WYCHWOODS HISTORY

THE JOURNAL OF THE WYCHWOODS LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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WYCHWOODS
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Contents

The observations and opinions in the articles and notices in the Journal are those of their authors and not necessarily those of the Society

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Foreword

In April 1981, Margaret Ware and Mike Linfield called a public meeting in Shipton village hall to see if there was sufficient interest in the Wychwoods to form a local history group. From that well attended meeting, in true English style, a committee was formed and the Wychwoods Local History Society was up and running by the autumn with 87 members. At that meeting in 1981, John Steane of the Oxfordshire Museum Service emphasised the importance of research and practical work as part of a society's activities. Journal Seventeen again demonstrates how well this advice was taken and the continuing wide range of research and interests in the Society and in our community.

At the beginning of the twenty first century, the WLHS small research group moved their attention to an early twentieth century set of documents produced as a result of Lloyd Georges' People's Budget of 1909. From the resulting tax lists, the nature of the differing neighbourhoods in Milton and Shipton were examined. In this Journal, Part 1 covers Milton with Shipton to follow.

From an entry in Leafield Overseers' of the Poor accounts, Joan Howard Drake records the ingredients that made up 'Daffy's Elixir' and from the remains of two small earthenware jars and a glass seal found during fieldwalking, Margaret Ware offers us 'Poor Man's Friend' and a little wine from All Souls College.

Jack Howard Drake's extracts from Reuben Rainbow's diary show something of the hardships of a soldier from the Wychwoods serving in the Boer war. Wendy Pearse has found fascinating information about those from Ascott killed in action in World War One, not only in a Flanders field but also in Mesopotamia and at sea.

And John Richards remembers his childhood in Upper Milton during the 1930s.

Trudy Yates, Joan Howard-Drake and Sue Jourdan

His Name be Not Forgotten

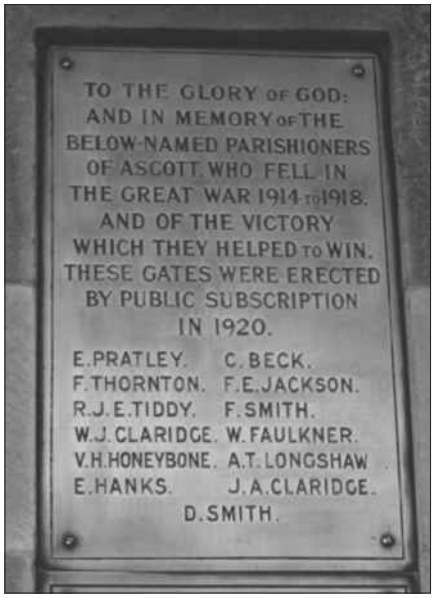
WendyPearse

The Roll of Honour for the First World War kept in the Tiddy Hall names sixty-nine men and three women, approximately one sixth of the inhabitants of the village of Ascott. Of this number thirteen are commemorated on the plaque on the pillar of the church gates as the war dead of Ascott. These men would have been well-known to their fellow villagers but today it seems rather impersonal and remote that only initials and not Christian names were recorded.

After the war the relatives of the deceased were sent the appropriate medals, a scroll and bronze plaque. The scroll read 'He whom this scroll commemorates was numbered among those who, at the call of King and Country, left all that was dear to them, endured hardness, faced danger, and finally passed out of the sight of men by the path of duty and self sacrifice, giving us their own lives that others might live in freedom. Let those who come after see to it that his name be not forgotten. But do we remember them? Their names are read out at the Remembrance Day service and the poignant notes of the Last Post break the silence. Their surnames are past village names but in several cases, their families have moved on and apart from Reginald Tiddy, few memories survive. A sense of sadness pervades. If possible, I would like to put some flesh on the bones of these lost men who walked our streets, worked in the fields and probably spent their short life span in the pretty surroundings of the Evenlode valley which we all enjoy today. Many of them, however, breathed their last in the blood, sweat and mud of Flanders and the Somme, far away from their Ascott homes.

I have uncovered some information about a number of them and am grateful to those villagers who have helped me, but if anyone knows any details, no matter how small, I should be pleased to hear them. Opposite is a list of the names on the plaque; fortunately their christian names are on the Roll of Honour.

One of these men who did not die on the Western Front is **Frederick Smith.** The clue to his war is inscribed on his parents' tombstone in Ascott churchyard. Most of us acquaint the First World War with the



ELISHA PRATLEY
FRANK THORNTON
REGINALD J. TIDDY
WILLIAM J. CLARIDGE
V. HARRY HONEYBONE
ERNEST HANKS
CECIL BECK
FRANK E. JACKSON
FRED SMITH
WILLIAM FAULKNER
ALBERT T. LONGSHAW
JOHN A. CLARIDGE
DENNIS SMITH

The plaque remembering the thirteen men killed in the First World War

Western Front, perhaps followed by Gallipoli but the war was fought in other peripheral regions, one being Mesopotamia, today's Iraq, and it was there close to the ancient Tigris and Euphrates rivers that Frederick Smith met his death.

Fred's parents were Charles and Rebecca, Rebecca being one of the Ascott Martyrs. In the 1891 Census, he is listed aged one with brothers Thomas 21, Charles 5 and sister Elizabeth 12. The five-year-old Charles was later to become the father of the late Charlie Smith of Maple Way and I remember Charlie once told me of his father's brothers Fred and Wally ' they was both army'. Wally was not born in 1891 but the rest of the family were living in the house opposite the then Coldstone Farm, the last on the left heading for Shipton, where Charles was still living in the 1950s.

When the war began, Fred was in India, a Lance-Sergeant in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire 43rd Light Infantry or the Forty Thieves as they soon came to be known on arrival in Mesopotamia, due to their remarkable scrounging abilities. The Indian Government pressured by the British had sent a small force to secure British interests in the oil refinery at Abadan and the pipeline to the coast. Unfortunately the military commanders of the mission produced a total military disaster and caught up in it were Fred and his comrades.

In 1897 and 1898 the Ascott School Log Book records Fred as commended by the Inspector during his visits, so the Bible story of Adam and Eve must have been well instilled. Now, in the winter of 1914 located

Ascott under Wychwood Church Memorial Gates with the plaque on the pillar to the left.

in the original Garden of Eden, reality defied belief when confronted with a filthy mud-hut village huddled around an open space in the centre of which grew a stump of a tree reputed to be the original tree of temptation. In the squalid and flea ridden surroundings occupied by Arabs who stole and murdered for gain, this was a far cry from the biblical stories recounted in Fred's schooldays.

General Sir John Nixon GOC Mesopotamia was ambitious and not being content to secure the oil installation as ordered, he decided to try to capture Baghdad. After entering the port of Basra on 22 November 1914, the 30 miles to Abadan were soon accomplished, but the way ahead was across a vast open terrain in an inhospitable climate and lying in wait were a large Turkish Army and bands of ruthless tribesmen. Nevertheless the force pressed on and had reached Amara, 100 miles north on the Tigris by 3 June 1915 and a similar distance on the Euphrates by 25 July.

Nixon, delighted, decided to send Major General Sir Charles Townshend, Commander GOC Expeditionary Force D, northwards towards Baghdad. Townshend with 14,000 troops accepted the orders to advance a further 90 miles to Kut, but planned on his own initiative to press on the other 210 miles to Baghdad in search of glory. The force defeated the Turks at Kut but the Turkish army slipped away. However Townshend pressed on to

Ctesiphon 20 miles from Baghdad. Through 1915 in the extreme cold of winter, floods, intense humidity and mosquitoes of spring, and a summer of such heat that the bully-beef melted in the tins, the Forty Thieves fought through all the initial successful campaigns but at Ctesiphon General Nureddin had entrenched a large army across the line of the British advance. Outnumbered three to one Townshend attacked but was sharply repelled suffering 4,500 casualties and was reluctantly forced to retreat. This lasted over several days, the 43rd providing the rearguard all the way. They entered Kut on 2 December 1915.

Kut lay in a bend of the Tigris surrounded on three sides by the river. The troops collapsed into sleep on entering the village, but once awake they were set to digging lines of trenches, dugouts and gunpits. They laid cables and erected barbed wire, feverishly working to block the land approach throughout the twenty-four hours before the Turkish army caught up with them. Townshend had plenty of time to retreat to the coast but instead he decided to await relief and preserve his great ambition of glory. On one corner where the trenches met the river was the fort and here at noon on Christmas Eve after hours of rifle fire, grenades and bombardment, the enemy advanced in formation on the fort. As they breached the walls, thirty-three Eurasian Gunners stood their ground in the trench behind blocking the way into Kut. With only fourteen still holding out, the two hundred strong Forty Thieves bludgeoned in with butts and bayonets, followed by the Pioneers. For hours they fought amidst bursting bombs, exploding shells, machine-gun fire and the cries, screams and hoarse clamour of men fighting for their lives. All around the Kut defences the battle continued until at last the Turkish attack faltered and they fell back, leaving two thousand dead. The entire garrison talked of the heroism of the Eurasian Rangoon Gunners and the Forty Thieves, and it is possible that this is when Fred Smith was awarded his DCM, the highest award granted to an NCO apart from the Victoria Cross, and he was also promoted to Sergeant.

Unfortunately and unusually the Regimental Honours List does not contain citations for the fifteen NCOs and other Ranks who were awarded a medal during this period but amongst those who 'were brought to notice for gallant and distinguished service in the field from 5 October 1915–17 January 1916' was Lance Sergeant F. Smith DCM 'R' Company.

Townshend sent a message to Nixon who had already retreated to Basra, saying he only had supplies for a month. Nixon panicked, sent the first relief column which having struggled through floods and Turkish attacks was forced to retreat having lost 6,000 men between 18 and 21 January 1916.

Lieutenant General Aylmer commander of the relief force asked Townshend to co-operate with diversionary sorties when the second relief

column advanced in March but Townshend refused saying it was bad for morale. Again the column was repulsed with 3,500 casualties. Townshend, urged to break out rather than starve never revealed the true amount of stocks in hand. He was not prepared to stain his reputation by defeat, revelling in the thought of the hero gallantly holding out against countless hordes. The third relief column pushed further in April but to no avail and by that time 23,000 men had become casualties attempting to relieve less than half that number still in Kut.

By 29 April food had run out and Townshend had to surrender. At last the remaining men of Expeditionary Force D. could stand upright in the trenches. Starving, filthy, disease ridden, and after enduring the environs of hell for month after month, they watched Townshend depart for surrender negotiations.

With his personal staff Townshend was sent to Constantinople where he remained an honoured guest of the Turkish commander until the end of the war whilst three hundred and forty five prisoners were exchanged for Turkish prisoners. However on 4 May, following the forced abandonment of the troops by their officers, the remaining Expeditionary Force D men set out on a 1200 mile march led by their NCOs including Fred, during which a vast number would succumb to the dreadful conditions. In fact the war diary of the 43rd Light Infantry records that 'The conditions were, in fact, inconceivable by any who was not present. It is doubtful whether the 43rd in its long and glorious history has ever had to endure such vicissitudes as in the eighteen months campaign in Mesopotamia'. Three hundred of the Forty Thieves went into captivity, only 90 survived to return home in 1918. They marched under Kurdish whips and died in their thousands of typhus, dysentery, cholera, extremes of heat and cold and exhaustion. If they dropped out of the column they were soon at the mercy and torture of local tribesmen. Seventy per cent of the British and fifty per cent of the Indian troops died.

Company Sergeant Major Love kept a little book during this march wherein he listed what happened to the men on this terrible journey. Against Sergeant Smith's name is the following 'Was left at Mamoura on the march to Airan suffering from dysentery have not been seen or heard of since. 26 June 1916' This probably explains why June is given as Fred's month of death on his parents' tombstone. In actual fact he did not die for nearly two more months. How great an ordeal his last weeks were we can only surmise.

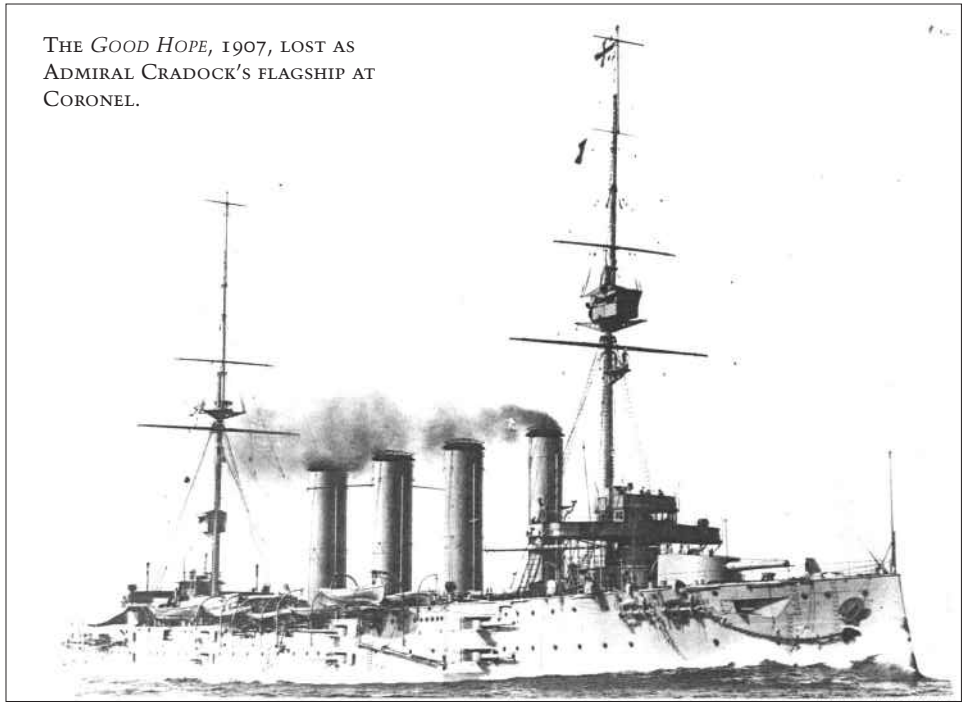
Great secrecy was preserved about the Mesopotamia disaster and the church gate plaque which lists the dead in the order in which they died, appears to record Fred as dying in autumn 1917. However some time after his parents died, Charles in 1918 and Rebecca in 1920, news must have arrived with a more exact date of death. Sadly, Fred was a long time missing.

In the Commonwealth War Graves Commission register is an entry for Sergeant F. Smith dcm, 1st Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckingham-shire Light Infantry 8057. Died 15 August 1916. His body lies in the Baghdad (North Gate) War Cemetery in Iraq, Grave no XXI T 28.

Although Fred's mortal remains lie far from home, another Ascott man's final hours were spent at a much greater distance – the other side of the world, on the Pacific Ocean. **Elisha Pratley**, a stoker in the Royal Navy was the first man of Ascott to die in the First World War.

Elisha's parents William and Elizabeth had already lived in 1 Feoffees Cottages (the lower end of Church View) for nearly twenty years when he was born in 1888. One of the youngest of at least twelve children, he attended school at the same time as Fred Smith and was likewise commended by the School Inspector, passing his labour certificate in 1901.

By 1907 he was in the Royal Navy, enlisting as a seaman but when war broke out, serving as Stoker 1st Class on the HMS *Good Hope*, the



The *Good Hope*, 1907, lost as Admiral Cradock's flagship at Coronel.

flagship of Rear Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock in command of the South American Station. The *Good Hope* was built in Fairfield, Govan and launched in 1901. With a displacement of 14,150 tons, carrying 2,500 tons of coal and hailed as a mighty cruiser with a speed of 23 knots, she was, on completion, amongst the fastest ships in the world. Deck fittings were kept to a minimum to reduce the risk of fire and she was usually employed as a cruiser squadron flagship as befitted her size and prestige.

When Japan joined the Allies just after the start of the war, Germany's powerful East Asiatic Squadron was based in Far Eastern Waters. Its Commander Vice Admiral Graf von Spee realised the necessity of leaving those waters and decided to cross the Pacific and operate off the west coast of South America. Reaching Easter Island with armoured cruisers Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and light cruiser Nurnburg, he was joined by two more light cruisers Dresden and Leipzig. The British Admiralty, aware von Spee was making for South America, informed Rear Admiral Cradock. Unfortunately Cradock's Squadron, the by now elderly cruisers *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*, light cruiser *Glasgow* and armed merchant cruiser *Otranto*, were greatly inferior. Declining to wait for the old and slow pre-dreadnought *Canopu*s which carried a main armament of four 12in guns, Cradock sailed from the Falklands, through the Magellan Straits and steamed north up the coast of Chile in search of the enemy.

Von Spee was at Valparaiso and learned that the *Glasgow* was only two hundred miles south at the Chilean port of Coronel preparing to rejoin Cradock's Squadron. The German ships steamed south at full speed to attack *Glasgow* and met the British Squadron fifty miles off Coronel on 1 November 1914 shortly before 5pm. Although hopelessly outmatched Cradock did not hesitate to engage. He signalled the Canopus 'am going to attack the enemy now'. Orders were given to the engine room to increase speed to 17 knots. Elisha and his fellow stokers must have been working flat out to fuel the boilers. The four British ships steamed north in single file, the *Good Hope* leading, whilst the Germans approached in a similar formation from the opposite direction. The sun was setting behind the British and unfortunately the range was too great. By the time the ships were close enough to engage, the sun had set, the British were silhouetted against the afterglow and failing light made it difficult for them to see the enemy ships against the coastline. At 7.03pm. the enemy now twelve thousand yards away, opened fire, quickly followed by the *Good Hope*, *Monmouth* and *Glasgow*. However the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau were crack ships renowned for gunnery and as the squadrons converged, each engaging the opposite in line, growing darkness and heavy spray of head seas made firing difficult for the main deck guns of the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth*. The enemy soon got the range and their third salvos caused fire to break out on the forepart of both ships. With the two British ships constantly on fire and repeatedly hit, the battle continued until at 7.50pm

an immense explosion occurred amidships on the *Good Hope*. In the darkness ferocious flames shot two hundred feet high. Total destruction followed. With the enemy approaching, *Glasgow* was forced to leave the failing *Monmouth* but at 9.20pm seventy-five flashes of fire were observed which no doubt marked the final attack on the *Monmouth*.

There were no survivors from either ship. Cradock and one thousand six hundred of his men were lost. Coronel was a major British Naval defeat, only redeemed by the destruction shortly afterwards of von Spee's Squadron off the Falkland Islands.

Stoker 1st Class Elisha Pratley 238572 HMS *Good Hope* Royal Navy died age 26 on Sunday 1 November 1914 and is remembered with honour on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial on Southsea Common.

A cruel twist of fate, not an incident of war, caused the death of Ascott's second sailor **William Faulkner**. Another Stoker 1st class, William was the son of James and Emily Faulkner of Andrews Yard. Both James (Jim) and his brother were shepherds. The school log book again lists William's name as commended by the inspector. He joined the Royal Navy as a stoker in 1916 and was known for his exemplary character. Into his second year at sea, at the beginning of 1918 he was a member of the crew of the Royal Navy destroyer Racoon. Launched in 1910 from the Cammel Laird shipyard, the Racoon weighed in at nine hundred and twenty tons and was capable of a speed of 27 knots. I do not know whether the ship was approaching the British mainland or leaving, but on 9 January 1918, the Racoon, under the command of Lt George Napier entered the Sound of Inistrahull between the island of that name and the north coast of Ireland, not very far from the Giant's Causeway. A snowstorm was raging and at around 2am Racoon struck the Garrives Rocks between the islets of the Garvans and was totally wrecked. None of the crew on board, usually about one hundred personnel, survived. Fortunately for them, nine ratings had been left behind at the last port of call. Whatever the reason, they must have thanked their lucky stars. One crew member was buried on Rathlin Island, two more at Culduff churchyard and twenty bodies were taken to Rathmullen for burial. The *Oxford Times* reported the tragedy and the fate of William Faulkner on 26 January 1918: 'One of the bodies recovered from the ship and has been buried is believed to be his'.

Stoker 1st Class William Faulkner K/34503 HMS *Racoon* Royal Navy who died age 20 on Wednesday 9 January 1918 is remembered with honour on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial on Southsea Common.

On 4 August 1914 the German troops invaded Belgium and the Great War had begun. As they steadily advanced amidst great destruction and bloodshed swinging southwest towards the French frontier, the Allies scrambled to range their own armies against them. But the surge seemed

unstoppable and even the renowned regular British army who had advanced to Mons by the 23 August, along with their allies was stumbling back in total disarray. However the German campaign based on the Schlieffen Plan proved too grand for available communications and by 29 August a gap had been forced in the German advance causing the German troops to swing east instead of west of Paris. Then by crossing the Marne on the 3 September still heading south east, they exposed their flank to the Allies instead of outflanking them as the Plan intended. Suddenly the situation hung in the balance. An allied counter-offensive on the 6 September at the Battle of the Marne was followed by the Battle of the Aisne. This petered out in deadlock at the beginning of October leaving an open flank between the Aisne and the Channel. The ensuing race to the sea saw both sides striving for victory in an endeavour to outflank each other as they established their trenches step by step northwards to the coast. On 9 October Antwerp surrendered, the Belgium field army escaped down the coast and the Western Front reached the sea at Nieuport. In places the line was still indecisive as ferocious fighting continued but by 11 November the trenches extended solidly from the North Sea to Switzerland. A long grim war lay ahead for all combatants.

The Front held firm through 1915 and into 1916. However when the Germans attacked the French defences in the Verdun sector on 21 February 1916 a momentum began which was to culminate in Britain's greatest military slaughter, the Battle of the Somme.

A long-projected Anglo/French offensive had been planned by Sir Douglas Haig, British Commander in Chief for 15 August 1916 but General Joffre, the French Commander, insisted that the offensive must be brought forward. His force defending Verdun was sustaining impossible losses and he felt that unless something was done to relieve German pressure, total annihilation would ensue. Haig agreed with great reluctance to bring the date forward to 1 July 1916. Unlike the other belligerents, Britain had been forced at the outbreak of war to create a new army from scratch. The British peacetime army was merely a small imperial garrison force. But the original British Expeditionary Force of four infantry and one cavalry divisions had grown by 1 July 1916 to 58 divisions. Despite the very successful setting up and maintaining of this army, the troops though trained, were green and the majority untried consisting for the most part of the million volunteers who had joined in swarms in 1914 drawn by Kitchener's pointing finger.

On 24 June 1916 British guns opened up the preliminary bombardment on the Somme. At 7.30am on 1 July fourteen British Divisions climbed out of the trenches on an 18-mile front north of the Somme and marched slowly forward, each man carrying 66lbs of kit. They expected to find the enemy, barbed wire, trenches, artillery and defences annihilated by the week-long bombardment. Instead they were massacred by German

artillery and machine guns as they plodded through no-mans land and lined up to pass through the very few gaps which their own artillery had created in the massed barbed wire. It was a catastrophe without parallel in British history. By the end of the day, 57,000 men had fallen, 19,000 of them killed.

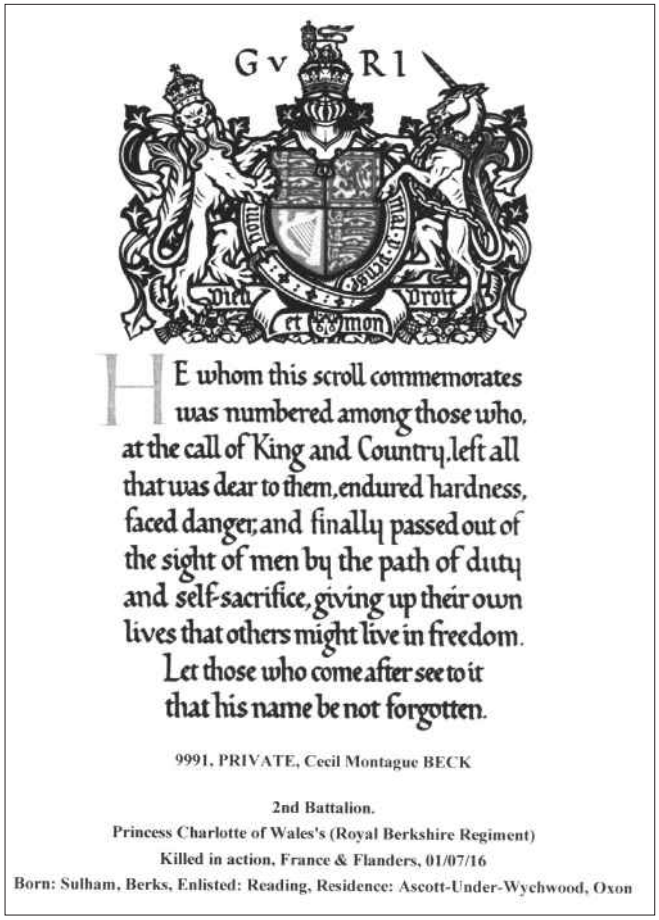
One of these 19,000 was **Cecil Beck**. Cecil had been born in Sulham near Pangbourne in Berkshire and was the son of Louisa Mary Beck who had moved with her sister Florence to 16, Shipton Road, Ascott, now the home of Mrs Storey. Perhaps feeling he would like to serve in his home county's regiment, Cecil enlisted at Reading in the 2nd Battalion, Princess Charlotte of Wales's Royal Berkshire Regiment. His cousin Mrs Lily Quinnell remembers that Cecil and Mr Farmer who lived in Martin Kirk's house next door, both came home on leave and Cecil's mother held a party for them before they returned to the front. Mr Farmer survived the war but Cecil never came home again.

The War Diary for the 2nd Battalion records the following. They moved up on the night of 30 June/1 July to the assembly position for battle, their objective the village of Ovillers, north of La Boiselle. At 7.30am they advanced, 24 officers and 800 other ranks. By 9am only about 75 could be mustered. On 2 July the remnants of the battalion were withdrawn. A month later despite repeated offensives no advance whatsoever had been made in that part of the line.

Private Cecil Montague Beck 9991, 2nd Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment, killed in action 1st July 1916 age 19. His body lies in Serre Road Cemetery No 2, Somme France Plot 3, Row C, Grave 6.

Nine days later came Ascott's second death. **Frank Thornton** was born in Charlbury but his parents William and Kate soon moved to 31 High Street, Ascott, now Yewtree Cottage. Frank attended Ascott School where each year between 1897 and 1900 he was commended by the Inspector. The school log book does record however that in July 1900, Frank and Jesse Moss were very severely punished for impudence. Do we suspect a thrashing? Mrs Thornton soon called on the headmaster but was apparently quite satisfied at his explanation. Frank passed his Labour Certificate in October. By the time war was declared Frank was living near Hitchin where he enlisted in the 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment. His brother Frederick also served through the Great War.

On 1 July at 7.30am Frank's battalion advanced on the extreme right of the British attack next to the French. By 8am the German front line trenches were taken. Having secured the support trenches, the 90th Infantry Brigade went through and captured Montauban. The 2nd Bedfordshire's were given the dangerous task of clearing the trenches and dugouts of any remaining Germans resulting in the capture of 300



After the end of the war, the bereaved family received the medals, a bronze plaque and a scroll recording their family member's

prisoners. On the 2 July the Germans counter attacked but the battalion held their trenches until relieved on the night of 4 July. Arriving in the rest area, they fell into well-earned sleep having had practically no sleep or wash for six days or removed their clothes for three weeks. By 9 July they were back in front line trenches once more.

Frank was wounded in action but buried 30 miles away in Abbeville. To reach there he must have gone through the whole process of casualty clearance. Wounded in an advance, a casualty would have to wait to be picked up by stretcher-bearers, pass through the regimental aid post in the trenches, then on to an advanced dressing station for assessment of his wound. Possibly then by ambulance to a casualty clearance station for emergency operation or nursing and as soon as possible removed to a field

hospital or by train to a base hospital. It seems most likely that Frank was wounded in one of the first four days of the offensive when his battalion was in action, and reached Abbeville through the casualty system. Alternatively on return to the front he could have been hit by a shell or sniper, quickly processed to the train and died en route to Abbeville.

Private Frank Thornton, 19108 2nd Battalion Bedfordshire Regiment, died of wounds 10th July 1916 age 27. He is buried in Abbeville Communal Cemetery, Somme V.C.3

Of course one name that has not been forgotten is that of **Lieutenant Reginald John Elliott Tiddy**, the third Ascott man to die on the Somme. A few years ago Martin Kirk described in *The Wychwood* his search for Tiddy's grave in Laventie but I can add a little more to the story. Educated in Tonbridge and Oxford before pursuing a distinguished university career, Tiddy was a scholar at University College and took a first class in Classical Moderations in 1900 and a Literae Humaniores in 1902. He was Passmore Edwards scholar in 1903, became a Fellow of University and later Trinity Colleges where he lectured in Classics and English. He was also University Lecturer in English. The elder son of William and Ellen Tiddy, they lived in Priory Cottage in Priory Lane. A lover of music, he was very interested in the folk dance and song movement of Oxfordshire.

Lord Sanderson Furniss who built Chestnut Close, now Wychwood Manor, was a friend of Tiddy and in his memoirs describes how Tiddy bought the land and built the first Tiddy Hall. He also explains how Tiddy joined up owing to a stern sense of duty, though unfitted for army life and so short-sighted that only after several unsuccessful attempts was he finally accepted. However he approached army life with buoyant zest, his most attractive characteristic, and taught folk dancing to the other soldiers. Only his most intimate friends knew how deeply he felt the horror of war and the misery of his soul. He was promoted Lieutenant on 29 July 1915 and spent some months in 1916 on instructional duties. However his battalion, 2nd/4th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry moved into trenches at Fanquissart on the 9 August and shortly afterwards Tiddy was killed in action. One of a lieutenant's major duties was the welfare of his men. Those in forward posts in no-mans land all had to be checked during the night perhaps following wire guide lines to locate them. Sometimes a lieutenant led patrols into no mans land to surprise and attack an enemy patrol or to capture Germans for information. We do not know the exact details of his death.

Lieutenant Reginald John Elliott Tiddy, 2nd/4th Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, killed in action 10 August 1916 age 36. He is buried at Laventie Military Cemetary, La Gorgue Nord France 11 D 20.

Despite the disaster of 1 July the offensive had to continue and did so for 140 days. Every allied attack was followed by a German counter offensive. On both sides the soldiers shared the relentless terror and suffering. On 15 September 1916 the weapon which was to have such an impact on land warfare entered the stage. Rumours of a wonder weapon, a leviathon, a war machine, spread like wildfire amongst the troops. In the initial offensive only 32 took part, grinding along at half a mile an hour, their interiors a hell of heat and noise. They opened a gap, soon blocked by the enemy. Their day was yet to come.

Perhaps **William Claridge** the next Ascott casualty, who died near this first tank action, was one of those who marvelled at these new monsters of war. William's family lived in the second cottage up the top row of four in Church View. His father James was a carter from Chilson, his mother Sarah came from Ascott and they had lived in The Row (Church View) since at least 1887. William had at least five elder sisters and one elder brother. In 1911 he signed the parish register as a witness when his sister Charlotte married Harry Pinfold from Enstone. 1916 was an extremely sad year for the Claridges. Sarah died in February and James in March so although they never knew about William's death, it must have been a harsh blow for his siblings. Like Tiddy, William enlisted in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry but in the 6th Battalion. By the end of September the battalion had already taken part in several offensives on the front and on 26th was in position behind Morval. Relieved on the 28th, on the 29th they paraded in battle order and marched to the trenches at Trones Wood. It seems unlikely William ever reached Trones Wood for on that day he died of wounds and was buried not far from the battlefield.

Corporal William J. Claridge, 6th Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry 17716, died of wounds 29 September 1916 age 22. He is buried in Grove Town Cemetery, Meaulte Somme France 1 K 16.

The Somme battle continued on through October into November. Regiments from every part of Britain and many parts of the Empire took part and died in their thousands. The French fought on the southern part of the Front. The offensive was finally closed by Haig on 18 November.

Ascott's last casualty in 1916 was **Victor 'Harry' Honeybone**. Harry's parents Thomas and Naomi were living in Church House which used to stand in Church Close from at least 1884 and after it was demolished they moved to Mary Barnes' house next door. His two elder brothers Peter and Ralph also served and no doubt attended Ascott School where Harry was commended by the inspector in 1900, 1901 and 1903. Ascott banns register records the forthcoming marriage of Victor Harry Honeybone to Louisa Elizabeth Pittaway in 1915 so here we have our first war widow. But Louisa later married Percy Charles Faulkner and moved to The Hill,

Shipton. Originally Harry joined the 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry but was later transferred to the 5th Royal Berkshire Regiment. This battalion was in the Arras area from October 1916 to the end of the year and like all others took turns in manning the trenches. They relieved the 9th Essex on 1 December and by the 5 December had sustained 12 casualties including Harry. There is little doubt these occurred from enemy shelling. Even when no actual fighting took place, the attrition rate from shelling, mortaring and raiding amounted to many hundreds a day along the line.

We cannot be sure whether Harry ever saw his little daughter Annie Bertha Elizabeth who was born on 20 November 1915 but he would almost certainly have been sent photographs, perhaps to mark her first birthday. When the war memorial cross was dedicated at Shipton on 11 September 1921, little Annie in a white frilly frock and bonnet performed the unveiling together with Hilda Edith Coombes whose father was also killed in the War. Harry's wife Louisa was one of the Pittaways from Shipton and Harry's name appears on both the Ascott and Shipton Memorials.

Private Victor Harry Honeybone, 5th Battalion Royal Berkshire Regiment 39347, killed in action 2nd December 1916 age 21. He is buried in Faubourg D'Amiens Cemetery, Arras, Pas de Calais France 1 J 51.

On 15 December the French finally attained victory at Verdun. Four months battle on the Somme saw 415,000 British Empire casualties, 195,000 French, and German casualties at least equalled these totals. And still stalemate reigned on the Western Front.

At the end of 1916 French Marshal Joffre retired and handed over command to General Nivelle, the hero of Verdun. In Britain the recently appointed prime minister David Lloyd George was determined to curb the excessive loss of life which had occurred through Douglas Haig's strategies throughout 1916. Lloyd George totally mistrusted Haig and secretly agreed that the British army should be placed under French command, to the utter consternation of Haig and the army. Nivelle planned a major offensive on the Aisne for April which unfortunately allowed the German Commander Ludendorff ample time to complete and retreat behind his massive newly-constructed defence zone on the Siegfried or Hindenberg Line, some twenty miles to his rear. On 9–15 April as a preliminary to the Nivelle Offensive, the British made good progress in the Battle of Arras, a diversion to the coming attack on the Aisne. A strong Canadian force swept up the slope and over the crest to capture Vimy Ridge despite the loss of 11,000 casualties in the process. But the French offensive was a total failure with immense casualties and no gain, resulting in mutiny by the French troops which spread rapidly throughout their whole army

except fortunately for those manning the front line trenches. Came the hour, came the man, and with the French command placed in the hands of General Petain, a man of firmness and understanding, the disastrous situation in the French Army was gradually mastered. In March the outbreak of the Russian revolution was to be one major impact on the war whilst the United States declaration of war on Germany on the 6 April, following the German proclamation of unrestricted U-boat warfare resulting in the sinking of US vessels, was an even more decisive factor.

With May came the next Ascott death, that of **Ernest Hanks**, the uncle of the late Owen Shirley and great uncle of Fred Russell. Ernest was born in Ascott and baptised on 27 September 1891, the only son of Thomas a farrier, and Sarah. At Ascott school he was commended by the Inspector in 1897 and in 1904, along with John Claridge of whom more later, he was one of the children who entered for Charlbury Flower Show, using plants donated by Lady Margaret Watney of Cornbury Park. The family lived in John Cull's house, 1 The Green, and in later records, his father is listed as a cattle dealer renting Cutts Close and as a cattle doctor. Perhaps a chip off the old block, this may explain why Ernest was known as Doc and why he was a member of the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, a troop of Yeomanry Cavalry highly regarded by its eminent members the Duke of Marlborough and Winston Churchill. In fact through Winston Churchill's influence as First Lord of the Admiralty, the Q.O.O.H. was the first Territorial Regiment to mobilise on 5 August 1914 and embark on active service. However the use of cavalry in the First World War was rapidly becoming outdated and in fact the men of the Q.O.O.H. spent a great deal of time fighting alongside the infantry throughout the War.

It seems very likely that Ernest must have been in the war from the onset with the Q.O.O.H. and the reason why he is recorded under the 1st/4th Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry when he died could have been secondment into a badly depleted regiment after returning to the front following an injury. Strangely, the 1st/4th Battalion Record states that a 17-man reinforcement joined the regiment on the 20 April. Could this have included Ernest? By 18 May the battalion had graduated forward to the outpost line at Hermies not very far from the Hindenberg Line where German defences included a canal and three colossal belts of barbed wire. No-mans land varied greatly in distance there, from merely each end of a demolished bridge to nearly a mile in width. On 21 May a fighting patrol of 28 went out in two waves to establish a post astride the east bridgehead. The darkness made it difficult to keep in touch and the enemy had laid booby traps into which several men fell. They eventually located an enemy trench but were met with very heavy rifle fire. However they charged in with bayonets and killed many of the enemy before retiring under cover of the Lewis Gun Section. Casualties were 3 killed, 2 wounded and 1 missing. One of those who died was Ernest.

Ernest Hanks, died in action in 1917, age 26.

Fred Russell remembers his mother recalling her grandmother's continuing grief over Ernest's death. She would sit and cry whilst she held Ernest's photograph on her lap.

Private Ernest Hanks 1st/4th Battalion Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry 203371. Killed in Action Monday 21st May 1917 age 26. He is buried in Hermies British Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. B 2.

Through May and June Haig was full of ardent enthusiasm for his long-sought campaign in Flanders. Lloyd Georges' response was almost total opposition. He foresaw casualties on the same scale as the Somme. But he was unable in the end to assert Cabinet responsibility over British strategy and Haig's proposals were allowed to go ahead allowing the Army of the Empire to embark on the bloodiest battle campaign in history, sited in the

Ypres salient and forever after known as Passchendaele. A salient is a piece of land pushed forward into hostile territory so that the enemy is ranged around it on all sides. Soldiers are shot at from the front, the sides and from behind and at Ypres, the enemy held the high ground on three sides. Early on 7 June following the detonation of 19 huge mines which had been placed under the German positions after two years of secret tunnelling, the infantry advanced behind an immense creeping barrage and achieved a tremendous victory by taking Messines Ridge at the south of the salient. All boded well. But the bad weather which dominated on 31 July at the beginning of the Passchendaele campaign was the true omen.

For three months the fighting continued and each time the Allies attempted a fresh advance, the weather turned foul. The terrain in Flanders had bedevilled commanders all through history and 1917 was no different. Water stood up to mens' knees and many were smothered. If they managed to struggle out of the trenches, they were caked from head to foot. The smell was awful, not just from the mud but from bodies or body parts which lay beneath their feet. Fresh water was virtually unobtainable and the difficulty of bringing up supplies can only be imagined. The landscape was a bog of rubble, shattered houses and occasional tree stumps. All this amongst continual bombing, shelling, machine gunning and sniping by the enemy forces, focused on any movement.

Frank Jackson was one Ascott man who endured some of these conditions until he died in action on 10 September 1917. Frank Ernest Jackson was the son of Thomas and Mary Ann who lived in Church View in the seventh cottage up the row of eight. Serving in the same Regiment as Lieutenant Tiddy, Frank's battalion had moved up from reserve camp at Ypres on the 7 September and reached the front line at St Julien on the 9th. On the 10th they assembled at dawn in shell-holes about 400 yards forward of the front line and remained there until zero hour – 4 pm. Advancing under artillery barrage, they were within 30 yards of their objective when held up by machine gun fire from both sides. Despite reinforcements there was no chance of further advance and the survivors remained in position until it was possible to withdraw under cover of darkness. Sixteen men were killed, one of whom was Frank. Unfortunately Frank's body was never recovered but his name is engraved on the Tyne Cot Memorial which stands amongst the greatest number of graves in any Commonwealth war cemetery. At the end of the war, 11,500 dead were brought to Tyne Cot from the surrounding battlefield. Many of the 34,888 missing listed on the memorial panels will be amongst them, their remains, like Frank's, unidentified.

Private Frank Ernest Jackson 2nd/4th Battallion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry 201983. Killed in Action 10th September 1917 age 20. He is commemorated at the Tyne Cot Memorial, Zonnebeke, West Vlaanderen, Belgium, Panel 96-98.

All through October the Empire troops battled on, hundreds of thousands of them echoing Seigfried Sassoon's words 'I died in hell. They called it Passchendaele'. Australians, New Zealanders strove relentlessly until the village on Passchendaele Ridge, a brick coloured smear in cratered mud, finally fell to the Canadians. The campaign was closed on 6 November 1917 with no real strategic gain.

The day of the tank arrived on 20 November when three hundred and eighty one machines drove into the first major tank operation in history at Cambrai. The first phase was a tremendous success; no preliminary bombardment announced their arrival and their sudden appearance sent the Germans into total confusion. Unfortunately misunderstanding and lack of co-operation followed and despite magnificent efforts by certain divisions, the initial achievement of the tanks was not followed up and on 4 December, Haig ordered the withdrawal to the old British lines.

And so into 1918 and a critical military situation for both allied and central powers. So far despite the declaration of war in April 1917, very few Americans had arrived on the scene. Hindenberg and Ludendorff, the German commanders realised that their greatest chance of success lay in a massive attack before the limitless Americans put in an appearance. On 21 March, three German armies attacked on a sixty-mile front aiming at breaking the British force and separating it from the French. The attack enjoyed spectacular success, General Petain was concerned with protecting Paris and only with the appointment of Marshal Ferdinand Foch on 26 March was the supreme command over all forces, including the Americans, achieved. This co-ordination of allied effort was one reason for halting the advance but the other was the terrain, an endless sea of mud after three years of war, and the inability of the German supports to keep pace with the drive. On 5th April, Ludendorff called a halt after establishing a salient of 40 miles. On 9 April he initiated another breakthrough further to the north, but again despite substantial gains, the British held on 'backs to the wall' and prevented the German breakthrough to the Channel ports.

Albert Thomas Longshaw died of wounds on 16 April 1918 and is buried at Etaples near the site of the huge complex of base hospitals. Obviously he was a casualty of this determined German offensive. Born in 1889 'Tommy' Longshaw was the eldest son of Albert from Langley and Jane née Moss of Ascott. At the time of his birth, they lived in Shipton Road, probably in Mrs Tustian's house, number 34. However they soon moved to the bottom house of the top four in Church View, next door to the Claridges. Tommy's brothers George and Leonard also served in the Great War. Tommy was admitted to Ascott School on 10 July 1896 and by January 1897 was the despair of his teacher due to his inability to draw. Perhaps he had improved by 1900 when he was commended by the

inspector. In 1912 at Ascott church, Tommy married Margaret Ellen Maling whose family lived in High Street, then called Mill Lane. The young couple also moved to a house near Margaret's parents. Two of Margaret's brothers also served and in March 1918 she signed as a witness at her brother's marriage in Ascott, a few short weeks before the tragic news of her husband's death became known. After the war, Margaret was living at Merriscourt Farm near Sarsden.

Originally enlisting in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, at the time of his death Tommy was serving in the Hampshire Regiment. The most likely explanation for the change seems to be that on his return to the Western Front after illness or injury, he was drafted into the Hampshires who had taken heavy casualties and needed reinforcements following the Germans' lightning advance. The base town of the British sector in France was Albert, only one and a half miles from the Front. In 1897 a huge new red brick church had been built, its massive tower capped with a gilded statue of the Virgin and Child, the child held high above his mother's head. A German shell in 1915 had dislodged the statue and from then on it hung weirdly over the square below in an attitude of a frozen fall. The Golden Hanging Virgin became a mascot for the multiple thousands of British Tommies who marched past it. It was believed that when the statue fell, the War would come to an end. In the German offensive, the town of Albert fell into their hands and the British were not inclined to allow them the excellent observation viewpoint from the tower. At 3.30pm on 16 April, the day of Tommy Longshaw's death, the 35th Divisional Artillery, with pinpoint accuracy demolished the tower and the Madonna fell. Perhaps an omen. The turning point was near and before the end of the year, the war would be over.

It is possible that Tommy lingered a while before dying and that Margaret may have been able to visit him in hospital. The army was prepared to pay for relatives to visit via the public purse, if they could not afford the expense themselves. A 'Dangerously Ill' telegram would be sent which advised the relative to take the telegram to the nearest police station for help. Margaret may have been amongst the anxious groups who crossed the Channel and travelled to the Normandy coast hospitals to take their last leave of their loved ones. Funerals could be delayed if relatives were coming and arrived too late, and the poignant notes of the 'Last Post' sounded very frequently in the wind.

Private Albert Thomas Longshaw 2nd Battalion Hampshires 42079. Died of Wounds 16th April 1918 age 28. He is buried in Etaples Military Cemetery, Pas de Calais, France. XXIX D8A.

Ludendorff mounted more offensives along the Front but the 1st US Division arrived to fight alongside the British on the Somme on the 28 May and two more US Divisions fought with the French on the Marne in

June and July. On 18 July the pendulum swung against the Germans and by early September they had retreated back to the Hindenberg Line once more.

On 12 September 1918 **John Claridge** was killed in action at Laventie near the same place as Lieutenant Tiddy two years earlier, and like Frank Jackson has no known grave. His name is engraved on the Ploegsteert Memorial. John was probably the brother of William Claridge who had died in 1916 and he certainly attended Ascott school where as a little infant boy in 1896 unfortunately had a fit but soon recovered and was sent home. He was also one of the Charlbury Flower Show entrants sponsored by Lady Margaret Watney. A Lance-Corporal in the 2nd/4th Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, the battalion had been in the front line in August enduring gas attacks before moving south across the French frontier. Their advance continued and they reached Laventie on 11 September. During that month eight men died including John.

Lance-Corporal John Claridge 2nd/4th battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry 11852. Died in Action 12th September 1918. He is commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Comines Warneton, Hainaut, Belgium. Panel 7.

The Ploegsteert Memorial commemorates 11,368 men who have no known grave and the sounding of the Last Post takes place on the first Friday of every month at 7pm. At the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, the First World War ceased and the tragic deaths of young men from all over the world came stuttering to a halt. Cecil Beck's cousin Mrs Lily Quinnell, although only six at the time, remembers that following rumours of a cease-fire, a large number of the villagers gathered at the station waiting for the train. With no telephone or radio, the driver and fireman spread the news at the stations, as they hung out of the windows shouting, 'It's all over'.

Sadly I have to confess failure over the remaining Ascott man **Denis Smith**. Apart from an entry in the Ascott Banns Register announcing his forthcoming marriage to Gertrude of Crawley, I can find no trace. He may have been a victim of the disastrous flu' epidemic that decimated the fighting forces as well as the rest of the population in 1918, or he may have totally disappeared like many other prisoners of war in the confusion of the last months of the war. Unfortunately, we may never know.

In February 1920, Captain Lionel Ferguson who served throughout the War and was twice wounded, wrote in the diary which he kept from August 1914 – March 1919, the following words:

'To those who in the years to come may ever read these notes, please remember none of us regret our experience, but we have had our bad times. We have formed never to be forgotten friendships but for the first

time in our lives, we have known the meaning of Hunger, Thirst, Dirt, Death and other privations. We I think have all known the meaning of Fear as we had never before seen it. Those who talk of The Next War are people who never suffered in a front line trench; for never again will those who have come back, advocate another War.'

I am most grateful to all those people who helped me with my research on the First World War, but especial thanks to Linda St Clair, Debbie Shirley, and Dino Lemonofides at the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Museum at Headington.

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From Village Medicine Cupboard and College Cellar

MARGARET WARE

Twenty-four members and friends enjoyed walking two post-harvest fields bordering the Leafield Road near Judd's Grave in autumn 2001, once again finding objects which later proved to have fascinating backgrounds. Although the long-term aim of the fieldwalking project is mainly to record the distribution and density of prehistoric and Roman-medieval material to gain an insight into past settlement patterns and land-use, it is often the post-medieval, i.e. more recent, finds which excite immediate interest.

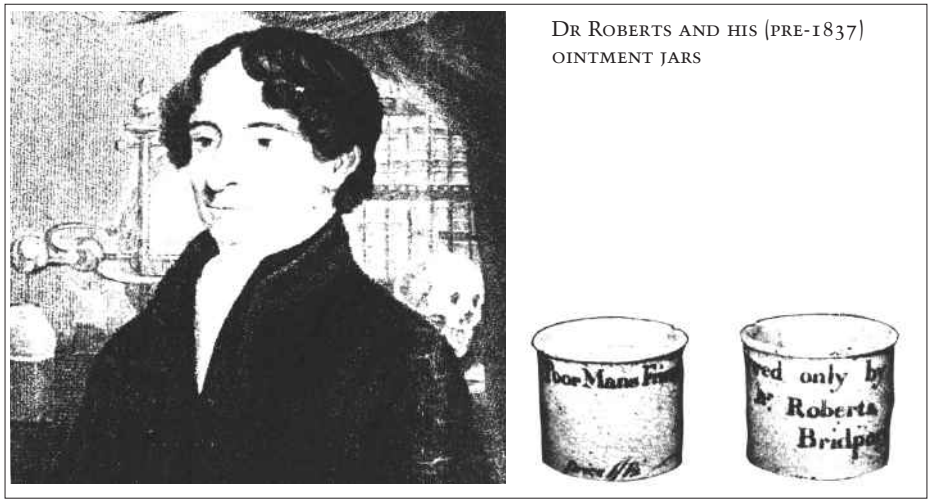
The remains of several small white earthenware jars bearing fragmentary inscriptions in blue were found by three people within thirty yards (ca. 30m) of each other. Some had clearly contained the popular nineteenth-century ointment Poor Man's Friend, retailing at 1s.1 d. Other sherds bore the tantalising lettering 'Prepared only by...' and '...Roberts Bridport'.

A subsequent enquiry to the Dorset County Record Office elicited a wealth of information. Each jar (ca. 1 x 1 in or 4 x 4cm) in fact bore both inscriptions; on one side 'Prepared only by Beach & Barnicott successors to the late Dr Roberts Bridport', and on the other 'Poor Man's Friend price 1/1 '. This popular proprietary medicine for the treatment of a variety of skin diseases was originally manufactured by Dr Giles Roberts of Bridport in the late eighteenth century. On his death in 1837 the business was taken over by Messrs Beach and Barnicott, and apparently the ointment was still being sold at the beginning of the twentieth century.

An advertisement for 'Dr. Roberts's Celebrated Medicines' in the *Bridport Almanac* for 1887 claims to be able to cure:

> *...Dandruff in the HEAD...Glandular Swellings in the NECK...inflamed Roughness of the Skin in the ARMPITS and ELBOWS...deep Cracks or Fissures in the HANDS...Hard, Shiny, and Inflamed Swellings in the LEGS...Red Scaly Patches on the BODY. In all these cases, the treatment must be twofold. An Ointment is required to relieve Itching and to heal the surface, and Medicine' (Dr. Roberts' Alterative Pills) 'must be taken to change the state of the Blood, and render it pure.*

One Jane Forrester of Bridport who suffered greatly from severely irritating skin eruptions for 37 years, which also caused all her hair to fall out, was able to 'rejoice in a perfect freedom from all trace of her old enemy' and a



DR ROBERTS AND HIS (PRE-1837) OINTMENT JARS

strong growth of hair after a course of 'only 5 boxes of Pills, and 4 pots of Ointment, the 2s.9d. size'.

Even the price of the smallest of the little jars – 1s.1 d., (other jars at 2s.9d., 11s., and 22s. each – 'Postage extra') would have represented a formidable outlay for the average 'poor man' in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but it seems to have been efficacious and widely used, as pieces of the 1s.1 d. jars are quite well known and often found. In Shipton last autumn we recovered the fragments of at least seven different jars of Dr Roberts' ointment so somebody locally, sometime, had obviously had a jolly good clearout of their medicine cupboard!

The other object to excite our curiosity was a thick, dull brown glass disc, one and a half inches (4cm) in diameter, slightly damaged, bearing the letters 'All Sou... Coll: C:R'. It seemed likely that this related to Oxford's All Souls College Common Room, and was the seal or decoration of a bottle. Further research was indicated.

It appears that, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it was customary for wine, mostly port, to be purchased at the college's expense from local taverns, for consumption by Fellows and guests on special occasions ('Extraordinaries & Extraneis'). The tavern keepers, who alone were licensed to sell wine by retail, used bottles often sealed with the tavern motif and/or the innkeeper's initials. Moreover, the Fellows patronised these taverns a good deal themselves, buying their own private supplies there to the extent that, in the case of All Souls at this time, The Three Tuns appeared to be more the centre of College social life than the Common Room.

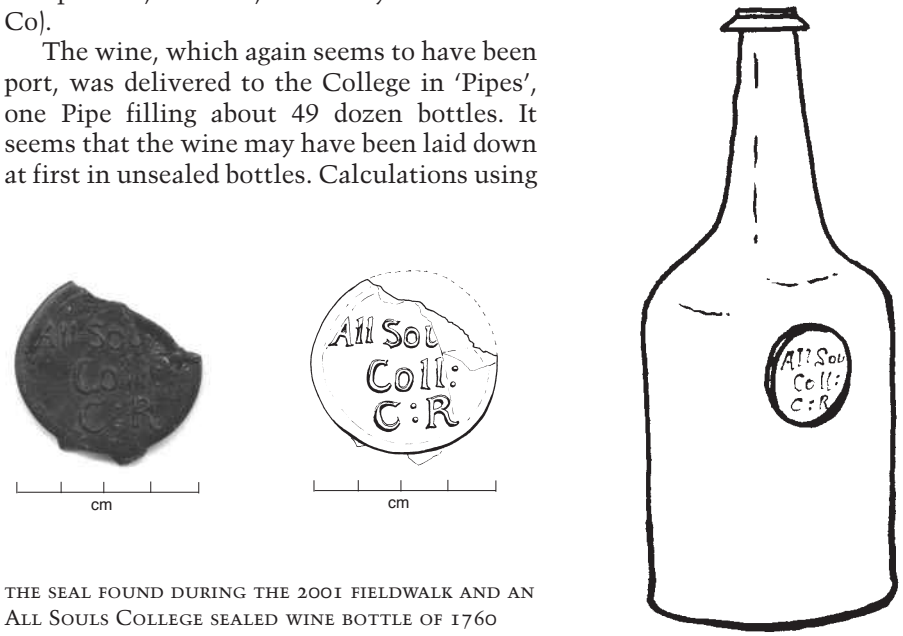
However, at Michaelmas 1749 the cellars at All Souls College were established and wine began to be ordered in bulk from Gwyn Goldstone,

a London wine merchant. Specially manufactured consignments of bottles were purchased, the college wine account also being responsible for bottling and corking. No trace remains of the ten thousand wine bottles thought to have been purchased initially but, as recently as 1970, the cellars still contained over a thousand later eighteenth and nineteenth century wine bottles with glass seals, the majority bearing the college name, as in our specimen, or its initials 'A.S.C.R.'. As the exact shapes of the bottles and their rims have been found to change slightly over the years, and the lettering on the seals of each batch of bottles purchased from the manufacturers found to differ slightly, it was possible to arrange the bottle types in a chronological sequence. Furthermore, a study of the college accounts of the period allowed a few of the bottles to be dated, and indicated their origin. Careful comparison of the lettering on our seal with the type series illustrated suggests that our bottle belonged to one of the earliest surviving batches, having been made for the college in 1760 at the glassworks of a Mrs Batchelor in Stourbridge, Oxford's nearest glass-making town. The college wine account shows a payment to her in that year for delivery of an unrecorded number of bottles:

Dec 8 Pd Mrs Batchelor by Bill on Child to Thomas Bretell as per recpt £30.0.0.

(Messrs Child and Backwell were a bank at Temple Bar, London, later Glyn Mills and Co).

The wine, which again seems to have been port, was delivered to the College in 'Pipes', one Pipe filling about 49 dozen bottles. It seems that the wine may have been laid down at first in unsealed bottles. Calculations using



THE SEAL FOUND DURING THE 2001 FIELDWALK AND AN ALL SOULS COLLEGE SEALED WINE BOTTLE OF 1760

the Wine Account records have shown that, during the 1750s, bottles disappeared from the cellars at an alarming rate, as high as 50 dozen per year, or about two a day! This probably prompted the change-over to the use of distinctive bottles sealed with the college name or initials, as a means of identification (and possibly as a status symbol) and would also explain the following note which appeared subsequently in the wine book:

> *June 16 1761 It was then agreed by ye Society that no Wine shall be carried out of All Souls College in ye College Bottles upon any Account whatsoever, and that none but Members of ye Same shall be allowed to purchase ye Wine at any time.*

It is interesting that this custom of wine storage in sealed bottles persisted until the 1920s. But the question immediately arises - what was the connection between Shipton and All Souls in the mid-eighteenth century? The college held no land in the parish, our local 'landlord' being Brasenose. Relatively few folk then were college-educated, the exceptions being clerics, doctors and lawyers. One Robert Charnock (or Chernock) was briefly vicar of Shipton from 1726-1728, and the All Souls College records confirmed that he was a Fellow from 1716 until his death in 1735, too early to have any relevance to our bottle. Shipton's other clerics of the period – Joseph Goodwin (1728), Thomas Brookes (1773) and Robert Phillimore (1814) – attended different colleges, and the All Souls records contain no further references to Shipton.

Two possibilities remain. One of our clerics, or some other well-connected person was visited by a friend who was a Fellow, and who brought a gift from the college cellar. Alternatively one of the college servants lived here, and was not averse to helping himself to a little illicit refreshment. Such goings-on probably did happen, as we have seen, but we shall never know the truth!

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Peter Irvine of the Dorset Record Office for information on Dr Roberts and his ointment, to Julian Munby (Oxford Archaeological Unit, now Oxford Archaeology) for references to the All Souls cellars and bottle sequence, and to Dr Norma Aubertin-Potter of the Codrington Library for helpful comments on All Souls Fellows' records. Joan Howard Drake made several useful suggestions.

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Some Wychwood Neighbourhoods about 1900

Anthea Jones, Joan Howard Drake,
Sue Jourdan & John Rawlins

In 1909, Lloyd George introduced the People's Budget. He had to raise money for old age pensions introduced that January (5 shillings a week for a man, and 7 shillings and 6 pence for a married couple, at age 70) [1] and for building the new class of Dreadnought warships to maintain a lead over German naval building; the Chancellor of the Exchequer was therefore looking for new sources of revenue. He thought there was money to be extracted from what was called the 'unearned increment of land', in other words, capital gains which resulted from mineral or housing development. Capital gain was to be taxed at 20% when land changed hands, but purely agricultural land was exempt. The budget outraged the House of Lords, and led to a major constitutional clash with the Commons, where the Liberal government under Asquith had a huge majority. It resulted in the first formal restriction of the power of the House of Lords.

The budget was discussed between the Duke of Marlborough, F.E.Smith[2] and Fred Pepper, who were riding together to a meeting of the Warwickshire Hunt in 1912. The daughter of Fred Pepper, who owned Shipton Court at this date, reported the conversation.[3] The duke said the new land duties would be the ruin of him – 'All very well for you, Pepper; you only have a small estate ... but it hits me very hard.'

'Well, we shall certainly all be ruined in the end, I expect', returned my father, cheerfully. 'We'd better make 'F.E' king of Ireland, and go and live there under his rule'.

In order to establish the base value of every piece of land in the country, a survey was undertaken in 1911. [4] The map used for the survey was the 1898 Ordnance Survey and the initial list of the local population was taken from the Poor Rate lists of 1908. Across the country, 9 million landowners filed returns. The lists and maps showing the disposition of holdings were completed. But many difficulties in the implementation of the new tax led to its repeal in 1920, with the exception of the tax on mineral rights. The immense amount of paperwork which had been produced was shelved, and eventually many of the records were sent to County Record Offices to be held in their archive collections.[5]

Something of the nature of the Wychwood villages of Milton and Shipton

in the early twentieth century can be described from these records, ten years before the Census Enumerators' Books for 1911 will be made available to researchers.

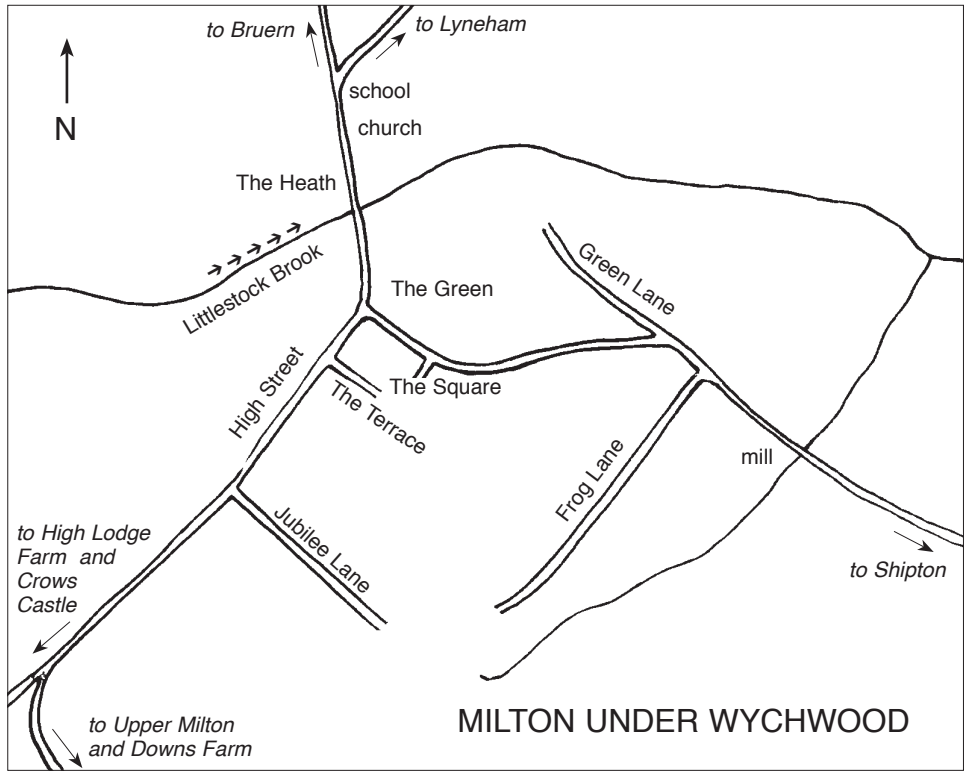
Additional information has been drawn from *Kelly's Directory* for 1911, the 1891 census enumerators' books and from the lists of electors for 1911. About two adult men in every three had been able to vote in parliamentary elections since 1884. Most were enfranchised as rate paying householders with one year's residence. Relatively few voters were freeholders, who had always been able to vote provided their property was worth the small amount of £2 (40 shillings). In addition, the 1884 Representation of the People Act gave the vote to those who had occupied lodgings for a year valued at £10 or more; this brought three voters on to the Milton Electoral Register in 1911 who occupied first floor bedrooms in another's house. The Act also enfranchised occupiers of land worth £10 a year who were not householders of that place. In 1888, elected County Councils were introduced, and all ratepayers could vote, including women. Freeholding was not relevant to County elections; there were consequently different categories of voter on the Electoral Register. When elected Rural and Urban District Councils were set up in 1894, the electorate consisted of those who could already vote in parliamentary or county elections. Not until 1918 were all men aged 21 allowed to vote, with some women, and in 1928 all women were enfranchised. In 1911, 134 men resident in Milton and 130 in Shipton could vote in parliamentary elections, 264 (61%) out of a population of approximately 435 adult men; this is less than the national average which was 66%.[6] A further 17 men and 25 women in Milton and 11 men and 24 women in Shipton had votes in county and parish elections, and three men in Shipton had a parish vote as part-owners. There were six non-resident voters in Milton and five in Shipton.

A valuable feature of the 1911 surveys is that they recorded both the owner and the occupier of each plot of land, and described it in terms of 'cottage', 'building', 'shop', 'land' and so on. 'Shop' indicated a workshop probably more often than a retail shop, but there is no obvious clue as to the particular meaning of each individual entry. There is also no indication as to how the distinction between houses with gardens and cottages with gardens was reached; it was made by the landowner who filed the return, and the same description might hide significant differences in size, but there was a definite social differentiation.

Size of farms, and whether farmers rented land from more than one owner, are clear in the 1911 survey. Extending the study in *Wychwoods History* No. 14 of the period around the mid-nineteenth century enclosures, farm sizes and farming family stability or mobility have been traced through all the available Census Enumerators' Books from 1851 to 1891. Farmers have again been defined as those occupying at least 20 acres of

land.[7] Their own statements in the censuses between 1851 and 1881 about their acreages included land in other parishes (in 1891 they were not asked for this information), so these cannot be compared precisely with the 1911 survey, but the censuses do suggest the relative stability of the acreage of farms established around 1850, though not of farming families themselves. Stability was much less usual than mobility, yet it has coloured the 'folk memory' of the past. Only the Maddox family in Shipton survived from 1852 through to 1911, and still owned the 113 acres of the Downs purchased at enclosure in 1852. In Milton Edward Reynolds married a Gardner so that the farm continued effectively in the same family.

It has been possible to locate nearly all the inhabitants in the 1911 survey by reference to the maps. These are now fragile and appear to have been well used, but each property is coloured distinctively and the numbers relating to the schedules entered. Unfortunately schedules were not numbered in any systematic or geographical order, road and house



names have sometimes changed, and not all the numbers entered in the valuation books are now legible on the maps. Nonetheless many existing houses can be identified, although alterations and additions since 1911 have often changed the nature of a property. Several walks round the villages have increased enormously the authors' appreciation of the houses and it is hoped that readers will also be prompted to look for indentifications. Even though the tax list, electoral roll and *Kelly's Directory* were all 1911 there had been changes in the inhabitants in the villages between compilation of one list and another, and the tax survey list has been taken as the basis of this study.

The 'Income Tax Parish' of 1911 in Milton and Shipton coincided with the townships of the old ecclesiastical parish which has been divided into six neighbourhoods for this study – two in Shipton and four in Milton. Milton neighbourhoods are Crows Castle, The Downs and Upper Milton; the densely populated High Street which is the heart of the township with Jubilee Road; Church Road and The Heath; and Shipton Road with Frog Lane and Green Lane. Bruern was a separate township in Milton parish. Shipton is divided into two by the Court and will be discussed in Part 2.

Part 1: Milton under Wychwood

Crows Castle, The Downs and Upper Milton

At the farthest edge of the parish of Milton, and quite remote from the village, there was the small settlement of Crow's Castle. Esau James Griffin occupied the one farm of 145 acres, (Daphne Edginton lived here during the Second World War, as described in *That's How It Was*), and there were four cottages, two called Crow's Castle Tavern. Mervyn Wingfield of Barrington Park owned the land, and kept in his own hand (ie not leased to a tenant) 10 acres of woodland. Nearly as remote were two farms on The Downs, built since the open upland pasture had been enclosed in 1849. John Henry Watts (who lived in Poplar Farm in the High Street) occupied one, of 56 acres, and Samuel Stubbs the other, 160 acres. Of these three farmers, only Esau Griffin had been living in Milton in 1891 with his occupation given as 'shepherd', but he was not in *Kelly's Directory* for 1911, though a Baptist minister of that surname, Revd G.A.Griffin, was noted. Sixty-nine acres on the Downs were tenanted by Richard Hartley, said in *Kelly's* to live at the 'College' which was in Upper Milton. He had just taken over the Brasenose College lease from the late Richard Gilbert and he was shortly to change the name to Manor Farm, but he occupied Grove Farm, Shipton, when the electoral register for 1911 was made. R.H.Gayner, who lived in Sunderland, owned Watts' farm and

William F. Pepper of Shipton Court owned Stubbs' farm. Like Wingfield, both owners kept woodland in hand, 4 and 11 acres respectively. Completing this outlying group of potential tax-payers was the Taynton and Guiting Quarries, with their head office in Cheltenham, owning and occupying 13 acres of tree-covered land, with two cottages.

The absentee owner, Gayner, could vote for the MP of the area by virtue of his freehold (Pepper and Wingfield were qualified by owning property elsewhere in the area); so too could Charles Collett, a cottager at The Downs. The cottagers William Faulkner, Henry Tanner and Henry Wilcox, two at Crow's Castle Tavern, could vote in parliamentary and parochial elections, but not in county elections because they did not personally pay their rates; they lived in 'tied cottages'. This demonstrates the complexity of the voting system.

The road to the Downs passes through Upper Milton, a larger settlement of farms and cottages. Earl Ducie, the inheritor of the estate built up by the Langston family of Sarsden House in the early nineteenth century, owned 541 acres here divided into two farms: Springhill (227 acres) and High Lodge (312 acres), occupied by Reynolds and Sons and Ernest Badger [8] respectively. Again the only land Earl Ducie kept in hand was 15 acres of plantation. Edward Reynolds had been at Springhill in 1881 having married the daughter of a previous tenant; he then employed seven men and two boys. In 1911 there were three cottages associated with the farm, one standing empty. At High Lodge, Ernest Badger had succeeded John Badger, who was there in 1891; again there were three cottages, one of which was empty. The effects of the long-continuing agricultural depression is apparently reflected in the reduced number of labourers occupying tied cottages, as they were forced to leave the countryside. Also in Upper Milton, George Edward Groves occupied Lower Farm and 130 acres owned by William Pepper; he was not there in 1891. Four houses stood in substantial gardens, two owner occupied, the other two owned by Robert Adkins and Jane Baughan, property owners elsewhere in Milton. Jane Baughan's house, now Holly Cottage, was occupied by Edison Bunting, a baker; perhaps he was related to Fanny Bunting, baker, in Shipton High Street. There were two more cottages, one attached to Manor Farm, and one to a farm on the Downs, and two small plots of land.

Milton High Street and Jubilee Road

As has been shown in other studies, for example in *Wychwood History* No. 13, Milton Street, now known as High Street, must have been a busy, noisy place with animals, carts, and pedestrians in the dirt road. It was quite densely populated with alleys and terraces of houses running at right angles to the street, as was typical of a town.[9] There was throughout a mixture of houses and cottages with shops, public houses, post office, craft

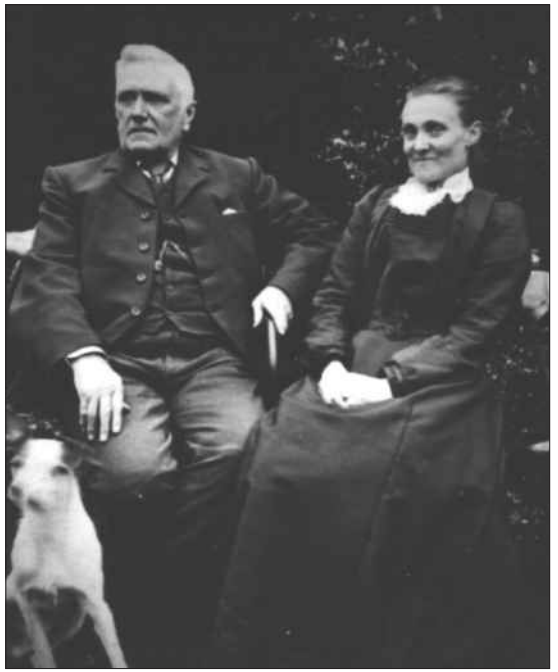
workshops and one farmhouse: John Henry Watts at Poplar Farm in the High Street rented 184 acres from R.Hayden Gayner. In the area stretching from Groves' yard along the Green and Milton Street there were 36 houses and 74 cottages. Altogether in Milton there were 64 houses and 123 cottages with only 14 named houses. Only 11% listed in the survey owned the property they lived in; all the men (but not women) occupying houses had a parliamentary vote but not all who lived in cottages. Of the five houses in Jubilee Lane (Jubilee Road in the survey) two were owner-occupied.

Most houses were owned singly, but there were many blocks of cottage properties. For example, four cottages were owned by John Phillips who lived at Hill House, Chippenham. Amongst these groups of cottages, Hawkes Yard, now called The Terrace, stands out. There were eleven cottages, two of which were empty, also some farm buildings and a close rented by George Edward Groves of Lower Farm, all owned by Mrs S. Gomm, daughter of Alfred Groves. She died aged 91 in 1942. Mrs Gomm and her husband John who was listed on the electoral roll 1911 and in *Kelly's* as an insurance agent, were said to live at Upper Milton, perhaps with George E. Groves. What must once have been the farmhouse on the High Street end of the Terrace was occupied by Adolphe Parsloe, a slater, but was not owned by Mrs Gomm. It has a date-stone '1724', but the dovecot in the rear suggests it is rather older. There was also the calvinist chapel at the other end of the yard.

In the premises latterly occupied by the Midland Bank, now Wychwood Business Services, was the bakery occupied by William Horwood but owned by Mr Mayer who had recently passed the business over. Mayer himself lived nearby in the imposing house now called Terrace House, later lived in by Sarah Gomm. Other craftsmen in the High Street supplying the needs of the community included Fred Puffet the blacksmith and Charles Woodin the bootmaker. Lydia Dangerfield ran a draper's shop in a family property in the High Street, now London House, opened about 1910 when she was in her early thirties. She was a spinster born in Shipton and the daughter of J. J. Dangerfield who in *Kelly's* 1907 was grocer, draper and farmer in Shipton. Charles Brooksby ran the ironmongers and off-licence in the premises once Gorton's Stores and latterly Pratley's ironmongers, and recently converted into dwellings. There were two public houses, both owned by the brewers Clinch & Co of Market Street, Witney; Thomas Basson was the licensee at the Quart Pot and Thomas Townsend at the Butcher's Arms. On the corner the post office and grocer was run by Archibald Venvell. Mark Dix ran a coffee tavern where now prescriptions rather than coffee are dispensed.

At the west end of the High Street, near the junction with Jubilee Road, Alfred Groves owned some fairly newly built houses: Waverley, Roseneath,

Right: John Gomm and his wife Sarah, daughter of Alfred Groves. Early 1900s. She owned the cottages of Hawkes Yard (The Terrace)



Below: The Laurels, Jubilee Lane with Fred Fletcher's carriage-making 'shop' now demolished. Early 1900s

and St Michael's Cottage: Ellis Wilf Groves lived in Roseneath.[10] But in Jubilee Road, which it is thought was formerly the Groves' stone yard, only one of the new houses was owned by a Groves: Philip Upstone Groves owned and occupied Holmleigh, built in 1869.

The name Jubilee Road commemorated the diamond jubilee of the Baptist Church; the first chapel had been built in 1839, two years after Queen Victoria came to the throne. Here was a new professional area of Milton. The largest and most prestigious house with its porticoed entrance, now called Sunset House but then Bleak House, was occupied by Thomas Walker, who was listed in *Kelly's* as auctioneer, appraiser, valuer, land, house, estate and commission agent and agent to the Norwich Union Fire and Life Insurance Office and Railway Passengers' Assurance Co. The house was owned by Joseph Watson of Coventry who by 1920 was living there himself. The Baptist minister's manse, built in 1889, was empty but soon to be occupied by Revd G.A. Griffin. John Bond rented Fair Haven from Thomas Basson of the Quart Pot and Professor Henry Newton Dickson of Reading owned Sunrise. Fred Fletcher, carriage maker, owned and occupied a house and a shop, the only 'shop', or workshop, in Jubilee Road.

Tradesmen and craftsmen also occupied houses facing the modern Recreation Ground, or 'play green' which had formed part of a much larger area called Milton Green. Most properties were not distinguished by an address, but were simply described as 'Milton', but a few were said to be at 'The Green' or 'Milton Green'. E.J.Rawlins lived in a house, owned by

THE GREEN, MILTON 1910. THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHAPEL IS AT THE LEFT END AND THE HOLLIES AT THE RIGHT. THE PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN BEFORE THE BUILDING OF RAWLINS' GARAGE AND SHOP.

Ann Rawlins, next to the TV shop now lived in by Peter Rawlins. The Misses Pratley, dressmakers, owned and occupied a house now called Jasmine Place. William Titcomb was a butcher in a property owned by C Waine, now the Co-op; he rented 40 acres on the Heath. Two cottages were occupied by Emma Yeatman, the widow of William Yeatman, blacksmith, and Mrs Carter. The Shipton farmer, John Fowler Maddox, occupied a large 'Groves' house now called Hilborough but previously Iveagh. The house and the shop next door, now Dashwood House (the pet shop), were occupied by James Miles, 'hardwareman' and carriage proprietor, who also had land in The Heath and The Sands. John Franklin occupied The Hollies.

Church Road and The Heath

A continuation of the main street through Milton went towards the Heath; Church Road was not named in the 1911 survey. On the corner facing the Recreation Ground were two houses and a cottage owned by Margaret Rawlins. William Titcomb's 40 acres were owned by Julie Mary Hudson with what is now called Little Hill Farm Barn; Little Hill Farm House was owned and occupied by Anne Davidson, widow of the former Baptist minister. There had been substantial development of the Heath itself after enclosure in 1849. This formerly untilled, rough ground on the north side of the township was used by the enclosure commissioners to provide 20 acres of 'fuel allotments', administered by Messrs Gilbert[11]and Ricketts, to replace the furze and thorn previously available to the poor from the area and there were 18 acres for the 'poor allotments' and another 5 acres for allotments rented from Earl Ducie by the parish council. Earl Ducie had 143 acres of the Heath and was the only substantial land-owner in the area. Most of his land (133 acres) was farmed by John Pollard who occupied Heath Farm, Lyneham Road; he was not there in 1891. There were three smallholdings: Henry Baughan's 16 acres rented from Robert Adkins perhaps provided closes for his brother's horses. (Henry lived in Upper Milton but George in Shipton Road was a coal merchant). In the same way, James Smith, who was a carter and lived in Hawkes Yard,[12] had 5 acres owned by Earl Ducie, and James Miles, the hardwareman, 11 acres from W. Smith. Walter Rawlins owned five cottages just across Littlestock Brook, Mrs Emma Porter owned three as did Joseph Silman, deceased, and there was one owned by Earl Ducie.

Earl Ducie had made available a quarter of an acre of his allotments in the Heath for a school and house (master Thomas Giblett) and 5 acres for a vicarage house. The church, 1854, was provided by Squire Langston, his father in law. A probable relation of the vicar's, with the same surname and was perhaps his mother, lived at The Bungalow with 8 acres of land, rented from Alfred Groves. Two other 'houses' in this area, Heath House (now Heathfield House) and nearly 5 acres of land were occupied by Ann

The Rawlins family about 1900. Joseph and Mary (seated) with four of their children (left to right) Walter, Kate, Margaret, Ernest. See also the cover of *Wychwoods History* No. 9 (1994)

Kirby and owned by Mrs Dorothy Birdwood, and Kohima, with 12 acres, was owned and occupied by Robert Mayman, physician and surgeon. His choice of house name is explained in *Wychwoods History* No. 15, where the six 'iron cottages' recorded in the taxation survey, but not itemised, are also described; [13] Dr Mayman also owned another two cottages. There were 20 cottages in this neighbourhood.

For the purpose of the parliamentary franchise, the vicar, Darrell Horlock, was a freeholder as he had a lifetime tenancy of his vicarage, and Robert Mayman was also a freeholder. Four women were voters in local elections; Annetta Horlock, Ann Kirby, Mrs Emily Badger (widow of a farmer at High Lodge) and Mary Ann Townsend.

Shipton Road, Green Lane and Frog Lane

The Groves family dominated Milton under Wychwood every bit as much as a lord of the manor. Altogether the family owned sixteen houses and thirty-five cottages, scattered throughout Milton. The other comparable family was the Rawlins, who owned six houses and twenty-eight cottages. The Groves generally owned better quality properties. There were nine Groves households but only three Rawlins though six Rawlins owners. Alfred Groves lived at The Elms, where the centre of the business now is,

Part of Jonathon Square c.1935

and there were also four cottages on the site, and eight in Jonathan Square behind The Elms, but the yard, office and stores of Alfred Groves and Sons were said simply to be in 'Milton'. The houses built by Groves were mainly let. *Kelly's* lists Alfred Groves and Sons as builders, contractors, brick makers and potters, and English and foreign timber merchants; they were important employers in the village. Following in Milton's quarrying and building traditions, Joseph Rawlins and Sons were slaters and plasterers although Joseph's son, Walter Rawlins, was listed in *Kelly's Directory* as cycle agent, wallpaper dealer and agent for E.H.Taylor's bee -keeping appliances.

The ownership of the cottages behind the other, Primitive, chapel (now converted to a house beside Rawlins electrical shop) was divided between Thomas Alfred Groves who owned nine and Walter H. Rawlins who owned six. Those owned by T.A.Groves were said to be in 'Jonathan Square' while Walter H. Rawlins had filled in his form with, more simply, 'The Square'. Although rather grandiloquently named, the cottages do form three sides of a square and at one time there may have been others now demolished on the fourth side. They constituted what in a town would have been called a 'court'. Walter Rawlins lived in The Square.

Both the Groves and Rawlins families owned property in Frog Lane,

which in 1911 still ran along the edge of dry arable land on a contour above the marshy streamside. Housing development had hardly begun in this area apart from an older farmhouse at the south end, now the Homestead, and Calais Cottage, both owned by Robert Adkins who also owned the 19 acres of land called the Sands, tenanted by five different people. Four properties in Frog Lane were given the description 'cottage', and four 'house'. Walter H.Rawlins owned the cottages, now on the corner with The Sands. On the north side of the lane, Alfred Groves of The Elms owned, and had presumably built, three houses: Frogmore (now Forest Gate) and Holmfield (now Woodhill) and a third not named, but called The Anchorage in *Kelly's* 1911, now Orchard House. They were occupied by H.E.H.Way, G.C.H.Crawhall and Jean Pelham.

Green Lane was not mentioned by name but houses here were said to be at 'The Green' or 'Milton Green'. Most of the Green was still grazed by animals in 1911, and mainly consisted of 63 acres tenanted by Gabriel Griffin, who was possibly related to James Griffin at Bruern Grange. The former farmhouse (Heath Farm) had been divided into four tenements

The Homestead, Frog Lane early 1900s

owned by E.J.Rawlins, and next to it was the Quaker meeting house. Milton House was owned and occupied by Mrs Elizabeth Steel and said simply to be in Milton.

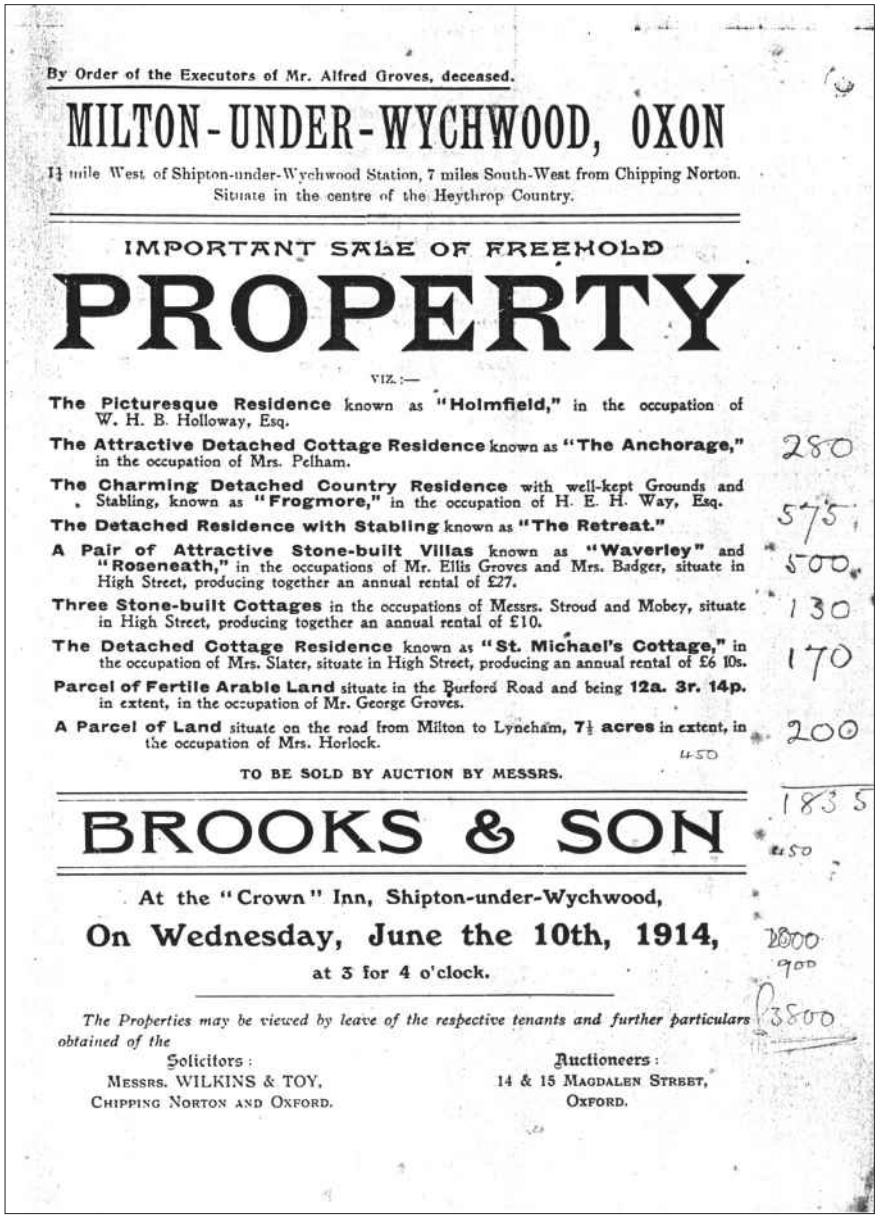
In Shipton Road, there were nine houses, in addition to The Elms, five of which were owner-occupied, and eight cottages which were owned in groups of two, three or four. Development was mainly on the north-east side. Isaac Clack, shoemaker, lived in the house now called Sunnyside with a shop on the street side, but he also owned three contiguous cottages; Walter Rawlins owned four cottages and Joseph Rawlins three. On the corner of Green Lane, two 'Groves' houses and two adjacent cottages were in the hands of Groves and Ricketts jointly. Mary Groves and Mrs Ricketts lived in one house and George Ricketts in the other. Mary Groves was one of the four women in this area of Milton able to vote in local elections; Mrs Ricketts was not a voter. Robert Adkins had land in Shipton Road, of which 12 acres were rented by Gabriel Griffin. At the boundary between Milton and Shipton, part of the mill and a cottage owned by Pepper were in Milton, although the mill building was in Shipton. On the southwest side there were only three houses; George Baughan's, then called The Shrubbery, now Cotswold, and two houses owned by the Oddfellows near Shipton mill, now Hoplands.

Bruern

The pattern of land ownership and occupation in Bruern was a great contrast with Milton, with only three owners, Earl Ducie (659 acres), Cecil Samuda (499 acres) and Edward Rhys Wingfield (678 acres). Earl Ducie's tenant at Bruern Grange was James Griffin, and 20 acres were let to William Edginton who farmed at Merriscourt. Samuda at Bruern Abbey kept land in hand, including 107 acres of woods and plantations. Wingfield of Barrington Park owned Tangley, adjacent to his main estate. He kept 109 acres of woods in hand, and also had rights to take game over his estate; his tenant farmer was Edward Stephens. There were five cottages. Twelve men were registered as voters and two of the three freeholders.

Conclusion

In 1911, there was one significant owner of land in Milton, Earl Ducie; as shown in an earlier article, this estate had been built up by Squire Langston of Sarsden House and amounted to about 750 acres in Milton, including a block of heathland which had been allocated at enclosure. [14] Pepper of Shipton Court had a relatively modest amount of land in Milton, as did Wingfield of Barrington and Gayner of Sunderland. While small parcels were both owned and occupied by the same person, this was certainly not the pattern for farmers who were all tenants. Farm size had been consistent since 1851 but the tenancies had changed in fifty years, some to newcomers although there were obviously many interfamily



By Order of the Executors of Mr. Alfred Groves, deceased.

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Situate in the centre of the Heythrop Country.

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PROPERTY

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The Picturesque Residence known as **"Holmfield,"** in the occupation of W. H. B. Holloway, Esq. 280

The Attractive Detached Cottage Residence known as **"The Anchorage,"** in the occupation of Mrs. Pelham.

The Charming Detached Country Residence with well-kept Grounds and Stabling, known as **"Frogmore,"** in the occupation of H. E. H. Way, Esq. 575

The Detached Residence with Stabling known as **"The Retreat."** 500

A Pair of Attractive Stone-built Villas known as **"Waverley"** and **"Roseneath,"** in the occupations of Mr. Ellis Groves and Mrs. Badger, situate in High Street, producing together an annual rental of £27. 130

Three Stone-built Cottages in the occupations of Messrs. Stroud and Mobey, situate in High Street, producing together an annual rental of £10. 170

The Detached Cottage Residence known as **"St. Michael's Cottage,"** in the occupation of Mrs. Slater, situate in High Street, producing an annual rental of £6 10s.

Parcel of Fertile Arable Land situate in the Burford Road and being **12a. 3r. 14p.** in extent, in the occupation of Mr. George Groves. 200

A Parcel of Land situate on the road from Milton to Lyncham, **7½ acres** in extent, in the occupation of Mrs. Horlock. 450

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION BY MESSRS. 1835

BROOKS & SON 450

At the "Crown" Inn, Shipton-under-Wychwood,

On Wednesday, June the 10th, 1914, 2000 900

at 3 for 4 o'clock. 3800

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AUCTION POSTER 1914 OF ALFRED GROVES' PROPERTIES NAMED IN THE 1911 TAX LIST

connections which a change of name obscures.

The ownership of the houses and cottages was much divided; only a small number of heads of households owned the house in which he or she lived, and approximately nine out of ten paid rent. The rents of residential property provided useful income especially for women. It is interesting to have found the Groves and Rawlins families such important cottage landlords, but there were many other owners some living locally, others not resident in the area. The area of Church Road beyond the group of old cottages on The Heath had considerable residential development in the late nineteenth century while Upper Milton was essentially an area of farms and tied cottages with only a few other houses. The comparison with Bruern is striking; here in 1911 all the houses and land were concentrated into three estates. Milton Street was quite densely developed, but on the outskirts of the village there is a big contrast with 2002; while the number and variety of trades and craftsmen have declined, the number of residents has increased considerably.

Many photographs of the buildings and people mentioned in this article are illustrated in *The Wychwoods Album* and *The Second Wychwoods Album*. We would also recommend a walk round Milton.

Footnotes

[1] 25p and 37.5p

[2] Later a notable Liberal politician, created Baron Birkenhead in 1919.

[3] E.P.Thompson, *Portrait for a Grandson* (1947) page 101.

[4] B.Short, 'Local demographic studies of Edwardian England and Wales: the use of the Lloyd George "Domesday of landownership"', *Local Population Studies* 51 (Autumn 1993).

[5] Oxford Archives/DV VIII (Maps) and DV X/32 (valuations).

[6] An assumption was made that 70% of the male population in 1911 was adult.

[7] *Wychwood History* No 14 (1999) 'The Agricultural Ladder'.

[8] *Wychwood History* No 14 (1999).

[9] *Wychwoods History* No 13, 'Honey Merchant and Tailor' and other occupations in Shipton, Milton and Leafield 1785–1817.

[10] For further information on the Groves families see *Wychwood History* No 7 (1993) and 8 (1994).

[11] In the Survey listed as 'diceased'.

[12] See *The Wychwood Album*

[13] John Rawlins, 'What's in a Name?', *Wychwoods History* No 15 (2000), 72–76.

[14] *Wychwoods History* No 14 (1999).

Who's Heard of Daffy's?

Joan Howard-Drake

On 8 January 1796 the Overseers of the Poor in Leafield bought 'Daffy's' for John Busby for which they paid 1s 2d.[1]

John Busby of Lanes End was a poor man, a pauper supported over many years by the parish as were many other members of the Busby family. Between 1792 and 1811 he received money, had his rent paid, firewood provided and children's clothes given. His family was often ill and it cost the parish £1 5s to bury his son in 1792 and £1 10s his wife in 1809. On the 4th and 7th of December 1796 John received 9s, on the 26th 8s, mutton and brandy, the latter items were given only in illness. When the Overseers bought the Daffy's in 1797 they again gave John 9s and made several similar payments later. Clearly something was wrong since most of the payments to him before and after this time were about 1s or 1s 6d.

Some time ago part of an article in *Family Tree Magazine* by Tom Wood mentioned 'Daffy's Elixir'. It quoted Richard Conyers, physician to the Thomas Coram Foundling Hospital in London in 1748 speculating that the way babies were fed at that time might be wrong. He said 'Pap was a mess, which might be much more usefully employed by bookbinders for sticking pages together than given to infants as nourishment'. He gave the names of several cure-alls or palliatives including Daffy's Elixir which he thought gave effective relief.[2] The entry in the poor law account book now made sense – it was medicine for John Busby's children.

A later issue of the magazine returned to the subject of Daffy's Elixir, the inventor of which was the Reverend Thomas Daffy, a seventeenth-century vicar of Harby in Leicestershire. He ascribed his longevity to his 'Elixir Salutis' and his chemist son, Daniel, later sold it as 'Daffy's Elixir' in his Nottingham shop.[2] A reader of the magazine, John Holdich, sent a recipe which he found in the handwriting of Edward Holdich (1641–1705) of Wadenhoe in Northamptonshire.

oz of Gaicum
¾oz of Liquorice roots
1oz of Collander seeds,bruised
6oz of Raisins of the sun, stoned
1oz of Ani Compani roots
oz of Aniseed
¾oz of Senna, grossly bruised
3 pints of the best white Aniseed water

John Holdich consulted the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew about the ingredients of the Elixir. They thought that 'Gaicum' was probably guaiacum, a tropical American tree yielding *lignum vitae*, a greenish resin used in medicine. Kew did not recognise 'Collander seeds' but thought they could be coriander (*coriandrum sativum*). This was said to counter the purging effects of senna. Another reader thought 'Ani Compani' might be a phonetic version of elecompane (*inula helenium*) which was also used in medicine. *Culpepper's Complete Herbal* detailing Inula's virtues makes it sound like a veritable cure-all.[3] An eighteenth-century cookery book giving recipes for the relief of stomach problems recommends, among other things, coriander, aniseed, liquorice and 'raisins of the sun, stoned' but the 'stomach waters' so-called were well-laced with strong spirits or beer and sugar[4] These were obviously not intended for children, the poor infants had something much less agreeable. Constipation due to bad diet was a problem in the past but the above recipe looks pretty violent, even California Syrup of Figs which many of us remember sounds much kinder.

In Thackeray's *Vanity Fai*r Daffy's Elixir was the cause of a terrible quarrel between Amelia Osborne and her mother Mrs Sedley. Amelia found her surreptiously giving her adored son, Georgy, a spoonful of the elixir and accused her of poisoning the child. Mr Pestler the apothecary had told her it was poison. The editor of the Penguin Classics edition of *Vanity Fair* says 'Mr Pestler must exaggerate in calling it poison since it had been much administered to infants for nearly 200 years. Latterly, however, it had frequently contained gin'.

References

1 Leafield, Oxon Poor Law Overseers' account book 1792–1811. Oxfordshire Record Office.

2 Tom Wood, 'Genealogical Miscellany', *Family Tree Magazine*, Vols 17 no.1 November 2000 & no.9 July 2001; Vol. 18 no.1 November 2001.

3 *Culpepper's Complete Herbal*, p.130.

4 John Nott, *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary*, 1723.

Reuben Rainbow's Diary

Jack Howard-Drake

Reuben Rainbow was born in March 1871, the son of Thomas and Ann Rainbow of Shipton under Wychwood. He enlisted in the South Wales Borderers at Bradwell, near Burford, on 18 January 1888, aged 16, giving his age as 18 years 3 months and occupation as labourer. At that time soldiers served 7 years on active service and then 5 years on the reserve. It seems that he was called up from the reserve in about December 1899 to serve in the Boer War. On 22 December he was in Dublin when 'The 2nd Battalion of the South Wales Borderers received orders to mobilize at Aldershot prior to proceeding to South Africa for active service.'

This is the first entry in a diary which Reuben kept from December 1899 until July 1900. It was found among family papers in the possession of Mrs Joan Kimber, wife of Reuben's grandson and mother of Margaret Mix.[1] Mrs Kimber kindly allowed us to transcribe the diary and agreed that it should be deposited in The South Wales Borderers and Monmouthshire Regimental Museum in Brecon. A copy of the transcript in the Society's archives is available to anyone who would like to read it.

The diary gives a detailed and fascinating account of the campaign in South Africa from the point of view of a private soldier. The battalion left Dublin on 24 December and arrived at Aldershot at 8.00am on Christmas Day which, says Reuben, 'passed off very good according to the circumstances'. They spent the next week kitting out and left for Southampton at 8.30am on 13 January arriving at 1.00pm and going immediately on board SS Bavaria. They arrived at Capetown on 3 February, seven men having died on the voyage from pneumonia and enteric fever. When they disembarked Lord Roberts paid them a visit and was 'heartily cheered by the troops'. Private Connell of the 24th was committed to a general court martial on a charge of attempted murder on the high seas, being accused of throwing a knife at Colour Sergeant Standon. They left by train for De Aar, 300 miles north of Capetown in Cape Province.

On arrival they were immediately ordered further north and eventually reached Belmont. They left the train and on 10 February received orders to move to Graspan, about five miles away. As Reuben records 'Busy all day preparing for our departure as we were to start early next morning en route for Orange Free State. Leaving our tents and camp utensils behind the men carrying 2 day's rations in their haversacks'. On Sunday 11

February 'Left Graspan at 3.30am and after a hard 14 miles march arrived at a place called Ram Dam where we camped for the night having to lay on the veldt with only one blanket for covering in fact that was our only covering till we got to a place called Karree Siding'. On the Monday 'we had our baptism of long range fire' and on Thursday they were ordered to attack Jacobsdal. '... after marching 2 miles we formed up ready for attack when the enemy opened fire on us with heavy rifle fire the artillery were slow in coming to our assistance and owing to that the enemies fire was telling on our troops, the artillery opened a heavy fire and well directed on their trenches and with the help of Maxim gun and rifle fire soon put the enemy to seek for safer quarters and after 2 hours of smart and sharp fighting we took the village which we occupied for the night; but had to stand to arms as the enemy were expected to do a fresh attack in stronger numbers but everything passed off quietly with nothing to disturb our rest'. On Friday 'everything was quiet during the morning at 9.30am we had to bury our dead in the cemetery the killed were 4 Englishmen and 3 Boers an officer read the burial service for the English troops and a German read the service in Dutch for the Boers'.

Thereafter the diary is an almost daily account of long marches, often in appalling conditions with inadequate rations and equipment. The entries for 26 to 28 May are typical:-

> Saturday 26th Rev[eille] at 4.30am breakfast at 5am parade 5.50 we started away a little after 6am we could not travel so well today as yesterday we came across several cornfields and these were very rough to march over we come over one drift which was very awkward to bring across we halted for 2 hours for the baggage to catch us up we started on again at 2pm we reached our camp about 5pm after doing about 18 miles we camp by some coal pits the first we saw in the states and we were about 5 miles south of the Vaal river and some of the towns of the Transvaal was in sight.
>
> Sunday 27th Rev[eille] at 5.50am, breakfast at 6 parade at 7 start away 7.15am and marched on for about 4 miles all through the mealy fields & cultivated ground and the ground of a sandy nature it was making the march twice as hard for us we halted for 4 hrs to wait for the baggage because the wagons were sinking in the soft ground and the mules getting in bad condition we started from here at 1.15pm and little farther on we crossed the river we put our feet on Trans territory about 2pm we marched again for 3 miles where we camped for the night only done something like 8 miles but the troops were done up owing to the bad ground to march over, the baggage didn't reach till late owing to that we were unable to get our dinner till 10pm and they were serving ration for the next day the troops were unable to take their rest till 12pm.

Bandmaster Reuben Rainbow standing with Shipton drum and fife band which he founded in the early 1900s after he came back to England.

> Monday 28th Rev[eille] at 4.30 parade at 5.30 we started away at 6.15am we were advance guard we kept on marching till 4pm when we arrived in camp after 30 miles hard marching we cooked the little tea and sugar we had issued to us in the morning only half rations our baggage did not arrive till 9pm we had to wait in the cold till then we had 1lb of preserved meat issued to us being lb for the night and lb for the next day after we ate we soon retired to sleep.

Reuben recorded in some detail the movements of his own unit but also of other units engaged in operations against the Boers:

> Thursday 29th Rev[eille] at 5am Parade 6.30, had to cross the Modder by a foot bridge the railway bridge being blown down by some of the enemies force, we formed up on the other side of the river and served out 50 extra rounds of ammunition to each man ready for action at 8.30am the 7th Division advanced with Gen French's force of cavalry on our right and a force of mtd infantry on our left, we got on without having any signs of the enemy till we reached Man's Farm, about 1½ miles from Karee siding when the Boers opened fire on us, our artillery came into action about 11am and continued firing until sunset when the enemy were driven back from their position, their position being taken at the point of bayonet by the 2 S. W. Borderers and the 2 Cheshire Regts after 7½ hours of hard fighting and heavy losses the casualties of the Borderers being 3 killed 18 wounded After the engagement we had to outspan our mules, and water them, We had to make the Battlefield our resting place for the night in the open air, and being so cold at night we could not get much sleep, also the Regiment being on outpost we could not get to camp'.

The diary also records all the day to day activities of an army in the field. Inspections, bathing parades, church parades, the arrival of mail and the English papers, concerts and football matches, the care of the wounded, the guarding of prisoners ('17 Boers under a sentence to be shot for tearing down the British proclamation'), the movement of civilians and refugees, the arrival of nurses and much more including, of course orders, counter-orders and rumours.

Many of the men of the 2nd Battalion were reservists like Reuben and were plunged into the most difficult conditions with no special training. It is astonishing that they were able to cope but there is not a word of complaint in Reuben's diary. It is difficult to see how he managed to keep any sort of diary under the appalling circumstances in which he served. It is full of detail of each day's happenings and when and how it was produced is a bit of a puzzle. It is written in pencil in an ordinary school type exercise book with Reuben's name on the front and although it reads as though written on the march shows no sign of being damaged. There is another oddity about it. It falls into three parts which seem to have been written by different hands and by men with different standards of literacy, the breaks occurring in the middle of a day's entry; but it is a continuous and coherent account, the authenticity of which can be checked against an official account of the 2nd Battalion's record of service published privately in 1904 and an account of the South Wales Borderers in South Africa by Major Martin Everett, the curator of the Regimental Museum. Major Everett has welcomed the diary as a valuable contribution to his research into the service details of the 3500 men of the South Wales Borderers who served in South Africa between 1900 and 1902.

Reuben's service details as recorded by Major Everitt show that No. 2324 Private Reuben Rainbow returned to England, probably in July 1900 at the end of his reserve liability, as he did not receive the South Africa 1901 clasp to his Queen's South Africa medal for which he had the Johannesburg, Cape Colony and Orange Free State clasps. On 2 March 1901 he married Elizabeth Wallis, describing himself as bachelor, aged 30, and a labourer, son of Thomas Rainbow, fishmonger. Mrs. Wallis, aged 35, was the widow of James Longshaw, an army pensioner. Reuben died on 22 June 1911, aged 40.

Footnote

1 Reuben Rainbow married Elizabeth Wallis and had a daughter who married William Thomas Kimber. Their son, William Reuben Kimber married Joan Ogden and Margaret Kimber is their daughter.

Recollections

John Richards

Albert, my only sibling, was seven years old when, in 1928, I was born in one of a terrace of tied farm cottages at Blackwell in Warwickshire, on the farm where my father was herdsman. All our neighbours worked on the same farm. Of the few things I still recall from that time, is the dusty road which ran past the end of our garden; on the opposite side was a village pond. There was an iron pump from which dad drew the water for washing, drinking and cleaning. It was kept in a couple of galvanised buckets in a comer of the kitchen. My only other memory of Blackwell is of straying into the kitchen of our next-door neighbours, Mr and Mrs Taylor; they were sitting at table and turned to watch me toddling towards them. I have little doubt they welcomed the little intruder. Mrs Taylor was my godmother, bless her! Even though we moved out of the area, and she never saw me again, she never forgot my birthday till the day she died, always sending a card and some little gift. Like most farm labourers at that time they could have had little enough to spare. It was to her I wrote my first letter. My parents were meticulous in making sure we never missed writing our thank-you letters.

Farming was then going through a very hard time. Economic downturn started in the early 1920s and the 1929 Wall Street Crash, precipitated world trade into a recession that was to last until the outbreak of the Second World War. Unemployment was general, and men desperate to find work, were undercutting each other's wages. When his boss, Mr Hirons, gave up farming, it was against this unhelpful background that my father was obliged to look for a new job. He first found work at Rynehill Farm, near Churchill in Oxfordshire. All too soon he realised why he had got work fairly easily. His new boss was a despot who drove his men unmercifully. People in the neighbourhood knew this and they were reluctant to work for him. One of the conditions for taking dad on was that mother would work in the farmhouse and, among other things, do the farmer's family washing. There were, of course, no washing machines or detergents and to get clothes sparkling white, washing soda was used. The farmer's wife made my mother add so much of this rather caustic agent, that her hands were raw. Dad could tolerate hardship himself but he hated to see his wife ill-used. When his uncle offered him another job he decided to take it.

Uncle Walter and his wife were religious. He was a lay preacher, taking services at various local chapels and he looked benign and well-fed. New Farm, near Kineton in Warwickshire, lay at the end of a narrow track across two large fields. There were three gates to be opened and closed every time. It was here, aged about five, that I did my first bit of DIY. I found a push-along wooden toy abandoned by some earlier child with one wheel missing. When I found a circular rubber heel that fortunately was both the right size and had a central fixing hole, I was able to attach it in place and make my plaything trundle along in fine style. I don't think I have derived quite that degree of satisfaction from anything since. I only entered the farmhouse a couple of times. It was comfortable, well furnished, and warm in contrast to our cottage which was damp, draughty and cold, except in summer, when the flies swarmed in to join us.

The flies, which must have bothered uncle and aunt every bit as much as they did us, came from a huge manure heap known as 'the muckel bury' which occupied most of the farmyard. The cottage we lived in was built onto the end of a barn and formed one side of the farmyard, the other sides being defined by the farmhouse, cowsheds and loose boxes. It was the dung cleared out from the latter, which piled up from spring to autumn when the muck spreading and ploughing began.

Like so much farm work in those days, muckspreading was hard and unpleasant. The manure was wet and heavy, and had to be dug out by hand with a four-tined dung fork, and every forkful thrown up into the cart. The cart had big diameter wheels so that the back was high off the ground making for tiring work. Man and horse had then to walk to the fields, the farther ones a long way off. Here, as the horse walked forward, the dung was thrown off in small heaps. It was then spread until the whole area was covered, ready to be ploughed in to fertilise next year's crops. My father's job as herdsman, amongst a host of other duties, was to look after the herd of milking cows. No milking machines then, of course, just a bucket and three-legged stool. The diet of the lactating cows was improved by a supplement of molasses. When I was allowed to lick the stick used to stir the lovely black goo, I really believed it improved mine.

One of my early memories is being taken by my brother to see 'something exciting'. We went through a gate and some way along the track until we reached a gap in the hedge. We looked through at what appeared to be a rather boring grass field. It had nothing in it but a large shed, and a post from which a sort of tube made of cloth streamed out in the wind. We waited, and eventually we heard a distant buzzing which seemed to be getting nearer. To my open-mouthed astonishment a biplane circled round, disappeared for a few moments behind some trees, and then swooped down to land and taxi across the grass to the shed. I had seen my first aeroplane. I have since wondered if Albert glimpsed something more,

a hint perhaps, of a future in which he was to have a part. He later saw service in the RAF during the Second World War, followed by a career in civil aviation as Chief Electrical Development Engineer with Sir Alan Cobham's company Flight Refuelling Limited.

I began school aged five at the Church of England School in Kineton. On my first day, mother loaded me onto the parcel carrier of her bike, and took me several miles to the school door. Except for my brother, that was my first encounter with other children. After that first day dad, or one of the other farm workers, took me in a horse drawn trap known as the milk float, together with the milk churns, to the highway where they were collected by the milk-lorry, and I was picked up by the school bus. Total bewilderment characterised the start of my school life. However, I soon found my niche in the back row with the dunces. I was unhappy and miserable at that school but fortunately for me it was not to be for long.

Life for dad must have been almost intolerable, the work was hard, the hours were long and as the only worker living on site, he was continually at his boss's beck and call. Mother was the most incredible manager, stretching what little we had to make ends meet. Looking back, I think she probably went short at times, to make sure we kids were fed and the breadwinner as well provided for as possible. The hardships and poor diet took their toll on my father, and when an injured hand became infected it would not heal. The doctor laid him off work telling him that unless he left that job, it would be the death of him.

From the first day of his illness, dad's wages,

George Frederick Richards (1892–1978) January 1916 aged 24. He was then working as a shunter in the railway marshalling yards at Wolverhampton

on which we all depended, ceased, and after two weeks, his pious uncle told him we must quit the cottage unless he started work at once. My Uncle Will cycled over from his home at Welford upon Avon to see how we were managing and he showed dad an advertisement in the *Evesham Journal*. A cottage was for sale in a hamlet near Milton under Wychwood in Oxfordshire. Although neither of them had any money, and dad was ill, they got on their bikes, and made the long trip to see the place. Sir Norman Tebbit would have been proud of them. The cottage was in a very run down condition. As they approached they could see in through a hole in the roof, and out through the other side. However, it was the cheapest place they were likely to find, and had a little over an acre of land on which dad knew he could grow some of our food. Dad made an offer and a solicitor arranged a mortgage with a man in Chipping Norton. In addition to the interest at 5%, there was a tithe which had to be paid to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. It seems likely that this imposition was one reason for the low price of £350.

On a rainy day in March 1934, our few sticks of furniture were loaded onto a small open lorry, and we set off with few regrets but much foreboding to start a new life in Upper Milton, in our first home which was not a tied cottage. Although it was nearly derelict and heavily mortgaged, and dad out of work and unwell, my parents felt freed from an onerous burden. At that time, over a decade before the 1942 Beveridge Report, farm labourers were not eligible for the dole. Perhaps the view taken

Eunice Richards née Hancox 1891–1981

was that work of some kind could generally be had on the land, and that farm wages were too low for anything to be deducted for National Insurance. We had almost nothing to live on and the first mortgage repayment would be due in a month's time.

With farms surrounding the cottage, my father went the rounds of all of them in search of work but he suffered the disadvantage of being unknown in the area. With labour plentiful and farming in decline, he went weeks with no sign of a job. Mother's skill at making something from nothing must have been sorely tested. There were a few vegetables in the garden and there was a plentiful supply of nettles which she cooked for greens, and she gathered watercress from the brook where it flowed through a field a short distance away. It may be that dad was able to snare the odd rabbit, and the orchard to which part of the land was devoted showed promise of apples, pears and plums later in the year. In his increasingly desperate hunt for work dad cycled farther afield till finally Mr Douglas Izod, a farmer in the village of Lyneham, took him on. It was a long journey to bike to work in all weathers, but dad was grateful for the work. He must have been one of the most conscientious, hard-working men the Izod family ever employed, and, as he didn't live in the cottage which went with the job, they were able to let it and pocket the rent.

As dad biked towards the farm on his first day in the new job he was followed by jeering villagers. They resented the stranger and verbally abused him and this went on for several days. In the end, someone explained to dad the cause of the villagers' discontent. Mr Izod had sacked a man for being lazy and often drunk, only a few days before he took dad on. Like many of his kind, the man was well-liked by those who didn't have to pay his wages. As people got to know him, dad went on to earn the respect of most in that village and the district. Farm wages in the thirties came to thirty shillings a week out of which had to come the mortgage, the tithe, insurance and a penny a week each for the hospital fund. There was no NHS, if you were poor and fell ill, you got better or died, much as we do today, but largely without intervention by the medical profession. Other demands on the purse were rates, paraffin for the oil lamps and the hurricane lantern. All that remained of dad's pay for four of us to live on was seventeen shillings and sixpence.

This my parents squandered on food, clothing, shoes and transport, the latter two being synonymous, and on such other frivolities as seed to plant for growing the greater part of our food. Little was left for buying fuel. The ancient coal fired range was actually fired with any combustible rubbish that could be found which had the unfortunate effect of causing the stove-pipe to get quickly choked with soot. Dad was nearly always at work so mother usually had the job of cleaning it. The stove-pipe emerged from the wall a little above head height, whence it headed upward. In order to open the access lid in the elbow of the stove pipe, mother was

Lovegrove Cottage, 1990s

obliged to stand directly below it. She used a round brush on a long wire handle and as she swept, the soot fell in a black cascade all over her, probably not a favourite job. One surprisingly good fuel, the dried stems of cabbages, Brussels sprouts and the like, were usually reserved for stoking the copper on washing days, which by tradition were Mondays. We were fortunate in having trees in the hedges around the greater part of our holding which provided some firewood.

In country areas in the early thirties, the class structure was still rigid and everyone's position in it closely defined. It remained so until the outbreak of the Second World War when the lower orders were once again required to fight. It seemed almost as if each stratum despised the next one down and the different levels made a point of not mixing socially. There is an underlying truth in the scene where John Cleese and the two Ronnies depict the upper, middle and working classes, and their attitudes to each other. The pre-war reality was every bit as ridiculous, and reflects little credit on the society of the time. Once my generation has died out, and our prejudices with us, I cannot believe people will ever again tolerate quite that degree of snobbery. We were at the bottom of the heap and lacking anyone to look down on and despise, I dare say we made up for that by glancing disdainfully upward. However, I am sure we were rather less hung up on class than our 'betters'. Most of our neighbours were farmers and landowners. I suppose they regarded themselves as middle

class, making their friends among, and marrying, others of their ilk.

Farming was having a hard time but nevertheless some of our farmer neighbours appeared relatively affluent, dressing well, running cars and able to have their children privately educated. The custom was for farm staff to be paid on Saturday at the end of the five hour stint on their half day. In order, no doubt, to emphasise their inferior status, it was common for the men to be kept waiting, cap in hand, well after the time for which they were paid, while their wages were made up. As they were handed the money they were expected to say 'thank you Sir' or even 'thank you Master'. On the smaller family farms the labourers would have been addressed by their christian names. However, it was quite usual for the lower orders to be addressed simply by their surnames, denying them their rightful Mr or Mrs. This, by folk who themselves expected a 'Sir' to which they had no entitlement. Many of the bosses had little respect for those who worked for them, and none at all for those who did not. We were pretty much beneath their notice, or so it seemed. If by accident or carelessness, they harmed us it was beneath their dignity to apologise.

The only thing that made our life in the cottage viable was the growing of much of our own food. I vividly recall an occasion when cattle from a neighbouring farm strayed into our garden. The farmer, a big, strong man, arrived. He began bellowing at his animals, waved a stick and trampled through our vegetable crops to get behind the cattle, the better to drive them. He did more damage with his boots than they had done with their hooves. Still shouting, he went off with not a word to mother. She could only look on as much of our winter food supply was ruined. There will have been no malice in this cavalier treatment of a neighbour, we were merely too unimportant for it to matter.

There was little rest for my hard-working parents. For much of the year it was dark when dad left for work, and again dark by the time he returned home. After his meal and a brief rest, he would go out into the garden, and by the light of the hurricane lantern, get on with digging or whatever other tasks had to be tackled if we were to eat. Mother worked at any jobs she could get to earn a few coppers. When no paid work could be had, she too got on with gardening, or making or mending clothes for us. She was an avid reader but contrived, even with a book propped up close to the oil lamp, to carry on with the knitting which she always had to hand. She was never idle.

Dad was a shepherd at Izod's farm. The farmhouse, cottages, and buildings were in the village with the sheep kept a long way off in fields beside the road which runs along the ridge up to the A361. These fields are very exposed, and in the severe winters of the nineteen forties, the sheep were sometimes buried under snow. They had to be dug out quickly if they were not to die of suffocation. In these conditions, dad had to leave

home very early in the mornings having first cooked his breakfast on a primus-stove. He often had to carry his bike part of the way as in places the snow was so deep he had to climb up and walk along the tops of walls. On arrival, he had first to locate and then to dig out the sheep.

There was an old hut on wheels, where he kept bags of feed and the ovine medicines such as turpentine, Stockholm tar, magnesia and castor oil for treating his charges. If dad was lucky enough to be close when midday came, he would sit in the hut to eat his sandwiches. More often, he was too far away, and then he had to find what shelter he could under a hedge. For a drink, he took tea in a bottle from home. Even in summer it would be cold and in winter it was often frozen, and then he went all day without a drink until he got home. When lambing was imminent, the ewes were brought down from the hill to more sheltered ground near the village where additional shelter was erected using straw bales and hurdles. At those times, dad was sure of a hot drink from a kindly villager, Mrs Belcher, who lived in a nearby council house.

Living so far from the farm dad missed out on most of the little perks, things like firewood or a jug of milk. He did, however, enjoy one of the traditional perquisites of the shepherd, that of the lambs' tails. Sheep are vulnerable to several ills which can cause them suffering or worse. Amongst these are foot rot and maggots. As a hygiene measure the lambs had their tails docked – no great fun for them at the time but saving them a lot of discomfort later. I doubt if the shepherd enjoyed it much either, but he at least could look forward with relish to a meal of lamb-tail pie. Few these days would willingly undertake the task of cleaning the tiny tails, every last trace of wool has to be removed, a tedious job the shepherd's wives had to do, but oh, what a reward. This delicacy was appreciated by the shepherd and his family which was unknown to the cultivated palates of the gastronomic cognoscenti. I count myself privileged to have savoured it.

For all the time dad had worked on farms he had been a stockman, and when tractors replaced the horses, he had never learned to drive. While the horses were still in use, he could take his own supplies of fodder, hurdles and so on up to his shed on the hill. After that he had to rely on other people to take loads up with a tractor. When they were busy elsewhere, he was obliged to carry things on his back across several fields, and through gateways which, in wet weather, were deep in mud. The suction was often enough to pull a boot off as he strove to lift up his foot. I have seen him with five willow hurdles and an iron bar for making stake holes loaded on his back. Like all shepherds, dad had a sheepdog to help him at work. The dog lived at the farm. It had a good deal easier life than my father.

Fond parents have delighted in recounting the amusing utterances of their offspring and mine were no different. When Albert was ten or more, they were still telling, no doubt to his embarrassment, how he imitated

John sitting in the porch at Rynehill Cottage, Churchill, 1931

the farmer, Mr Hirons, calling the various kinds of livestock, 'Mr Hirons he say to the ducks "dil, dil, dil," and to the hens he say "bid, bid, bid," to the cows he call "cup, cup, cup, come on" and to the pigs he say 'ewy, ewy, ewy, chuck, chuck, chuck'. I recall my brother as an old man speaking affectionately in those terms to any pig he came across, scratching its back as he did so. Perhaps my belief that dad summoned his sheep by calling 'ovey, ovey, ovey' is a little fanciful; certainly it sounded very like that. Thomas Hardy remarked this use of Latin by the shepherds in Dorset during the last quarter of the 19th century. Dad was born in 1891 and may well have heard local shepherds still using that call. Maybe it has echoed down the generations since the Roman occupation.

When we first arrived at Lovegrove, a relatively small garden was devoted to vegetables and an even smaller area to flowers and shrubs. All the rest of the acre or so was down to grass with fruit trees and bushes. Apart from gooseberries and black, red and white currant bushes, there were three pear trees of unknown variety, several kinds of plums, my favourite Victoria, and Monarch, Magnum, and Pershore. Also three or four damson trees and a greengage. The apple trees were Bramley, Blenheim, Souring and several other unrecognised varieties. They were

mostly mature trees, and, being standards, required long ladders and a good head for heights when gathering time came round. In their bid to grow enough food, dad and mother increased the cultivated area threefold. It still left a large area of grass. To mow it with a scythe must have been a daunting task. However, it had to be done as the resulting hay was valuable. I remember dad got £2 for the small hayrick which we produced after all his work with the scythe and the rest of us with home made wooden rakes and with a kind of pitchfork called a shupick. (I can't vouch for the spelling of this two-tined implement's name but that is what it sounded like.) Most of the men had at least some skill with the scythe. The sound of blades being whetted rang out across the countryside at haymaking time. Mr Smith, who lived next door, was particularly skilled with the scythe and he had a patch of fine grass where his wife had her washing line. This he kept mown like a lawn entirely by means of his scythe. Neighbours had to rely on each other when a task beyond the capabilities of one man, had to be completed while suitable conditions of crop or weather were favourable. Mr Smith and my father joined Chris Holborough when his field had to be mown. The three of them worked in a line across the field. I have heard it said that in hot weather, men lost so much fluid by perspiration that they would go all day without needing to urinate.

The women, too, depended on one another holding down each other's cleaning jobs during times of illness or other family emergencies. Such jobs were hard to came by and if neglected were all too soon filled from a pool of ever eager labour. If you were ill you got a neighbour to fill in for you, doing a similar service in return as the need arose. They shared their various skills to help each other out, some being good at one thing and others at another. They exchanged advice on the children's health and their own. When one family killed their pig the perishable offal was shared around and the compliment was returned when others had their pig butchered. We were all in the same boat and, like any small crew, recognised our interdependence. There was always a background of tolerance and good will. I'm sure it wasn't always sweetness and light between neighbours but folk remembered past kindness and were mindful of likely future needs. Amicable relations were in everyone's interest and any resentments defused.

After a few years life got a little easier. My parents managed to buy the odd weaner piglet to fatten to supplement our diet. Hens, ducks and geese were kept in the orchard. This took on even greater importance when the war created new shortage. There was sometimes a surplus of eggs which could be sold to fund the purchase of pig meal and corn. Another source of income was the sale of apples and plums from the orchard. In 1934 Blenheim apples were making one shilling and sixpence a pound. The few kitchen scraps left after four of us had eaten were too few even to feed the

fowls and the cat. Dad grew extra potatoes for the pigs but they needed other kinds of food as well if they were to thrIve and maize meal at seven shillings and threepence a hundredweight and sharps at six shillings and sixpence a hundredweight had to be bought almost every month.

On starting at my new school, the council primary school next to Milton church, I took an immediate liking to it and, more especially, to the infant teacher Miss Gwen Silman, later to became Mrs Morgan. All the children loved her as she made us feel secure, valued and special. It was a matter of great pride to me that I could boast that she was my neighbour. I still remember the books and copies of the *Children's Newspaper* that she lent to my brother and me. It was no fault of hers that I remained with the dunces. With the rest of the pupils I moved up to Miss Slater's class. She too was a splendid teacher with a fine talent for reciting verse and for reading stories. As I recall her reading to us from Rudyard Kipling, I almost felt the tropical heat and smelled the stench of 'The great, grey, green, greasy Limpopo river, all set about with fever trees.' She made things come alive for us and held our attention. Hers was always a tranquil class. Here I was able to get on with my studies, and retained my place with the dunces.

Finally I reached Mrs Pearce's top class. Naturally the lessons were harder, and I felt a lesser rapport with her than with her colleagues. All the classrooms were heated in winter by Tortoise slow-combustion stoves which were replenished from time to time with coke by the teacher. Those lucky enough, or clever enough, to sit near the front, were warmish. The rest were mostly tepid, and we dunces at the back developed a hardiness which stood us in good stead for when we returned to our poorly heated homes. It was from this class that pupils were entered for the scholarship examinations. Along with several others, I was not deemed fit to be entered and for that reason alone I distinguished myself by not failing it.

We were a fairly healthy bunch of kids and I recall no serious accidents. There was always the risk of disease, of course. Of the childhood ones, I remember having measles and of the more serious ones like diphtheria. There were several cases most years until swimming in the river Evenlode was banned. One case of meningitis brought us an early meeting with sadness and loss. I remember Toni Reynolds as an attractive, dark haired, brown eyed girl, perhaps a year or so older than I was. When she died, it was my first encounter with grief and I felt it keenly. Toni's home was about half a mile further from the village than mine, so her funeral cortege passed our cottage. It may be that the emotion of the event and perhaps a dawning awareness of my own mortality, have distorted my memory. In the middle of the nineteen thirties, can I really have seen a plate glass hearse, drawn by a pair of jet black horses, caparisoned in black harness

John and Albert Richards, early 1930s

and sable plumed head-dress, bearing away my young school fellow to her untimely rest? True or false, that is how I remember it.

When we first arrived at Upper Milton, there were four houses grouped where the road crosses over a brook, three on one side of the road, one on the other. Our cottage, named Lovegrove, was the middle one of the three. On one side lived Mr Harry Smith and his wife Rose. Mr Smith worked in the sawmill of Alfred Groves & Son, a building and quarrying firm who also had a thriving business buying and felling trees which they cut and seasoned to produce good English timber. They were the main employers in the village. When their timber-wagon went by drawn by a team of straining Shire horses and carrying one or more huge tree trunks to the sawmill in the village, it made an impressive sight. Later, a Sentinel steam lorry took the place of horses and was as fine a spectacle if rather noisier.

Mr Smith's cottage had originally been a row of three one-up one-down dwellings. In the days of very large families it must have been a tight squeeze for a brood of growing children in such a small space. There was,

however, a large and productive garden and Mr Smith was a very good gardener, growing lots of fine vegetables and beautiful flowers. His was a garden to gladden the heart and it benefited from the babbling stream which flowed through it, changing little in volume summer or winter, overhung by willows and crossed here and there by stone plank bridges.

In the house on the other side, lived a retired farmer known as Dickey Gilbert who had a live-in housekeeper named Julia Paxford, and a manservant called Jimmy Harris who slept in a shed in the garden. They had a donkey and trap for transport. Mr Gilbert used it to visit the Butcher's Arms in the evenings, and being rather fond of his tipple, he relied on the donkey to get him home again. At the end of one such convivial night out, he conceived the notion that the devil was up his chimney. By way of giving Satan notice to quit, he fired his shotgun up from the hearth. Understandably, Julia was alarmed and hastened up the hill to Chris Holborough, and begged him to go and take the gun off her boss before he shot her or himself.

Mr and Mrs Parsloe lived in the house across the road. Mr Parsloe's health had been ruined in the First World War. I remember him only vaguely as a figure lying on a couch under the living room window and he died soon after we arrived, leaving his widow Elsie to bring up their two young daughters, Ann and Jill. Elsie worked at any jobs she could get, mostly the housework of other women and she also sold a few grocery items from home, packets of biscuits and other similar staples. Ann was a little older than I, perhaps a year or so, and was more enterprising. She it was who provided my first anatomy lesson, on the basis of 'show me yours and I'll show you mine'. I knew we were up to mischief of a more than usually reprehensible kind. I was mainly concerned that a grown-up would inopportunely turn up, as adults seemed liable to do, and take the opportunity, to spank our readily accessible, bare backsides. About the only impression I was left with was that little girls bottoms went all the way round, while mine ended, a little untidily, half way.

My first experience of radio was a crystal set lent for a few days to my brother, and barely audible, probably due to an inadequate aerial. Late in the 1930s we acquired a secondhand wireless set but it had to be battery operated as we had no mains electricity supply until 1948. I still remember the first programme we heard. It was an installment of a weekly serial, The Plum Family, a sort of early comic soap opera. We were enthralled, and listened avidly, but not for long at a time because the battery had to last the whole week. It was called an accumulator, or more familiarly, a wet battery. Each proud wireless owner had two of these wet batteries, one in use, the other being recharged. At first we had to take one every week to Reg Bradley's home in The Square for it to be recharged, and collect the other one to take home, and connect to the wireless, always remembering

to anoint the terminals with Vaseline to prevent corrosion. The fee for a recharge was, I think, sixpence. Later, one of Mr Bradley's apprentices, Albert Champness aka Bim Gee, delivered and collected them in an ancient Austin Seven car. Those early wirelesses also required two other 'dry' batteries to make them work – a high tension and a grid bias battery. Another essential item was a long and lofty aerial wire, usually strung from a tree to a chimney or other high point on the house, and well-insulated from both.

After Mr Gilbert died, Fosters, a firm of hardware retailers, bought his house and they used the outbuildings to store their stock, and hawked it round the district in a red motorvan. Many outlying areas had no electricity or gas. There was a good trade in oil-lamps and stoves, and the paraffin oil which they burnt, as well as in the multiplicity of small household items stocked. The roof and sides of the van were festooned with other, larger things, garden tools, bicycle tyres, scythes and pans and pots, both cooking and chamber. Many rural homes had no indoor sanitation. Like all our cottage neighbours, we had a bucket lavatory in a tin shack known as South View. The sight of the 'red van', later taken over by Pratleys of the High Street, must have been a welcome one to people in the remoter cottages when supplies were running low.

Another retailing service which helped to make life tolerable was the quite superb one provided by the Chipping Norton Co-op and their driver Mr Turner. He was an exceptional man, never forgetting anything or losing an order. Whatever the weather the Co-op van brought bakery goods and grocery items which customers had ordered the previous week and collected their new order. This was only part of their service as he would also take orders for medicines, hardware, toys and clothes on approval from the outfitters and haberdashery departments.

Besides the battery man, other regular callers were Jack Kethro the baker from Shipton, Fred 'Fishy' Bradley, who delivered fish in an old and malodorous Ford 8, and Arthur Rainbow, who sold fruit and greengrocery from a horse-drawn van. With so many good gardeners, I fancy he found a poor market in our hamlet for his vegetables, but no doubt he managed to shift a few oranges and bananas. We had a grocery service from Gilberts of Bourton on the Water. Other callers were the man from the Pru who came on a bike from Burford and, for the rates, Mr Thornet from Chipping Norton Rural District Council. More infrequent visitors were the Kleeneze man, who sought to help his customers 'See the Light' not only by selling them window-cleaning materials, but by converting them to religion, and occasionally Jehovah's Witnesses, intent on much the same purpose as the Kleeneze man, but without the brushes.

In religious matters my parents were nonconformist. Mother attended the Milton Baptist Chapel but dad rarely had enough time away from the

ever-urgent task of gaining us a living, either at work or in the garden. In addition to the religious services, the chapel was the focus of rather more social gatherings with the Brotherhood for men and the Sisterhood for women. The Young People's Fellowship catered for what today we call teenagers. Quite a lot of our tradesmen were chapel-goers, whether from conviction, or to reassure customers of their probity I cannot say, perhaps both.

As a child I was sent to Sunday school as well as being taken to morning or evening service. The first Baptist minister I can remember was an oldish man, inclined, I thought, to be patronising. He seemed more like a Church of England clergyman than a nonconformist, but I was very young and may well have been mistaken. The next, Mr Evans, was a younger, more energetic person with a young wife; they seemed better able to relate to the children. Together they started a youth club and got things happening. When older, I attended Miss Lucy Groves' bible class along with my brother. The only part I enjoyed was when Bert Gee, one of the older members, played his cornet to accompany the singing.

Ann and Jill Parsloe were nearest to me in both age and propinquity, and so were my most usual playmates. However, for several months one summer, a family came in a big wooden caravan, and camped on a wide part of the roadside verge nearby, while the man worked on an extensive road improvement scheme. They had a son, a boy of about my age, and we became best mates. One of our favourite games was sailing boats on the stream which ran through the field opposite. The boats we made from off-cuts of wood which we shaped to a point at one end. By attaching a string to the front of our boats and the other end to a stick, we were able to tow the vessels along as we ran alongside the brook. All too soon for me, the roadwork was completed, and my friend and his family went on their way. I had another boy, Eric, to play with but he lived a bit further away and was over three years older, half as old again as me. Inevitably, we tended to do what interested him and I had a job to keep up. On the other hand, he had more things for us to play with. Eric Holborough's father, like so many men of his generation, had seen service in the First World War and been injured. He had worked at several jobs since leaving the army but by the time I knew him, he had bought a small-holding of between five and six acres and was gaining a living keeping poultry and selling eggs. The Holboroughs treated me well. If they went out and brought back something nice for Eric, an ice cream say, there was always one for me.

It took my parents all their time to keep us tidily clad and adequately fed, and at times going short themselves. Every penny was carefully spent and they prided themselves on owing no-one but an occasion arose when they were obliged to set aside their prudent principle of having nothing for which they could not pay. I became ill and it seemed as though I might not

recover. At the time the usual fee for a doctor's visit was seven shillings and sixpence. They worried where the money was to come from to pay a doctor but having little option, they asked Dr Gordon Scott Senior to come and look at me. When he had examined me he told my parents that I had a form of anaemia and gave an injection to which I had a violent reaction. I do not know if it alarmed him but it certainly scared my parents and me. I was okay after a short while and went on to get well again. In the meantime my folks awaited the doctor's bill. It never came. Neither they nor I ever forgot his kindness. No doubt he had drawn his own conclusions from the signs of poverty he saw as he passed through the cottage. It was to be thirty-two years before the chance came for me to repay, in small measure, the debt that I owed to him without embarrassment to either of us, and indeed, without his knowledge.

As Albert, my elder brother, approached school-leaving age and with work scarce, dad determined neither of his sons should have the sort of life he experienced on the land so the search was on to find Albert a job. Certainly any contribution to the cost of feeding and clothing him would have been welcome. Albert was one of the brightest pupils at Burford Elementary School. His headmaster, Mr Jones, told dad he would like to keep him on at school for as long as possible. He thought any of the work available at the time was likely to be in dead-end jobs he likened to 'setting an elephant to pull a wheelbarrow'. He said Albert was capable of better. At no small sacrifice, it was agreed that Albert should continue in school for a further term.

In spite of much patching, the roof was getting so bad that it had got to be stripped and completely re-slated. Dad turned this problem to advantage by offering the job to a local builder on condition he would take Albert on, and, although not in a formal apprenticeship, teach him the trade. The builder, Adolph Parsloe, had a good name for reliable workmanship. It seemed the best chance for my brother to get started in work that might have a future. He was undoubtedly used as cheap labour, but being bright and keen, he also learned a lot during his four years in the building trade. He made use of his skills to do a lot of work on our cottage. His passion, however, was for anything to do with flying, and with the start of the Second World War, he saw his chance and volunteered for service in the RAF.

Although only a child, I was becoming aware of the talk about a possible war. To people with scars from the last war still raw, and painful memories of its horrors still fresh, the threat of another seemed too hideous to contemplate. Folk shied away from it to the extent that our country was ill prepared. One evening in September 1939, I happened to be out after dark, and saw a car with newspaper tied round the headlamps to dim them. I returned home and was told that war had been declared.

In the summer of 1939 my time at the primary school ended and, along

John and Albert Richards, early 1930s

with my contemporaries, I started at Burford Elementary School. It was full to overflowing with the year's new intake of local children plus a great many others evacuated from London due to the war. Although my brother had been a pupil and left there several years previously, his ability had not been forgotten, and much was expected of me. Sadly, I was to prove a disappointment and graduated to my rightful place with the other dunces, a position I was to maintain through the rest of my schooldays until at the age of fourteen, I left to begin my education.

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***Wychwoods History,* Number 9 (1994) £3.00** The Medieval Lords of Shipton, Pt I; The De Clares; Shipton in 1662, a Hearth Tax Study; Possession is Nine Points of the Law; The Groves Family of Milton, Pt 3; Emigrants to America; Old Christmas Custom at Chadlington; Moss Families of Ascott; Book Reviews.

***Wychwoods History,* Number 10 (1995) £3.00** Jessie Hunt, Evacuee 1939–45; Shipton in 1662: Hearth Tax Study, Pt 2; Shipton Village Shops and Roundsmen; First Parish Council Elections; Smallpox; Puzzles over Shipton Prebend; What really happened at Shipton Court; The de Langleys: Medieval Foresters; George Quartermain of Ascott.

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Further copies and back numbers of *Wychwoods History* may be obtained from Dr Margaret Ware, Monks Gate, Shipton under Wychwood, Chipping Norton, Oxon OX7 6BA (telephone 01993 830494). Postage and packing is 90p for the first copy and 40p for each additional copy. Cheques payable to Wychwoods Local History Society. See pages 67–68 for a full list of publications in print.

Cover illustration: *Ernest Hanks (far right) with friends outside the Churchill Arms at Ascott. He died in action in 1917.*

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