More Yatton Yesterdays

Number 7

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MORE YATTON YESTERDAYS

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**Cover picture of the office building of
W E Clement and Sons. Photograph taken
in the 1980s by the late Malcolm Wathen**

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Editorial

This issue of ***More Yatton Yesterdays No 7*** is dedicated to Tony Coe to mark his ninetieth birthday this year. Tony is a founder member of the Local History Society who has held the positions of Chairman and President and he has been a committee member for all that time. His quiet enthusiasm for uncovering and recording the history of this area and his encouragement of others to do the same has been an example to all of us. Thank you Tony for all your hard work and assistance in the past and may it continue for many years to come.

We also thank all our customers who regularly buy our books and all our contributors: without them there would not be any *More Yatton Yesterdays*. Finally thank you to the traders who sell these books without charge, we appreciate your efforts on our behalf. They are **Yatton Post Office (Nicola), Yatton News (Clive), Claverham Post Office (Richard)** and **Jean's in the Precinct.**

Brian Bradbury
President and Editor

Contents

W. E. Clement & Sons,

Coal & Smokeless Fuel Merchants, High Street, Yatton.

This coal business was started in Yatton in the late 1800s by Mr Banger Blake Barber and his brother who died when a very young man. At that time, their father was the Station Master at Yatton Station. The trading name was "Barber Bros."

Barber Bros also acted as cartage agents for the Great Western Railway Company, delivering parcels and the like locally until the late 1920s, when the GWR introduced its own delivery vehicle.

The office and yard was in the High Street, almost on top of the railway bridge. It remains there today, in use by another company. I believe the premises were previously owned by a Mr Knowles, but I have no knowledge of its history.

When the Wrington Light Railway opened in 1901, running from Congresbury to Blagdon, the Barber Bros opened a yard and office at Wrington and a storage yard at Burrington. At the time, Burrington was used chiefly to supply the Combe Lodge Estate and the Nordrach Sanatorium. I was told many years ago that a carter would deliver two loads of coal each day from Burrington to Nordrach, using a trace horse for the long climb through Burrington Combe and beyond. I have always thought that this was no mean achievement, bearing in mind the horses were stabled at Wrington, starting from there each morning, returning each evening.

When the First World War ended, Tom Brice, who was to be a very loyal worker for many years, returned from the forces to join civilian life again. Tom was with a motorised company in France and was not keen to revert to horse transport. As a result a lorry, being sold by the Combe Lodge Estate, was purchased. It was a Vulcan with a carrying capacity of 30 cwt. and with solid tyres. This started a long relationship with Vulcan vehicles, which extended until after the Second World War.

Barber Bros. sold the Wrington business to a Mr White and later in 1927, my father, Walter, acquired the Yatton business. My younger brother Denis, joined my father in the business upon leaving school in 1931.

Mr White died in 1932 and, because his son was not keen to continue the Wrington business, my father acquired it, thereby reuniting the Yatton and Wrington businesses under one ownership. I had been employed in Bristol but at this time, joined my father and brother in the business, initially working at Wrington.

We still had two horses working at Yatton around the mid-1930s, but motorised transport was taking over. We felt it was time to move forward.

However, there was a problem. Jack Scribbens had been a very loyal worker for many years. He looked after and loved the two Shire horses, "Bonnie" and "Prince". It would have been a terrible

blow to Jack to lose "his" horses, so we knew we had to be patient. Jack decided to retire in 1936 and, a few months later, the Shire horses, trolleys, carts, and so forth were sold. The Shires were sold to a horse dealer, Mr Williams, whom I seem to recollect lived at Felton.

The other carter, Reg "Laddie" Parsons – a right lad he was – was happy to go as mate on a lorry.

A further word about Jack Scribbens. During the Second World War, I was overseas for over five and a half years of my six and a quarter years' service. I knew very little of what was happening at home. Upon my return, I found that Jack had been placed in Butleigh Hospital, which was used as an old peoples' home, whilst his wife, Aggie, had been placed near Bridgwater. When my parents, my brother or I visited Jack, it was always the same story - how he missed Aggie. I talked to the late Cuthbert Stuckey (of Macquarie Farm), our local County Councillor, about their forced separation but with the very difficult conditions prevailing after the War, nothing could be done. Jack died in 1960, followed by Aggie the following year.

I was a member of the North Somerset Yeomanry, part of the Territorial Army, before the Second World War. I was therefore called up for duty about 20 August 1939. We trained with our horses on the sands at Weston-super-Mare or in the fields where the Bourneville Estate was later built at Weston. The horses, between 600 and 700 of them, were stabled on the rugby ground, so that was soon in a right mess. A few weeks later we were sent to Nottinghamshire, where we continued training until January 1940, when we travelled to Palestine. Incidentally, most of our horses came from Devon, having been requisitioned by Capt Ray Hearn (father of Major Dick Hearn, the trainer). I imagine he was not a very popular chap in Devon at that time.

Men, horses and equipment travelled by train to Dover, then by boat to Calais and then by train to the south of France. The horses travelled on a different train to most of the troops and at Marseilles, onto a ship designed to carry livestock. I shall always remember this train journey. The seats and the backs of them were wooden and we were fed on hard, old Army biscuits, which I am sure must have been in store since the end of the First World War. The occasional stop was provided for toilet and a mug of tea. More often we were in a siding to let a French express train through. After three days we were glad to see the end of that part of the journey! Having arrived at Marseilles, we boarded the troopship "Devonshire" for our journey across the Mediterranean Sea to Haifa. After several months in Palestine, the horses were transferred to French *spahi* (native cavalrymen) and the Regiment reorganised. However, by this time I was with a small unit in the Tobruk area.

By 12 November 1944 it was time to return to the UK, since the maximum permitted time for a soldier to be posted overseas was almost complete. I rejoined Mollie, my wife, in December 1944, the first time we had seen or spoken to each other for almost five years. (We had married in December 1939). A month's leave and then to join a small unit near Woking, preparing to go to Germany.

However, the unit ended up going to India, which I was not allowed to do, so I joined a draft going to Germany. After many false starts, we got to a place near Bruges, where we just waited and finally got into Germany the day after peace had been declared. By November 1945 my discharge number was issued, so back to the UK once again and I was finally discharged in December 1945

Shortly after that, my brother Denis was also discharged after his outstanding service with No 4 Commando. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre for his part in the raids on Dieppe.

Back to work, once again and one of the first shocks I had was to find that one hundredweight (51 kilos) of house coal was 3/7d (l8p), compared with 1/11d (l0p) when I went away at the start of war. Also, there were now so many regulations that it seemed ridiculous to have so many. I remember a senior figure in the coal industry (who insisted on calling me "laddie") saying he would not see it in his time, but I would see it in my time, when Welsh coal would be £5 per cwt. I think it must be around that now.

Just after the end of the war the trading name was changed from "Barber Bros." to "W.E. Clement & Sons". This should have been done by 1943, so I suppose the war interfered with this.

A problem at this time was nationalisation, the panacea to all the nation's problems! Personally, I always thought it was a great disaster. At first it did not seem to make much difference, but as the army of officials grew at an alarming rate and regular increases in the price of all fuels to help pay for the officials, it became very worrying.

At about this time the railways were also being nationalised and we, as a firm, were operating ten railway wagons for the collection of coal from various collieries. These wagons were then requisitioned and we were paid the "magnificent" sum of £10 each. For the steel wagons, with oil boxes, this price was a disgrace.

In 1960 British Rail decided to stop delivering coal class traffic to various stations and eventually this affected us. The old system was replaced by the introduction of Coal Concentration Centres (CCC), whereby a train load would be delivered to one point and then carried by lorry around the locality.

This led to another problem, extra handling was involved and with coal being a friable product, a greater amount of "smalls" were produced, meaning more wastage. Also you had to accept what the CCC had available, which was not necessarily what your customers wanted.

For our business a complete re-think was necessary and this resulted in the purchase of an eight-wheel tipper-lorry to collect the coal directly from the collieries, chiefly in the South Midlands and in South Wales. This worked very well and a second similar vehicle was later purchased.

As time went on changes started to appear. In South Wales there were 'flash' or 'lightning' strikes, a feature of that time. A movement towards smokeless fuels was taking place particularly for use in the range of modern appliances becoming available and mostly burning overnight, ensuring you had a warm home in the morning. Another factor influencing change was the importation of very cheap

oil from the Middle East which resulted in most industrial users and people in larger houses switching to oil-burning appliances. The decline was accelerated rapidly with the later advent of North Sea gas until today, it is almost an occasion to see a chimney smoking from a coal fire.

For comparison, in the early 1950s (our busiest year), a little over 16,000 tons were delivered. In the last year of trading it was down to just over 6,000 tons. Strangely, the tonnage was level over our last three years.

Upon my retirement on 1 September 1980, the business of W.E. Clement & Sons was sold to Western Fuel Company. My brother Denis continued with the new owners for about two years before he also retired. He sadly died on 29 November 2002.

Ron Clement

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Decoy Lights on Cleeve Hill

Sluice and remains of pan

Remains of sluice

On Cleeve Hill just within the boundary with Wrington and Brockley near the footpath from the Brockley end of Cleeve to Wrington , David Ridley of Goblin Combe Farm has made an interesting discovery. He has located the remains of five embankments of stone or concrete about one foot high at most, forming "pans". Some are circular, some rectangular or square and others are egg shaped. The largest one measures approximately twenty by ten yards and the smallest ten by ten yards. Each pan has a metal sluice gate that has two uprights between which is a horizontal bar. (See sketch) All the pans are situated close together near what was a turning circle at the end of a track leading from Brockley Combe on private land managed by Fountain Forestry. The track was built up with brick and stone rubble from blitzed Bristol houses. In the 1940s there were no trees as the land was furze covered grazing.

The pans were used to provide decoy fires initially called 'Special Fires' and later "Starfish" which were developed after the bombing of Coventry in November 1940. They were taken out of operation in September 1944. Nationally the fires were used to lure German bombers away from the cities at greatest risk, such as Bristol. There were sites around the city including those in the west at Long Ashton, Kenn Moor, and Yeo Mouth, near Kingston Seymour. Other types of decoy sites, some of which had the ability to fire back, were placed around key RAF sites.

The decoys in the west of England were built by a Bristol firm William Cowlin and Son Ltd, with plumbers from Arthur Scull and electricians from Colston Electrics.

In recent notes by John Penney and Ian James of Fishponds using public records it is said that these pans were used to burn diesel oil to produce a brilliant white or yellow light resembling incendiary bomb fires. Flaring fires, imitating the burning pattern of incendiaries, were produced by adding water to the oil. The fires would burn for four hours and were set alight in relays so that they could be kept going as long as was needed.

These decoy sites were used mostly on cloudy or misty nights so that their true nature was obscured. It was hoped that the crews of German bombers, whose navigational equipment had been affected by British interference would mistake these fires for the results of incendiaries that had been previously dropped on Bristol. To this effect any incendiaries were put out as fast as possible before the following bombers appeared. At a distance is the concrete base of a hut close to the boundary wall. This was probably the hut used by the airmen who lit the oil in the pans via an electric spark. A contractor's report for March 16th 1941 says there was a bombardment with incendiaries which started at 9.30pm and continued until 3.30 am.There were at least two 500 lb bombs and another 100 smaller ones within three quarters of a mile. In total 1500 incendiaries were found up to two miles from the site. Sixteen oil and water tanks were hit. There was some

damage to nearby property and loss of cattle but no humans were killed.

At the time Mrs Joan Brean of Downside had an aunt Edith Merrick living at Combe Head Farm where the six airmen responsible for lighting the fires were billeted. Mrs Brean can only remember the site being attacked by enemy bombers on three or four occasions in March and April 1941, which is confirmed by the public record. Once (probably March 16th 1941) she remembers being taken with Granny Merrick, who was in her nineties, into the woods to watch the planes, having been told by the airmen that there was to be a raid on Bristol. They could see the German pilots clearly whilst watching the aircraft diving towards the decoy fires.

Also she can remember vividly, members of her family trying to hide under tables when the aircraft were frighteningly close.

David Ridley can remember being told by his mother Iris Ridley of The Grove on the Main Road at Cleeve of when she had six evacuees from Bristol staying with her. Having assured the evacuees that they were much safer in Cleeve than Bristol she was amazed to find her pantry roof collapsed due to a bomb exploding on a rock on the hill above her house. It is likely that this was also on March 14th 1941.

We would be pleased to have other reminiscences about the use of decoy lights.

Marianne Pitman

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Unsung Heroine

Buried in St Mary's Churchyard at Yatton, in an unmarked grave, lies the body of Jane Drury Alexander. A quiet unassuming woman whose secret was well kept from her many friends and acquaintances in Yatton.

Jane Drury Alexander was married to Superintendent R.C.Alexander J.P., Chief Constable of Durban South Africa. Mrs Alexander together with her husband saved the life of Mahatma Gandhi whilst living in South Africa in the late 1800s. The following account is taken from a South African newspaper cutting.

In December 1896 Mahatma Gandhi arrived on one of two ships from India. For 23 days the two ships swung at anchor while a battle of willpower went on. The Indians refused to return to India while the Committee of Europeans threatened to push them into the sea if they attempted to come ashore. A government official promised to restrict

future immigration and persuaded the Europeans to allow the Indians to land. As the passengers landed peacefully a warning message was sent to Gandhi advising him to stay aboard for his own safety until it was dark. An Official who knew Gandhi as a personal friend disagreed and himself accompanied Gandhi from the ship. They set off for the town about 4-30pm on January 13th 1897. Immediately Gandhi was recognized by his turban, cries went up to thrash him and some stones were thrown. A powerful man from the crowd dragged the Official from Gandhi's side, more stones were thrown and his turban torn off, he was kicked and beaten until almost unconscious. At that moment came a lady with a parasol, it was Mrs Alexander wife of Supt of Police, she knew Gandhi. Calmly she walked up to him through the mob, opened her parasol to protect him and helped him slowly up the street. Such was her dignity that the shouting angry mob fell aside to make way for her. A little later police arrived and escorted Gandhi to the shelter of the police station, from there he was taken to a friend's house. As he was resting and having his wounds tended, thousands of Europeans gathered round the house. They began throwing stones and demanded that Gandhi should be handed over or they would burn down the house.

Supt Alexander arrived with detectives, he was popular with everyone and stood on a bench at the entrance to the house and spoke to the crowd. Meanwhile he had sent in one of his men dressed as an Indian trader with a message to Gandhi to put on the uniform of an Indian constable, then to slip quietly away from the house through the crowd and take shelter at the Police Station. The message said if this was not done, there would be bloodshed and burning.

Outside the house Supt Alexander did all he could to gain time until the signal reached him that Gandhi was safe at the Police Station. Supt Alexander then broke the news to the crowd that Gandhi had walked right through them. They would not believe him, so four men from the crowd were appointed to search the house on the promise that if they did not find Gandhi the crowd would disperse and return to their homes. They searched extensively but had to report Gandhi was not there and eventually the crowd dispersed.

Gandhi refused to identify his assailants, saying simply that an excited crowd could not be blamed for acts of violence and with that the incident was closed.

The following account of Mrs Alexander's life at Chestnut Farm, North End, Yatton was written by the late George Kingcott to her grandson in Durban, South Africa in 1969.

Jane Drury Alexander

Jane Alexander and her husband Superintendent R C Alexander, JP

Mrs Jane Alexander came to live at Chestnut Farm, Yatton, Somerset in the fall of the year 1907. A Mrs Lloyd Jones and her daughter had been staying at the farm and left for an extended holiday in the West Country. They went to Ilfracombe a seaside resort. At the boarding house Mrs Lloyd Jones met Mrs Alexander who told her that her husband had died on board ship going to Jersey and he was interred there. She then went to Weymouth and shortly after moved to Ilfracombe. Mrs Alexander asked Mrs Lloyd Jones if she could recommend anywhere that she could more or less settle for the winter. Mrs Lloyd Jones gave her the address of the farm. Mrs Alexander booked rooms for two weeks and liked it so much she stayed with us until she died. That is how she came to be at Yatton.

My father when Mrs Alexander arrived would be a man of 62 years and my mother in her early 30's. There was a daughter by father's first marriage and a son aged 4 years, also a Mr Cook who was the son of a very well to do family in London. It seems he over-studied and had a slight mental relapse while training to be a Lawyer. There was also a nephew of father's and until I was born in 1910 that made up the family. Also 'living in' were two young men who worked on the farm and as was the

custom in those days they spent their time in the kitchen. If logs or coal were wanted then they did the service. A daily maid and the weekly washerwoman, also a carter and cowman all slept in their respective homes, but all had their meals at the farm supplied by my father. You can see in those days food was of the best. Cheese, butter, eggs, poultry, duckling and wild duck in winter, to say nothing of the joints supplied by the Butcher. There was country bread often baked in wood ovens delivered daily. In 1909 my half- sister married and a resident maid was employed who lived in. I was born in March of 1910 and mother had a long illness until July that year.

It seemed Mrs Alexander lived a rather subdued life, keeping to her own rooms writing letters and doing needlework and crochet. On Christmas Day she joined the family at dinner, tea and supper and also for about a week after. During that time they played cards including Whist and she also introduced the game of Bezique. It was at one of these evenings she had her first drink of cider which was made on the farm. From that time onward she seemed to be a retired Aunt of the family rather than a paying guest, although she had her two rooms, she often joined the family at the table especially if game or waterfowl was for dinner.

In the spring of 1908 she rented a second bedroom for four months. A Mrs Howard from Chard in Somerset came to stay with her. Mrs Howard's late husband I believe, was a Commander. Mrs Howard stayed two months and then a Mrs Armstrong came to stay. She was a widow and lived with her son who was a vicar in Manchester, she also had a son Harry who used to visit his mother when she stayed at the farm with Mrs Alexander.

Mrs Alexander and Mrs Howard for a good number of years would rent a furnished cottage near Ilfracombe and employ a housekeeper and stay for perhaps 2 months. They would return together and stay at the farm, then Mrs Alexander would go and stay with Mrs Howard at Chard for perhaps a month. This was a pattern that was followed year by year.

In November 1914 father died and a big change took place at the farm. After father's death the management was reduced and also the stock. The men went to war and living in the house then was mother, my brother, a baby sister and myself, also Mrs Alexander. My sister went to live with my cousin and his wife and mother took on the running of what remained of the farm with the help of one elderly man and the house was looked after inside by a housekeeper, a Mrs Britton.

Mrs Alexander took charge of me from my early infant days, taking me out in the cane wicker pram. In the mornings going to the station to the bookstall to get the morning papers. If it was fine she would walk around the moors about two miles and home again. She made all my clothes and knitted my socks. I do owe Mrs Alexander very much indeed in the outlook I have on life. She often said "If I cut a coloured boy and I cut you, you will bleed, but your blood will be red the same as the coloured boy's. If you pinch him

he can feel it the same as you. Always acknowledge and say 'Good Morning' (or whatever the time of day is) to whoever they are, even if it is a beggar. Get to know all classes of people, but be very careful who you make friends of". This I have found to be very true.

She also used to say "always try to look up, you will not fall, those at the top are afraid to look down in case they fall". How true.

I started school in 1916 and at that time was able to play the card games of Whist and Bezique.

The table at the farm was very much the same as previously mentioned, cheese, butter etc but meat was in short supply so more poultry substituted it. Home killed pigs supplied bacon and ham. The only big change was the very dark bread and sugar, from the time of the housekeeper's arrival. Mrs Alexander always prepared the vegetables and fruit for dinner. This continued until she died.

Now let me return to her social life as I have been told and in later years seen. It would have been in the fall of the year 1908 or 1909 that Mrs Alexander started to move around. She often visited General Hunter who lived at 'Cadbury House', quite a fair sized manor house. She also used to visit Judge Franks. His wife was connected to the Cambridge family and a lady in her own right. The Cambridge's married into the Royal Household. They lived at 'Hill Court', Congresbury, Judge Franks was a German who was interned during the 1914-18 War but returned after peace was declared although in much reduced wealth and then lived at 'Seven Trees', The Avenue, Yatton. Mrs Alexander visited them often. At Clevedon she visited a number of South African War Officers, Colonel Keen, Colonel Sturges, Major Winter and others.

Mrs Alexander was a church goer and shared the two churches of Yatton and Kingston Seymour. She rather favoured Kingston Seymour Church, the Vicar in charge of the living was a country fellow who kept gun dogs. He was a very likeable chap and one after Mrs Alexander's own heart, helping the under-dog whenever they could. He was a bachelor and sometimes Mrs Alexander went to tea with him, but he always had his housekeeper at the table when he had a lady to tea. He always said "they don't catch me for village gossip". Whenever there was a Whist Drive at the village school mother and Mrs Alexander always walked the one and a half miles to Kingston Seymour to take part in it. Mrs Alexander also visited the Vicar and his wife at Yatton and the Vicars of both Parishes called and had tea with her.

Shortly after war was declared Mrs Alexander joined Mrs Barnard and other ladies of leisure and formed a sewing and knitting guild at Mrs Barnard's house. They went three afternoons a week knitting long operation stockings in white wool and mending and darning. They organised the delivery and collection of the work, which they did in their own homes for the Guild. At the farm it was a hive of industry. Grey shirts were sewn up, they came in bulk, all in pieces cut to

pattern and about twenty a week were made up. Mrs Alexander also visited wounded soldiers who happened to be billeted nearby. She wrote letters for those whose hands were injured. Her war years were filled with activity and kindness to those in need. She made many friends, the farmers wives all made her very welcome, also their families. I have seen her many times riding back with them in their milk carts having taken the milk to the station.

At the top of the orchard at the farm was a cottage, a Mrs Spurrier lived there. She had a pony and trap and sometimes she and Mrs Alexander would go for miles taking their food with them. They visited Brockley Coombe and Burrington Coombe (Rock of Ages) and quite a lot of the Mendip country. Mrs Alexander loved country life and country people. In the Spring when chickens, ducks and turkeys were hatched they were put into coops on the lawn, she would feed and water them until they were transferred to the farmyard.

Two cats, a Tortoiseshell and a Black and Grey were always in front of her fire and would follow her into the fields. She was not afraid of cows and would go into the yard at milking time and stroke their necks. When a calf was born or the sow had a litter it was not long before Mrs Alexander was there. Horses too were her great delight. She tamed a large black hen so well she would tap on her door if it was closed for a tit bit and later the hen would lay her egg in the corner of the room.

Mrs Alexander was a very caring person. There were several families on Horsecastle Corner in need and on many occasions small parcels of groceries were sent by the shop, but they did not know who sent them. Mrs Alexander was always interested in children and she nearly always carried sweets with her. She spoke to everyone who passed her and gathered all the local news. She would stop and talk to the local road repairing gang when they were having their morning break. She would tell them of several holes in the road she had noticed that needed filling up. On leaving them she would give them a Players cigarette each, that happened often on her morning walk to the station to get her newspapers.

I think it was in 1923 Mrs Alexander had a slight stroke, but got over it without much discomfort but after this she stopped her walk to the station. Her daily papers were then left at the corner shop, which was nearer. After the stroke she only went to stay with Mrs Howard at Chard on one or two occasions and she died of an internal growth in September 1926.

Mrs Alexander never told any of our family of the saving of Mahatma Gandhi. We only found out from Mrs Murry Smith but we knew she used to write to him and a good many people with South African addresses. Mrs Alexander's original home was in Manchester but during her stay with us no relation on her side of the family seemed to be in England.

Margaret Bushell

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Jack Crease Remembered

Jack Crease was born in 1898 and lived in The Laurels, a house on the corner of Moor Lane and Northend until when he was three the family moved to Rose Cottage in the High Street where he was brought up and lived there until his death in 1986.

Jack was very fond of children, he taught Julian Britton to read and write before he was four and after attending Oxford University he worked with children for the local Church of England Society.

Rose Cottage before the first world war. Young Jack on extreme left.

During the First World War he was a lieutenant in the army and was so badly wounded in the neck in France that he was not expected to live. However he was brought back in a private ambulance to Ashton Court, which was used as a wartime hospital and recovered. In the 1920s he toured France in a Bentley Tourer and for many years kept in touch with people he had met. In the Second World War he was a sergeant in the Home Guard.

He was a founder member of the Probation Service and he rose to become the head of the Probation Service for Weston super Mare. On retirement he received a garden seat and a birdbath.

For most of his life until the 1960s, he had between eight and ten boys living in the house who would otherwise have been sent to Borstal. The bedrooms and attics were furnished with iron bedsteads. As a result of his kindness, he acquired 260

godchildren of which 200 were the children of these lodgers. Latterly Jack became very partial to corned beef although his housekeeper Miss Howe, was a good cook. Miss Howe, who originally came from Swindon, died suddenly of a stroke eight years before him. After her death his only companion was a tortoiseshell cat.

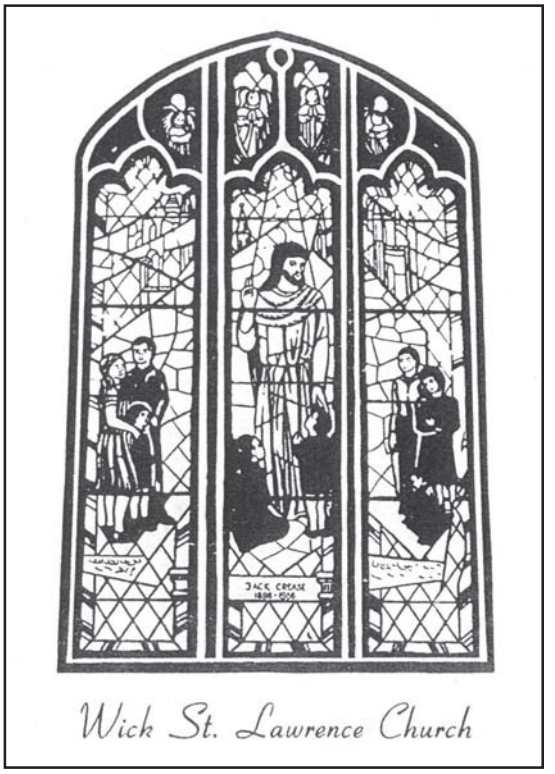
With his assistant in the Probation Service, Miss Witheridge, he taught Sunday School at St Lawrence's Church, Wick St Lawrence, organised outings and supported fundraising enthusiastically, including coffee mornings for the church held both in Wick and at Rose Cottage.

In later years he was a lay reader for Wick St Lawrence, he replaced the candlesticks and cross when they were stolen from the church. A stained glass window depicting his life was inserted in the church and dedicated in 1989.

This window above the altar depicts Christ surrounded by children, one of whom has a cricket bat. Jack was an accomplished cricketer and benefited Claverham and Yatton Cricket Club considerably.

Besides his hobbies of collecting flint arrowheads from the Mendips, teaspoons and china plates Jack also belonged to a local Rotary Club and he supported Hewish Harvest Home by raising money.

Jack was instrumental in setting up Yatton Village Hall as a community resource when it was sold by the church.



The Jack Crease memorial window in Wick St Lawrence Church

Appropriately there is a room in the Village Hall named after him with some of his oil paintings on the walls. It is interesting to note that amongst all his other activities Jack taught painting at weekly classes in Hewish Village Hall. Liz Parsons from Wick, who has contributed to these memories, attended these classes.

Keith Britton and Liz Parsons

Editors note – Yatton Local History Society were honoured that Jack Crease accepted their invitation to become their first President and we wish to acknowledge his contribution to the Society.

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Ken Bailey and His Parrot

My parents Rhoda and Bill Bailey ran the grocery store on the High Street called W.J. Bailey & Sons. We lived at the back of the shop and that is where I was born in 1911. Both my parents worked in the shop, so we were brought up by my Auntie Gertie, who was my father's sister. There were three girls, Marjorie, Eileen and Gladys and three boys. My brother Reg was the eldest and he was a ventriloquist who did shows around the local villages. Often at Christmas he would amuse the customers in the shop by juggling oranges. Cec, my other brother worked in the shop. I often rode with him on the horse and cart when he was delivering groceries. He played cricket and skittles for Yatton. We had three horses and one cart which were used for various things, one being going to Bristol to get stock for the shop. I was the youngest so my sisters spoiled me, especially Gladys who died in her twenties of a heart complaint, which hadn't stopped her cycling to Clevedon twice on Sundays to Mass.

Ken Bailey and Polly behind the shop,

The shop was situated opposite Tutt's Grocery store. Mr Tutt was so deaf he had an ear trumpet that everyone had to speak into. I can remember standing at my bedroom window, which overlooked the shop, watching Les Burnell, who worked for Mr Tutt, cranking up Tutt's Model T Ford to start it. When it finally started it shook so much the bonnet fell off!

Next to the shop was "The Prince of Orange" and a few doors down "The Bell." There were quite a few pubs in Yatton then. My best friend Dick Lukins lived at "The Bell." Our gardens at the back ran parallel, so we could talk to one another over the walls. I was in the garden with my air rifle one day, just messing around when Dick shouted "You couldn't even hit a sparrow" (of which there were many). I turned and aimed the gun at some galvanise on their wall. Just at that moment Dick popped his head up and I caught him just above the eye

which was lucky. Vividly I can see his mother walking him down the street to get some help with a towel wrapped round his head. I was in a lot of trouble for that as you might imagine.

Dick had a younger sister and I have a lasting memory of seeing her walking down the street after her music lesson, carrying her case.

Bill Iles was another friend of mine. He came to stay with his uncles Albert and Bill in the summer. They ran a market garden, everything was grown there, row after row of apples, pears etc. We would wander through the orchard picking fruit at will, taking one bite and then throwing it away. It wasn't just fruit, it was vegetables and flowers as well. When I think about it now it was quite a sight to see as they produced, picked and sorted everything. It was then sent on a daily basis to their mother in Bristol, who ran a fruit and vegetable shop. There was a footpath which ran along the side of the Market Garden so they put up boarding to keep people out and it was always known as "going down The Boards."

We had innocent pastimes, we would go down to farmer Price's farm and help him pull and collect mangolds with his horse and putt. We'd go fishing at "The Pit", which was just a water hole where the trains collected water on their way past.

Then there was my pal Polly: he was a parrot that we had. He was very clever and did a wonderful rendition of "God Save the Queen". He was given to my mother by Mrs Baber, who lived on the Claverham Road. Her husband and three of her sons were killed in the 1st World War. Her other son, Buff came home shell shocked and could not stand Polly chattering all the time. He would get so agitated that he would throw his boot at him. That's how Polly came to live with us and he would sit in the window waiting for my return from school and then he'd come running down the street to meet me. Sadly he ate some berries from a laburnum bush in the garden and died.

One of the previous owners of the shop was called Bill Smart, my father was convinced that he haunted the house and shop. Whenever there was a rattle or noise my dad would say "there goes Bill Smart". At night when I was in bed the mice would scurry about overhead and I was never sure if it was the mice or Bill.

My parents were staunch Roman Catholics and they hoped by sending me to St Brendon's R.C. School in Bristol that I would become a priest. I started at the age of seven catching the train from Yatton to Temple Meads and then I would walk or ride on the bus across Bristol and up Park Street. It depended on the weather and my desire to buy sweets with the bus fare!

I think I wasted my education and when I left school I became a car mechanic. My first job was with Welsh and Co. in Bristol and from the first day until I left I was known by the nickname "Yatton".

Ken Bailey

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Memories of A Local Lad

At Weston super Mare about 1937
left to right Joyce Lampert, John Hawkins, Rita Hawkins and Wendy Banwell

Before he was married, my father Bert Hawkins lived and farmed with his family at Brockley Elm farm. His father James Hawkins was North Somerset County Surveyor. My grandfather on my mother's side was Bert Lewis, who was born at Boxbush Farm, where Graham Burdge's family now live. Grandfather Lewis decided that farming was not for him and became a policeman in Clifton, Bristol.

In 1933 my family moved into Linden Cottage, North End, Yatton. Linden Cottage belonged to my great-uncle Montague Kerton, after whom I was named. The cottage was well known to my mother as her grandparents had lived there before the turn of the century. My mother remembered, as a small child, climbing on the back of an armchair, to reach the whisky bottle on the top shelf of the sitting room cupboard and taking a sip.

She never lost the taste for it.
Water for washing and drinking was pumped from a well into a stone sink. The weekly wash was done in the copper, which was heated by a small wood fire. The sheets and blankets were wrung out by hand and put through a large mangle. The kettle was boiled on a rack over the living room fire and was constantly boiling during the winter months. A small paraffin stove was used for cooking.

Once a week we had a bath with water which was heated in the copper and bailed out into a large metal bath. The bath was hung on the wall outside when not in use. The toilet was about twenty five yards from the house. My mother, a very independent woman, would scoff when people suggested that an indoor toilet might be a good idea. "What's good enough for my grandmother is good enough for me" she'd say. Many years later, when my mother went to stay with my sister for a while I had an indoor bath and toilet fitted. Her remark on arriving home was "How lovely, we should have done this years ago." She was ninety four years old at the time.

Before the Second World War, the men went to work and the mothers mainly stayed at home to look after the children. Sometimes they would have a part-time job, but would see their children off to school and would be there when they returned home.

From a very early age my sister Rita, Roland Burdge from Park Farm and myself were taken to Horsecastle Chapel by Barbara Burdge who lived at Brick House Farm. Barbara was a teenager at the time and was a very pretty girl. Each summer we would go on a Sunday School outing. I remember going to Weymouth, Weston super Mare and Burnham on Sea. I have a photograph of an outing to Weston, with my sister Rita, Joyce Lampert, Wendy Banwell and myself, taken about 1937.

Linden Cottage was lit by paraffin lamps which were carried to the where needed and candles were usually used in the bedrooms. Later, when electricity was introduced in the area, we had electric lighting in the downstairs rooms only, but not in the kitchen. The light in the dining room was set off-centre, in order to shine into the kitchen. Mains water was also introduced to the village in the late 30's, so the use of water pumped from the well ceased, although we still used the stone sink.

My sister and I attended Yatton Undenominational school, where Miss Stradling was the headmistress. The other teachers were Miss Kingcott, who lived in Rock Road and Mrs Davis (John Pearce's grandmother) from Derham Park. It was normal for children to walk to school. We walked from North End, but some children walked from Kenn and back each day. No school run in those days! On Sunday afternoons practically all the children in the village attended Sunday School.

In 1939-40 at the start of the war, numbers at the school increased due to the evacuation of children from the large towns. Many of the children came from London and were very street-wise. Boys would collect bullet cases and shrapnel, which were like currency and could be swapped. When the air raids on Bristol became heavy my mother, sister and I would go to Brick House and spend the night in the large cellar. Other families living nearby would also shelter there. My father and Uncle Cecil stayed at home. My father who survived in the trenches during the First World War, despite being wounded and gassed said "They didn't get me the first time, so I don't think they'll get me now!".

One night during a very heavy raid, Leonard Burdge who was a special constable came quickly down the steps of the cellar. He'd seen a German plane in

the moonlight, then we heard the whistle of three bombs but only two explosions. At school we learned one bomb had dropped in Maurice Crossman's field, near the river on Yatton moors and had not exploded. My friend, Roy Durrant and I decided to go and see if we could get some good parts to swap. After school we walked down to the cross-roads (Ham Lane). There was a policeman at the little bridge. He made us go back the way we came. We went back so far and cut across the plank bridge over the rhyne to the field where the bomb had fallen. At the bottom of the hole, which had gently sloping sides, were three soldiers working on an object. We stood on the edge of the hole for some time, unnoticed. Eventually I summoned up the courage and said "Mister, can we have some bits?". The soldier with his back to us turned and swore, then started up the side of the hole. We turned and ran. The next morning after prayers at school, Miss Stradling called Roy Durrant and myself out to the front for a good dressing down. The policeman must have recognised us, although I didn't know him. I do know it wasn't Mr Claxton as I got to know him very well in my youth!

Sometime around 1941 there was a demonstration on the green outside Yatton Church. An incendiary bomb was ignited to give people some idea of the damage it could cause. As the flames died down there was a mad stampede by the boys to get to the remains which were still very hot. I think it was Trevor Knott who got the fins, which were the most desirable part!

(See the Editor's note below)

As there was no sewer at North End, houses would have cesspits that would be emptied every so often. Some of them had overflows into the rhyne at the rear of Linden Cottage. This rhyne had a plank across it to allow access to adjacent fields. The three Smedley boys and I were playing on the plank and jumping up and down as we tried to see who could bounce the highest. I was going great guns but on the way down I missed the plank and went in up to my neck and only by grabbing the plank did I stop from going under! When they eventually got me out I smelt to high heaven. My mother wouldn't let me into the house; she threw buckets of cold water over me and made me take off all my clothes in the garden. This was in the middle of winter! Roger Smedley went on to become managing director of a large company and I think Peter and Barry also became very successful.

When Mr Kemp was vicar of Yatton I belonged to the church choir. John Pearce from Derham Park was the senior choir boy and if you misbehaved or hit a false note he would give you a slap around the head – no political correctness in those days! I remember Bert Price from Church Farm having a very fine tenor voice. At times during the service we would have a power cut and the organ music would gradually die away. The members of the choir would rush out and start pumping the bellows and the organ would gradually come back into life as the pressure increased. Mr Emery was the choir-master and he was a very forbidding gentleman.

(Continued on page 25)

Picture Gallery

1. Market Inn

2. High Street at north end

Picture Gallery

3 & 4. Yatton Market shortly after closure

Picture Gallery: Photographs 1 - 7 were taken by the late Malcolm Wathen

Picture Gallery

5 & 6. Yatton Market shortly after closure

Picture Gallery: Photograph 8 was supplied by Ivor Astle

Picture Gallery

7. Former Milk Factory (now Smart Systems site)

8. Former Yatton Hall prior to demolition

Mr Kemp lived in the Vicarage, which is now demolished and with housing in its place (Well Lane). At the rear of the vicarage were two quite large ponds connected by a little stone bridge. We used to go out in the punt and fish during weekends and holidays. Sadly the pond has long been filled in.

Montague John Hawkins

Editor's note: In Yatton Parish Magazine dated March 1941 there is a report of the Long Ashton Fire Brigade attending to give a demonstration of the best methods of dealing with incendiary bombs. Due to a poor public attendance (the weather was inclement) this was cancelled and re-arranged for Saturday March 1st. We assume the above account was about the revised event.

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Singing Groups

JUST US

'Just Us' was formed to provide entertainment for a harvest supper at Claverham in 1974. The group has always been composed of women from their early twenties to their sixties, at any one time there has been an age range of twenty five years.

The group originally included a pianist Mrs Chrystalle Kersley, a local piano teacher, and then Mrs Trudi Baxter the retired headmistress from Cleeve Junior School, followed by Mrs Gaynor Burgess in 1989 who took over having previously accompanied a Welsh Male Voice Choir. For some years Mrs Gloria Summers led the group and she was followed by Mrs Moira Lascelles. Mrs Sally Taylor and Mrs Valerie Harding made many colourful costumes. Mrs Glen Browne was a resourceful treasurer who organised many dinners and skittles matches while Mrs Barbara Maggs was in charge of the bookings.

The membership varied from over twenty down to twelve, some members having been with the group since its inception. Besides singing and dancing in old people's homes (both local authority and private) as far apart as north Bristol and Axbridge, the group has also sung at carol and other church services in Claverham. It has sung at a wedding and also sadly at the funeral of one of its members.

The group's repertoire included selections from shows such as 'My Fair Lady' and 'South Pacific', songs by Ivor Novello and Andrew Lloyd Webber as well as old time favourites. Some short plays have also been performed, written by local entertainer Mrs Muriel Stock, who with others filled in between items at performances.

In 1992 the group contributed by singing at a flower festival at Yatton's Anglican Church. Those present included Mary Ashworth, Glen Browne, Gaynor Burgess, Caryl Cheesewright, Moira Lascelles, Carole Legge, Barbara Maggs, Pauline Payne, Marianne Pitman and Sally Taylor.

Yatton Singers

'Yatton Singers' first met in May 1984 and have continued meeting in school term time ever since. The conductor is Isabel Cummings and there are four men and twelve women, of whom two are founder members.

Yatton Singers on Clevedon Pier in 2003

The group sings folk songs, pop-songs, old time favourites, spirituals, carols, hymns and madrigals. Arrangements by three of the most musical members, Isabel and Matthew Cummings and Alan Turley are sung regularly.

The audiences who are mostly in North Somerset include pensioner's clubs, nursing and residential homes, charities such as Cheshire Homes and the general public; also Woodspring Deposit Grant Board, social organisations like the Yatton Bowls Club, flower, apple and May Day festivals, and participation in concerts with other organisations such as the Guides. Most recently the group have sung at a Christmas concert in

Cleeve Village Hall for the over sixties, in Yatton Parish Church as part of the annual Yatton Festival of Music and on the Clevedon Pier as part of an Anglo–French Festival.

The Cummings family have composed two musicals which have been performed in Yatton Methodist Church in 1988 and 1995 . The first for the church centenary was called "So we'll build another church "and the second in which some members of 'Yatton Singers' took part was "Growing Together".

The group meets in the old Horsecastle Chapel and would be pleased to welcome new members.

Marianne Pitman

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Yatton In The 1940s

I came to Yatton in April 1939 after my marriage at Cleeve. My husband, Tom and I began our married life in Derham Park, Yatton and although I did not want to leave Cleeve I soon made friends. I joined the Women's Institute and their choir and found that very interesting as we entered competitions with various Somerset choirs. I enjoyed those years very much.

There were five grocers shops and two butchers in Yatton ; groceries were delivered to me by Tutt's, and my meat came from Pearce's at Cleeve although Edwards' in Yatton also delivered meat. We had our milk from Court House Farm which was where the shopping precinct is now. They delivered it daily.

Mr Ebdon was the Headmaster for a few years at the Junior School after we came, then Malcolm Stone arrived with his wife and took over from Mr Ebdon.

We were regular worshippers at St Mary's Church and after the Second World War my husband became a sidesman. He was followed by our son, Nigel who sang in the choir and he later became a server.

We often went to Bristol by train on a Saturday, I think the fare was about 1/6d (7½p) return. The little bus from Portishead to Wrington ran four times a day and was very useful.

The war started in September 1939 so things were changed, I did not go out to work as our son was born in 1940, my husband was called up into the Forces in 1942 and he was not demobilised until 1947. I had a mother with two little boys staying as evacuees but they were only here about three months, I then had a woman whose husband was serving in the Army staying with me.

There were regular dances held in the Church Hall and some concerts occasionally.

Elsie Ridley

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Les Fido's Notes

Les Fido was a member of Yatton Fire Brigade, a village Councillor and a long-service employee at Wake and Dean's factory. He took a keen interest in the village and provided us with many notes during his last years. Les passed away recently and we take this opportunity to publish some of the information he supplied.

A History Of The Fire Service

The size and the disaster of the Great Fire of London in 1666 made people fire-conscious. It brought about fire insurance for the first time, attributed to a private man, Dr Nicolas Barbon, in the year 1667.

In 1680 an association started which became known as the "Fire Office": policies were issued for a minimum of seven years and based on the annual rent of the property concerned. This in turn started several companies and also the fire marks or badges to distinguish the property insured by the various companies. Volunteer brigades at the time were untrained so the insurance companies started their own fire brigades to attend property insured by them. Sometimes this led to a rather foolish practice in the following way:- A call of "fire" is raised and the call goes to the various offices. The first brigade to arrive at the fire might find it is not their property involved so they just wait for the brigade of the right insurance company, or if not insured at all they let it burn.

This state of affairs continued until 1707 when an Act was passed which stated on and after March 1708 the Churchwardens of each parish should provide and keep in order a large engine, a hand engine and a leather pipe and socket of the same size as the fire cock or plug. It was also the duty of each parish to fix stop blocks of wood or fire cocks in the water mains. (This type of hydrant still exists in Bristol today.)

The Act of 1707 was brought in to encourage better fire fighting and to cover property other than that covered by insurance. To further encourage it money was offered as prizes in the form of first on the job gets first prize. The first was 30/- (£1.50) for the first engine complete and in order, 20/- (£1.00) for the second and 10/- (50p) the third and the first turn cock to have water on received 10/- (50p). This caused great excitement to both firemen and public, especially the parish brigades, where everyone joined in to help push the engine along. The story goes that it generally ended in a free fight to decide who was really first. (An engine of this time can be seen in St Mary Redcliffe, in Bristol.)

Round about this time equipment steadily improved. The first "Steamer" horse-drawn, as the first steam driven pumps were known, made its appearance in London in the year 1829, the makers being Braithwaite & Ericsson. This pump threw a jet 90 ft into the air, and had an output of 900 gallons per hour. The first real test of this Steamer was at the Argyle Rooms the following year, working for five hours without a hitch, and in 1834 at the Great fire at the Houses of Parliament. This invention was a great labour saver, whereas with the hand manuals anything up to sixty men were required. The Steamer needed only one, but this did not suit some members of the public and it was eventually destroyed by an angry mob. Only two pumps of this type were employed at the great fire of Tooley Street, June 1861. Competitions held at the Crystal Palace in 1863 gave the Steamer a chance to come into its own and soon after it became popular.

I expect lots of older members of the community remember these old engines. These were in time replaced by petrol driven engines, both pump and conveyance. A word about hose: leather was first used about 1672, followed by canvas about the year 1850. This was to be followed just before the war with rubber lined hose, to reduce friction loss (which is another story). The size of lengths was: leather 6 foot, canvas up to 100 foot, rubber lining 50 foot. Things continued along this happy-go-lucky way. Some cities had their own brigades, some were full-time, others part-time retained men. The same with the smaller towns and the little parishes generally, where brigades started from nothing at all. We in this parish had one and an officer who I was proud to serve under, Captain Davey. We were more often than not laughed at, but remember we were the pioneers. The Government, which wakes up sometimes either to go to war or to put someone in jail for their ideals, thought it was time all the country had proper fire protection. This led to the 1938 Act which made it compulsory for Rural District Councils to provide the necessary equipment and gave them until 1940 to do so. We in this area, thanks to Mr Clist and some members of the RDC, put our house in order and we have in this village one of the finest Fire Stations for its size in the district.

To explain the 1938 Act, prior to this date the Fire Insurance Companies paid for attendance to fires (except towns and cities, which had regular brigades paid out of the rates). Only the equipment, such as it was, was paid for out of the rates. The 1938 Act altered all this: the insurance companies paid the Government a lump sum, then the attendance to fires and the equipment were paid for out of the rates. Please note that this holds good today. If you want the brigade, we are your servants and you pay for your protection in your rates. So do not delay calling us. The phone number, day and night, is Yatton 3292. Of course if you can put it out yourself, do so by all means, but if it is a big job phone for the brigade right away: every minute you waste the fire is getting bigger.

The War and The Blitz

The enemy in its attack on our cities made big use of fire-bombs and the Fire Service was in great demand, but gallantly as we fought the flames it was not enough. There were at that time in this country, formed under the 1938 Act, about 1,400 fire authorities, each with their own style of equipment and drills. These differed greatly throughout the country, so something had to be done to standardise the brigades. August 18th 1941 saw the birth of the National Fire Service, the aim of which was to bring us all together under one control, to standardise drills, etc. and to improve water supplies. Things gradually improved after the National Fire Service was formed. The first test was the blitz on Bath, followed by those on other cathedral cities. There was more water and better reinforcements available.

YATTON FIRE BRIGADE
was founded about 1918-1920

First Chief Officer Mr J. Burdge
Mr E. Davey
Mr T. Jones
Mr H. Davey
Mr R D. Keedwell

FIRES IN THE VILLAGE

Wake & Dean
Box Bush Farm, North End
Mr S. Stuckey, Claverham Road
Mr Clements' shop in the High Street
Chesnut Farm, North End
Court de Wyck Tannery
Larchmount Hall
Arthur Wynn's shop
Atlay's Garage.

CREWS FROM YATTON ATTENDED BLITZES

on Bristol, Bath, Weston, Exeter and Plymouth.

APPLIANCES & STATIONS in YATTON

Church Houses – hand truck
Old Skating Rink, Rock Road
Nailsea's old engine converted - Austin gate change (this appliance attended Bristol Blitz on November 24th 1940 and Bath in 1942)
Austin Tow with Pump
QL Bedford army appliance
Wat C (no baffle plates)
Commer 1946
Dennis

VILLAGE FIRE BRIGADE

1938 Act RDC, L. Clist, Chief Officer
1940 NFS X13 D. Division HQ Bath
D.D.O. Hurst
1946 New Act A.C. Somerset C.O.
Barral

Note – there are no Station Officers at Yatton Fire Station now, only Sub-Officers over the firemen.

Written by the late Harry Smith (as he saw it): he served 32 years with the Yatton Fire Brigade Station, A6 Somerset as it was known from 1939-1945 and the article was passed to us by ***Les Fido****.*

Thoughts on Yatton

An Old Smithy could have been on the parcel of ground past the Market Inn, where the first row of houses is. There was a kind of building yard, it had a wall paper factory there or it may have been on the piece of land going down to Wake & Dean Gardens. About 25 yards up from the entrance on the same side there was a saw pit when we were at school, so this could have been there before the smithy. There was a two room cottage there and there were always old bits of metal about. .

When Wake and Dean made the factory larger, they pulled down nineteen houses in Horsecastle, then Hunts who took over later pulled down another seven in the same area, making twenty six houses in all. One of the houses they pulled down was The Lawns; this had a tennis court, rose garden, shrubbery and drive way.

There were about thirty wells in the Horsecastle area when I was a boy. They never ran dry, the soft water ones and the hard water ones were only yards from each other. The ladies used to come with their buckets on Friday evenings in the summer for soft water to wash their hair and also for the children. The well at the Bridge Inn was just inside the gate, the pump was further back in the car park.

Wake & Dean, the furniture factory sank a twelve inch bore hole in 1939. It went down two hundred feet or just over. The ten foot long flange pipes went down one hundred and twenty feet. In the first week of testing, Monday to Saturday 8.0 am to 5.30 pm, it produced 11,000 gallons an hour. The second time of testing with a larger pump gave 18,000 gallons an hour, but it did not lower the spring level. The Works covered 14 acres and 500 people worked there around 1950. They (*the Company*) came down from London around 1902, because of the high rates there. My father and his friend were the first two locals to start there. Father and I put in 77 years' service.

Where Mr Tutcher farmed, a Mr Birch had a bake house. A workman, who was a baker there, refused to use a batch of fat that was delivered for cooking: he said it was human fat. It was sent to a place in Bristol where it was found that he was right. It was traced as having come through Holland from Germany. They were melting their dead down. This took place sometime during the First World War. The man's name was Mr J. Flower from High Ham, Langport, Somerset and he was my father's step-father.

Part of Derham Park was used by Somerset Cricket Club. My father met W.G. Grace quite a few times. He used to stop in the big house, which has now been replaced by a new house in Yatton. The Chamberlains lived there, then they went back to London. I understand they were tied up with the Bank of England years ago.

Windyridge (*The Ridge*), the road opposite the old Post Office, you used to drive down there in a horse and cart, cross the Cheddar Valley Line and come out, after crossing the main line as well, at the side of the old gas works. Then follow down the road to the river and the field called Big Wemberham, or 48 acres as it was then known.

During the war the Queen Mother and her husband [*George VI*] stopped near the old railway turn-table, outside Yatton Station, for three days while looking at war damage in Wales.

I do not know if you are interested in local people's names. The name Fido was given for fighting on behalf of the Church, it means 'faithful' and belonging to the Son of God. I understand the Fidos were Bishops in the 14th century. The name was first recorded in the Suffolk Subsidy Rolls in 1327. The family was in High Ham, Langport, Somerset in 1565. The Caples, Barnards and Hurds were also there as well and all the five families including the Orams, a little later, were related by marriage. Some are still there.

The modern name for Fido in French is Fithe. Perhaps this is how the Church section came into it, if this is so.

Trust I have not wasted your time. (forgive state of writing at 85 years old)

Les Fido

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The Yatton Pall

The embroidered blue velvet pall or hearse cloth, known at one time as "The Old Cope", was fashioned in the 17th century from two 15th century vestments. It would have been used to cover the coffin at funerals. The vestments lay unused for many years in the Yatton Parish Chest until the spring of 1923 when it became necessary to have them repaired and restored.

The Yatton Branch of the Girls Friendly Society, on the suggestion of the President, Mrs Peart, agreed to meet the cost of restoration and the Pall was then taken to the Fabric Department of the South Kensington Museum. The vestments were carefully repaired by the staff of the Royal Needlework Guild working under the instructions of the Museum staff and on their suggestion placed in an airtight oak frame.

The restored Pall was placed originally in St John's Chapel in Yatton Parish Church and was unveiled on the 14th June 1923 by Lady Mary de Salis as President of the Diocesan Branch of the Girls Friendly Society. The Pall is now in the passageway leading from the Chapter House to the north doorway of the church. At the foot of the frame is a brass plate with the following inscription:-

"Portions of 15th century dalmatic and tunicle made up as a herse cloth probably in the 17th century. Restored by the Yatton Branch of the Girls Friendly Society 1923."

The following description of the Pall was provided by Mr F C Ecles, South Kensington Museum, Architect to the Church Finance Board. "The Yatton Pall or 'Hearse-Cloth', to give it the Old English name, is one of the most important relics of mediaeval embroidery in the West of England. Of the few surviving examples of pre-Reformation needlework most date from after 1500. The Yatton Pall has been made up out of two vestments of the latter part of the fifteenth century, sometime between 1450 and 1500. It probably received its present form early in the 17th century. The groundwork is of 15th century blue velvet. Down the whole length run two bands composed of the embroidered orphreys of the vestments, but with the panels re-set. These panels contain figures of prophets and saints under canopies; among them we can identify Moses and David, St Andrew and St Thomas, St Stephen and St Laurence. The groundwork is embroidered with conventional designs which of old used to be called 'water-flowers'. The vestments of which the pall is made up were called dalmatic and tunicle, or sometimes two tunicles or two dalmatics for they were often exactly alike. They were put on over the head, reached to about the knees, had some sort of sleeve and were divided up the sides below the sleeves. They were worn by the assistant ministers who read the gospel and epistle and were known as the Gospeller and Epistoler, or deacon and sub-deacon. In a mediaeval parish the Rector or Vicar usually had the help of another clergyman who was maintained by money left for memorial services by wealthy people, and the parish clerk, who was required to have some knowledge of Latin and music, usually acted as Epistoler. So it was generally possible to have the three sacred ministers, as they were called, on a Sunday morning. The law of the Church still requires this in Cathedrals and on important occasions.

Bright blue, such as these vestments were originally, was a favourite colour of old and was often used for festival ornaments. There was great freedom as to colours in churches, save only in Lent, when everyone used a plain dull-looking linen, nearly white, as Westminster Abbey does now.

It was only in Cathedrals, and in the great Churches, that strict rules were followed. We possess the whole series of colour-rules which were used in Wells Cathedral. At Yatton they probably used their best vestments on high days and their old and worn things at other times. These blue vestments were probably among the best the Church possessed."

There are six panels of figures in each of the two bands of embroidered orphreys. My suggested identification of some of the figures is set out below:-

Upper Band

1. Male saint holding a palm (this can represent any martyr).
2. Female saint.
3. DAVID, with harp and lion.
4. Bearded saint holding a small book.
5. Bearded saint holding a larger book (Note - many saints hold a gospel).
6. Male saint holding a rod with a ball at each end (this is probably a fuller's staff or rod representing the apostle JAMES the LESS).

Lower Band

1. St STEPHEN (the first Christian martyr) with a stone above, about to strike his head.
2. St LAURENCE holding a gridiron.
3. MOSES holding tablets of stone.
4. Male saint holding a palm.
5. St ANDREW holding a saltire cross. (see sketch)
6. St THOMAS, the apostle, holding a builder's square.

Saint Andrew holding saltire cross (sketch by Hilary Tincknell)

Christopher Hawtree in *The Times* of 26 July 2003 has traced the origins of the word "hearse". It is derived, via the French herse, from the Latin hirpex, which was a rake or harrow. In English in the 13th century it became the term used for a similar shaped device to hold candles at Easter. It existed simultaneously in English as "herse" for a harrow, hence "rehearse" – to go over the ground again.

"Hearse" evolved into a word for candles and tributes over a coffin at a funeral and, later, above the tomb itself. From this grand structure the word became applied to a frame to hold the coffin, and by the mid-17th century it meant the vehicle for the final journey of the coffin. The Yatton Pall would have been draped over the hearse bearing the coffin to the church.

An alternative word for "pall" is "mortcloth". An example of the use of this word is provided by the following entry:- "1724 April 20. The said day John Dease gave into the poor for the morcloath to William Dease - 1:0:0". This relates to my ancestor John Dease and is the first record of a payment of mortcloth dues in the parish registers of Collessie, Fife.

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Nicholas A Deas

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Cleeve School, Plunder Street, Cleeve

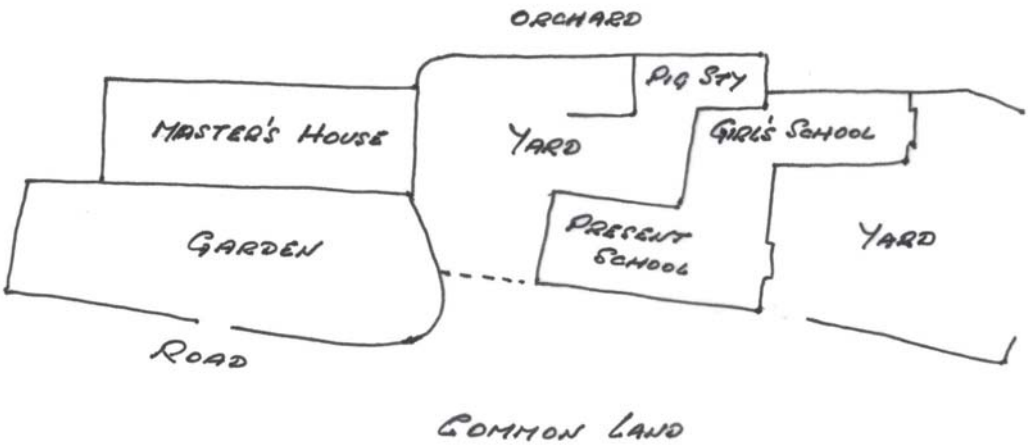
Foundation, building and funding of the school

The first recorded school in Cleeve was a Dame School in Cleeve Court Cottages set up in 1810. Dames did not have to have any teaching qualifications and the schools were set up for profit. The Rev Thomas Biddulph, the vicar of Yatton who lived at Cleeve Court wanted the school cottage as a coach house. An alternative building was provided at Plunder Street in a converted cart shed and wagon house by Rev Biddulph in 1836 on the site of a house known as Alice Vowles' house. A master's house was also made available. It is possible that stones from Court de Wyck House, which was pulled down in 1820, were used in building the school as well as being used for Cleeve Court. (See Sketch A)

The National Society, which was founded in 1811 by prominent Anglicans, had as its aims the building of schools, encouraging the use of teachers and monitors in education and the teaching of the liturgy of the Church of England. In 1833, there was the first government grant of £20,000 intended to help voluntary societies educate the masses by building schoolhouses.

By 1838 the National Society had supported the foundation of seven hundred schools in England including the original one in Cleeve, which was regarded as a model of its kind.

It is known that the school was thatched in 1854 and enlarged in 1859. Within the next two years the land on which the school stood was put up for sale by



Sketch plan of the original school in 1836

SKETCH 'A'

Cleeve Court Estate and was bought for the parish by the Rev. Symes who lived at Westhanger and who was then vicar of Yatton including Cleeve. In 1861 a new school *(see sketch B)* was built for £560, of which £207 came from a government grant and £250 was given by the National Society. The remaining £102 came from within the diocese and of this £72 or over 12% was spent on books. Some additional land to allow the expansion was given by local landowner Robert Castle, JP of Cleeve Court.

It was thought that each child should be allowed ten square feet as a building guide and that 97 children could be accommodated, which would be a tight fit.

Each pupil funded the school by paying one penny a week and there were contributions from the church plus capitation grants from the government. Boys were worth 5p or 20% more than girls in capitation terms! If the teachers were recognised by the Department of Education, the buildings were of a sufficient standard, the attendance was satisfactory and the girls taught sewing, the grant would be paid. A higher capitation was available if the children passed the exams in the three R's as set by the school inspector. Later the emphasis was on widening the curriculum to include history and geography but Cleeve School had difficulty attaining a high enough standard in geography in some years. In 1872 the grant was £22 1s 8d (£22.09) and in 1890 £46 18s 0d (£46.90). In a rural community there were seasonal jobs for children so satisfactory attendance was not always easily achieved, which could affect the capitation grant.

Prizes of money were given for good attendance to ensure the maximum grant possible could be obtained and there were School Attendance Officers who checked on children who missed school.

The managers were responsible for running the school including employing staff and keeping the building in good repair using the available grants, fees and also philanthropic gifts.

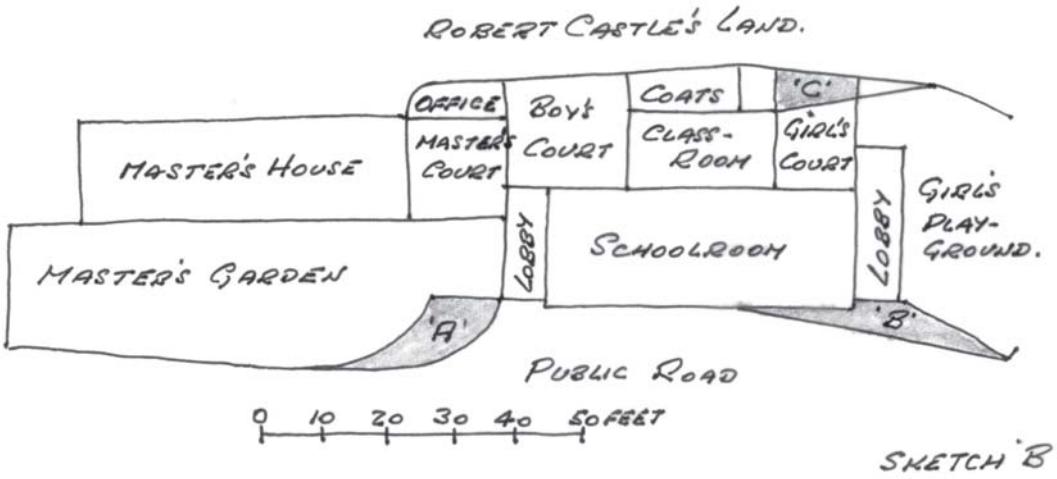
In 1861 the Government set up the Department of Education and the possible capitation doubled depending upon the teachers having recognised qualifications, the buildings being up to agreed standards and the girls being taught sewing. Ministry Inspectors examined the pupils' knowledge.

In 1891 schooling was made free nationally and all fees were abolished.

Children had their whole education in Cleeve until it was made a primary school in 1943 when all children of secondary school age went to Clevedon or Congresbury schools instead.

In 1945 the school became Voluntarily Controlled, that is to say a Trust was set up by the National Society. The Church of England's contribution fell to 20% but it retained three foundation governors appointed by the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

In 1956 the first Parent Teacher Association was set up and became an important source of additional funding and although the PTA had lapsed it was restarted in 1962 when the school was threatened with closure.



Sketch plan of the school site and changes required prior to the new school being built in 1861. The area marked 'A' was incorporated into the site from the public road, in exchange for area 'B'. Area 'C' was land given by Robert Castle Esq to enlarge the Girl's Court and the Offices.

Initially the services at the school were quite primitive.

Water from a well in the girl's yard was used until 1912 when mains water then became available and a cesspit was in use until 1967. 'Tortoise' stoves for heating were not installed until 1917 and electricity was not connected until 1930.

Structural changes to the school included the removal of a gallery in 1909 and the provision of a screen to separate the classes in 1930.

The children had only the small yards, an orchard behind the school and later the disused quarry to play in until in 1958 Lord Sinclair of Cleeve, who lived at Cleeve Court provided land for a playground at 1/- (5p) a year. He also provided land at the same rent for two more classrooms.

Teaching staff

When the Plunder Street school was opened in 1836 the first head teacher was Mr William Harding with his wife as assistant. Mr Harding did not gain teaching qualifications until thirty five years later in 1871, but both teachers were held in high esteem and when they retired in 1881 Mr Harding received an inscribed marble clock and Mrs Harding a purse of thirty sovereigns fresh from the Royal Mint. A lot of money in those days!

The Hardings were followed by several husband and wife teams which the School Managers found expensive and so in 1887, Mrs Fanny Brookes was appointed and remained there until 1902.

After this there were a number of head mistresses until finally in 1959 Mrs G Baxter oversaw the transfer of the school to the new purpose-built Court de Wyck VC Primary School in 1972. The old school building became, and still is an environmental resource centre administered by the local authority through appointed trustees.

Discipline and infectious diseases

The school logbooks recorded canings for boys for the most trivial misdemeanours and one boy was even given a good shaking. Another boy got the cane for having a bad temper and for not speaking when spoken to.

Outbreaks of Scarlet fever hit the village in 1883, when the school was closed for a week while the rooms were cleansed and white washed and in 1884 when one girl died. On that occasion Carbolic Acid which had only just been discovered by Lister was used to disinfect the school for the first time. In 1872 Mrs Harding, the wife of the headmaster, caught smallpox and the school was closed for a month; fortunately she recovered. There are many references to whooping cough and measles in the school records, especially between 1861 and 1930 and on several occasions the school was closed for a week.

World Wars

During the First World War the girls knitted socks for soldiers. They were given extra knitting lessons and some boys were also engaged in order to increase the effort. In December 1914 over fifty articles were sent to HMS Woolwich and some items were sent to Belgian refugees.

In the Second World War there were 200 London evacuees in Cleeve and of these forty were children who attended the school. For a short period the local children were taught from 8am until midday and the evacuees from 1-30pm until 4-30pm. When the numbers of evacuees dropped to twenty four the school returned to normal times and all the children were taught together. The Cleeve teachers had to cope with the influx in crowded conditions as there were 84 children in total.

Coronations

The school celebrated the Coronation of King George VI in 1937 by attending church in the morning and performing two plays "Kingly Crown" and "Act of Royalty" in the Village Hall. In the afternoon there were sports and a tea party, and each child was given a celebration mug.

For the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, the school was decorated and a television hired so the children and their parents could watch the events as they happened. Afterwards there was a tea party.

Court de Wyck School

For Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee the school was decorated with red, white and blue bunting and flags, while the children dressed in red, white and blue took part in the Annual Fun Run.

On April 3rd 1997 on the twenty fifth anniversary of the school a time capsule made by Ken Summerell of Yatton was buried containing items that the children thought would be of interest to future generations.

At the time of writing there are 145 children at Court de Wyck School: they have computers and up to date teaching aids, a far cry from conditions when the first school opened at Cleeve. There is also a web site:- claverhamvillage.co.uk/school.htm

Most of the information in this article comes from an extensive account entitled Cleeve School 1836 to 1972 by a former teacher Paul Martin and from the research done by children at Court de Wyck School.

Marianne Pitman and Ruth Summerell

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Feedback

We always welcome any additions or revisions to articles which have appeared in previous publications :-

More Yatton Yesterdays No 6. Page 10 – Photograph of the girls on the lorry. The two on the right of the lorry are Mollie and Mary Adams. Their mother was Grace nee Parsons who married Mr Stone in later years. The girl on the far left was either Mary Davis or a girl named Pollard from Claverham Road. The girls were members of a local pantomime group, except Mary Adams who was too young.

Information from Millie Wright

Yatton Deer Park

Where was Yatton's deer park? We know that there was a deer park in existence in 1260 but we do not know where it was situated and this is an attempt to sift the evidence we have and suggest a possible site.

Firstly what is (or was) a deer park? This may seem a question with an obvious answer but it has actually got at least two answers. A deer park was an enclosure where deer were kept, but the park may have been a large area where the deer could be hunted to provide sport for the owner and his friends and also provide fresh meat after the hunt, supposing it was successful. It could also have been a small area where the deer were kept only as a source of fresh meat, particularly in winter.

As I said, we know there was a deer park in Yatton in 1260 because in August of that year John Odeline, a Canon of Wells and Prebendary of Yatton had arranged with Peter, the Prior of the Hospital of St John to have 3 shillings (15p) a year paid to himself during his life and to his successor after his death on a loan raised on the value of the deer park which he caused to be assarted, the payment to be made on the morrow of the Epiphany in the same year. Therefore the park did exist at that time, but where it was is the question to be answered.

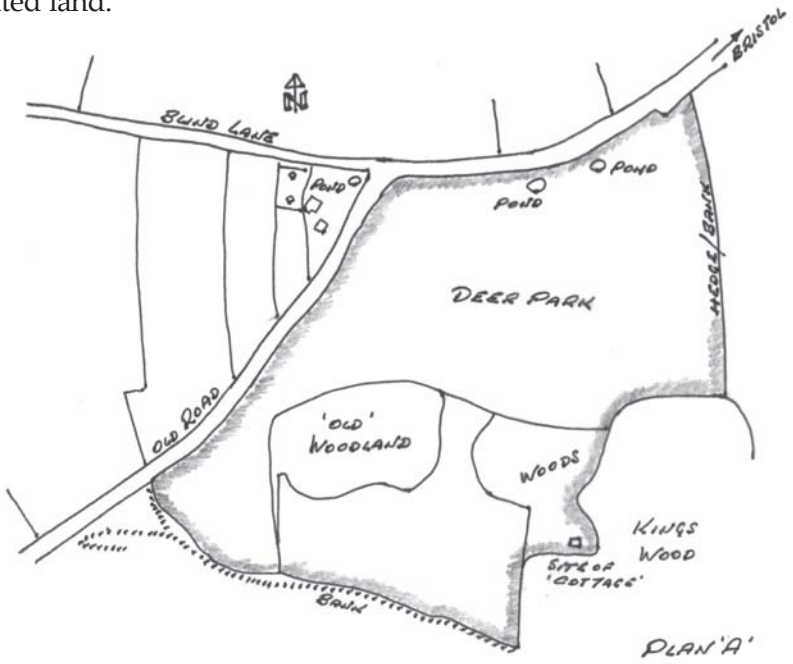
The site which is suggested from a place name is Park Farm on the Yatton to Clevedon road and in many villages the Park Farm name is derived from a deer park which existed in medieval times. The present Park Farm has features consistent with a deer park location as follows:-

1) The farm buildings are set back, well away from the road, which would allow for the park to be all round the house.
2) The farm was called Park Farm in 1712 when Thomas Hipsley came there and the name changed to 'Gregorys' when Edward Gregory married Elizabeth, T Hipsley's daughter in 1738 and moved into the farm, but it later reverted to Park Farm again.
3) Boundaries could have been formed by the Yatton to Clevedon road to the north, the water course called Little River to the north west and Horsecastle Lane to the south. The field boundary to the north west could be an original park boundary as it has the remains of a ditch and bank.
4) The original building, now part of the farmhouse, could have been a small, one up, one down, stone built construction with the ground floor being stone flagged having a pronounced slope or fall to one side and this could have been an animal shelter. A main first floor supporting beam which has deep sloping chamfers, which appears to be original, suggests a dating of about 1600. There is also a man-made stone-lined pool near these buildings which are probably not the first on this site.
5) Field references from a 1799 map indicate that a number of fields in the above area were still owned by the Rectory of Yatton or had been sold by the Rectory. Other transactions may have occurred earlier.

However, there are some problems with this location:-

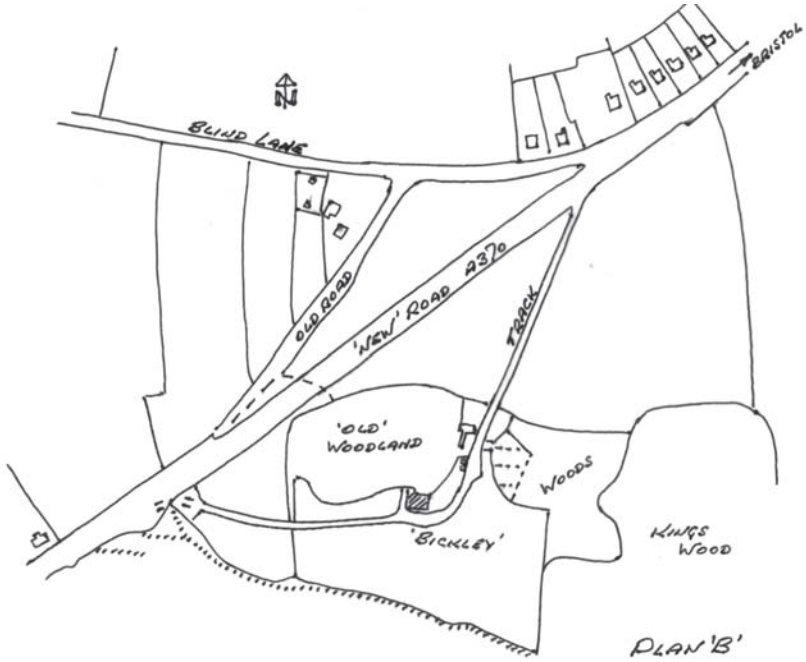
1) The land where Park Farm is situated is on the ridge of higher ground on the line of Yatton High Street which is above the surrounding moors, is not subject to flooding and has probably never been inundated. It is difficult to believe that this land would not have been under cultivation before the 13th century, although the reference to the deer park in the Dean and Chapter of Wells records states the park was 'assarted' by Odeline (which means clearance of scrub, trees and bushes). This implies the clearing of uncultivated land.

2) The dating of about 1600 for the first floor support beam in the cell that was the original part of the farmhouse suggests that the building is much later than the 1260 enclosure date but it was not essential that an animal shelter be in the deer park, particularly at its formation. However we think that the deer park only existed for a short time, so the cell could not have been part of the deer park. It could however have been part of the stone farmhouse construction which probably superseded an earlier timber dwelling.



These factors seem to make it unlikely that this was the site of Odeline's deer park and so we must find an alternative location.

A common feature of the known locations for medieval deer parks is that they were on sloping ground usually adjacent to or in wooded areas. This suggests two possible sites in Yatton; Henley Wood or Bickley (which is now in Cleeve). Henley Wood does not seem to provide many positive answers to the questions which must be asked but Bickley is more optimistic.



The following may be relevant:-

The enclosure could have been bounded by the foot of the limestone outcrop, the line of the old road which was linked to 'Blind Lane' and the hedge line to the east.

There is a slope down from the limestone outcrop to the old road line which forms a water catchment area .

There are remains of ditches and banks along the limestone outcrop.

The name Bickley means 'clearing'.

The woods are 'ancient' and contain holly bushes – a source of browsing for deer.

An archaeological 'dig' established that a building with an adjacent cultivated area had existed at the top of the slope inside the enclosure area and disappeared in the 14th Century. This could have been an overseer's or keeper's cottage.

The old road line has remnants of embankments which could have had fences on top (see Plan A); this road line was modified when the present A370 was formed (see Plan B). The park area as set out on Plan A is small but it could be of sufficient size to maintain a supply of fresh meat during the winter. The value of the park in 1260 of 3/- per annum would now be worth about £90 p.a. and this would seem to be a reasonable value for a small deer park.

Perhaps this is the site of Odeline's deer park, but we must wait for something to confirm it or otherwise in the future.

Brian Bradbury

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