



# YATTON

# E S T E R D A Y

No: 9 ~ 1992

Yatton Local History Society

John Scally 92



## Editorial

Our front cover depicts the Masonic Hall — one of Yatton's historic buildings. Once again we are indebted to John Scally for his art work.

We hope you enjoy 'Yatton Yesterday' No.9. We are optimistic about the production of Book 10 in 1993. This will mean over a decade of hard and conscientious research on the part of our contributors, all voluntarily.

May we point out that 'A History of Yatton' is in no way a substitute for 'Yatton Yesterdays'. It is rather a complementary background to them all.

We are indeed grateful to our newsagent friends, Clive Mortimer, Andrew Melhuish and George Scott for their sales on our behalf, free of charge, as well as to Richard Whittaker of Claverham Post Office. Copies of Book 8 are still in the shops, and books 3,4,5 & 6 are available upon request.

The video history of Yatton in 1992 proceeds apace. Chris and John Derrick and their assistants are doing sterling work to achieve this unique record of village life.

During the winter there will be a series of interesting lectures at the Methodist Hall, High Street, and subsequent visits to historical localities during the summer of 1993. Come and join us!

*A. F. COE President*  
*B. BRADBURY Chairman*



## Programme of Winter Lectures

A programme of winter lectures will be held at the Methodist Hall on the third Tuesday of every other month, as follows:-

Tues 15th September 'The Work of the Landmark Trust' by Chris Crook, Curator of Woodspring Priory, Worle.

Tues 17th November 'The Shapwick Landscape Archaeology Project'. Mick Aston from Bristol University will talk, with slides, about the history of this Somerset village situated between the Polden Hills and the Levels.

Tues 19th January 'Recent Research into Yatton's History'. Several members of the Society will give short talks on various aspects of village history, some with slides, plans and exhibits. We hope to present the following: Wake & Dean, farmhouses, wells, the Park Farm estate and the video project.

Tues 16th March 'Orkney's Historic Heritage'. Nicholas Thomas, former Director of Bristol Museum, will talk about the many interesting historical remains still to be found on these islands.

These meetings are open to visitors; research meetings on Tuesdays in alternate months are open to members only, as is the social evening held in February. The programme of summer outings is usually available about March each year.



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# The Lodge of Agriculture No.1199

## Foundation

Meetings were held during December 1867 with a view to establishing a Masonic Lodge at the Ship & Castle, Congresbury. There were eight founder members, all but one belonging to Lodges in Bristol. Among the eight were J. R. Bramble, aged 26, a Bristol solicitor, said to live at 'Egglesford House', Yatton (is this Eaglesfield, the previous name of Westaway?); Dr. Hurd, at Rose Villa, High Street, from 1859 to 1883; and the appropriately-named A. Stiff of Cleeve, starch merchant.

The Lodge was consecrated on Tuesday 14th January 1868 at the Ship and Castle at 1.30pm, and at 3 pm. a banquet was held, tickets 4s. (20p.). "The Lodge is distant 1½ miles from the Yatton Station of the Bristol and Exeter Railway and conveyances will be in attendance to meet the 11.34 and 1.42 down trains and the 10.17 and 12.29 up trains and also for the return trains in the evening". Present were 13 members and 56 visitors. The fee for initiation — in addition to the subscription — was five guineas, a very large sum of money in the 1860s. Also membership was obviously restricted to those who could have time off to attend a ceremony on a Tuesday afternoon. The first Master, J. R. Bramble (d.1908) became a Lieut-Colonel in the Gloucestershire R.E. Volunteers, a J. P. and an active local historian. Later he lived at Cleeve House, Meeting House Lane, which was burnt down in the late 1960s, moving to Weston-super-Mare in 1906.

## Early Members

These included Colonel Long of Woodlands, Congresbury. Born in Wrington in 1843, he joined the army and served in India. In 1900, aged 57, he took the 4th Somerset Militia to the Boer War. He died in May 1926, having been a member of the Lodge for 56 years.

James Mountstevens, later the landlord of the Railway Hotel, Yatton, was then aged 26 and farming at Land Farm. From Yatton came Edward Linton of Rock House, aged 51 and a 'gentleman', and William Halliday, schoolmaster and organist. Henry Shiner, father of the Yatton auctioneer, was a member.

Others included the vicar of Congresbury, aged 26, Charles Banwell the Congresbury postmaster and William Partridge of Woodside, Congresbury. From Nailsea came the curate and an engineer. Charles L. Fry Edwards completed 55 years as a member, being buried at Axbridge early in 1924. He was a J.P. and vice-chairman of Somerset County Council. Frederick Wood, a Wrington solicitor and clerk to the Justices at Axbridge, also completed more than 50 years, his son Dubric (born 1890) being a prominent member of the Lodge. Another of his sons was killed in 1915 in the Dardanelles.

Many joined in their 20s and early 30s. The Lodge did not grow quickly, for by 1900 membership was only 56. The Cheddar Valley Railway opened in 1869 and this probably accounts for the number attending from the Axbridge, Cheddar and Winscombe areas. Other areas well represented are Wrington, Backwell, Wraxall, Bristol and, of course, Congresbury and Yatton. Occupations included solicitor, engineer, doctor, farmer, assorted merchants e.g. corn, timber and wine, builders, brewers, agents (insurance and estate), schoolmasters and 'gentlemen'.

## Development of the Lodge

Meetings were held monthly except during midsummer and the minutes record the purchase of various items, e.g. a carpet not to exceed £8. It is recorded that Brothers Long and Edwards walked to Bristol to attend meetings of another Lodge until it stipulated that 'Brethren must attend in Evening Dress'.

After 24 years at the Ship & Castle, the Lodge moved in the early 1890s to the new Assembly Rooms in Yatton which had been opened by James Mountstevens, himself a member of the Lodge. Being next to the station would have facilitated travelling to meetings. To commemorate the move, a new banner was presented by Mr. Fry Edwards bearing the inscription 'God Speed the Plough'.

Possibly as a result of the move, more people from Yatton now appear on the list of members — Gilbert Winter (surveyor), Thomas Cotterell (wallpaper merchant), F. Savage (asst. station master), A. Pethick (contractor), James Ball (sexton), W. E. Lawrence (solicitor), E. R. Buscombe (innkeeper), P. A. Box (commercial traveller), R. Hiam (civil engineer), G. Parker (commercial salesman) and D. E. Williams (nuisance inspector).

Other Yatton members included E. W. Blew (insurance agent), A. Knowles (builder), J. Taylor (accountant, d. 1920), Albert Barber of Bellevue House, the station master, Wm. Counsell (coal merchant), Stephen Cox of Court de Wyck and E. J. Hoddell, the market auctioneer. Later they were joined by the auctioneer W. H. Shiner and Sidney J. Wake of Wake and Dean, described as a 'church furnisher'.

It is interesting to note that after Dr. Hurd, all the Yatton doctors became members; Dr. C. W. Sayer, Dr. de Courcy Lyons who lived at Henley Lodge, Dr. J. U. Bolton of Glenville House, and Drs. P. Johnson and Vincent Wood, both of whom lived at Henley Lodge. Dr. Wood, however, resigned in 1926, the reason not being stated. All through the years there were some from other villages described as 'physician & surgeon'.

Other occupations not previously mentioned were bank manager, workhouse superintendent (both Axbridge and Flax Bourton), police and local government officials, a dentist, a vet and people in various kinds of commerce. There were usually several C. of E. clergymen and some schoolmasters. An occupation which does not fit the usual pattern is 'professor of music' — Frederick Hek who moved to Winscombe from Montpelier, Bristol. Other areas of residence are Long Ashton, Flax Bourton, Wedmore, Banwell, Worle and Blagdon.

## **The Great War, 1914 - 18**

The first meeting after the summer break, 1914, was held in October, when it was reported that some members had joined the Forces and the National Anthem was sung. A notice was read 'that in order to prevent the peace and harmony of the Craft being disturbed it is necessary that all Brethren of German, Austrian, Hungarian or Turkish birth should not during the continuance of the War attend any meetings....'

In 1916 Lieut. Henry Miles was killed in action, followed in 1917 by Col. E. H. Openshaw and Captain F. P. Wheeldon. At the end of 1917 it was decided to hold meetings at 4.30 pm. rather than in the evening and to dispense with the banquet. Instead, light refreshments at 2s. (10p) each would be provided at the end of the January meeting. Five guineas was given to the Somerset Prisoner of War Help Fund.

After the war an oak tablet was erected as a war memorial to the three members killed in action and it was unveiled in December 1919. As a thank offering for peace, the harmonium was replaced by an organ. Membership in 1918 was 66, an increase of ten since 1900.

## **The Years 1920 to 1936**

In 1920 it was proposed that the initiation fee be raised from five to eight guineas. Meetings continued at the Assembly Rooms. There were 47 new members between 1920 - 1928 and 29 from 1928 - 1934. Occupations remained much the same with the addition of several motor and electrical engineers. The catchment area is also similar. Clergy included



the vicars of Wrington, Congresbury, Kenn and William Ford who was living at Rock House in 1929. Arthur Edwards, the butcher, and Mr. Dee-Shapland of Green Farm, Claverham, joined in the early '30s. By 1924 membership had risen to 79 and in the 1930s it was over 90. In 1923, £5 was given to the Japanese Relief Fund for the relief of distressed masons in Japan.

Members became unhappy with the Assembly Rooms and in 1924 a possible move to Winscombe was referred to. A committee was appointed to consider securing the Lodge's own premises and to this end the Temple Building Fund was set up. The annual subscription was raised from one to two guineas, half to go to the fund, though members living over 20 miles away continued to pay one guinea. Early in 1927 the following resolution was put to the meeting: "That as the inclement condition of the Lodge room is detrimental to the attendance of members, the Worshipful Master be respectfully requested to at once take such action as may be necessary to ameliorate the existing discomfort and that he be empowered to incur such reasonable expenditure for the purpose as the available funds of the Lodge will permit".

Some discord amongst members is implied by another resolution of the same year referring to "the distressing differences that have existed for three years with regard to the future home of this Lodge, that harmony may if possible be restored...."

No progress seems to have been made, however, because in 1934 another committee was to investigate the possibility of having exclusive tenancy of the Assembly Rooms, or to get land adjoining to erect a Lodge Room, or any other suggestion to "improve the present conditions in Yatton under which the Lodge labours". This finally led to the decision to move to Larchmount Hall, High Street, Yatton.



"Larchmount"

20th March 1935

## **The Move to Larchmount Hall**

Miss Avery's school for girls had occupied the hall for 35 years until her death in 1925 (see 'A History of Yatton' page 83). After being taken over by Larchmount Laboratories it was gutted by fire in March 1935. When acquired by the Lodge only the four outside walls and chimney stacks remained. In the reconstruction the latter were removed and the upper windows were left blank, as they are today. The architect was P. B. Rigg and the main contractors were John Dyer & Son of Weston.

The ceremony of dedication on Monday, 16th March 1936, was conducted by Brigadier-General C. L. Norman who was the Provincial Grand Master of Somerset.

## **Conclusion**

In 1940 the Army requisitioned the ground floor of the Lodge. Meetings were still held, but on Saturday afternoons because of the blackout, and after 1942 no meetings were held from December to February inclusive but from June to August instead.

On Monday 15th January 1968 the Lodge celebrated its centenary. At that time it had a hundred members. It still continues to meet at Larchmount today and this December it celebrates its 125th anniversary.

## **References**

Somerset Record Office Q/RSm — 2

Minute books and material kindly lent by Mr. Terry Hart of Nailsea

Photograph from Society archives

*Marian Barraclough*



## **Wells in Yatton and Claverham**

In 1991 and 1992 a survey of wells in Yatton and Claverham was made using information held by Yatton Local History Society, including the 1903 Ordnance Survey map, and from conversation with local residents. Where possible, photographs were taken for the archives of the society, and the society holds a complete list.

Most of the sites are privately owned and not publicly accessible and the help and co-operation of the owners is gratefully acknowledged. As many wells may not have been investigated additional information would be much appreciated. Over one hundred wells and pumps have been identified and there may be many more. The map gives an indication of the siting of some wells, most of which were found near or in houses built before 1850, or on their sites.

Before mains water became widely available any dwelling or group of dwellings needed its own water supply and an underground source was the most reliable. Before 1847 no central government supervision of water supply existed and water was only piped to those who could afford it. Yatton did not get a piped water supply until 1910 (see 'Yatton Yesterday' No.2, 1985). Some wells were still in use in the early 1950s until they were discontinued because of the need for a demonstrably safe supply for dairy farming.

Use of private water supplies for drinking has been completely replaced by mains water locally (Woodspring District Council 1992). However, water from a small number of wells is still used for gardening.

The earliest reference found to a well in Yatton is a report that the churchwardens spent 16s. 4d. on a bucket and chain for the Church House well in 1473. By 1896 there was the luxury of a cast iron pump and stone trough which can still be seen in the parish church car park adjoining the bier house.

Many wells appear to have been dug outside the original walls of farmhouses but as the houses were enlarged the wells were incorporated in the kitchen, scullery or dairy as at Orchardleigh Cottage, Manor and Cadbury Farms. However, at Brick House the well is within the earliest remaining walls. Some, such as those at Oldeacre and Manor Farm, still contain clear water.

Other wells posed challenges of a different kind. One was found at the junction of Church and Chescombe Roads on the site of former cottages where it still remains, albeit filled in to be found by further unsuspecting roadmenders. In June 1992 another well was found unexpectedly in a nearby garden and had been covered by a concrete slab since the last war. It is about 40 feet deep with 20 feet of clear water and is lined with stone to the full depth.

Another interesting well is in a field at Claverham Green Farm where there was once a windmill used to pump water for domestic and farming use. It was also used by the neighbouring Grove Farm.

Most wells were stone lined for at least 10 feet, 6 feet across and up to 30 feet deep. The one at Cottage Farm was stone lined for 10 feet then went through a layer of shale and had a wider base chamber to increase its capacity. The opening was narrower, made of a flat round stone with a central hole about 2 feet across. On some stones, as at Grove Farm, evidence of supports for a bucket can still be seen. Other wells were completely covered and hand pumps were used to raise the water as at Claverham Court and Prospect House.

Most wells were renowned for not running dry, but when the tannery at Court de Wyck was using a lot of water the wells in Claverham nearly did so. The wells at Horsecastle, The Grange and Weeping Ash Farm were on the same line of shale. Other wells in Henley Lane were also on a stream line from Cadbury Hill to Hollowmead so they were equally affected. Church View and the Butchers Arms suffered the doubtful privilege of being flooded simultaneously at times.

At Bishops Farm the well fed a 600 gallon tank in the roof of a barn from which water was piped to eight cattle troughs with the help of a motorised pump. This well was mentioned in auction details of 1854. Similar arrangements existed at Claverham Court and The Grange.

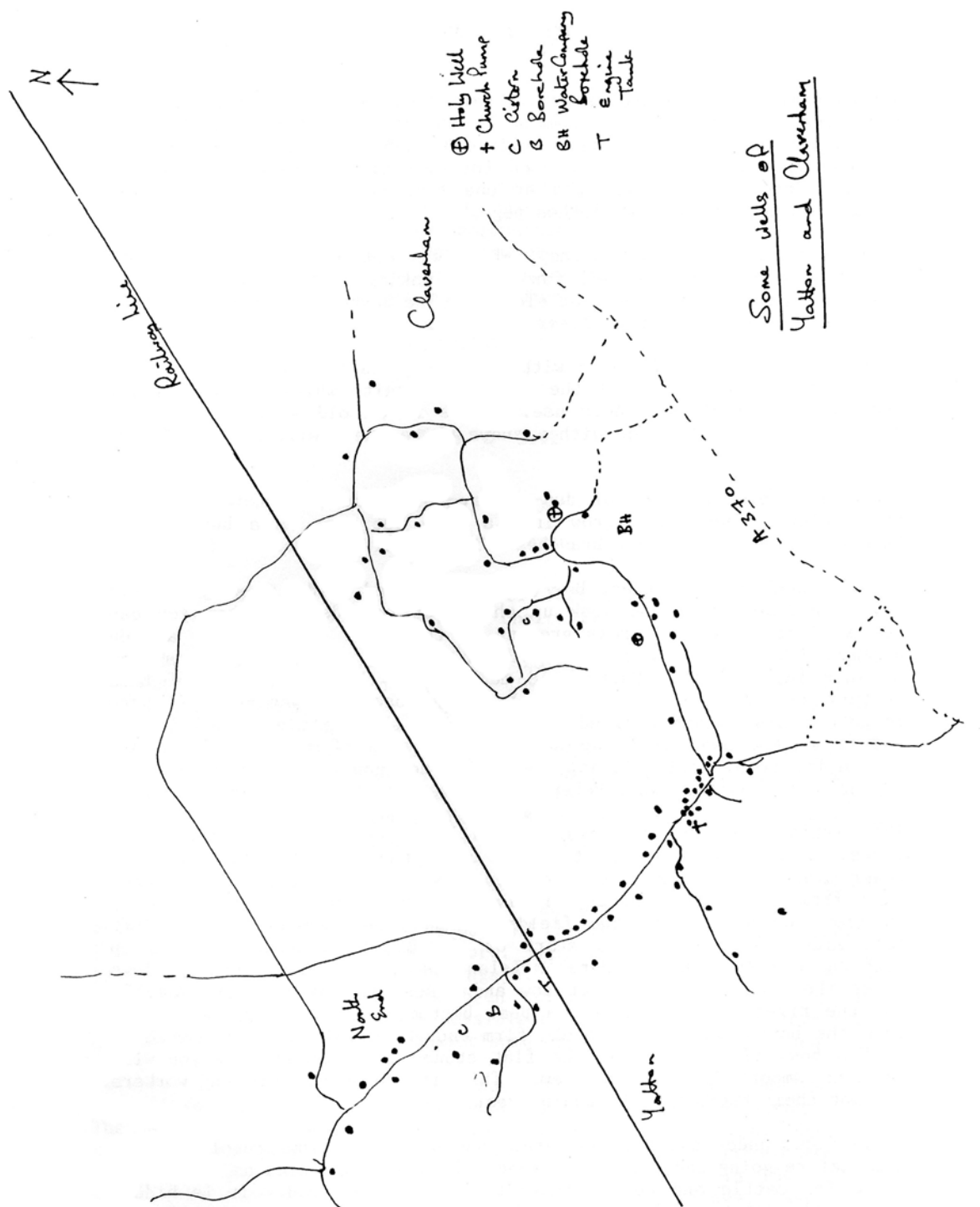
Besides wells, soft water was collected in cisterns from roofs. One still exists in the stable yard of Claverham House and contains clear water. The cistern has a round opening and a stone lined neck with a brick lined vault beneath. The vault is 6 feet deep and 9 feet wide. There is a similar one at Macquarie Farm.

Industrial water supplies were found at Wake & Dean's factory in a deep borehole near the internal railway line (see 'Yatton Yesterday' No.7, 1990). Also there were the tanks at the railway station by each of the four lines which were used to replenish the engines.

Other interesting wells were the reputedly holy ones, one at Court de Wyck and two near Claverham Road. The name 'Bishops Well' is all that remains, but they were reported in 1923 to have had a reputation for curing consumption or TB (Horne 1923). They appear to have been springs which flowed into the Yeo, perhaps from the same source as the Henley wells. Now only a displaced stone marks the site of Bishops Well.

A number of wells were shared, as at the Glebelands, Horsecastle and in Yatton High Street at Orwell House.





Wells and pumps were meeting places and a story is told by Mrs. Burdge about the one at Horsecastle Court. It was noticed that the soap kept disappearing and no one could shed any light on it. One wag said to his neighbour that she wasn't to worry as it couldn't be her 'as it was well known that she didn't use any'!

### Reference

Horne E., Somerset Holy Wells and other named Wells  
— the Somerset Folk Series No.12, Somerset Folk Press 1923.

M. A. Pitman

## Willow Trees

Withey trees, as they are called in this area, are of several different varieties. First and most common is the crack withey. This is the kind which years ago was kept pollarded, and the young branches used for making spars. Spars were used for pinning the thatch down on the ricks. Travelling gypsies who at one time camped on the moors used these branches for making clothes pegs. Then there is the basket withey, which was cut near ground level and the long slim branches used for basket making. These two types are easy to separate when looked at closely. The basket withey has slightly narrower leaves which grow closer together.

Another variety is the white withey which grows taller than the other two, and the undersides of the leaves are quite white. I have never been able to find out their use. There is an old saying about this tree which goes 'when the withey shows white there will be rain before night'. There are several types of dun withey which produce pussy willow in the spring. They don't grow into a tree but stay as a bush. Some have bluish stems to their branches whilst others are quite red.

If you stand on Moor Street Bow (the hump backed bridge over the Little River on Moor Road) and look up the river towards Claverham you can see a clump of withey trees growing on the river bank. These are on a small island which was called 'Peter's Island' by people years ago. My late father Victor Naish told me that in the early years of this century an old chap who lived in Yatton, whose name was Peter (I have forgotten his surname) lived in a tent on this little island in the summer to get away from the hustle and bustle of Yatton. There are just a few people still living in Yatton who know this area as 'Peter's Island'. One wonders what Peter would have thought of Yatton in 1992.

The Little River as it flows through Yatton passes some interesting spots. I will start where it passes under the road at Kenn Moor Gate, Lower Claverham. This must have been the point of entry to the common land from Claverham, where the river is very narrow. It widens as it flows on and passes two fields called 'The Commons' on the left hand side. Then comes the start of the Black Ditch which links up with the old River Kenn. Peter's Island is on the left before it flows under the road at Moor Street Bow and makes its way to North End. So far the river has flowed over a peat bottom, but as it approaches Ham Lane the bottom turns to gravel, firm enough to walk on. It now comes to Ham Bow; if you look at the flat stones that cap the bow you will see the smooth hollows in them. This is where farmers and workers brought their tools for sharpening years ago. As it flows under the bow the water runs over a shallow gravel-bottomed area before going under the main road. This area was used as a drinking place for cattle and horses travelling along the road. It is hidden by a small copse. I have been told that in the great drought of 1911 cattle were driven from Kingston Seymour twice a day to drink there, as many of the rhynes in that area had dried up.

The river now goes between Box Bush Farm and the Bridge Inn. The banks here are very steep and this area is called 'The Mattik'; I don't know why. It flows out of North End, passing the bottom of Duck Lane before making its way to Wemberham, where it passes the ruins of the ancient Wemberham House and the long row of horse chestnut trees. It finally makes its way to Kingston Seymour.

In many places along the route described are marker stones set in the banks. Between these stones is the area where occupiers of certain houses in Yatton and Cleeve are responsible for keeping the river clean. This is called 'keetching'. Many new occupiers have been greatly surprised to find this responsibility backed by law. The liability in 'The Mattik' belonged to Wake & Dean's furniture factory.

*Ray Naish*

## 1538 & 1992 or Then, as Now

Over the centuries the inhabitants of Yatton have often been called upon to raise money to save parts of their village from disaster. Recently an appeal was made to raise £310,000 to save the church from falling into a state of decay. In 1991 the population of Yatton and Cleeve was estimated to be 5,924 over the age of 17 years, therefore the sum required to save the church was over £52 per head of the population of the area. Many of the people of Yatton are in full employment but some are pensioners and some are unemployed. Many do not belong to the Church of England; there are only 451 names on the Church Electoral Roll of the Parish of Yatton Moor, so it has been a tremendous effort for Yatton's inhabitants to raise this enormous sum.

To look back 450 years it is interesting to see from the Churchwardens' Accounts what sort of a burden had been placed on our 16th century ancestors when, having finally completed the rebuilding of their beautiful church only fifty years before, they were faced with having to raise large sums of money once again. In order to make comparisons the 16th century currency has been converted in this article into present-day values. It is not possible to get nearer than a very rough estimate but it can give the reader some idea of the sums involved.

Between 1538 and 1548 the Churchwardens had two problems; one was 'the rage of ye salte water' and the second was the rage of 'King Henry VIII'. The latter would have affected only the vicar and churchwardens but the former concerned a large number of people whose livelihood depended on the meadows in the northern half of the parish. In 1548 'Danys yere', the sluice at West Wemberham, near Phipps Bridge, 'wych then beyng ruynus and yn decay' needed urgent repair. There was a real danger that much of the pasture land in that area of Yatton would fall a victim to the sea. The cost of repairing this sluice in present day money was in the region of £3,100, equivalent to £10 in 1548.

In 1538 King Henry, by the 1534 Act of Supremacy, had made himself head of the Church in England instead of the Pope. He ordered that all churches must replace the Latin Bible with one in English. He also ordered that registers of baptisms, marriages and burials be maintained. These registers were to be placed safely in chests kept locked in the churches. All images were also to be removed. The cost of all this in present day money was at least £500, making the combined cost of the sluice and King Henry's demands over £3,600.

For a population of only 500 adults this was £7 per head (the exact age that one was considered an adult is not known). Yatton was not a prosperous parish in the mid-16th century. The land was too wet for sheep, which were producing great wealth in some parts of the country, and the people of Yatton must have been very poor. The better-off inhabitants would have been the owners of Court de Wyck, the few farmers in the area and the self-employed tradesmen such as the mason, carpenter, wheelwright and blacksmith. Most men were farm labourers and a few were quarrymen and miners working in the stone quarries and iron mines nearby. At that time the wages of skilled artisans were only about £46.50 per week in present-day money and a labourer's wage was equivalent to between £31 and £38.75 per week with a little extra work available at harvest time. Many of them would have had large families and the married women would not have been wage earners. The unmarried women, when employed, would have been servants earning little more than their keep.

There was only one solution for the 16th century people of Yatton, which most fortunately has not yet had to be repeated in the 20th century, and that was to sell some of the church property. They sold the silver cross, some candlesticks, the 'gylt' from the forbidden images and even the wood from the ends of the pews, which had presumably been cut off because they showed carved images. This raised over £3,616 in modern money and must have seemed to have solved the difficulties.



However, if these Churchwardens could have looked into the future they would have seen terrible upheavals ahead. After Henry VIII's death and the early death of his son Edward VI, the Roman Catholic Queen Mary came to the throne in 1554. Immediately orders went out that everything connected with the Roman Catholic Church must be returned to the church, such as the altar, a new sepulchre, the processional, a missal, a manual and sacred bell, an oil box, candles, the censer and frankincense as well as the replacing of the rood loft with all that it entailed. Unfortunately the expenses did not end here.

On 17th November 1558 Mary died, back came the Protestant faith with the accession of Queen Elizabeth, back came the communion table, the English Prayer Books and Bible, out went the altar, out went the newly placed rood loft and the images were 'plucked down'. It is difficult to calculate the total cost of all this but it was in the region of £2,200 in modern money. No doubt money was raised from the Church Ales and by collections in the same way that they had raised the money to rebuild the church one hundred years before. Church Ales were a type of medieval fete, except that the amount of alcohol supplied would have been very much greater than one would expect to find in any modern bazaar or fete at St. Mary's! Finally in 1560 the Churchwardens gave permission to sell some of the church plate for the large sum of £3,811.

The present day Churchwardens, like their predecessors, were also faced with a terrible event that they could not have foreseen, the fire in the church tower. This time the Church Insurance and not the Church Ales saved the situation. The original intention of this article was to show how much greater was the task to raise money in the 16th century than the 20th century. However, it has actually shown what an enormous task faces us today. It is to be hoped that the Restoration Appeal achieves its target and that the Churchwardens will not have to resort to the 16th century solution.

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*Mary Campbell*



## The Great Canadian Adventure

*The exodus from Yatton to the vast untamed prairies of Alberta, Canada, early in this century.*

The morning of February 9th 1909 saw a crowd of folk at Yatton railway station. The occasion was the exodus of several local families as emigrants to the Canadian prairies. With them went much household furniture, tools and other items — even a piano. The train took them to Liverpool, from where they sailed on board the 'Empress of Britain'.

### **Who were these people?**

Those who left on that day were:

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Burdge with their four children, May, Olive, Frank, Reg.

Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Burdge

Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Burdge

Miss Rose Hennessey  
Mr. and Mrs. Sam Burdge  
Mr. Hubert Collings — killed by lightning 1921

At later dates others also left this area for Canada. Some of these were:

Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Creed — Mrs. Creed was a daughter of Mr. Sam Burdge  
Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Kingcott  
Mr. Dennis Burdge  
Miss Margery Griffin  
Mr. Phil Inglis from Cleeve  
Mr. Fred Tutchter  
Mr. Arthur Gurnett — worked for Butcher Edwards  
Mr. Cyril Tarr and two sisters  
Mr. Greenslade went to join his brother Bill in 1909  
Mr. George Redman

### **Why did they go?**

Generally the economic climate in this country was poor, for farmers especially so. Most of the farming land was owned by the 'Landed Gentry' and farms were rented out to tenant farmers with no security of tenure and no chance to buy.

The British and Canadian Governments sponsored the move to the Canadian prairies by subsidising the fares to £10 per person including all the effects they could take. Land could be purchased from the Canadian Government at a cost of a few cents per acre, but the farmers had to plough at least ten acres of their section each year.

### **How did they settle?**

Having filed on their chosen section the women and children would be left with friends if possible, while the men went to build huts from cut turf, called sod huts, until they could build more permanent wooden ones. Wells to be dug, teams of oxen to buy, also machinery, ploughs, binders etc., miles of barbed wire fences to erect, seed wheat and many other items were added. A very hard life.

### **How they travelled**

The following is a first-hand account of the journey to the Canadian prairies, starting at Yatton on February 9th 1909. May Burdge, elder daughter of Edward Burdge, was nearly sixteen years old when the party left Yatton. This is her account.

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It was with a spirit of adventure that we boarded the train from the small town of Yatton, England, on February 9th 1909. Our families had lived there all their lives, but my father had been considering a move to Canada for some time, and had been influenced by his brother Sid, who had already made several journeys that took him to eastern Canada and occasionally to the west. Some of those trips across the ocean had been made by cattle boat. Father was a baker by trade, but had been persuaded in his mind that the prairie and a farm would be a very good place to raise his family. Special rates by train and boat were offered as encouragements to Britons to emigrate, and now the die was cast.

Household effects had been carefully selected and all unnecessaries disposed of as weeks of 'packing up' took place. Beds, wardrobes and the family piano were labelled and got ready for freighting to Canada.

The station was filled with well-wishing friends and our many relatives that day as we said our goodbyes. In four months I would celebrate my sixteenth birthday, and I was the oldest in the Ted Burdge family.

We arrived in Liverpool and soon were ready to embark on the 'Empress of Britain'. I remember that week on the sea so very well, for I was sick every day and unable to go to the dining room for even one meal. My sister Olive was also seasick, but not so my younger brothers who enjoyed the big boat, ate every meal, made new friends and had heaps of fun.

Because it was winter time we were obliged to dock at St. John, New Brunswick, and I was mighty glad to set foot on land. Again we transferred to the train and began the many miles by rail across Canada. The Yatton crew consisted of three Burdge brothers, Ted, Sid and Ern with their families. Ted was my father and was the only one with children at that time. A cousin, Rose Hennessey, was with us. Two others from the Yatton area, Hubert Collings and Sam Burdge, were also travelling west on the same 'Colonist' train, which was one of the many so named for the conveniences provided. A stove at the end of the train was available for cooking meals and at night we slept on our mattresses which were laid on the seats. In Ottawa we stopped to visit a cousin, Minnie Beech, and then proceeded on our journey.

It was a snowy day when we pulled into Strathmore, our prearranged destination. The Ross brothers, Charlie and Alex, were there to meet us with two sleighs and two teams of horses. We headed for Carbon where they and their sister Maud lived, and where we all received a very warm welcome. Affectionately known as 'Auntie Maud', she had married my uncle Sid Burdge on one of the earlier visits to Canada, and they were established on a farm near Carbon, but anticipated moving to join his brothers, Ted and Ern, wherever they located a homestead.

Within a few days our menfolk were on their way to Calgary to secure land. They had hoped to locate in Hand Hills, but this land had been pre-empted by ranchers, so they decided on land to the east which became known as the Berry Creek district. And so it was that, almost immediately, the men began shuttling back and forth to the new home sites. They had to haul lumber from Bassano with which to build the 14 feet by 16 feet shacks which were planned for the three Burdge locations, each one about a mile apart. We would use tents for additional sleeping that first summer, and until more rooms were added to the house. The well they dug on our place gave an abundance of good water, far more than at either of the other locations. For this reason it was dubbed 'the hub' and many newcomers driving through stopped to water their horses before moving further on.

By early June the sites were ready for the women and children to be moved from Carbon, where we had been staying since arrival from England, and during which time my brothers had been attending school. We loaded up and left Carbon for Strathmore, where we boarded the train for Bassano. There the men had built a much used overnight sleeping shack; and from Bassano we drove with team and democrat north to Fieldholme where we crossed the river. We slept there in a rooming house and started the next morning for the last half of our trip which led us to our new homes.

I remember my mother shed a few tears quietly. The new home was so meagre by comparison to that which she had left in England. But she was young and brave too, ready for challenges that lay ahead, and she wasted no time or energy in self pity.

It was about the same time that the McKellar family were also moving to the district, and they would become very much involved in our lives. Uncle Sid had met them in Ontario, where Mr. McKellar and Uncle Sid had worked together with a Bible carriage. From Ontario the McKellars had moved to California and while there Ruth, a teenage daughter, died. Archie



junior went to visit Uncle Sid at Carbon, and shortly after that the family left California for the Canadian prairie. Archie had a sister Nellie, and together with their parents they arrived at Carbon, and from there we all moved to Berry Creek together. The McKellars built a modest home, and began breaking land with their team of oxen.

The Madge family were already settled to the north of the Berry Creek district. They were ranchers and had a lot of cattle as well as some horses. The area was growing quickly at that time.

Our very first summer is unforgettable — thunderstorms, the lightning flashed and thunder rolled, bringing heavy rains that drenched the prairies. As young folk we loved to watch the lightning. The rains produced a bumper crop of hay, and likewise there was a bumper crop of mosquitoes. No-one living in the area that year could possibly forget either the hay or the mosquitoes. Saskatoon bushes were loaded with juicy fruit and although we had never seen them before, we soon learned their value to us.

In September Auntie Nell, Uncle Ern Burdge's wife, was helping Rose Hennessey with the hay sweep. They were each driving a team when something frightened the horses and they bolted. In the runaway that followed Auntie Nell was cruelly dragged and her left leg badly crushed. Doctor Gordon from the west and Doctor Naismith from the east were both summoned to help. They cared for her to the best of their ability, and she did improve for a little while, but just before Christmas she died. She had been married for less than a year.

In the meantime, and very shortly after the accident, another blow fell on the community. A wall of orange flames blew its way across the country as the prairie fire of 1909 swept and burned its way through. Fighting the flames proved useless, and the bumper crop of stacked hay was completely destroyed. Bill and Walter Greenslade, neighbours on the creek to the east of us, had gone to find work for the winter. In their absence the fire burned their barn and farm machinery to the ground. Only because we had ploughed fire guards around our buildings were we spared from losing everything we owned. Yet, somehow, in the discouragement and sorrow of that first year, we knew that God had not forsaken us. He was with us and although we were poor, many of us learned that true joy doesn't come from having an abundance of 'things'. Joy and peace are found in a personal faith and trust in God.

Already Sunday services were being held in the McKellar and Burdge homes, and many from the surrounding area came together to share and learn from each other's experiences. We listened to messages given from the Bible and we prayed together. Some were converted to faith in Jesus Christ, others were strengthened in their faith.

We prepared for winter, and it was a bitterly cold one. Our coal was mined and hauled by waggon from the open pit at Sheerness. Later we got our coal from the Anderson mine. Every trip to Bassano counted, as that was where we got groceries and mail. We bought cases of dried prunes, apricots and raisins, sacks of flour, tea, sugar etc. Meanwhile Auntie Maud had been busy curing hams and bacon which, together with crocks of butter, were transported from Carbon to our homes. How delicious were those items during that long winter. Soon we learned to make cheese and sauerkraut as well as soap, and of course my father's ability as a baker stood us in good stead for bread and cakes.

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This is the end of May Burdge's account of the journey and the first year in Canada. 1910 onwards will appear in the next 'Yatton Yesterday'

Mr. Ernest Burdge, whose first wife Nell was killed in the runaway accident in 1909, married Margaret Edwards in 1914 at Horsecastle Chapel, Yatton.

Brothers Len and Bill Burdge, who supplied this article, and Tom their younger brother, were born in Berry Creek and the family lived in the wooden house built by their father, Mr. Ernest Burdge. They pulled out in 1923 and came back to England where they farmed at Court House Farm, where the Gateway supermarket is now.

*L. and B. Burdge*

NEW OMNIBUS SERVICE  
BETWEEN  
*WRINGTON and the YATTON RAILWAY STATION.*

A  
TWO-HORSE OMNIBUS  
RUNS BETWEEN  
**Y A T T O N**  
AND  
**W R I N G T O N**

AS UNDER:

<p><b>Leave WRINGTON</b> – 8.0 a.m. <i>(GOLDEN LION INN)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">" " 12.15 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">" " 5.50 p.m.</p>		<p><b>Leave YATTON</b> – 9.45 a.m. <i>(RAILWAY STATION)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">" " –1.15 p.m.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">" " – 6.50 p.m.</p>
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*In connection with Up and Down Trains on the Bristol and Exeter Railway.*

*Fares each way: Inside 9d.; Outside 6d.*

*Authorised Agent for collection and delivery of Goods and Parcels.*

*HENRY PLAYER, Wrington,*  
*Proprietor.*

*Ref: 'The Player Family of Cleeve', p.27, 'Y.Y.' No.8 — here is a copy of an advertisement for the horse bus service mentioned: it is from the timetables for January 1877 published by the Bristol and Exeter Railway.*



## Chelvey Pumping Station

A document dated 1914 contains a statement by Mr. Benjamin Crossman of Chestnut Farm, Claverham, then chairman of Yatton Parish Council and joint owner of 30 acres of Kenn Moor, two to three miles from Chelvey Pumping Station, owned by the Bristol Water Company.

He stated that this land, which is peat, used to be level but in the dry summer some years ago (probably 1896) it sank in places and some of the holes were 7 – 10 feet across and 3 – 4 feet deep; there were also cracks 20 – 30 yards long. He filled them up and the raised banks of the River Kenn, which had also sunk, had to be remade to a height of 3 feet, as the normal level of the river was 1 foot above the surrounding land.

Mr. Crossman thought that the pumping of water by the Pumping Station had caused 200 – 300 acres to have sunk, including land on Green Farm occupied by C. Court, land towards Midgell Pits occupied by Ernest Young, part of Grove Farm (Mr. J. Wyatt), lands of Claverham Court (Mr. Burdge) and land near the Court occupied by Mr. T. Wynn. As a result of the pumping, the Commissioners of Sewers had to put in a dam on the River Yeo at Wimberham to bay back the water throughout Kingston Seymour parish and Yatton and Kenn Moors.



## Yatton Sequence Dance Club

This article is another in our series covering clubs and societies in the village.

The Yatton Old Tyme Dance Club began as a result of the cancellation of evening educational classes run by Somerset County Council which included Old Tyme Dancing. It was started in 1948/49 and held at the Assembly Rooms (now the Fire Box), and shortly afterwards moved to the Church Hall (now the Village Hall).

During the early '70s, Modern Ballroom and Latin American dances crept into the Old Tyme world and soon became more popular, and so the club changed its name to Yatton Sequence Dance Club. However a few favourite old tyme dances are still done today.

People ask 'What is Sequence Dancing'? Anyone who knows the St. Bernards Waltz or the Valeta will know that steps are repeated and everyone is doing the same thing at the same time — or should be! The repeats are of 16 bar lengths and Modern and Latin dances are worked out in the same way, new ones being invented continually. Thus not only is this hobby good exercise for limbs and joints but also the mind, as well as being very enjoyable.

The club, until the mid-'80s, had a membership of approximately one hundred, and was started by young people in their teens and twenties. Today's membership is seventy of whom only fifteen live in Yatton, others travelling from neighbouring villages, Clevedon and Weston. There are six Founder Members who are Life Members and of these, four still attend the Thursday club nights regularly. In addition to Thursdays, a dance is organised on the third Saturday of each month during the season which is from September to May.

During the 1957/58 season a young man fell through a rotten floorboard in the Church Hall and the club decided to help pay for a completely new floor — still used today. The money was raised by means of members making lines of pennies round the hall, this being a very popular means of fund-raising during this era. They not only paid a good percentage of the cost but also bought green velvet curtains for the stage, these being replaced by the present ones in 1985.

The music used for club nights is recorded but for a Saturday is quite often 'live'. Since the 1980s this is played on an electronic organ, whereas in the early days of the club four-piece bands were quite common. All the music is purposely arranged for the sequence dancing and ranges from the 1940s to Andrew Lloyd Webber.

M.C.s are the people who teach the members the dances and also organise the programmes for both club nights and Saturday dances. They dance through the first sequence of each dance and then invite everyone to join them, 'Partners Please' being the cry. The Yatton club's first M.C. was Trixie Ellis F.I.D.T.A. and her husband Bob who retired in 1976. They were succeeded by Ken A.I.D.T.A. and Audrey U.K.A.P.T.D. Williams from Clevedon, former members who joined at an early age, Ken's mother and late father being Founder Members. Yatton S.D.C. is not unique, there being similar clubs all over the country, but unless younger people can be encouraged to join and take over from present members, whose ages range from 40 – 80, then the clubs will fade away in the next twenty years.

*Joan Levi*



### Correction to 'Yatton Yesterday' No.8, 1991

Page 12, second paragraph, end of second line.

For 'his mother's' read 'Mr. Webber's'



# Yatton Parish Council in the 1939-45 War

## Part II

This is a continuation of the article in 'Yatton Yesterday' No.8, 1991.

**Fire Brigade.** For some years the Council had been responsible for a voluntary fire brigade, the equipment for which was kept at the alms-houses. The Fire Brigades Act 1938 made District Councils responsible and in June 1939 arrangements were made for valuation of the equipment transferred. In May 1940 reference was made to the old fire station being disused and in May 1941 the Fire Service was allowed to erect in the War Memorial garden a signpost to the Fire Station in Rock Road.

**The Blackout.** Before the war village lights were only lit during the winter months and they were a Parish responsibility. There was no lighting in the 1939/40 winter because of the blackout and the Council agreed to pay the Gas Company £10 per annum to cover interest on the capital cost of lamp standards and equipment. In 1945 arrangements were made for street lighting during the 1945/6 winter.

On several occasions arrangements were made for street kerbs, lamp posts and the Causeway gate to be whitened.

**Waste Collection.** In March 1940 arrangements had been made for waste paper collection by schoolboys. The Council resisted the taking of the chains at the War Memorial in a metal collection as they were part of a memorial to those killed in the 1914 – 18 war. In December 1943 it was announced that collection of ferrous scrap would cease, but in the following September there were complaints that the Ministry of Works had not yet cleared the dumps.

**War Savings.** War Weapons Week was in June 1941, Warship Week in February 1942. Certificates were received in April 1944 relating to the Parish's achievements in Warship Week and Wings for Victory Week, and in December 1944 in Salute the Soldier Week. The next June a photograph was received of H.M.S. Lotus, the ship adopted in Warship Week. Mr. J. M. Jones was secretary of the village War Savings Committee.

**Charities:** Collections for the British Sailors Society were made in June 1940 and May 1941.

In 1944 appeals were received for the United Aid to China Fund and for a hospital in Addis Ababa.

**Cultivation:** In March 1940 cheap lime was available for allotment tenants and in January 1942 an Allotment Association was started with Mr. Leaker as secretary.

In September 1940 Mrs. Wood established a depot for the production and marketing of vegetables, and Mrs. Leman of Bickley was involved.

In 1941 waste land had to be notified to the War Agricultural Committee. Complaints were made about uncultivated gardens at Westaway and at Mr. Slade's house in High Street. An attempt was made to start a pig club in July 1940 but as there was little response the attempt was abandoned.

**Landing of Enemy Troops:** A circular was received about arrangements for prevention in July 1940 but next month it was stated this was a matter for the Military.

**Troops:** In September 1940 a committee was formed to arrange entertainments for troops and it was later reported that whist drives had been arranged. Captain Allen R.A.M.C. invited the Council to a Social Evening in the Church Hall in December 1940.

The Highways Department was told in 1942 of damage to roads by army lorries at Ham crossroads and at the entrance to Decoy Pool Drove.

**Decoy Fires.** A complaint was made to the Police in May 1941 about the lighting of decoy fires at Kingston Seymour and elsewhere.

**Visit of King and Queen, March 1940:** this is mentioned in 'Yatton Yesterday' Nos. 2 and 4.

**End of War with Germany:** During the Parish Council meeting on 7th May 1945 news was received that Germany had surrendered. The Council accepted an invitation to attend a thanksgiving service in the parish church on 13th May at 3 pm. As early as December 1944 the Council had joined with the Church in planning a 'Welcome Home'.

**Victory Celebrations:** These were held nationally on 8th June 1946 and public meetings were held in March and April to arrange local events. The cost was covered by the addition of one penny to the parish rate. The celebrations were to be:

An open-air service for all denominations at 2.15 pm.

Children's sports and adult sports.

Tea for all under 14 and over 60.

Sideshowes

Dancing on the Village Green (Church Hall if wet).

Bonfire.

Committees were set up and they were authorised to spend a total of £55.10s.0d. The amount actually expended was £42.12s.4d. but no details are recorded. The names of the members of the committees are recorded in the Parish Council minutes and also in the History Society archives.

*H. J. Vincent*



## The 1939 – 1945 War

There have been several articles in 'Yatton Yesterday' on this subject, and we are collecting together all the information we have, but we need a lot more.

May we ask you, please, to contact a member of the Society with your memories of this time, however unimportant you may think they are. You may have newspaper cuttings, photographs etc. and we should like to see these. Eventually we may be able to publish a booklet, because it is important that we record the war whilst there are still those alive who remember it.

Mr. Ben Crossman of Hewish has kindly let us see material left to him by his aunt, Mrs. Alvis. The following two short articles are based on this, and we hope to publish more in the next issue.



## A Victorian Farm Labourer

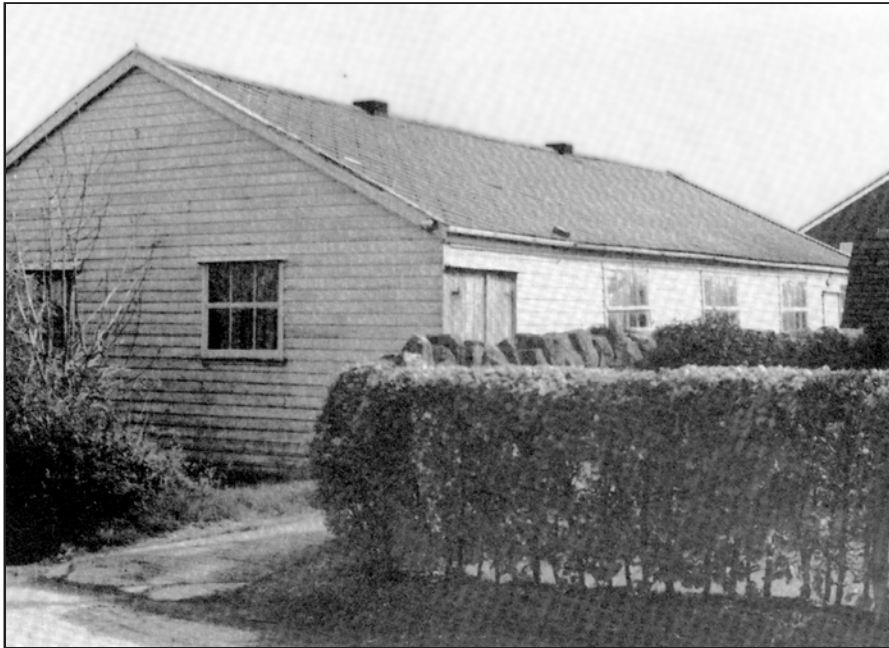
Harry Scribbins worked for Mr. Benjamin Crossman at Chestnut Farm, Claverham, in 1889, and received 13s. (65p.) for a 6-day week. He married on 26th April 1890, a month after his wages had gone up to 14s. (70p.), but this could have been because he worked longer hours in the summer months.



## The Claverham Church Room

This room, which saw almost 50 years' service, was originally an army hut purchased for £260. An additional £193 was spent carting it from Bristol and erecting it on land which had been given by Mr. Donald Cox.

Openings of new buildings etc. were always attended by celebrations in the days of home-made entertainment. Accordingly, it was decided to combine its opening with a Harvest Thanksgiving Service conducted by the Rural Dean, the Rev. H. E. Badcock. This took place on Thursday 28th October 1920, and clergy attending were 'requested to bring their Robes, viz., Cassock, Surplice and Hood'.



Two services were held in the church at 9.30am. and 3.30pm., the latter being a Dedication Service, followed by tea in the Church Room (adults 1s., school children 6d.). More was to come, as at 7pm. the Rev. A. H. Wright preached at the evening service. On the following Sunday, in addition to the usual morning and evening service, there was a Children's Flower Service in the afternoon, at which Mr. Ebdon gave the address. 'Offerings of fruit and vegetables, dairy produce and help in decorating' were asked for. Mr. Crossman has a copy of the special programme printed for the event.

The hall had to be closed in 1986 as it did not comply with fire regulations and it has now been demolished. The photograph was taken in April 1987 when it was awaiting demolition.



## From 'Western Daily Press' 1866/7

**Poll Tax** — At Yatton a meeting of ratepayers was held and a penny rate was proposed. This was not agreed and a poll of the parish was started at once when the amount was finally passed. (*Seen in the journal 'Malago' No.27, Spring 1992*)

N.B. This was before the days of the Yatton Parish Council and the rate would have been levied by the Vestry of the Parish.

*H. J. Vincent*



## ‘Victorian’ Houses in Yatton

Until the last century, although we know that Yatton always had a long street, the actual village clustered round the church. Individual farms stretched out along the street right down to the present Kingston Bridge. Horsecastle developed in the early 19th century. After the railway came in the 1840s this pattern did not change immediately — this was the main line followed soon by the Clevedon branch. In 1869 the Cheddar Valley line opened (see ‘A History of Yatton’ p. 60).

In 1865 the first train to Bristol was 9.03 am. and so people were obviously not commuting to work. Also, railway travel was relatively expensive. In 1877 the first train to Bristol was at 7.06 am. and there were frequent trains on the other two lines. At about this time the village spread down towards the station and many houses were built.

There follows a list of houses below Larchmount and Cherry Grove (then a farm) with approximate dates of building. 1841 is the date of the Tithe Map of Yatton; 1885, 1903 and 1931 the dates of the Ordnance Survey 25" plans.

### Built 1841 - 1885

Railway Hotel (now Firebox)	Built by 1844
Bellevue, on site of previous house	1840 - 55, probably nearer 1840
5 – 15 Hillview Terrace, 6 houses	Between 1863 - 1885
Market (ex-Railway) Inn & 3 North End next	Early 19th c. front
Buildings shown here 1799/1821/1841	? rebuilt or altered?
Glenville House & 2 acres of land	1857
1, 3, 5, 7, The Avenue on above 2 acres    )	
9 & 11 The Avenue as one house            )	About 1870
Two at High Street end + shops            )	
Five x 3-storey, 101 - 109 High St. incl.	About 1880
Four x 3-storey gabled, 91 - 97 High St.	About 1880
Nos. 1 - 6 & 43-46 (ten) Elboro Ave. (Street)	Pre - 1885
Laurel Bank, 163 High St.	Pre - 1885
Woodcliffe & Oakleigh 159/161 High St.	Pre - 1885
Former shop, 147/149 High St.	?
was a building here in 1885 - ? the same	

### Built 1885 - 1903

5 houses corner Moor Rd. (Griffin's Corner)	1885—1903 on site of 2
22, 20 + ex-shop, 1 opp., 1 & 2 Moor Rd.	earlier houses
Market, site there 1885, no buildings	Buildings 1885-1903
Nos. 4 - 6 North End, yellow brick	Land sold 1889, prob. early 1890s
Southview Tce. (ten) & Sunnyside House	As above
13 The Avenue	About 1890
Nos.140 & 142 next to coal office	Probably 1890s
The Park — Winchester & Yarbury	“
Stowe House, 126 High St. (was ‘Caerleon’)	“
Laurel Terrace, 5 houses, Listed II	1900
Scotland House, 112 High St.	Just pre-1903 prob.
(was Betty Austin,hairstresser)	



*Examples of the earliest and latest houses listed*



## Built after 1903

The Ridge,+ The Beeches & Nithsdale on corner of High St. W. Counsell demolished Laurel Farm & built 4 pairs of semi-detached houses for letting. 1903 — 1905

Rose Lynn, 116 High St. Both this and Scotland House built on land belonging to Tutchter's Farm. Soon after 1903

## Conclusion

The Society would be grateful if the present inhabitants of these houses (or anyone else) would let us have any information in their possession as to precise dating, who built them, who lived there etc. This is for the Society archives and would not be published without prior permission.

## References:

The plans listed in para. 3 and personal communication.

*Marian Barraclough*



## Video Recordings

The Society has used still photography to record the changing face of the village for nearly a decade and this year video tapes are also being added to the archives.

The idea for using the comparatively new medium of video came while comparing source materials used by local historians today with those that will probably be available for future researchers. A wealth of printed information, photographs, film and video should be at their disposal but how much film and video will feature Yatton? We suspected very little and decided to organise a group to begin recording the sights and sounds around us.

Our first project, 'Video '92', is an attempt to show the atmosphere of the village in 1992 by filming public events, street scenes, social and sporting events, new building etc. The unedited rushes will be stored by the Society and a short documentary made from these. Copies of the latter may be sold later next year.

The plan for 1993 is to 'video' all aspects of Yatton which may disappear in the next few years.

We would also like to hear from anyone who has old cine film of the village; with permission, this could be copied onto VHS tape, added to our archives and possibly used in future research films of Yatton.

This year's filming has been very successful and our thanks go to everyone who has helped and especially to those who have allowed us to 'shoot' them.

*Chris Derrick*





# Names on The War Memorial

## The 1914 – 1918 War

In 'Yatton Yesterday' No.7 (1990) Mr. Day gave details of villagers who were killed in the 1939 - 45 war and whose names appear on the War Memorial. He has since gathered information about those killed in the 1914 - 18 war and this appears below. If anyone can fill in the blanks, will they please contact Mr.Day.

### 1914

TPR . JACKSON, GEORGE N. Somerset Yeomanry

The family lived at Stream Cross, Claverham, now 106 Claverham Road. (*verbal*).

TPR. SIMS, CHARLES OLIVER 1st Kings Dragoon Guards

Was in South African war, therefore a reservist and recalled in August 1914. Killed at Ypres on 31st October 1914. Congresbury-born, eldest of a family of 11, at the time of call-up was living at Newton Abbot as manager of the Midland Cash Bakery. Married to Agnes, with one son and two daughters. The family moved to Horsecastle after he was called up. (*Verbal, his daughter*).

PTE. KINGCOTT, HAROLD J. 1st Battn. Grenadier Guards

Killed at Ypres on 31st October 1914, where he is also buried, aged 23.

Son of William Henry and Emma Kingcott. Lived at Well Cottage, Lower Claverham, moving to Clarence House, 132 Claverham Road. His sister May was a teacher at Redhill and at Yatton Undenominational School. His sister Olive was also a teacher, at Sandford and at Congresbury. They both moved from Claverham, living first at Rock Road and then at Derham Park. (*Verbal & Family Bible*)

### 1915

COLOUR SGT. BABER, HENRY MATTHEW 4th Somerset Light Infantry

Husband of Alma. At rest April 12th 1915, aged 56. The family lived at Claverham Road, today No. 45. (*Headstone & verbal*)

L/CPL.CLARK, HAROLD E. 1st Gloucestershire Regt.

PTE. PAYNE, WILFRED H. 1st Battn. Australian E.T.F.

Son of John and Mary Jane Payne, born 5th February 1892 at Lower Claverham. Apprenticed to the building trade with Mr. G. Needham, Claverham Road. Emigrated to Australia in 1912. Died at Gallipoli August 1915. Buried in unknown grave. (*Family Bible*)

### 1916

PTE. BABER, WILLIAM HERBERT 1st 24th London Regt.

Son of Henry & Alma Baber of Claverham Road, now No.45. B.E.F. France. Wounded at Highwood, died at Cardiff General Hospital 21st October 1916, aged 21. (*Headstone & verbal*)

CPL. EDWARDS, WILLIAM C. 2nd Co. South Midlands R.E.

PTE. GREGORY, WILLIAM 7th Somerset Light Infantry

PTE. MASTERS, WILLIAM	3rd Somerset Light Infantry
PTE. SKUSE, GRANTLY	12th Gloucestershire Regt.
Son of Mr. & Mrs. Harry Skuse of Claverham Road (now No.149), killed in action. ( <i>verbal</i> )	
PTE. COOPER, FRANK THOMAS	6th Somerset Light Infantry
The eldest of three children, one brother and one sister. Was married in Batheaston to Kate. Moved to Claverham and had a family of two. He volunteered for service; his daughter was born two days before he was killed at the Battle of the Somme, 14th September 1916. His name is on the memorial column in Thiepval; buried in an unknown grave. ( <i>verbal</i> ).	
SPR. CATRELL, WILLIAM C.	Royal Engineers
PTE. JOHNSON, HENRY D.	1st Somerset Light Infantry
PTE. MILLS, ALBERT GRAHAM	10th Devon Regt.
Died on 8th October 1916 at Salonica of a fever, aged 21. Son of John and Emily Mills of 'Fern Bank', Claverham Road (now 'Oakville', No.115). ( <i>family grave and verbal</i> ).	
PTE. TUTTON, HENRY	2nd Battn. Grenadier Guards

## 1917

GNR. HEAL, SIDNEY C.	R. G. A.
L/CPL. METHUEN, LEONARD C.	1st Duke of Cornwall Lt. Infantry
Of Claverham, was seriously wounded and died from the injuries. ( <i>Yatton Parish Magazine December 1917</i> ).	
TPR. TAMBLING, CECIL F	North Somerset Yeomanry
Son of Mr.& Mrs. William Austin Tambling, late of Bridgwater, moved to Yatton 1914. At the time of his call-up he was working in Bath. Killed in action in France. ( <i>Verbal, his step-brother</i> )	
PTE. WEBSTER, GEORGE R.	3rd Devon Regt.
Son of Ellen and George Webster, died of wounds in France 6th November 1917, aged 20. ( <i>Family gravestone, Yatton</i> )	
PTE. MAY, HENRY	7th Somerset Light Infantry
Killed in action in France. Married to Helen Jane, with a family of three daughters. Lived at Lower Claverham, then moved to Claverham High Street (now No.6). Worked for Mr. Ernest Young of Cottage Farm. ( <i>verbal</i> )	
PTE. PARSONS, HUBERT S. 13729	10th Devon Regt.
Killed 28th March 1917, aged 24. ( <i>Headstone, Yatton</i> )	
SPR. WEAVER, HENRY J.	Royal Engineers
PTE. WYNN, BERT P.	9th Yorkshire Regt.
Was the brother of Arthur John Wynn, Henley Stores (hardware), Henley Lane. ( <i>verbal</i> )	

## 1918

SPR. BEACHAM, GEORGE Royal Engineers  
Sympathy expressed to Mrs. Beacham in Yatton Parish Magazine, June 1918.

PTE. JOHNSON, NORMAN P. 1st Somerset Light Infantry  
Attached to King's Liverpool Regt., 4th son of late Dr. P. P. Johnson M.B. and Mrs. Johnson. Aged 22. Sympathy expressed to Mrs. Johnson, Yatton Parish Magazine June 1918.

PTE. PALMER, ARTHUR STANLEY M.M. 2nd Hampshire Regt.  
Killed 13th April 1918, awarded M.M. 9th October 1917.  
Married with two daughters, his wife remarried and had two more daughters.  
Sympathy expressed to Mrs. Palmer. Yatton Parish Magazine June 1918.

PTE. FARTHING, VINCENT J. 12th Somerset Light Infantry

Q.M. SGT MILLS, MONTAGUE G. R.A. M. C.  
Died in France 1st November 1918, aged 28.  
Elder son of John & Emily Mills of 'Fern Bank', Claverham Road (Now 'Oakville' No.115).

CPL. SMITH, HARRY S. Royal Engineers  
Died in Portuguese East Africa on 24th November 1918 of gastro-enteritis.  
Worked at Wake & Dean. Joined Royal Engineers when aged 19. Son of Mrs. Knight, the Carriage Works, Yatton. (*Parish Magazine*)

SGT. SPARSHATT, STANLEY S. Royal Engineers  
Killed in France 8th May 1918, aged 22.  
Son of the late Ernest John (d.1915) and Mrs. Agnes Louisa Sparshatt. Sympathy expressed in Parish Magazine, June 1918. In April 1922 Mrs. Sparshatt gave books to the church for a new library in memory of her son. (*Family gravestone and parish magazine*)

## 1919

PTE. JENKINS, HERBERT R. PLY/14914 R.M. L. I.  
H.M.S. Warspite. Died 24th August 1919. (*Headstone*)

The following names do not appear on the War Memorial.

### 1. Information taken from Parish Magazine

BOMB. SNOW, STANLEY WALTER  
Son of W. T. Snow of Yatton, died 21st September 1918 at Rouen Hospital. He attended Merchant Venturers' Technical College, Bristol, then joined the Commercial Union Insurance Co. He died trying to save a comrade whilst they were being bombarded with gas shells.



L/CPL. GALE, ARTHUR J.

7th Gloucestershire Regt.

Died in 1914.

PTE. SIMMONDS, L.

54th Battn. Canadian B.E.F.

Died in 1916.

LIEUT. SIMMONDS, A.

R.F. A.

Died in 1917.

PTE. PAYNE, PERCY 132795

R.A.M.C.

Died as a result of a gas attack, 26th June 1918, aged 21.

Funeral at Yatton. He had previously worked for Mr. Woodward, Shevington Lodge, Congresbury.

## 2. Information taken from gravestones in churchyard

PTE. KINGCOTT, CHARLES JAMES

A.S.C.

Son of Charles. Died 9th January 1918 in East Africa, aged 23.

PTE. HILLMAN, NOBLE CHARLES

Canadian R.A.M.C. Expdry. Force

Killed in action in France 27th September 1918, aged 27.

PARSONS, GILBERT FRANCIS

Killed in action on 24th October 1918, aged 20.

Second son of Walter Edward & Ellen Parsons.

### CLEVEDON MERCURY, 8th January 1916

It was reported that a muffled peal was rung at Yatton Church for servicemen who had fallen in the war.

NOTE: We hope to have details of the names on Cleeve War Memorial to publish in the next issue of 'Yatton Yesterday', Cleeve being in the Civil Parish of Yatton during both wars.

## Addition to 1939 – 45 list in 'Y.Y.'No.7

BENNETT, MICHAEL OLIVER DOUGLAS

R.A.F. Bomber Command

Killed 1st October 1943 at Hagen, aged 19. Son of George Meacham Douglas Bennett. (*Gravestone, Yatton churchyard*).



## The De Wyke Family and The Manor of Wyke, Yatton, 1166 — 1346

In 'Yatton Yesterday' No.8 there was an article by Mr. N. Deas about the owners of the Manor of Wyke. The following is a shortened version of further research on the de Wyke family by Mr. Deas. The original longer version with the comprehensive source list are filed in the Society's archives and may be seen on request.

The Manor of Wyke was not recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086. In later centuries documents state that this manor was held of the Bishop of Wells. It is likely therefore that it formed part of the Manor of Yatton in 1086, held by Giso, Bishop of Wells.

The first record of the de Wyke family appears in the Barons' Charters of 1166 in which Thomas de Wiche is returned as holding two knights' fees in the County of Somerset of Robert, Bishop of Bath. The historian Collinson suggested that the de Wyke family were seated at that time at Wick (or Week) St. Lawrence and took their name from that parish. This is thought to be incorrect because Week St. Lawrence then formed part of the great Manor of Congresbury which had been held directly by the Crown from before 1066, and this manor was not granted to the Bishop of Bath until the time of King John (1199–1216). Furthermore, in the 14th century the two knights' fees held by later members of the Wyke family can be identified as relating to the Manors of Milton (by Wells) and Wyke (by Yatton). It is reasonable to assume that the same two manors were held by Thomas de Wicha in 1166.

In 13th century documents Milton was known as Middelton or Middleton. Wyke is derived from the Old English 'wic', meaning 'a dwelling, a building or collection of buildings for special purposes, a farm, a dairy farm' and in the plural 'a hamlet, a village'. The use of the word Wick in the sense of a dairy farm was very common in the 13th and 14th centuries.

The next record of the de Wyke family is in a document of 1214 which states that Thomas de Wika was exempted from the scutage payment levied by King John in 1214. This was presumably because Thomas was one of the many knights of minor importance who joined John's disastrous expedition to Poitou in France that year. He was probably the son or grandson of the Thomas de Wicha included in the 1166 returns.

The next member of the de Wyke family mentioned in surviving documents is Philip, whose name appears in documents between 1225 and 1242. It is likely that he was the son of the Thomas living in 1214. In 1225 and 1226 Philip was involved in legal proceedings in the King's Court against Agatha de Middelton concerning land in Middelton. In 1228 he was involved in proceedings concerning land in Sandford. There were also proceedings in the Somerset assize court in 1225, in which Philip claimed that Agatha and her son Henry had unjustly diverted the course of a certain water in Middelton.

Philip must have died about 1242 because there was an agreement recorded in the court at that time under which the guardian of Philip's land and heirs (who were infants) granted the Manor of Wyke as a dower to Philippa, formerly Philip's wife.

In 1285 there was an agreement between John and Philip de Wyke, under which John granted to Philip lands and rents in Milton (163 acres), Wyke (28 acres) and elsewhere, to hold for his life. After Philip's death the property was to revert to John. Elder brothers often allotted to younger brothers land from the paternal estate, and so it is reasonable to conclude that John was the elder brother of Philip, and that they were the sons of Philip and Philippa de Wyke.

It seems probable that Philip lived at the Manor of Milton (by Wells) and that he was the Sir Philip de Wyke, Knt., who witnessed many of the charters of the Dean & Chapter of Wells at the time of Henry III (1216–1272) and Edward I (1272–1306). The earliest dated document in which his name appears is one in the Glastonbury Chartulary dated 7 September 1263. One of the documents at Wells Cathedral witnessed by Philip on 3 December 1263 is of particular interest as it relates to land at Yatton. It confirms a grant made by William, Bishop of Bath and Wells, to Richard le Fox his yeoman, for his service, of one fardel of land with a messuage etc. at la Clyve in his Manor of Jatton, which Osbert the gardener formerly held. The last dated document which he witnessed (at Wells, 25 October 1299) relates to the grant of lands and tenements in Saltforde.

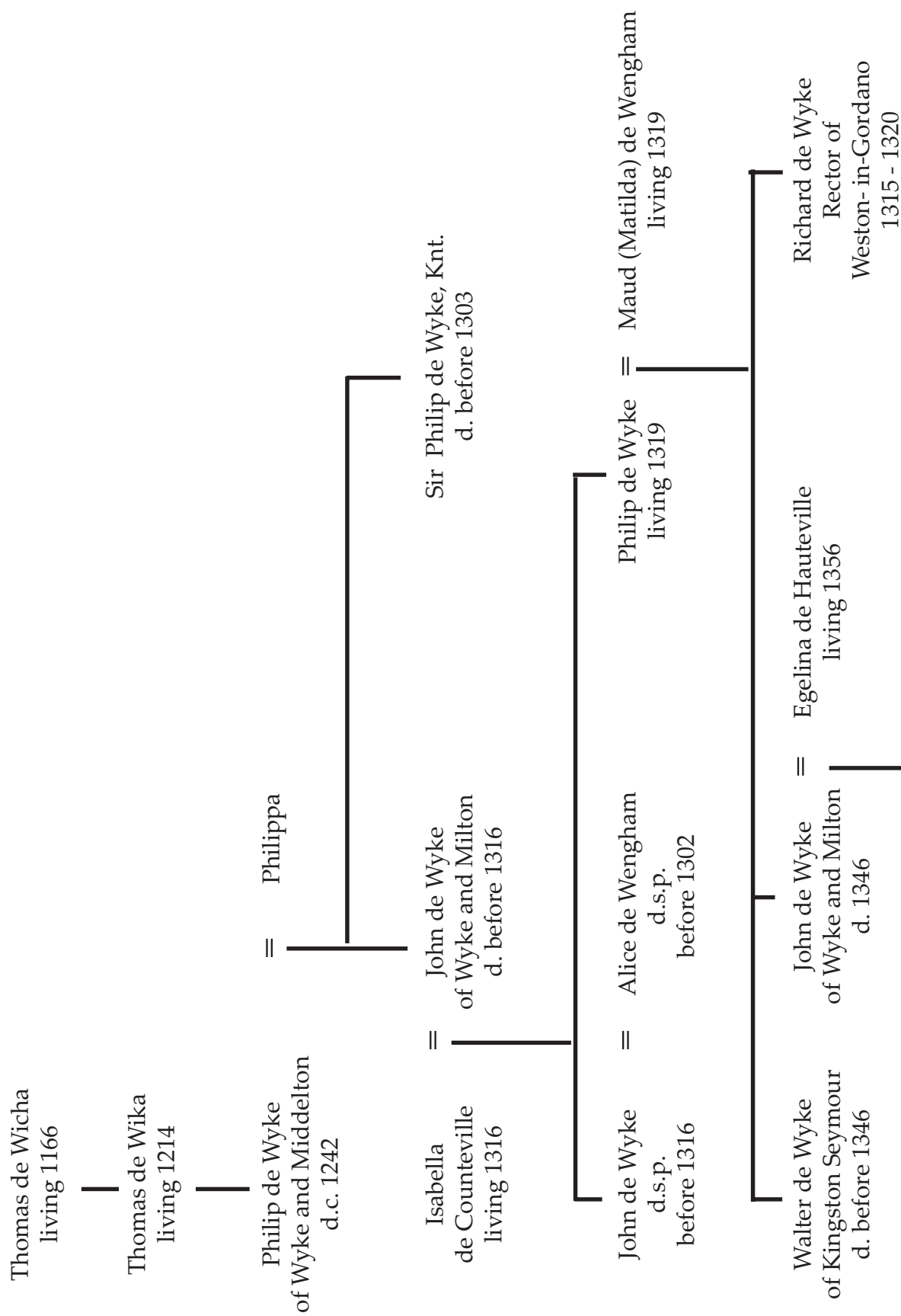
John de Wyke had married Isabella de Counteville, daughter of Richard Counteville of Alwarton (Allerton). Only two of the charters at Wells Cathedral were witnessed by him, one in the period 1284–1292 which was also witnessed by Sir Philip de Wyke, and one dated 1301 in which he is described as Sir John de Wyke. This John was probably the one who was Knight of the Shire for Somerset in Edward I's parliaments of 1298, 1302 and 1305 and was summoned to perform military service overseas in 1297 and against the Scots in 1300/1. In 1303 he was recorded as holding two knights' fees in Wyke and Milton and one quarter fee in Clewer; Philip had presumably died before that date and the property had reverted to John. In the 1316 entry for Yatton, Isabella de Wyke (Court de Wick) was assessed, so her husband John must have died before then.

John and Isabella had a son, also called John, who married Alice de Wengham, one of the four daughters and co-heirs of Maud de Sancto Mauro and her first husband Walter de Wengham. After Maud's death in 1288 the four daughters defended their claim to the Manor of Kingston Seymour and part of the Manor of Weston-in-Gordano against Simon de Ludgate, Maud's second husband, and Lawrence, the son of the second marriage. Alice died before 1302 without issue and her husband John became a tenant by courtesy. The John de Wyke recorded in 1303 as holding, with John de Boudon, one quarter of a knight's fee in Kingston Seymour must have been John the younger, and not John his father, who held the two knights' fees in Wyke and Milton.

In 1302 Richard Counteville settled lands on John the son of Isabella de Wyke (i.e. his grandson). It appears that this John died without heirs in 1345, as these lands were in the possession of Richard's daughter, Egelina, at that date.

Philip de Wyke married Maud de Wengham, one of Maud's other daughters; he was probably a younger son of John & Isabella. Philip was recorded in 1303 and 1306 as holding one knight's fee in Weston-in-Gordano. In the 1316 entry for Kingston Seymour only Philip and John de Boudon his brother-in-law (husband of Joan de Wengham) are assessed, so John de Wyke the younger must have died before then. Richard de Wyke who was instituted as rector of Weston-in-Gordano in 1315, and resigned in 1320, was probably a younger son of Philip.

In 1318 Philip and Matilda (Maud) his wife sold a third part of the Manor of Kingston Seymour, and the advowson of the church, to Maurice de Berkeley for 100 pounds sterling. In 1319 an agreement was made between Philip and Matilda on the one hand, and John de Boudon and Joan on the other, under which 106 acres of land in Kingston Seymour and Weston-in-Gordano were granted to Philip and Matilda for their lives. After their death 40 acres of land in Kingston were to remain to Walter, their eldest son, and the rest to John his brother. In the Exchequer Lay Subsidies of 1327 Walter de Wyke was assessed for 3 shillings in Kingston and John de Wyke for 10 shillings in Milton and Wokyhole.





The entry for Kingston in 1346 did not include any members of the Wyke family, so it is probable that Walter had died before then.

In 1346 John de Wyke, Walter's brother, held the following knights' fees: two in Wyke and Milton, one (with others) in Weston-in-Gordano, one half fee in Norton Hauteville and one quarter fee in Clewer. This John was the last of the de Wyke family to hold the Manor of Wyke (see 'Yatton Yesterday' No.8). In 1322 the Bishop's Register records that Nicholas de Wyke, son of John of Woky, was tonsured. In November 1343 it is stated that John presented John Queynte, priest, to the living of Weston-in-Gordano. It was this priest who obtained a licence in October 1343 to call banns in the oratory or chapel within the court of John de Wyke in the parish of Yatton for the marriage of Theobald Gorges of Wraxall and Agnes, John's daughter.

The accompanying family tree has been prepared in the light of the documentary sources consulted. The descent of the de Wyke family of Nynehead Flory, near Wellington, given by Collinson, is very similar. It would appear, therefore, that the de Wyke family held the Manor of Nynehead as well as the Manors of Milton and Wyke. Although the family disposed of the Manors of Milton and Wyke after 1356, they continued to own the Manor of Nynehead until 1590, when Richard Wyke the last of the Wyke family of Nynehead died.

References: see introduction to this article.

*Nicholas Deas*



## The Canal Which Might Have Been

(see 'Y.Y.'No.6)

With reference to the Bristol & Taunton Canal authorised in 1811 but never built north of Bridgwater, a map of 1842 by Thomas Moule shows the proposed route. Leaving the R. Avon at Morgan's Pill (near the M5 bridge) it followed the Gordano Valley to turn south through the hill by a 600-yard tunnel west of Cadbury Camp. From there it continued in an almost straight line to Banwell across Kenn Moor and Yatton Street slightly south of the present station. From Banwell it continued by a tunnel under the Mendip Hills near Christon and straight to Highbridge then to the R. Parrett near Bridgwater.

Just near Kenn Pier there was to be a short branch to Nailsea, which then had thriving coalpits, and from south of Mendip there was to be a branch to Axbridge.

If it had been built no doubt Yatton would have developed differently, with probably a wharf somewhere near The Ridge or Heathgate which might have encouraged industrial development in that area. Also the breaking up of some of the fields would have meant the roads would have been built to a different pattern.

Reference: 'The County Maps of England', Studio Editions Ltd. 1990.

*H. J. Vincent*



## Gas in Yatton – Part II

We resume our story of Yatton Gas Works and return to the early years of this century to find that in 1907 an agreement was made between the Parish Council and the Gas Company for street lighting from 15th September 1907 until 15th April 1908, at a cost of 39s. (£1.95) per lamp, 41 lamps, but not lit on three moonlit nights per month. The lamps were lit from dusk until 11 pm. and had to be lit and extinguished by hand by a lamplighter who did his rounds every night when the lamps were to be lit.

The lamps were 'flat flame burners'; they did not use mantles and the gas passed through a slot or hole with a very smoky flame and not a very good light. It was not until 1913 that a proposal was made by the Gas Company to install mantles on the lamps with an increase in cost, up to 41s.6d. (£2.07) each lamp. The mantles were expensive to fit and maintain but gave a much better light, and although the cost of the gas remained constant and the mantle light used less gas the Gas Company, when fixing the gas price, did not take this into account. So the Parish Council decided not to proceed with the change, not even accepting a trial offer of three lamps, although at extra cost, to see the improvement in lighting.

The Gas Company Chairman at this time was Mr. W Baber, Mr. W. Smith was the Manager and Mr. J. Harper Pye was the Consultant and also Clevedon Gas Works Manager (See 'Y.Y.' No.8). The Auditors were Baber & Perks of Bristol.

In 1914 an offer was made by the Gas Company to change the lamps to 'incandescent burners' (i.e. mantles) at a cost of £15 which was to be paid by the Parish Council. We are not sure whether this offer was accepted but in October 1915 an item is found 'replacements for street lights, 41 mantles, 35 chimneys'. Obviously a change had taken place and the street lights used mantles, so giving better lighting.

Earlier in 1915 Mr. Baber retired as Chairman and Mr. Dawes from his position of Company Secretary. He was given an annuity of £15 and was replaced by Mr. C. E. Franke.

It was normal procedure for the Parish Council to negotiate the price of the street lighting every year and in September 1915 the price was raised by £6.3.0. (£6.15) which the Council was unable to pay. The solution was to light the lamps from dusk until 10.15 pm. instead of 11 pm., so reducing the cost to the same as the previous year. An idea of the problem caused by using mantles can be gained from the note that 65 mantles and 33 chimneys were used (replaced) in one month.

All this is during the first two years of the 1914-1918 war, which presumably had an effect on prices, and this may account for the price of gas being raised from 4s. (20p) per 1,000 cubic feet to 4s.6d. (22½p) in June 1915, and a request from the Ministry of Munitions for gasworks to extract 'toluol' which could be used for the manufacture of explosives. However this was both difficult and expensive and does not appear to have been carried out at Yatton.

In 1916 an insurance policy was taken out giving cover against 'aircraft' at a premium of £2, and in February the Parish Council instructed Yatton Gas to discontinue the street lighting 'on account of the danger from hostile aircraft'. Also early in 1916 it was decided to try the lights without chimneys and so reduce the number of mantles being used — a typical month showed 42 mantles and 17 chimneys used. There was concern that the amount of gas produced in proportion to the coal used was not very good, because the coal was of poor quality owing to the war. Mr. E. N. Light of Clevedon took over a Directorship following the death of Mr. Collings in January and Mr. C. Smith was Secretary. Then in 1917 Mr. J. Harper Pye retired; he held the position of Engineer when he retired, possibly having taken this position in 1915.

Also in 1917 a request was received from Yatton Hall to install a gas supply to feed a 30 light capacity meter. This was then the Somerset Association for the care of the Mentally Defective (see 'Y.Y.' No.6 for more details of this property). It is possible that Yatton Hall had a gas-producing plant before this request was made and this supply was to replace the old one. Wake & Dean were contemplating a gas engine at their furniture factory and suggested having cheaper gas because of their use of gas for lighting. However, no rebate was offered and yet the gas engine was installed. We also have a record of Mrs. Peart at the Vicarage wanting a cooker; she was supplied with a Derby Cooker having an enamelled crown plate and a rack. She was considering a gas fire and geyser as well, but we do not know if she bought these. From this it seems that items were not kept in stock but were obtained against special orders.

The equipment used for gas lighting could be of varied types, but one called a 'cork slide pendant' was designed to enable the light unit to be lowered and raised and had a gas seal similar to a bicycle pump. Others used a water seal, which did not allow the light to be raised or lowered. In 1917 it was proposed to remove the lanterns (glass tops) from the street lamps during the war when they were not lit, but as nowhere could be found to store them it was decided to leave them on the posts. Then the war came to Yatton Gas Works. The stoker, Mr. J. Clarke, received his call-up papers. The Gas Company protested to the National Service Board that they could not find a replacement and eventually they released Mr. Clarke. He requested a rise of 5s. (25p) a week but was given only 2s. (10p) as a war bonus. Why a war bonus I do not know as presumably if he left his job as a stoker he would be called into the army; but it was a seven day a week job, hot, dirty and hard work requiring skill in firing the retorts.

It is perhaps surprising that only one stoker was employed but at a small works like this there would be assistance from the Manager or even from other works if necessary — perhaps Mr. Harper Pye helped until he retired in August. It should be remembered that there was some storage capacity for gas in holder(s) which could be filled at times of low demand and then released to fulfil requirements, and so it would not have been critical to make gas all the time. This storage facility is of course one of the big advantages of gas compared with electricity, which was competing more and more for customers at this time.

Mr. J. Slocombe from Burnham Gas Company took over from Mr. Pye as Engineer at a salary of 35s. (£1.75) per week with a house, coal and gas supply plus a bonus for increased gas and 'residual' supplies. These included such products as coke, tar and ammonia and could be of financial significance to a small works.

Once again Wake & Dean and Yatton Hall names appear; this time Wake and Dean stated that as the biggest consumers they should have a discount and this was agreed at 2d./1,000 cubic feet (about 1p). Yatton Hall had a defective meter which was replaced with a new 30 light meter, which they bought; then later Wake & Dean were given a discount of 8d. (about 3p) per 1,000 cubic feet for gas consumed in excess of 75,000 cubic feet per quarter.

As we can see, 1917 was an eventful year!

Then in early 1918 the Lighting, Cooking and Power Order was passed and the Gas Company had a notice printed and distributed to all its consumers. This was an order to reduce consumption to at least five-sixths of the previous corresponding quarter. Fuel was becoming difficult to get due to the war and costs were increasing as a result. Gas in 1913 was priced at 4s. (20p) per 1,000 cubic feet but at the end of 1917 it was 5s.2d. (26p), about 30% increase.

The year of 1918 was much quieter, although gas prices were increased again and the

Manager, Mr. Slocombe, had a rise of 5s. (25p) a week. When another man was sought to help and could not be found Mr. Slocombe was paid £1 a week extra to do the extra work during the winter. This was then carried on during the summer.

Then came 1919 and in June the street lamps were lit for the first time since the war; 41 lamps were now used and in September an advertisement was printed in the 'Gas World', Bristol Daily Press, Times & Mirror, and a Clevedon paper for another stoker. Mr. George Dorse of Clevedon was the successful applicant (out of 48) at 55s. (£2.75) a week, increased to 60s. (£3) later. He was paid an extra 3s. (15p) a week rail fare from Clevedon as he could not find a home in Yatton.

It was now proposed that the operating gas pressure be increased due to the use of inverted gas mantles which required a higher pressure to operate. There was an excessive drop in pressure from the works to 'Peters Corner' (this I assume was at Church Road/ Chescombe Road as it is now). Minor changes were proposed but the best answer was to lay a new main as large increases in pressure would only increase the amount leaking out of the existing faults. Later, in 1920, a new 6" main was laid costing £800 and this improved the gas operating pressure. An agreement was signed with Messrs. William Butler & Co. of Bristol to supply them with the by-product tar, and this led to tar being used for road making and provided additional income. In May 1920 a notice was issued that due to a coal shortage the gas supply would be restricted. This was not helped by the poor quality of some of the coal supplied, and sawdust was burned, presumably obtained from Wake & Dean's premises.

Mr. R. L. Gosling proposed that 12 additional street lights be installed with 12 private subscribers paying for them, the cost being £19.15.0. (£19.75) for lighting from November to March including mantles etc. This was agreed, and so Mr. Gosling and Mr. O. S. Walker became responsible for the cost at 33s. (£1.65) per lamp.

By the end of 1921 it became obvious that extra help was required at the works. Employing a youth was suggested and Mr. Dorse was given an extra week's wages in lieu of his Christmas holidays. The price of coal was dropping and also the price of coke. A national agreement was reached which proposed a cut in wages of 12½% in October and another 12½% in January 1922. However Yatton Gas refused to implement this, as the Manager stated that gas production had doubled since he came and that was why he needed extra help at the works. It was agreed that a 'suitable lad' be employed. The nephew of the Manager was taken on at £1 per week for a trial period.

Mr. Franke who had been Chairman since early 1921 was forced to resign due to ill health and was succeeded by Mr. Light. The price of gas was reduced by 3d. per 1,000 cubic feet and it was agreed to reduce Mr. Dorse's wages by 2s.6d. (12½p) per week, but this was later put in abeyance and the A.G.M. in June reported a 'successful year's working'.

This was followed by a proposal to buy a rail truck for transporting coal and in October one was purchased. Street lighting costs were now £87 for 35 lamps, lit from October to March. This reduction in number may have been due to the arrangement with Messrs. Gosling and Walker. The Manager, who was congratulated on the works performance at the A.G.M., had a bonus or gratuity of £7 and the wages were to remain until a time 'appropriate for a reduction'.

Late in 1922 the Secretary reported that he was now Secretary for both Yatton and Clevedon Gas Companies, and the 'automatic' street lights were returned to the suppliers having been tried, presumably not successfully. Six houses were to be built in Clevedon Road and a 2" gas main was to be laid by Yatton Gas as far as the house boundaries and the builder would continue it to the house meters. The youth who was now working was paid 20s. (£1) plus 10s. (50p) per week for lighting and extinguishing the street lights.



In January 1923 an agreement was signed with the Alkali Co. of Bristol for a by-product called ammoniacal liquor to be sent to Exeter. This liquid would often be discharged into rhynes or rivers and could find its way into the water supply, and this was a problem for all the gas industry. Another problem appeared at this time, when it was reported that not enough gas was being made with only one bench of retorts operating. In other words the company was selling more than it could supply with its existing plant. Later, in June, an agreement was signed to sell the tar by-product, so it was gradually being arranged to sell all the products of the gas production. Gas prices were still falling although the street lighting costs were 41 lamps for £97 from September 1923 to March 1924. You could pay for a new gas cooker either with cash and get a 10% discount on the list price of £11.10.3. (£11.51) or by hire purchase at 18s. (90p) per quarter for five years. The director's fee of £20 untaxed was changed to £30 subject to income tax. Mr. Slocombe was paid a bonus of £7 again and George Dorset was paid half a week's wages in lieu of holidays (this was £1.17.6. or £1.87) E. Joyce (the lad) was paid £1.5.0. (£1.25) per week plus 10s. (50p) for lighting the street lamps, and he was offered another 2s.6d. (12½p). The bank account was looking healthy with a current account of £340 and deposit of £450. Coal supplies were from several sources. Radstock supplied 200 tons at about £1.8.6. (£1.43), Writhlington 500 tons at £1.6.8. (£1.33) and Cardiff 56 tons at £1.15.8. (£1.78), a total of 756 tons a year being used.

In 1924 the personnel were — Mr. W. Slocombe (Engineer), Mr. W. Smith (Manager), Mr. C. Smith (Secretary), Mr. G. Dorset (Stoker) and E. Joyce (the lad) with Mr. Harper Pye (Consultant) called in as necessary, and the close relationship with Clevedon enabled Yatton to ask for and get assistance when required. As stated in Part I, there was no competition between the gas works as they each had their own patch and did not poach from each other. In September a G.W.R. extension to the rail sidings was considered, and in November a complaint was received that the street lighting was poor, as was that in the Church Hall.

Early in 1925 the G.W.R. agreed to extend the sidings and add mechanical coal handling facilities, although we do not have any details of this. Has anyone any information about this? At the A.G.M. another £200 was transferred to the deposit account and Baber, Perks & Co. were elected Auditors (Mr. Baber was a director of both companies). A request was made to Lloyds Bank at Clevedon to allow the Auditors to examine the deeds. The directors signing this were Messrs. E. Henry Light, Charles Inglis, R. C. Counsell and B. Baber.

A pressure drop was reported from the railway bridge to the Church Hall; presumably leaks had worsened, so additional weights were added to the gas holder and this had the effect of increasing the pressure. This could only be a short-term measure and the best solution would have been a new main which would have been expensive.

The plant by this time was requiring some attention, so a roof was installed over the retort house, but the purifiers were too small, possibly because the gas quality was improved. A piece of land adjacent to the works was offered to the gas works at a price of £50 by Mr. Mountstevens, but whether it was purchased we do not know. In October 1929 a review and appraisal of the works was carried out to consider ways of coping with the increased demand. At this time only one bed of retorts was in use. A way of increasing the supply was to bring into use the second bed which had been on site for some years but not in use. However, as a short-term measure it was decided to operate the retorts on a 24 hour basis, which meant that a night stoker was required. Mr. Peacey was employed for the winter at 40s. (£2) per week. It was also decided to upgrade the plant; a booster was bought and installed with a second hand set, operated by new gas engines, which involved rearrangement of the plant. A Mr. Copp was involved in this operation, either as designer or contractor. Some adjacent land was bought for £200 (whether this was the same as previously offered at £50 we do not

know) and this was used to store the oxide from the purifiers which had to be emptied every few days because of their restricted capacity. Also a shed was erected to cover the boosters, and two second-hand purifiers were ordered from a company in Leeds. Other plant was purchased second-hand, including two retort mantle pieces from Clevedon Gas, and Mr. Copp advised on the new layout. Mr. Slocombe now lived in a cottage on the site and this enabled him to cover when required, as Mr. Dorse was now living in Burnham.

In 1927 there was an enquiry about gas being fed to Claverham but this was to be 'a future possibility'. The street lamps were now fitted with inverted mantles, replacing the upright ones used previously. This inverted type required a greater gas pressure to operate and as we have seen there had been operating pressure problems. However with the upgrading of the plant one assumes that all was now well. The storage capacity must have improved as it was not necessary to employ a night stoker, and Mr. Boxall's (what happened to Peacey?) services were terminated in March 1927. Joyce's wages were 45s. (£2.25) per week and the street lighting contract was worth £105. The manager for many years, Mr. W. M. Smith, died early in 1927. In September it was agreed to lay a new main to supply gas to Claverham Post Office and the Gospel Hall. However, a main to Claverham House could not be laid free of charge; an offer to lay it at cost (£115) was made, but apparently not taken up. A stand-in stoker named Tucker was to be employed as Mr. Dorse was taking a holiday, but he would not be kept on after Mr. Dorse's return. He was also to do Sunday stoking at 7s.6d. (37½p) for each Sunday worked.

New council houses were being built by Long Ashton R.D.C. with a gas supply for a cooker and with lighting in two rooms. Rectory Farm was to have a gas supply, so the company was doing well despite rising costs and a rather old-fashioned business outlook. For instance, there was no advertising, no display of gas appliances for sale and little forward planning. Typical was also an offer to the company of a cottage near the works for a sum of £400, but this was turned down as it was felt that 'we should not get a sufficient rent return for the capital outlay' if it were used for housing an employee now living in Clevedon. As this property included land which extended up to the field gate of land owned by the company, it is surprising that they did not accept the offer, especially as it was a four bedroom house.

1928 was a fairly quiet year. Mr. A. G. Connells, the secretary to Clevedon Gas Company who lived in Yatton, was made secretary to the Yatton Gas Company at a salary of £100 p.a. The price of coal was now 22s.8d. per ton ((£1.26) delivered, and the gas lighting contract for street lights was £105 from 1928 - 9. A request for a gas supply to Hill Court was turned down because it was outside the Yatton boundary in Congresbury. The wages paid to Mr. Tucker were increased by 2s.6d. (12½p) per week but Mr. Dorse's were reduced by 2s.6d.

During the period from 1927 to 1934 there seems to have been a lot of work carried out on mains, both extending and renewing existing ones, and in 1929 some electric street lights were placed in front of the gas lamps (by Yatton P.C.?) but were removed after protests. Perhaps this was a sign of the future of gas being seriously threatened by the new electric supplies now becoming available. Gas cookers cost £16.15 (£16.75) each but you could buy one on hire purchase at £3 per quarter for 3 years. Also in 1929 there were contracts with United Alkali Co. Ltd. who bought the ammoniacal liquor, but complained that it was too weak. William Butler Ltd. bought the tar by-product, and coke was sold at about £1 per ton.

The Yatton gas story now takes a fresh path. Late in 1929 a letter was received from Clevedon Gas Co. suggesting a meeting to discuss a possible merger of the two companies. Yatton Gas agreed and the meeting took place on 14th March 1930, when the following points were discussed: Yatton Gas would be absorbed by Clevedon with an exchange of shares, the new setup would enable gas prices to be reduced for Yatton consumers; the merger of resources

and reserves would enable the new company better to withstand competition (from electricity?); Yatton would become a statutory body but gas production would cease, and new mains from Clevedon would be required. No opposition was expected to this work. It was a pleasant, informal meeting with five from Clevedon and four from Yatton plus two consultants taking part. Another meeting was arranged and took place on 31st March when prices of gas were quoted, i.e. Yatton 5s.10d. (29p) and Clevedon 3s.11d. (19p) per 1,000 cubic feet, and it was proposed to reduce Yatton to 5s.1d. (25½p) after a merger. A problem was the position of Mr. Slocombe, the manager at Yatton with his salary of £250 p.a., presumably not being required after the merger. Clevedon and Yatton shares were to be exchanged at nominal value and Clevedon directors went away to consider the position. Subsequently on 16th May 1930 a letter was received from Clevedon saying they had decided not to pursue the merger at the present time, but if Yatton had any fresh proposals then Clevedon would be interested in further discussions.

Prior to this, proposals had been received from Bristol Gas Co. to take over Yatton Gas but they changed their mind, possibly because of the cost of laying new mains to this area (about £41,000) especially as they had considered extending their area to include Yatton, Nailsea and Clevedon. This was during 1929 and may have precipitated the Clevedon/Yatton discussions.

In 1931 a Mr. H. J. Patter suggested that he would be interested in buying the works and business as a going concern but this was turned down by the directors; similarly a Mr. Woolsey made an offer and received the same reply. Obviously Yatton Gas was viable and an attractive investment.

Mr. Connell was still secretary and also secretary of Clevedon Gas Co., but in 1930 he resigned to join another gas company near London. He was followed by Mr. W. J. Cox, appointed after advertising, at a salary of £100 p.a.

In 1930 an application was received from a London company, Cotterell and Son, for a gas supply to power a 12 horse power gas engine for use with the Yatton sewage scheme. Yatton Gas replied that this could be done, and in 1930/1, Long Ashton R. D. C. wanted to buy a parcel of land for use with this scheme at a price of £50, but this was refused by the Gas Company. When Cotterells asked if the Gas Company would operate the pumps, presumably powered by the gas engine, the answer was 'No'. The gas price was however adjusted to give a flat rate of 5s.(25p) instead of 5s.6d. (27½p) which was the current rate for the first 50,000 cubic feet, decreasing thereafter, according to the quantity used.

During the early thirties Yatton Parish Council continued to negotiate with Yatton Gas the contract for street lighting but their attitude became more businesslike, and when the Gas Co. proposed a sum of £105 to include 41 lamps from 6th October 1929 to 19th April 1930, lit from one hour after sunset until 10.15 pm., the Council insisted that lighting was until 10.30pm. and lit every night, including nights of full moon.

Then in 1933 a major refitting was carried out. A new type of plant, a water gas plant, was installed by Forth Blakely of Leeds, presumably to cope with increased demand, also being a more attractive proposition for takeover or amalgamation if the opportunity arose in the future. It was arranged for the ammoniacal liquor to be discharged into the new sewage system, which got rid of a problem.

For the street lighting in 1934/5 the Parish Council told Yatton Gas it wanted lights of 156 candle power, lit from September to the last day of Greenwich Mean Time in 1935 from one hour after sunset until 11.30 p.m. Yatton Gas quotation was for 42 lamps at a cost of £95. This was accepted.



The former Chairman Mr. C. E. Franke died in 1934. Mr. Light was still Chairman in 1935 when approaches were again made with a view to amalgamation with Clevedon Gas. In January 1935 letters were received from the Board of Trade and the National Gas Council and also Weston-super-Mare Gas Company and all seem to refer to amalgamation of smaller gas companies. In May 1935 engineers from the Bristol Gas Co. carried out an inspection of the Yatton plant, and a later meeting discussed with Bristol Gas the possible amalgamation of Yatton 'with other towns'.

Then in November 1935 a discussion with Clevedon Gas at which Yatton was represented by Messrs. Inglis, Counsell and Barker, discussed a possible merger which would lead to Clevedon, Yatton and Portishead combining and ultimately joining with Bristol Gas. A main would be laid through Kenn to Yatton and various terms were discussed. The directors Barker and Owen did not consider Clevedon's offer to be as good as Bristol's, and it was stated that the Board of Trade would have to approve any merger, after inspecting the works.

So the Yatton Board of Directors decided to consider the offer and contacted Bristol Gas regarding the Clevedon discussions. Bristol Gas recommended that the proposition from Clevedon be taken up by Yatton Gas and that a merger take place. In February 1936 a meeting was held and the two Boards of Directors agreed that the merger should take place with the vexed problem of share values to be resolved at a later date. The Articles of Association were obtained from Somerset House in March with the merger in mind. Meanwhile Bristol Gas had outlined their future plans which proposed to link up Clevedon, Yatton, Nailsea, Portishead and Bristol and a Parliamentary sanction was being sought. This merger was proposed to counter the threat from oil and especially electricity as a power source. The Government was backing the electric grid system, which it controlled, with a huge subsidy, and small gas companies would not be able to compete. In October 1936 a meeting of the Yatton Gas Consumers Co. Ltd. approved the merger with Clevedon Gas, with the assets of the undertaking being transferred to Clevedon Gas Co. as agreed at previous meetings. This transfer was effected on 4th September 1936, although Yatton directors were still seeking a better individual deal which was not forthcoming. On 29th December 1937 the amalgamation was confirmed, and the new company became the Clevedon and Yatton Gas Co.

#### **References:**

British Gas Records  
Yatton Gas Company Records  
Mr. D. Gledhill of Taunton

*Brian Bradbury*



## **Alarming Accident on The Bristol & Exeter Railway**

(Weston Mercury 17th October 1857)

The Bristol and Exeter Railway Company's line has generally been singularly free from those accidents arising from carelessness or neglect, of which so many, and attended by such fearful consequences, have happened of late on other lines. On Monday morning, however,

an accident occurred on this line, which, though providentially unaccompanied by any important disaster, might have been productive of the most serious results. It appears to have arisen as follows:— About five miles from Bristol, at a place known as Cambridge's Batch, and situated within a few hundred yards of the Bourton Union, is a tunnel which has been lately undergoing repair. By some oversight of the workmen engaged on the tunnel, two trucks loaded with stones, were left on Monday morning on the up-line about two hundred yards or more from the down-entrance to the tunnel.

The up-train due at Bristol at 9.45 am. was proceeding about half-past nine o'clock at the usual speed between Nailsea and the tunnel in question, when on rounding an angle which the line makes near that point, the engine-driver perceived the trucks some distance before him and full in the path of the advancing train. He at once applied the breaks (sic) to the utmost of their power, and used every means to stop the train, but the distance was too short to permit of his doing so in time to avoid a collision. Fortunately, the speed of the train was so far diminished by his efforts as to prevent any of those serious consequences which might otherwise have occurred to the passengers. The engine of the train, however, came into collision with the foremost of the two trucks with force sufficient to throw itself and its tender off the line, to smash the truck into shivers, and to propel the other truck some hundred of yards up the line. The passengers in the train of course experienced a severe shock, those in the carriage nearest to the engine, being driven from their seats, and hurried violently against each other.

On examining the engine it was found to be completely disabled. As we have stated, it had been forced from the line, and was now wedged into the earth. Both the front wheels were driven from their place, and utterly smashed and broken. The buffers were bent and twisted up, and the iron front of the body deeply indented.

Means were at once taken to apprise the succeeding up-train, due at Bristol at 10.5 am., of the accident which had occurred. Detonating balls were placed at different intervals upon the rails, and within half an hour after the collision, the train was seen approaching at a slow pace which gradually slackened until it drew up within a short distance of the other train.

The passengers by both were of course prevented from continuing their journey, and loud were the expressions of complaint and regret from the groups who stood surrounding the crippled engine, or scattered along the line and on the embankments. Some, seeing no present prospect of release, at once adopted the expedient of walking to Bristol, whilst the others had to remain patiently until after some two or three hours delay the passengers, by both trains were conveyed back to Nailsea, and thence, the carriages having been shifted on to the down-line, to Bristol.

Amongst the passengers by the train which met with the collision, were Sir J. E. Eardly Wilmot, Judge of the Bristol County Court, D. Burges, Esq., junr., Town Clerk, A. H. Palmer, Esq., and P. T. Aiken, Esq., all of whom though severely shaken, fortunately escaped without any more serious injury. We should mention that considerable credit is due to the driver of the train for the presence of mind with which on catching sight of the trucks he at once applied the brakes.

An investigation, we understand, has been commenced with the object of discovering to whom the blame of leaving the trucks on the line is to be attributed.

*Kenneth Dougherty*

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Reprinted 2010, 2014

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ISSN 0266 8564

Registered Charity No. 1019832

Cover design: Larchmount Hall by John Scally

Reset and Printed at Woodspring Resource Centre, Clevedon 01275 870219

The Society is grateful to the Yatton Newsagents and Claverham Post Office who have agreed to sell this publication free of charge.

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# A HISTORY OF YATTON



THE CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN AT YATTON

Much original research has gone into this book, which is a chronological account of Yatton's history.

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Other chapters out of the total of twenty-two describe the village in Victorian days, finally ending in 1939. The book is illustrated with 11 photographs and 23 plans, including a pull-out reconstruction of Yatton's early fields.

Essential reading for anyone interested in village history.

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ISSN 0266 8564

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