so it does not constitute an 8th-century record of either place. I don't know why either Shipton should have featured in an Evesham forgery.

'I am sure that someone who knew the history of Evesham Abbey would be able to work out the reason for the appearance of Shipton (whichever one) in the forged charter. This deserves further investigation.'

## Quotes

'History is a myth which has been generally agreed.'

Voltaire

'History is bunk.'

Henry Ford

'People who have no sense of the past, no sense of proportion, no sense of what Mankind has accomplished already, are a danger to themselves and to others. They suffer from stunted vision, laboriously re-making old mistakes, reconquering continents already known and mapped.'

Enoch Powell

# Fieldwalking a Romano-British Site above Shipton

MARGARET AND FRANK WARE

## Introduction

In 1982 it was reported to the Society that a visitor with a metal detector had discovered several Roman coins and a few sherds of Romano-British pottery in a field at Starveall Farm (now known as Glebe Farm), about half a mile north of Shipton under Wychwood. Slight terracing of the sloping field was noted with a scatter of stony rubble which was interpreted as the foundations of a square or rectangular building. This effect proved ephemeral after ploughing and subsequent visits showed only a generally stony field. The pottery was identified by the County Museum Service as Oxfordshire ware, coarse British ware and one sherd of Samian ware, while the four poorer-quality coins left behind by the visitor were identified by the Ashmolean Museum and dated to the fourth century AD.

The following account is of a further investigation of the site, undertaken by the Society in September 1991, when the opportunity arose to fieldwalk the area.

The site (A on Fig.1) – grid reference centred on SP 284193 – lies on a shoulder of hillside facing south-west and overlooking the Evenlode valley. The underlying geological strata follow the contours of the hillside closely, the lower lias clay of the valley giving way to successive bands of middle and upper lias, consisting of sands, clays and marlstone. Further uphill the limestone of the inferior oolite contains a localised deposit of fullers' earth (Fig. 2). These strata cross the field in bands from west to east: on site the lower third of the field was very noticeably composed of heavy clay and the upper two thirds of a lighter clayey soil with frequent limestone fragments of varying sizes.

Three farms occupy this shoulder of hillside today, two built on the presumed spring-line between the oolite and upper lias, while Glebe Farm lies at the junction of the middle and lower lias where at least one other spring occurs (Figs.1 and 2).

A previous fieldwalk by the Society, 400 metres to the east at Honeydale Farm (C) had already recovered fourteen sherds of Romano-British ('R/B') pottery and a fourth century bronze coin, while several chance finds of water-worn R/B sherds had been made around the spring at D. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) contains details of various R/B artefacts found from the region of B:- pottery, including *mortaria*, a bronze brooch

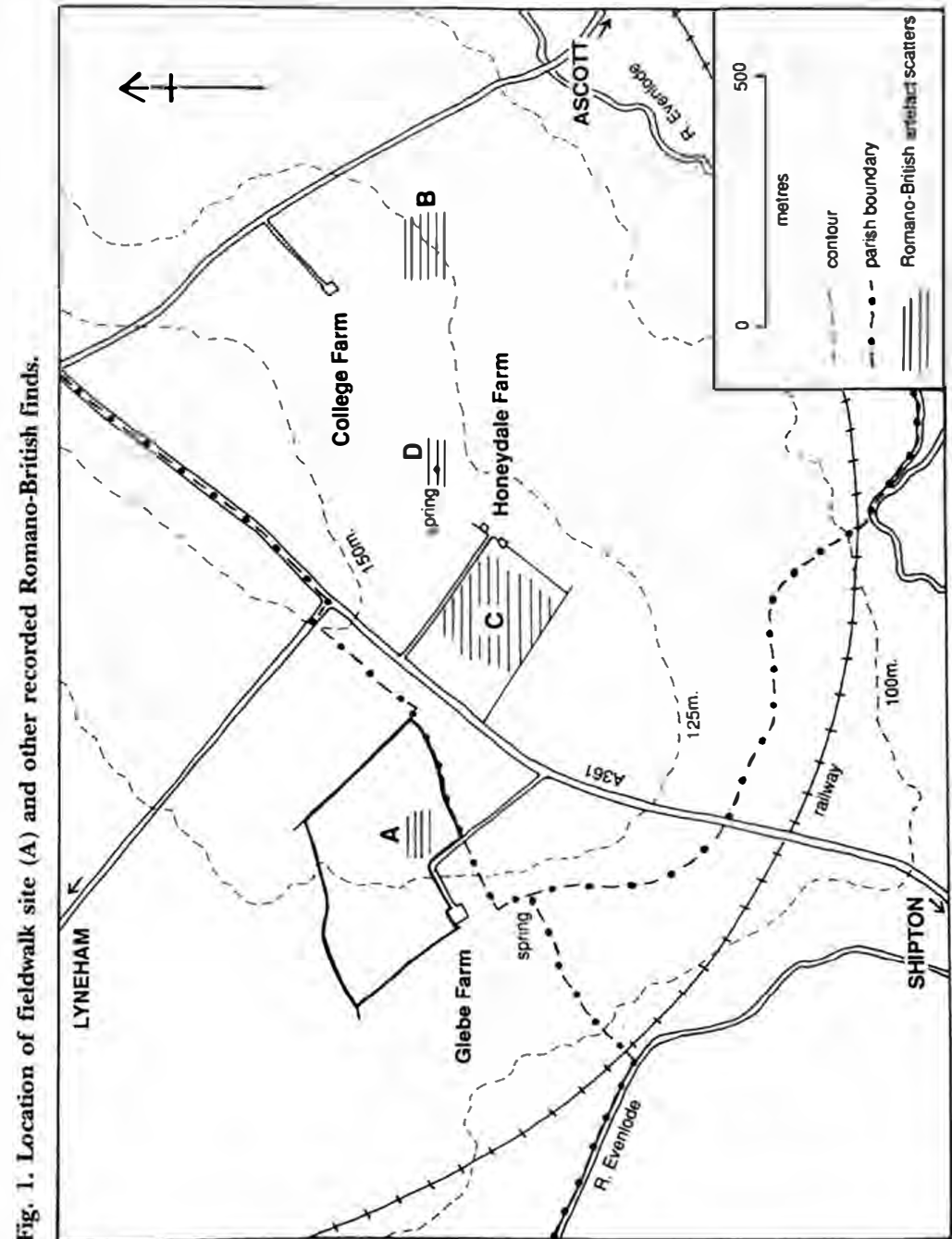
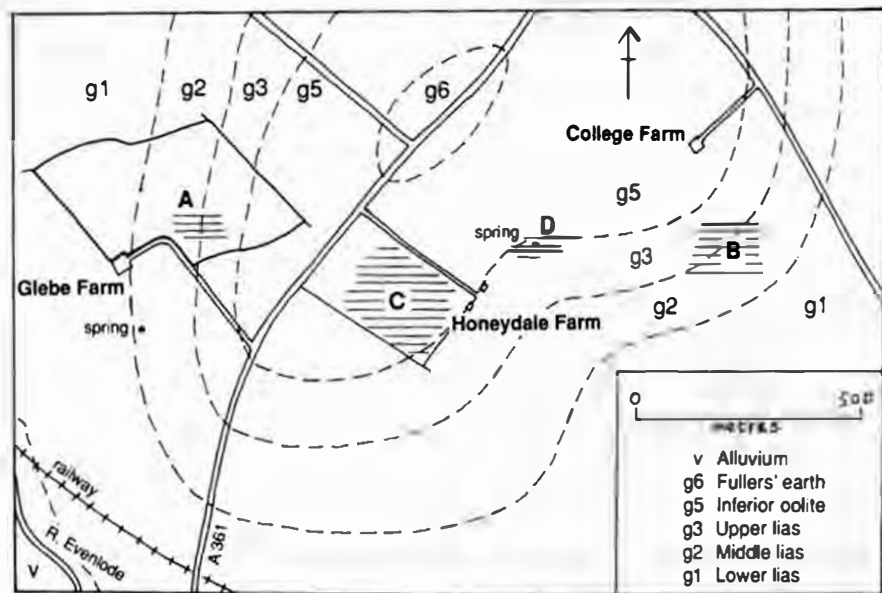


Fig. 1. Location of fieldwalk site (A) and other recorded Romano-British finds.

Fig. 2. Simplified geological map of the area.



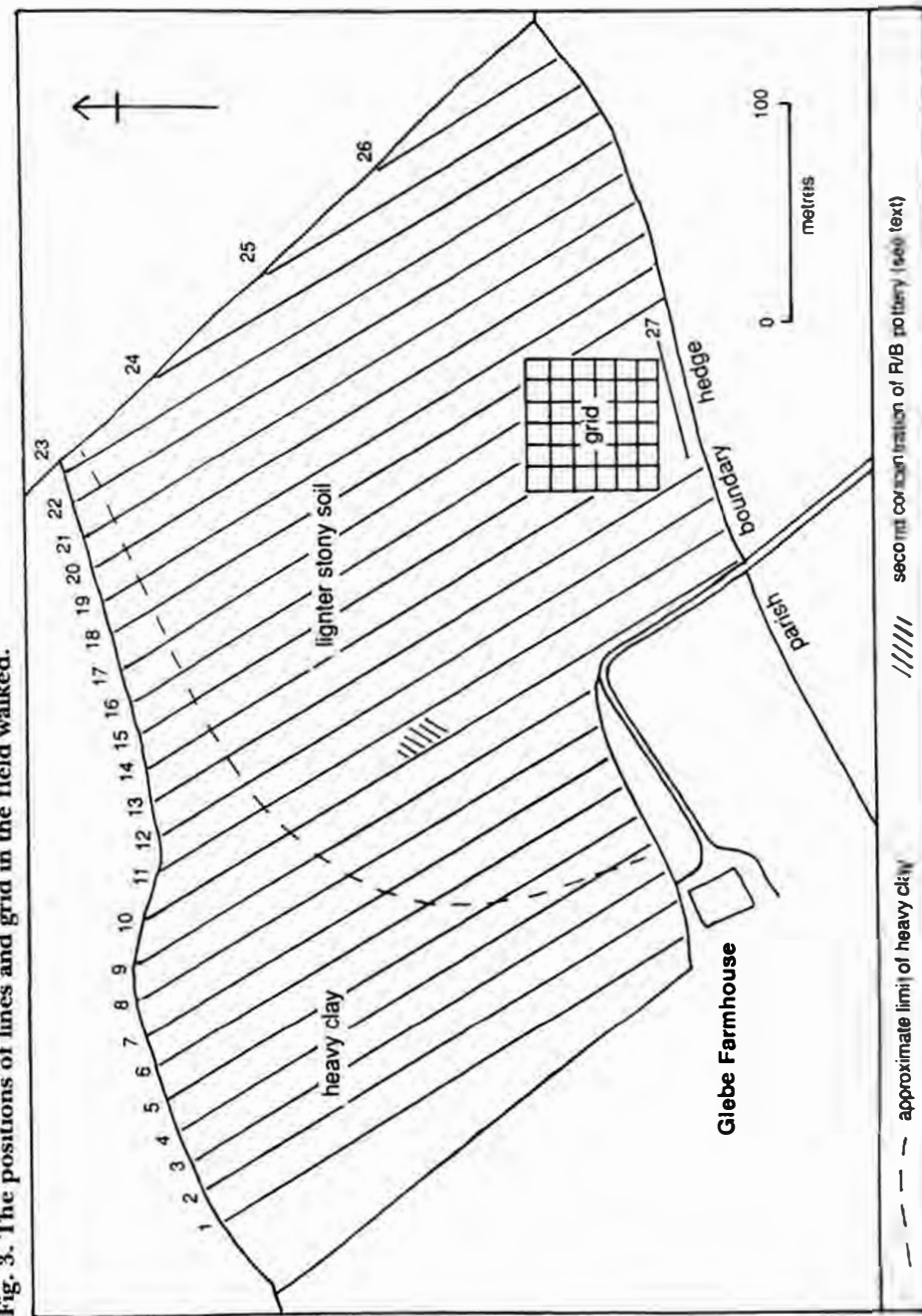
and bronze coin of Constantine I, and also *tesserae*, roof tile and wall plaster which suggest a possible villa site. It appears that at B 'a standing structure, now destroyed', thought to be a 'roman house' had been observed and explored by a local resident earlier this century and is referred to in a footnote in the account of Ascott D'Oilly Castle by Jope and Threlfall.<sup>1</sup> Two further records, of linear cropmarks slightly north-west of B are thought to indicate features (?enclosures) of an R/B date. The considerable evidence for Romano-British activity on this part of the hillside prompted the Society to seek the opportunity for a further examination of the site at Glebe Farm.

### Method

The method of fieldwalking adopted by the Society has already been described in detail.<sup>2</sup> The usual technique of line-walking was employed over much of the field with lines marked out at 15 metre intervals by baler twine and canes, parallel to an initial base-line (Fig. 3). Collection of artefacts by a walker moving slowly along a line and examining the ground surface approximately half a metre on either side of the line gives a sample coverage of one metre in every fifteen or about 7% of the field surface. The lines were laid across the shortest axis of the field and each line treated as a unit of collection.

The area of the field from which the previous discoveries had been made

Fig. 3. The positions of lines and grid in the field walked.



was examined using a different technique, that of grid-walking. Using the SMR six-figure grid reference as a guide, visual inspection of that part of the field was carried out by two people walking to and fro fairly rapidly, to establish the area of densest R/B pottery scatter. Each sherd seen was marked with a small cane and after about twenty minutes the area which would repay detailed examination became apparent. This did not exactly coincide with the SMR grid reference but seemed to be about 100m further east.

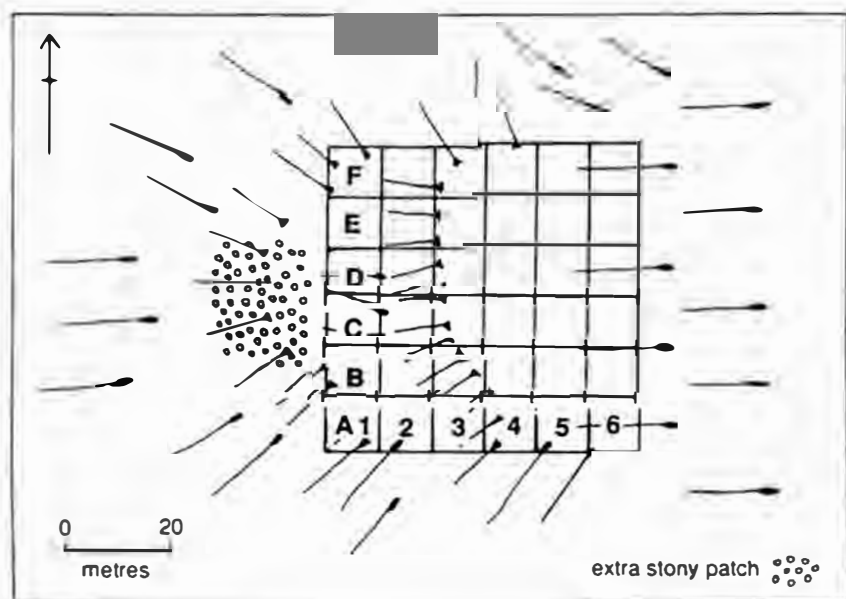
The grid was set up on a 60m. W-E base line, established with ranging poles aligned on compass bearings. From the base line a right-angled grid of 36 10m. squares (6 by 6) was marked out using ranging poles, canes and baler-twine, and numbered according to Fig. 4 using waterproof plastic labels tied to the south-west corner of each square. As the grid base-line was a measured distance from two prominent features on the OS map, the grid could itself be mapped reasonably accurately.

Each walker on the grid was allocated a square and asked to collect every artefact seen. They were encouraged to spend as much time as they wanted to make a thorough search, walking their square systematically. Grid-walking allows a much more detailed and thorough search than line-walking, with the potential of 100% recovery of surface artefacts. However, as noted previously, soil and weather conditions are among the factors significantly affecting recovery.<sup>3</sup> In fact, on this occasion, conditions for fieldwalking were

not ideal. The field had only recently been ploughed and harrowed after four weeks of drought, and much of the soil was very dry indeed. A persistent breeze often raised a fine dust. The first shower of rain for many weeks, which fell overnight before the grid had been fully walked, washed the soil surface sufficiently to show that more pottery sherds were now visible even in those squares which had been thoroughly examined the day before. The entire grid was therefore re-walked quickly by the writers, most of it the following weekend after a heavy rainstorm. In total, half as many sherds again (49%) were recovered in the re-walk from the entire grid, greywares especially being more visible. This illustrates clearly the advantage of fieldwalking after rain when surface artefacts have been washed free of soil.

The grid was also roughly surveyed. An area of ground approximately 50m. by 20m. seemed to form a flat platform in an otherwise gently sloping field, with another slight flattening 20m. downhill. The grid area was not noticeably more stony than the rest of the field: the rock fragments ranging in size up to 25cm. long. However, just downhill of the grid there seemed to be a distinctly stonier area about 25m. square which could correspond to the stony rubble noted in 1982 (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Grid numbering scheme and topography of the grid area.



#### Results: (1) The Lines

The results from walking the lines are set out in Table 1, on the same basis as that used in reporting previous walks. Numbers are shown for each broad category of finds together with the density per hectare for groups of categories (e.g. post-medieval pottery). This has been calculated on an estimated field area of 10.68ha., excluding the area of the grid. As the line-walk is a sampling technique which only scrutinises less than 10% of the field, it is not itself a record of the actual density of artefacts which might have been found on the whole field. It is, however, a crude statistic which enables comparisons of the main categories of finds to be made with other fields walked on a similar basis (i.e. at 15m. intervals).

What is immediately striking is the large number of R/B pottery sherds found and their high density (21 sherds per hectare). Densities of 1 or 2 per hectare are the norm in our parishes – the 'background whisper' from the manuring of fields. The previous highest densities of R/B material found on the Society's fieldwalks, of 5 and 3 sherds per hectare, were from two adjacent fields on the other side of the valley (fieldwalks Shipton 9 and 10) where a hedge bisected a local pottery scatter, which might have been a R/B farmstead.<sup>4</sup> The fieldwalk at Honeydale Farm also produced a density of 3 (not yet reported).

Table 2 shows the number of R/B pottery finds per line walked. There is a substantial variation in the recovery per line, which may partly be attributable to the differing abilities of individual walkers; unfortunately, line 11 was allocated to a complete novice before the relative importance of this particular line was appreciated (see below). However, a number of lines produced large quantities of sherds. It is clear that most finds were recovered

**Table 1: Number of Finds from Walking the Lines and Densities per Hectare**

	Number of Finds	Density per hectare
Flints	51	5
Coins – Romano-British	1	*
Pottery:		
Romano-British	226	21
Medieval	3	*
Post-medieval:		
'Leaffield type' glazed red e/w	74	
Unglazed red earthenware	13	
Non-local white-glazed wares	93	
Non-local other fabrics	25	
	205	19
Glass:		
18th century	26	
Modern	92	
	118	11
Claypipe	4	*
Building Materials:		
Romano-British brick and tile	2	*
Post-medieval:		
Brick	73	
Roofing tile	18	
Brick/tile	67	
Welsh Slate	144	
Dressed Stone	1	
	303	28
Drainage pipe	42	4
All metal	37	3
Bones and Teeth	9	1
Coal and Slag	71	7
Oyster Shell	3	*
Other non-metal	27	3
<b>TOTAL. FINDS</b>	<b>1102</b>	<b>103</b>

**Notes:**

- (1) The numbers recorded are the total of 'on-line' finds only.
- (2) Densities are expressed as the number of finds per hectare in the field walked, in this case calculated as 10.68 hectares excluding the area of the grid. Since the proportion of the field examined was somewhat less than 10% of its total area (say 1 metre in 15), the actual density of artefacts could be up to 15 times the values shown.
- (3) Densities are shown to the nearest whole number. \* shows a presence of less than 0.5.

**Table 2: Number of Romano-British Pottery Finds per Line**

Line number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Number of finds	-	-	1	2	2	15	9	11	34	46	1	5	26	16
Line number	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	-
Number of finds	-	19	15	10	8	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	2	-

from a band about 200m. wide between lines 6 and 19. Below line 6 the soil is the heavy lias clay already referred to, and it seems that the area of activity avoided this. Finds were also scarce towards the top of the field from lines 20-26.

It will be seen from Table 2 that finds of 15 or more R/B sherds were recovered from no fewer than six individual lines. By comparison with the Society's previous experience, these figures appear large and significant. The largest number of R/B sherds previously recovered from a single line is 20, crossing the possible farmstead on Shipton 9.<sup>5</sup> During the walking of line 10, a prominent pottery scatter between lines 10 and 11 was noted and reported to one of the writers, who subsequently inspected the area (about 15m. across) and recovered 44 R/B sherds from it. Similar forays were not made to the areas around the other lines with high rates of recovery, e.g. lines 13 and 16, and it is not known whether these finds were concentrated or spread more thinly over a larger proportion of the line. But the possibility exists of four or more separate significant scatters in the middle of the field.

**Results: (2) The Grid**

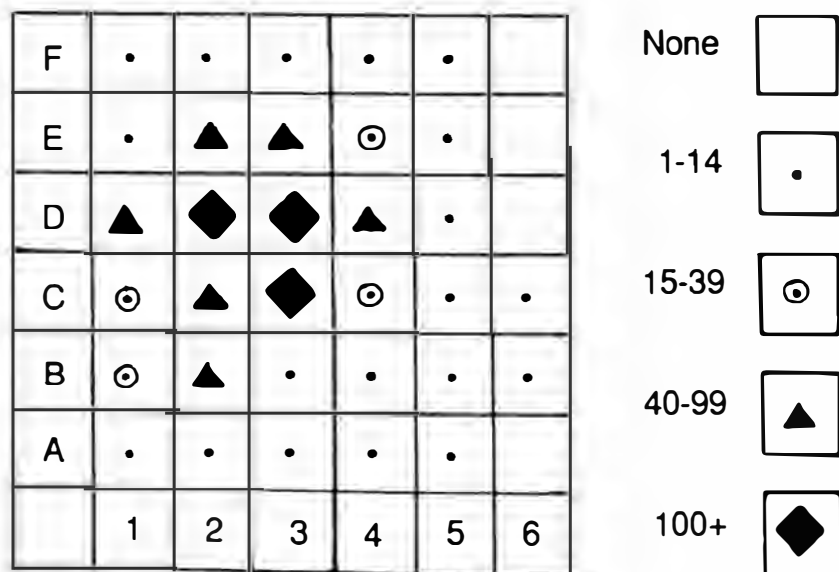
A total of 1,366 R/B pottery sherds and 1 coin were recovered from the area of the grid. This represents a local density of 3,794 sherds per hectare! This statistic is not at all comparable to the density of 21 recorded from the lines, as it comes from a complete and extra thorough investigation of the entire grid area instead of a more cursory examination of a sample from it. Nevertheless, this must be a dense concentration by any standards.

Table 3 shows the number of sherds from each square of 100 sq. metres, and Fig. 5 displays this information diagrammatically. It will be seen first that the writers failed to centre precisely on the main area of activity; the picture would have been more complete if a further row of squares had been walked to the west of the grid. However, this strip was much traversed during the weekend, and the superficial impression was gained that there was not much to be found there. It will also be seen that the main area of activity is

**Table 3: The Grid: Number of Romano-British Pottery Sherds per Square**

	1	2	3	4	5	6
F	14	13	9	4	3	-
E	9	47	67	19	12	-
D	40	228	394	46	2	-
C	31	90	184	23	3	4
B	23	41	16	7	12	4
A	1	4	5	7	4	-

**Fig. 5. Number of Romano-British pottery sherds per grid square.**



comparatively concentrated in an area about 40m. by 40m., and outside that tapers off pretty rapidly.

Table 4 shows the pottery finds from the whole field – comparing the grid, the lines and the foray to the concentration between lines 10 and 11 – analysed into five major categories. It will be seen that the assemblage is dominated by coarse greyware, which makes up 77% of the total from the whole field and 82% of the total from the grid. Greyware constituted only just over half (54%) of the total R/B pottery from the lines, but undue significance should not be attached to this. The explanation may simply be that the greyware was much more difficult to see than the red or brown samian and oxidised fabrics, particularly in recently harrowed soil which had not been weathered or rained on, which was the case when the majority of the lines were walked. As has been already pointed out, the more thorough examination of the grid, particularly the rewalk after heavy rain, recovered a higher proportion of the grey fabrics which were then easier to see.

**Table 4: Types of Romano-British Pottery**

	Grid	Lines	Second Concentration	Total
Samian	6	4	2	12
Oxidised Ware and Other Fabrics	166	95	18	279
Black-burnished Ware	58	1	3	62
Late Roman Shelly Ware	12	5	2	19
Coarse Greyware	1124	121	19	1264
TOTAL.	1366	226	44	1636

**The Finds: Coins**

Three Roman bronze coins were found, of a size consistent with the low denomination coins used in the fourth century (14-16mm. diameter). One was recovered from the grid (square D2), with clear markings which enable it to be identified as a well-known type issued in the reign of Constantine the Great (306-337).<sup>6</sup> The letters 'TR(?) S' under the 'wolf suckling twins' suggest it was minted at Trier. Of the other two, one was recovered from line 15, and the third was a chance find between lines and is therefore not shown in Table 1. Both of these are worn, one almost totally, the other with visible markings which are reminiscent of a type issued in the reign of Constantius II (337-361);<sup>7</sup> this identification may owe more to the imagination than is permissible, but an attribution of all three to the fourth century seems reasonable.

## Pottery

The R/B pottery was examined by Paul Booth, a specialist in the Roman period at the Oxford Archaeological Unit, together with the small number of medieval finds, sherds which the writers could not identify with confidence and some of the brick and tile component of the building materials. His report is attached as the Appendix to this paper. The writers also had the benefit of a discussion with him, and he wrote useful notes about individual items, some of which are quoted here.

Four sherds were identified as possibly of Iron Age date. Of these, two were recovered from square D3 of the grid; another was a chance find from between lines, and is therefore excluded from Table 1; the location of the fourth is unfortunately no longer ascertainable, but it is more likely than not to have come from the grid with square D3 as the most probable source. The possible early Anglo-Saxon sherd comes from square C2 of the grid. In addition an interesting and unusual sherd recovered between Lines 10 and 11 was a chunky, coarse piece, medium brown in colour, described as 'probably from a ceramic disc, Iron Age or early Roman, function uncertain'. It seems that we have here a hint of Iron Age and early Anglo-Saxon activity on this site, rather stronger in the case of the Iron Age, but it would be inadvisable to claim more than a hint.

Four medieval sherds were identified from the grid and three more from the lines.

Paul Booth has commented that much of the pottery was in poor condition, with small and very abraded sherds. This is to be expected of material recovered from field walking, which has been exposed in the ploughsoil to frost, battering from ploughing and harrowing, trampling by livestock and perhaps the effects of stubble-burning. Excavated material from below the ploughsoil is not exposed to these hazards and usually comes in larger pieces in far better condition. Far from being a criticism, this comment about our assemblage can be taken as a compliment to the effectiveness of our recovery, particularly from the grid where many of the sherds were indeed very small! But it does make precise identification very difficult for material which does not come from a stratified context.

## The Building Materials

A total of 27 pieces of brick or tile was recovered from the grid, again much of it small and very abraded, making positive identification difficult. Of these 16 pieces have been definitely identified as post-medieval, and of the remainder 'not all the brick/tile is necessarily Roman'. A cautious view has therefore been taken and only two pieces are claimed as definitely R/B. One has the shape of the ridged edge or flange of a Roman *tegulum* or flat roof-tile, though much abraded, from E2. The other, from D3, is probably R/B from its general colour and appearance; it is flat and about 1.5cm. thick, pink with grooves on one side which are reminiscent of the markings on a box-tile (but these may be caused by subsequent damage in the ploughsoil).

Similar comments apply to the material recovered from the lines, and a Roman origin is claimed for only two pieces, one of which is a clear edge-piece of *tegulum* with its flange from line 18 which was cut off by the north-east corner of the grid (see Fig. 3). A small proportion of the remainder of the finds from the lines, allocated as post-medieval, might be R/B. Three further pieces from the concentration between lines 10 and 11 are of doubtful origin but some of them may be R/B.

A piece of roughly-dressed stone from line 17 is interesting, but cannot of course be dated without a stratified context. No other dressed stone was seen either on lines or grid, although an area of stony rubble just west of the grid has already been referred to (Fig. 4).

There were no traces anywhere of either *tesserae* (mosaic stones) or wall-plaster, such as would be expected from a villa site. This accords with Paul Booth's general conclusion from the pottery evidence that a relatively low-status settlement is involved.

## Other Finds

This conclusion about the status of the settlement is perhaps confirmed by the almost complete lack of oyster shells – none from the grid and three only from the lines. Oysters are supposed to have been particularly favoured by Romans, but could not perhaps be afforded by peasants this far from any oyster-bed.

The flints form an unimpressive assemblage of much-abraded low-grade material. One possible scraper is particularly damaged by later fractures – there are no other clear tools which show reworking or complete blades. Three fragments from the lines and two from the grid show signs of having been burnt. At best this only represents knapping-waste, but some of it may merely be a component of glacial drift.

Another point which needs to be mentioned is the relative paucity of certain classes of post-medieval material. This is evident from the lines, which only show a density of 19 finds per hectare for post-medieval pottery. In previous walks densities of 40-50 were not uncommon, though there were particular cases of less than 19. Clay pipes are almost totally absent, which is unusual. Animal bones and teeth are also unusually scarce, and coal and slag at a density of 7 pieces per hectare is below normal. On the other hand modern building materials at 28 per hectare fall towards the upper end of the established range.<sup>8</sup> The medieval pottery is also thin on the ground though not unduly so.

These observations might suggest that at certain times – perhaps during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries – the field was not ploughed but used as pasture. It is on the margin of the parish at some distance from the centres of settlement and the former name of the farm, Starveall, might reflect the relative paucity of the soil. This suggestion, however, is at odds with the abraded condition of the Romano-British pottery and the flints, which seem to indicate ploughing over extended periods. An alternative explanation,



perhaps, is that manuring seemed less rewarding for a site both distant and uphill. Also it is not adjacent to through-lanes which would encourage passers-by to dispose of rubbish by 'chucking it over the hedge'. A further factor could well be the dry condition of the soil when most of the lines were walked, though this is more likely to affect the visibility of some artefacts, e.g. medieval coarsewares, than others.

### Interpretation

The pottery and coin evidence suggests activity throughout most if not all of the Romano-British period, with particular emphasis on the fourth century, which was the hey-day of the Roman villa in Southern Britain and in the Cotswolds in particular. The hint of Iron Age activity is interesting and may imply continuity of exploitation and perhaps occupation, which would not be unusual. The hint of early Anglo-Saxon activity is far weaker and need not be taken to imply continuity.

The most significant findings are:

- (1) The concentration of R/B pottery in the area of the grid, which is intensive and has fairly clear-cut edges.
- (2) The second concentration found on line 10 and between lines 10 and 11. This is apparently not so intensive but has not been searched so thoroughly and the edges have not been properly established.
- (3) The thinner scatter of R/B pottery throughout the remainder of the centre of the field, which exceeds anything found on previous walks except for the single local concentration on Shipton 9 and 10, and which may contain three more localised concentrations.
- (4) Paul Booth's suggestion that the pottery types found indicate a settlement of relatively low status, but above the bottom of the social scale.
- (5) The restriction of most of the R/B activity to the drier, more workable soils of the upper and middle lias, which echoes the position of the possible villa on the other side of the hill at B (Fig 1).

This is, therefore, a comparatively large area of Romano-British activity, with two if not more foci. It does not look like a villa, more like a hamlet or small village. If this is correct, it was presumably rural and agriculturally based. Larger semi-urban villages, with some industrial activity, tended to concentrate on the major roads, or were associated with mineral extraction or specialist activities like pottery kilns. So far as is known, the nearest major road was Akeman Street, some 8km. away at Asthall, which seems too far away. The walk yielded no evidence of kilns. One mineral resource in the neighbourhood is limestone, but Glebe Farm seems too far away from

exploitable limestone beds to be associated with them. However, another resource is fullers' earth, and it may be that extraction of this supplemented the agricultural base of the settlement's economy. This substance was known to have been used in the finishing of woollen cloth in Roman times.

However, the site is relatively close to the possible villa at B, which is just over 1km. away, and there are signs of activity between the two. It is possible that the extensive activity in this field is connected with the villa. Surprisingly little is known about the organisation of the rural economy on villa estates – how large they were, the size of the home farm and the manner in which it was organised, or whether the owners relied primarily on exploiting a tenanted peasantry. Perhaps the reality was far from uniform. The tentative hypothesis is suggested that this site could be one of the centres of the working farm on the villa estate, with a number of the habitations of farm workers (the indicated status above the bottom of the social hierarchy might be due to the presence among them of one or more of a managerial grade). The less intensive scatter of pottery over a wider area between the foci could be due to the presence of barns and yards, which would leave no other trace in the ploughsoil for fieldwalkers to find.

Clearly this field would repay further examination, particularly more detailed walking on a grid basis across the centre of the field, to establish how many foci there were, how they compared in size and quality with the main site already examined in the grid, and how they all related to each other spatially. It would also be interesting to discover the density of material between the various foci. This might give a clearer picture of the nature of the fairly considerable activity on this site. Excavation, of course, might yield more information, depending upon the extent of plough damage which has already occurred, but can hardly be expected for such a site which is otherwise at no particular risk.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge with grateful thanks the kindness of Mr and Mrs B.Kilkenny of Glebe Farm for so readily granting their permission for the fieldwalk to take place, and their helpfulness and interest throughout.

Our thanks are also due to the Oxford Archaeological Unit, particularly to Paul Booth for his valuable comments on the Romano-British material and for writing the pottery report. We are indebted to Miss Gwen Allen for helpful comments on the geology of the area.

Finally we would like to thank those 38 members of the Society and others who spent many hours stooping over the lines and grid. Their enthusiasm is very encouraging.

## References and Footnotes

- 1 E.M.Jope and R.I.Threlfall, 'The Twelfth-century Castle At Ascot Doilly, Oxfordshire: Its History and Excavation', *The Antiquaries Journal* XXXIX (1959), p. 220.
- 2 F. and M.Ware, 'Practical Fieldwalking in the Evenlode Valley', *Wychwoods History* 4 (1988). Visibility of the marker canes has since been improved by attaching fluorescent orange plastic tapes.
- 3 Ibid, p. 18.
- 4 Ibid, p. 32.
- 5 Ibid, p. 40-44.
- 6 P.J.Casey, *Roman Coinage in Britain*, Shire Archaeology (1980), Plate 14.2 on p. 45. 'URBS ROMA' on the obverse.
- 7 P.J.Casey, Plate 14.4 on p. 45. Called 'Gloria Exercitus' or 'glory to the army'.
- 8 F. and M.Ware, p. 32.

## Appendix

# The Pottery Report

PAUL BOOTH

A collection of roughly 9kg. of pottery from fieldwalking at Glebe Farm, Lyneham was cursorily examined. Most of the obvious post-medieval material had already been removed from the assemblage, but a little remained, together with a very few medieval and Iron Age sherds (perhaps five or six of each). There was one possible early Saxon sherd. The rest of the material was of Roman date.

Much of the pottery was in poor condition. The sherds were generally small and many were very abraded. In consequence the identification of colour-coated or slipped fabrics was difficult. In some cases traces of slip survived, in others the presence of diagnostic forms (e.g. in the Oxfordshire colour-coated ware range) permitted identification of fabrics which had lost all traces of surface treatment.

The Roman pottery probably covered much of the period from the second to fourth centuries. There appeared to be very little material which need have been of early Roman date, though the condition of the sherds makes any such conclusion dangerous. Much of the material probably derived from fairly local sources. The assemblage was dominated by greywares, most of which were probably Oxfordshire products, though a few sherds may have been of Savernake ware. Oxidised wares also consisted mainly of local products, though one sherd was thought to come from the north Wiltshire kilns, a few were probably from the Severn Valley industry (including rims of diagnostic wide mouthed jar and tankard forms) and two

sherds of pink grogged ware, with a source in Northants/Bucks, also occurred. The last of these is quite commonly represented in Oxfordshire assemblages. The principal non-local coarse fabric was black-burnished ware, which was reasonably well-represented. A few sherds of probable late Roman shell-tempered ware were found, but there was only one diagnostic rim and the condition of most of the sherds made identification uncertain. A few of these sherds may have been of Iron Age date.

Fine wares consisted of samian, a few sherds of Nene Valley colour-coated ware (all probably of fourth century date), and Oxfordshire products. These last included examples of most of the principal fabrics. Colour-coated wares were reasonably well-represented, but occurred almost entirely in bowl forms and examples of the fourth century mortarium type C100. White colour-coated vessels included a bowl and a flagon as well as mortaria. Oxfordshire white mortaria were scarce, with only two likely examples, one of second century date. The only non-Oxfordshire mortarium, a probable Cirencester region product, was also second century. White wares were generally scarce, all those which occurred were probably Oxfordshire products.

Vessel types were dominated by jars, mostly in reduced wares. Reduced wares were also used for a much smaller number of bowls and dishes. A lid and a strainer were also identified. The condition of the sherds meant that forms such as beakers were not readily detectable. Black-burnished ware forms were jars, bowls and dishes. Otherwise most of the bowls were in samian ware and oxidised and colour-coated fabrics. Beakers in such fabrics were very scarce. The presence of a tankard has already been noted; handle fragments from other possible examples also occurred. Flagons were rare and amphorae completely absent.

## Summary

The assemblage contains few surprises. The pottery derives largely from local sources and the non-Oxfordshire products represented are all ones which would have been anticipated in this part of the county. Samian ware is the only continental import. With one possible exception all the samian sherds are from plain vessels.

The range of fabrics and vessel types indicates a relatively low status settlement, always assuming that the pottery comes from the focal area of the settlement from which it derived, rather than from peripheral areas. The occurrence of roof tile indicates the presence of a Romanised structure, and the pottery contains sufficient diversity of fabrics and forms to show that the site is not right at the bottom of the anticipated hierarchy of local settlement. Occupation may have been most intense in the fourth century. The majority of the fine and specialist and non-local wares can probably be assigned to this period. The occurrence of three coins of the house of Constantine would be entirely consistent with this being perhaps the period of greatest prosperity at the site.

# Vital Statistics: Shipton under Wychwood Parish Registers 1538-1840

J.M.HOWARD-DRAKE, A.JONES, S.JOURDAN,  
T.MCQUAY

## Introduction

When Peter Laslett first appealed in the late 1960s for help in collecting information from parish registers all over the country, he was astonished and delighted at the response. The totals of baptisms, marriages and burials sent to the Cambridge Group for the Study of Population and Social Structure (CAMPOP) were carefully scrutinised, and eventually 404 parishes provided the basis for the demographic study of English population published in 1981 by E.A.Wrigley and R.S.Schofield, *The Population History of England, 1541-1871: A Reconstruction*. The collection of information has continued since this time, and Jack and Joan Howard-Drake, who had transcribed and indexed the Shipton parish registers as part of a project organised by the Oxford Family History Society to transcribe and index all Oxfordshire parish registers, calculated the figures for Shipton and sent them to CAMPOP. This study can therefore be put in a national context. With respect to parish registers, 'Shipton' means the six townships Langley, Leafield, Lyneham, Milton, Ramsden and Shipton which made up the parish, and this article is concerned with all six.

## Unusual events in the Parish Registers

The transcripts of Shipton's registers have been used for several particular studies. Between 1560 and 1640 two conscientious Shipton vicars, William Master and Henry Mills, wrote numerous notes and comments in the parish registers, which provide an excellent insight into the parish's morbidity some 400 years ago. 'Plague Tyme' as a marginal note in 1593 draws attention to the Milton under Wychwood epidemic of plague. Comments such as 'sillborn', 'died in the birth' and 'dyed in her travail' provide data for a fairly accurate assessment of infantile and maternal mortality. 'Murdered in his bed' and similar comments are the source material for estimating the violent deaths, and 'a bastard' written in the margin alongside the record of a baptism made an estimate of the number of 'base-born' in Shipton possible. All these aspects of parish register studies have been reported in previous volumes of *Wychwoods History* and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> This article sets out a more general approach to the experience of past inhabitants of the parish as seen in the parish registers.

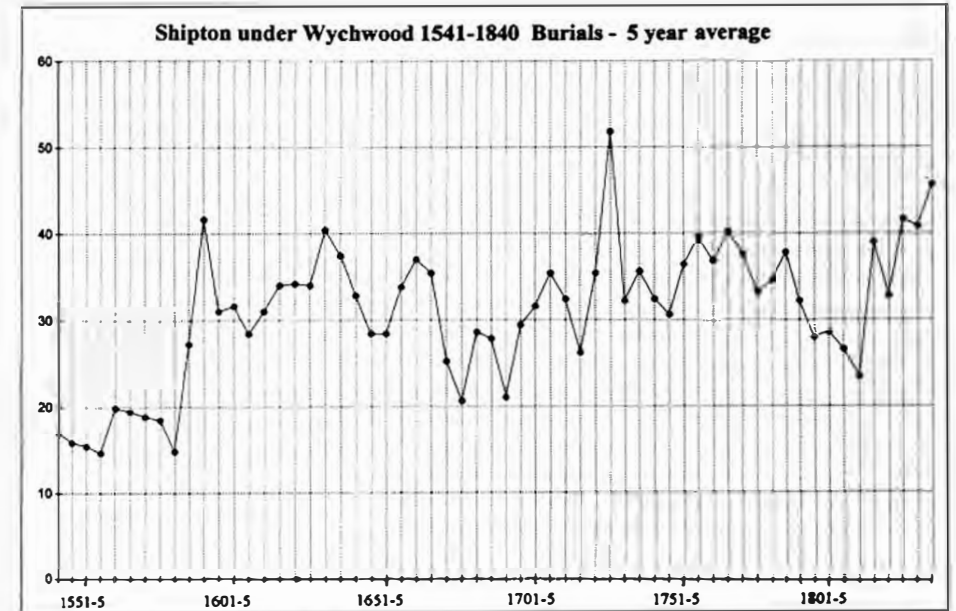
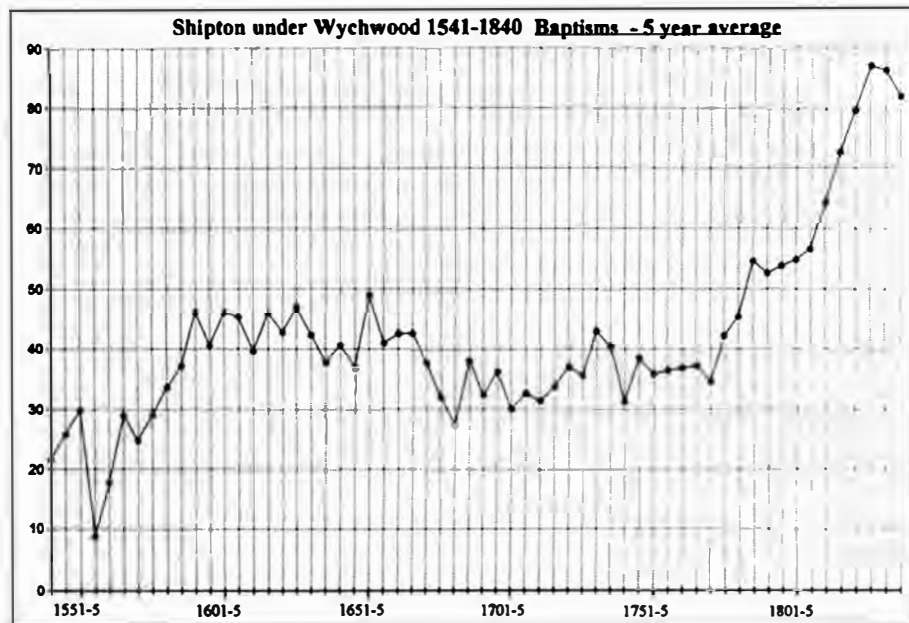
## The Experience of Shipton's Inhabitants in general

Totals of baptisms, marriages and burials extracted from Shipton parish registers for decades from 1541 to 1840 are set out in Table 1. Note: Baptisms from Leafield register have been added from 1784, when the register begins.

The end date of 1840 was chosen because in 1837 the Civil Registration Act came into force, and births, marriages and deaths were then recorded through the Poor Law Commission's organisation of districts and unions. As the Commission's headquarters were at Somerset House in London, that became the central store of civil registers.

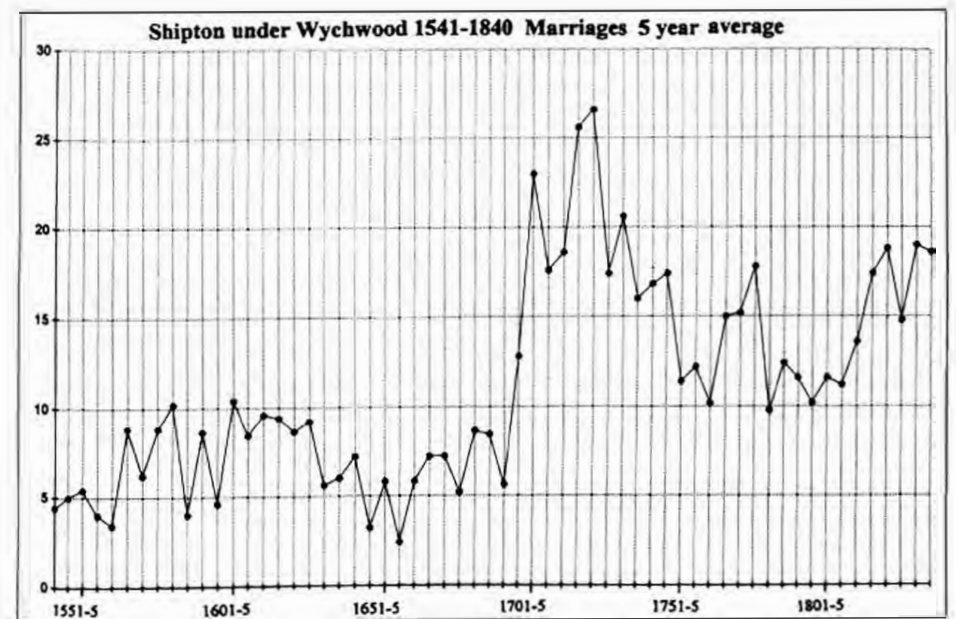
Shipton's parish registers begin in 1538. This was the date when Thomas Cromwell required that registers should be kept. In a majority of places, however, they date from 1558; an instruction issued by the church (in 1598) asked that existing paper registers should be copied onto parchment at least from the beginning of Elizabeth I's reign, 17 November 1558. Parish clerks usually followed the instruction exactly; as a result paper registers were destroyed and only the copies from 1558 were preserved. Henry Mills was the conscientious vicar who saw that the first twenty years of Shipton's registers were copied.<sup>2</sup> They display a curious and interesting feature. From 1541-1555 the average number of baptisms a year is 26, but from 1556-1560 it is only 9. In 1553 Mary Tudor succeeded her brother Edward VI; she died in 1558. During these five and a half years she attempted to restore the Roman Catholic church, although the English church had become increasingly Protestant during Edward's short reign. The effect in Shipton of her attempt to undo the Protestant revolution seems to have been to deter many from baptising their children in church – a true 'protest' – while the godparents are recorded for 12 children baptised between November 1564 and April 1565, which is a Roman Catholic practice and suggests a clerk sympathetic to that church. The level of baptisms recovered in 1565; it seems significant that the notably Protestant vicar William Master was appointed to Shipton in 1564 and probably arrived then to take up his cure.<sup>3</sup> Burials naturally varied considerably from year to year, according to the occurrence of serious infections, but there is no marked fall during Mary's reign. Baptism could be avoided as a matter of personal decision – burial was more imperative.

The easiest way of considering these register totals is to look at them displayed in graphs. Considering baptisms first, the average number per decade shows a considerable rise during the reign of Elizabeth I, reaching a peak of 458 in the decade 1601-10. It may suggest an acceptance of the Protestant church, or an increasing population, or of course a rise in the number of births per family. This rise has been observed generally in parish registers. For two centuries thereafter baptisms in Shipton remained stable and even fell around 1700, which is not quite as expected. Reasons for this fall will be suggested later. From 1781 there is a dramatic rise. Fertility rose all over the country, starting about 1750, and the decade 1811-20 saw the fastest-ever growth in English population. Many theories have been put



forward to explain this: higher standards of nutrition (yet it was partly a decade of war with Napoleon's France); generous poor relief (there was a severe post-war depression and unemployment); better medical care (but no real understanding of infection and disease as yet, although Dr Edward Jenner's promotion of vaccination against smallpox was certainly significant by the end of the eighteenth century); an extremely young population following a rise in births and a fall in deaths in previous years; and younger age at marriage, perhaps the result of an expanding population of agricultural labourers with no motives for delay, since there was no family holding to inherit, and of an expanding population of factory workers earning good wages at a young age. Wrigley and Schofield have demonstrated that a steadily falling age of marriage is the single most important factor in the rise of population over the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and there was also an increase in the proportion of the population who married.<sup>4</sup>

As for burials, a jagged outline in the graph reflects our ancestors' experience, with epidemics of influenza, smallpox and – most dreaded of all – plague, which could carry off a third of the people in any one place and sometimes even more. Plague in Shipton in 1593 has already been described in *Wychwoods History 5* (1989). The rise in burials before 1640, seen together with the rise in baptisms before 1610, does point to more inhabitants in Shipton parish in the later sixteenth century. After 1610,

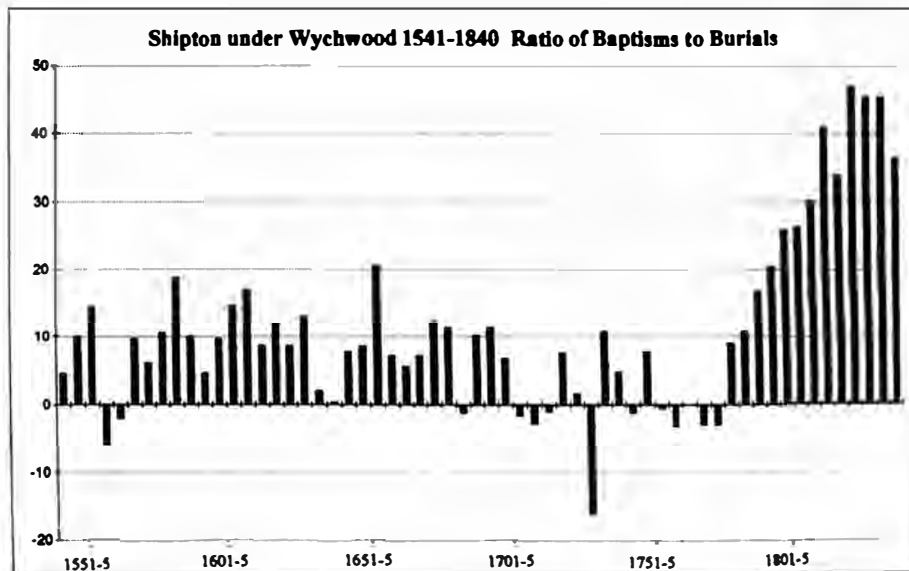


again, the picture is fairly stable, and the widening gap between baptisms and burials, which in other places provided part of the spring-board for eighteenth-century population rise, is apparently absent. The graph of the ratio between burials and baptisms shows only a small surplus of baptisms in each decade, while in 1727-9 more people died than in the outbreak of plague in 1593.

Marriage numbers are always problematical. Shipton was a popular church for marriages around 1720! Couples marrying by licence were perhaps directed by a helpful bishop to the vicar here, who supplemented his income with the marriage fees. In 1753, Parliament passed Hardwicke's Marriage Act. It was designed to prevent marriages being contracted without the Church of England's ceremony. A surge is sometimes evident in registered church marriages from this date but is not apparent in Shipton. Indeed, marriage seemed to be declining, despite the rising birth rate.

### Numbers of Inhabitants in Shipton Parish

Relating the numbers of register entries to the probable population of Shipton parish suggests a far from complete record. In 1676, when Bishop Compton of London collected parish returns of 'conformists' (or Church of England members), Roman Catholics and Nonconformists, the vicar of Shipton said there were 905 communicants in his parish, including 42 Nonconformists.<sup>5</sup> Assuming communicants were 65% of the total population, then there were perhaps 1,400 inhabitants. This estimate seems about right. In 1727, the vicar collected tithe from 336 households; with an average size of 4.5 to a household, that implies a population around 1,500. In 1759 and 1768 the vicar said there were 370 houses in the parish; with the



**Table 1. Decadal totals for Shipton parish**

Decade	Baptisms	Burials	Marriages
1541-50	237	164	47
1551-60	193	143	47
1561-70	234	196	61
1571-80	269	186	75
1581-90	354	210	71
1591-1600	434	363	66
1601-10	458	300	94
1611-20	428	325	95
1621-30	449	341	89
1631-40	401	389	58
1641-50	388	306	52
1651-60	450	311	41
1661-70	426	362	65
1671-80	348	229	62
1681-90	327	282	85
1691-1700	343	252	92
1701-10	313	335	203
1711-20	326	293	221
1721-30	363	436	220
1731-40	417	339	183
1741-50	348	315	171
1751-60	361	380	118
1761-70	370	385	126
1771-80	384	354	165
1781-90	500	362	111
1791-1800	532	301	109
1801-10	557	276	114
1811-20	685	312	155
1821-30	833	372	168
1831-40	841	432	188

same household size this means there were 1,665 people. In 1776 the vicar's return to the enquiry of his bishop when he made a primary visitation of the diocese provides an apparently firm figure of 1,952 for the number of inhabitants, which generally supports the estimates for 1676 and 1727.<sup>6</sup> The figures for each township are set out in Table 2.

**Table 2. Shipton parish population by township in 1727, 1776, 1801 and 1811**

	<u>National census</u>			
	1727 'tithe payers'	1776 'souls'	1801	1811
Shipton	79	406	406	395
Ramsden	23	335	335	354
Milton	117	495	495	522
Lyneham	36	195	195	206
Langley	10	51	51	50
<b>Leafield</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>487</b>	<b>478</b>
total	336	1952	1969	2005

The basis of the vicar's return to the first national census of 1801 – see Table 2 – was clearly the count of his parish that he had done 25 years earlier! Only in Leafield had the curate made an effort to recount his flock. However, Shipton's population was stable and remained so for another decade. Thereafter all the townships grew considerably.

With these population estimates, calculations can be made of crude baptism and burial rates, which relate to each 1,000 of the population, set out in Tables 3 and 4. For comparison, national birth and death rates are added, as calculated by Wrigley and Schofield, after corrections have been made for the deficiencies of Anglican registration.<sup>7</sup> Shipton's rates seem low. In particular, the parish seems to have been extremely healthy. If a rate is separately calculated for Shipton township in mid-eighteenth century, it makes little difference to the picture: in 1756-95, a population of 406 gives a birth rate of 23.8 and a death rate of 17.1. Table 4, based on more reliable population figures, shows that the nineteenth-century rates, too, are not typical of England in general, especially the burial rates. Crude rates are determined by the population size, and would be higher if the population were smaller than estimated here, but the rates all seem consistent.

Nonconformity in the parish may be relevant. From 1558 onwards, while the government strove to maintain much of the framework of the catholic

**Table 3. Crude baptism and burial rates in Shipton parish in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries**

Decades	Population	Baptism rate	Burial rate	<u>National rates</u>	
				Birth	Death
1656-95	1440	26.2	20.5	30	30
1706-45	1500	23.8	23.5	32.6	29.6
1756-95	1950	19.3	18.7	35.9	27.3

**Table 4. Crude baptism and burial rates in Shipton parish in the nineteenth century**

Decades	Population	Baptism rate	Burial rate	<u>National rates</u>	
				Birth	Death
1796-1805	1969	27.6	14.4	38.8	26.1
1806-15	2005	30.1	12.5	40.2	25.4
1816-25	2275	33.5	15.8	40.8	24.6
1826-35	2454	35.3	16.8	36.5	22.3

church, more extreme Protestants were asking for complete reform of liturgy and of the church's hierarchy. There are echoes of those old battles in the modern debate in the Church of England about the ordination of women. The 'Puritans' demanded more teaching and preaching and a fairer distribution of the church's wealth. In 1642, Charles I and his parliament confronted each other on these issues, and Charles refused to countenance significant church reform. The Civil War was fought as a result of this and other complaints about the governing of the country. Parliament won. Archbishops, Bishops, Deans and Chapters were abolished, and the Church of England moved towards a Presbyterian model. In 1654, the first Civil Registration Act was passed; a 'Register' was to be appointed to record births, marriages and deaths. The political problems of displacing the recognised system of government by a king proved impossible to solve; in 1660 Charles II was restored, and with him the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England. But during the years of Puritan control of the church, many had devised new forms of religious practice. They did not all return willingly to a Church of England moving back to the high church model which had

caused the Puritans to despair before 1640. The Compton Census noted 42 Nonconformists in Shipton in 1676; nine years later the vicar named only 17.<sup>8</sup> There was a Quaker Meeting House at Milton in 1738, and three or four families and three or four single persons were said to attend from Shipton; similarly there were 'three or four common People that I can only call Dissenters... Formerly I believe there might be more'.<sup>9</sup> Does this in part explain a stable but low level of registration in Shipton after 1660?

Shipton parish was an unusually large and complex one, which makes interpretation difficult. The people of Shipton, Milton, Lyneham, Langley, Leafield and Ramsden were all supposed to come to Shipton church, but 'Their living at a great distance from the church' was a reasonable explanation given by the vicar in 1738 for why his parishioners neglected the 'public worship of God on the Lord's Day'.<sup>10</sup> There had at one time been a chapel in Lyneham, but it seems to have disappeared before the period of parish registers. There was a chapel in Leafield throughout the parish register period but apparently no separate register until 1784. It would not be surprising if inhabitants of Ramsden did not walk to Shipton every Sunday but went to Wilcote or Charlbury, and even more so if they did not carry coffins so far, particularly if they were poor and had no cart. Similarly, Lyneham's folk perhaps went to Sarsden. This could explain the surprisingly low level of burials in Shipton parish. There is a tradition in Ramsden of how a coffin was lost in a blizzard for nearly a week; the bearers set it down to warm themselves and it was buried in the snow.<sup>11</sup> More likely they abandoned their journey to Shipton and returned home before the snow was too deep. Most important is the sudden upswing in the baptism rate after the start of the Leafield register, which indicates that the 'Field Towners' did not regularly baptise their children in Shipton. Were there chapel registers which have been lost?

Trends revealed by the parish register totals suggest further topics for investigation. Did only the more prosperous or respectable from the townships go to Shipton church? Did they form a stable population with a stable demographic pattern? Does it lead further to the reflection that it was the cottagers and labourers from the more distant townships who generally did not come to Shipton church, and that they were the section of the population which expanded rapidly in the later eighteenth century, creating the phenomenal population growth of the early nineteenth century? The problems are awkward but the historical challenges to explanation are interesting.

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7 E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The Population History of England 1541-1871* (1981), pp. 528-535. Note: the Shipton population figures approximate to and are taken as the mid-points of each 40-year span.

8 Oxfordshire Archives M.S. Oxf. Dioc. papers d.708 (1685).

9 'Articles of Enquiry addressed to the clergy of the Diocese of Oxford at the Primary Visitation of Dr. Thomas Secker in 1738', *Oxford Record Society* 38 (1957), pp. 134-5.

10 *Ibid.*

11 D.H. Allport, *Ramsden* (1965), p. 8.

## One Hundred Years Ago

From the *Oxford Times*, March 18 1893

### SHIPTON UNDER WYCHWOOD

**Death of Mr Wakefield Reade.** – The death of Mr Reade occurred at his residence at Shipton Court, on Monday, from paralysis. Mr Reade, who was born in the year 1815, leaves a widow and two children. He was formerly the confidential servant of the late Sir John Reade, on whose death he succeeded to the estate of Shipton Court and other property. His claim led to litigation; but the opposition was eventually withdrawn. The funeral took place on Thursday.

*Three years earlier, the Oxford Times for February 8 1890 had reported the following:-*

**Death of the Disinherited Baronet of Shipton Court.** The death is announced at the early age of thirty-eight of Sir Chandos Stanhope Hoskyns Reade, sixth baronet of the second creation, who was disinherited by his great-uncle, the late Sir John Chandos Reade, of Shipton Court. He married in 1880 Elizabeth, daughter of the late Trygarn Griffith Esq., of Carryglwd Park, Anglesey, and leaves no issue. He is succeeded by his cousin, described as a citizen of the United States.

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**Wychwoods History, Number 7 (1992)** **£3.00**

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Cover illustration: *The South front of Shipton Court after restoration by Alfred Groves and Sons.*