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

Foreword

It is as if the prolific Brookes families, who lived in the parish of Shipton in days gone by, conspired to confuse local historians intent on sorting them out. Joan Howard-Drake tackles the families that used so many identical names for their children - far too many Thomases and Elizabeths. With the help of wills, census and other materials, she makes it all as clear as it is ever likely to be.

To inspire the house-proud, we recall the booklet issued to new tenants in Pear Tree Close, Milton by the Chipping Norton Rural District Council in 1934. Do we need to be reminded not to swing on the garden gate, not to store 'things' in the bath and not to keep pigs ? Perhaps not but it certainly would not go amiss to have a handy 'Surveyor' at our beck and call to deal with intractable household problems.

Wendy Pearse shares one of her many forays into Ascott history and, personally, solves a local mystery by lifting the carpet in the church vestry.

Then we have two memories of life in the 1930's and during the Second World War.

Jeff Broxholme describes living at Combe Mill before and during World War II. Jeff was born in 1931, the son of the Manager of the sawmill for the Duke of Marlborough's estate. His recollections include precise descriptions of the mill workings as well as childhood adventures and wartime activities.

Dick Mason, in his own words, takes us on a tour of Bruern Abbey grounds during the period 1935 to 1947, when his father, Bill, served as Head Gardener and Farm Bailiff to Mr Crompton Wood. He describes life growing up in a small community, going to school and church with no local public transport. Highlights during this time were the presence of American servicemen and, later Italian prisoners of war. Both he and Jeff recall seeing the glow from a bombed Coventry

And finally, the passing of one of our Journal's greatest admirers, of whom you may never have heard.

Trudy Yates and Joan Howard-Drake

SOME OF THE BROOKES FAMILY OF SHIPTON

Joan Howard-Drake

The Brookes family name is found in many of the villages and towns of West Oxfordshire but this article is concerned with one family of those who lived in the large parish of Shipton. The parish contained the villages of Langley, Leafield, Lyneham, Ramsden and Milton under Wychwood. Their name appears as Brookes, Broke[s] and Brock in the records but only Brookes will be used in this article.

The family's connection with the parish goes back to the sixteenth century and certainly before that. Over the years they appear in the parish registers as gentlemen, yeomen, farmers and tradesmen and last but not least one became Vicar of Shipton parish. The first mention of the Brookes family in parish registers is in Shipton village and is the marriage of Thomas Brookes to Margarett Peerce on 20th February 1587 and this is followed by a baptism on '17th of December 1587 John, (*sic*) a daughter of Thomas Brokes , a tailor of Shipton'. [1]

In the later years of the century and those following, although members of the family baptised children in Shipton Church, the main places they lived in were the villages of Lyneham and Milton. The Brookes of Lyneham and Milton were yeomen farmers who left substantial goods and sums of money in their wills. Ann Brookes, a widow, who died in Lyneham in 1679, left nearly £80 [2] and John who died in 1680 left £206 7s 8d, a large sum of money then. [3] Not all the members of the family were so wealthy, some of those in Milton leave far less in goods and money and the poorest leave no wills at all.

Branches of the family use the same christian names throughout the years. Boys were John, Robert, Thomas, Henry, Martin and William with John and Thomas appearing most often. Girls were Anne and Elizabeth with an occasional Margery and Mary with others. Robert Brookes of Frog Lane, Milton baptised daughters Elizabeth and Ann in 1638.[4] The use of the same names for children of the various families makes it difficult to be sure who was the earliest ancestor of the family in this article. There are no less than six men in Milton who could be the father of John of Milton whose will of the 26th of January 1724 makes it clear that he is the man who can safely be identified as

the father of Peter who came to live in the Prebendal House and was ancestor of the family which became so important in later centuries in Shipton.

He was called Master John Brookes when he married Anne Mallard, both of Milton, in 1684 but in his will of 1724 he calls himself 'gentleman'.[5] Their childrens' baptismal entries agree with the names in John's will, son John was baptised in 1692, William in 1694, Thomas in 1698 and Peter in 1701 and these are the names in his will. Their two daughters Elizabeth and Anne both died early in 1700. A son Martaine is also named but there is no trace of his baptism or later marriage. There are entries for two of his children baptised, William in August 1740 and Elizabeth in January 1745. She was buried in February 1745, as was Martin's wife Anne in October 1746, a son John in May 1747 and finally Martin on 16th May 1758. They were all given as of Shipton.

Peter Brookes, son of John, was still 'of Milton' when his first daughter, Ann, was baptised in January 1726 the year that he obtained a lease of the Prebendal House in Shipton. His wife's name was Mary and they had five children after Ann. Mary in 1727; Elizabeth 1729; Peter 1730; Thomas 1732; Mary 1734 all given of Shipton.



The Prebendal House by St Mary's Church, Shipton under Wychwood

The Prebendal House that Peter Brookes leased was the home of the Prebendary of Shipton. It is an old hall house, probably dating from the 13th century with many additions made over the years and had about 92 acres of land attached to it. A Prebend is a share of the tithe income of a parish given to support a member of a Cathedral Chapter, a Prebendary, who was usually a Canon. Shipton's Canon was of Salisbury Cathedral and there is still a stall in the Cathedral with Shipton under Wychwood written over the Canon's chair. The Canon had duties in the Cathedral so that he did not live in this parish but had the house in order to be able to visit and have buildings large enough for storing the great tithes of the parish which were his of right. In Shipton he also held the advowson, which was the right to appoint a Rector to attend to the cure or duties in the parish. The Canon let the house and its land and drew income from that as well as from the tithes.

In Shipton there was a possible three tier occupation of the house. The Prebendary was not resident and leased it to a tenant who had the right to sub-let the property. Prebendary Roger Lupton leased the house to Thomas Bland in 1506 and the following lessee John London leased it to William Fermour in 1540 for £40 a year. It is not known who the sub-tenants were then. When Queen Elizabeth appointed John Foxe, the Martyrologist, as Prebendary in 1563 he leased it first to his own family and they held the primary lease until 1770, paying rent to following Prebendaries. John's family lived in Warlies in Essex so they rented part of the house firstly to members of the local Wisdome family. The baptismal entries in the parish registers show that Richard Wisdome was living there in 1586, 1589 and 1592. Samuel Foxe, the son of John, was also in Shipton in 1590 but it is not clear whether he was in the Prebendal House or at Shipton Court.

Frances Morgan was the great-great-great granddaughter of John Foxe. Her husband was Richard Morgan and they signed the leases to Peter and Mary Brookes in 1726 and 1739 respectively. After 1770 the Professor of Civil Law at Oxford University had the primary lease with the right to visit and continued to sub-let it to the Brookes family.

The first lease of 1726 for the Prebendal House and its lands between Richard Morgan and Peter Brookes was for three years and the rent was £135 a year. A Memorandum noted that Peter Brookes was to be granted a lease for a further six years, nine in all, and for that he was to pay Richard Morgan £275, the lease to be prepared at Peter's cost. Richard Morgan was *'with all convenient speed put the premises in good repair and shall maintain the same at his own charge'*. The end of the memorandum says that *'Peter Brookes shall suffer Dr Bouchier or his successors, to have the use of the Bedding & other Goods of him the said Peter Brookes which shall be at the Parsonage House at Shipton, as often as he or they shall vizitt there.'* [6] Dr James Bourchier was Professor of Civil Law at

Oxford University at that time. Since part of Peter Brookes' lease also stated that when the Morgans came from Essex it *'allowed for use of part of the house by Richard Morgan, his family & servants and joint use of the kitchen'* life in the house could possibly have been rather overcrowded.

Peter Brookes died in 1735 and his widow Mary then took a lease from Richard and Frances Morgan for three years for a rent of £106 a year, the lower rent probably due to the fact that Stockley Coppice in Wychwood Forest was not included. In the lease indenture there is a detailed description of the house. [7]

'An Indenture is recorded between Richard Morgan of Warlies, Essex, Esq and Francis, his wife and Mary Brookes of Shipton in Oxon, widow. Lease for three years of all the lands, appurtenancies, property, glebe and tithes of the Prebendal House to Mary Brookes widow of that Peter Brookes for the last 7 years.Rent £106 p.a. Tithes were – corne, grain, wool, hay. Allowed for use of part of the house by Richard Morgan, his family and servants and joint use of the kitchen.

Stockley Coppice in or near the Forest not included'

Then follows the Schedule or Inventory mentioned in the writ:-

'……. In the Lady's Chamber – and old Bedstead with Bedclothes; Curtains; Valence, seven old chairs; two stools, a pair of iron Dogges; a table; two casements; a lock to the door.

In the chamber within it – and old Board Binn; a casement and latch to the door.

In the next Chamber – one casement; a lock, bolt and latch to the door.

In the Chamber next the Boghouse –two casements; a latch to the door.

In the Closett in the same – a casement and six shelves.

In the Boghouse – one casement; a cover to the seat; a latch to both doors.

In the Parlour Chamber – an old inlaid chest and casement.

In the chamber in the Parlour chamber – two casements; lock, key and latch to the door.

In the Garrett over the same – a lock to the stay and case door and one casement.

In Sir Richard's Chamber – a bedstead; a little feather Bedd; the room hanged with purple very old; one casement; a lock and latch to the outward door; a latch and bolt to the inward door. Three shelves in the Clossett.

In the room over the cellar – a casement; three shelves; a latch to both doors.

In the passage – two shelves; two latches to the door leading to the Boghouse; two wooden covers to the seat.

In the Hall – two tables; and old iron chimney back; one wooden settle; an iron Barr to the Door into the garden; a lock, key and latch to the middle door; a lock and latch to the inner door.

In the stayer case going out of the Hall and passage – a bolt and lock to the folding doors.

In the parlour – two casements; a lock and key to the door.

In the withdrawing room – a large square table and old joyned frame; one casement and latch to the door.

In the Cellar – the stands; a lock and key to the same cellar.

In the kitchen – two fixed dressers; one table; and old cubbord and latch to the door.

In the washhouse – a stone trough under the pumps.

In the Garretts – two locks and keys to two doors and one iron casement.

In the Passage – a latch and bolt to the folding doors; a lock and key and latch to the outward doors and two bolts to the door at the backsides. A lock, key and latch in the servants' Hall. Three shelves in the Meal House and a lock to the door; a key and latch to the Dairy House; a lock, key and latch to the Maids' Chamber and a casement; and a lock, key and bar to the stables.

Peter Brookes senior's will of 1735 shows a man who had care for his family and the fairness with which he tries to dispose of his property. He shares his possessions three ways between his wife and his children. He bequeaths his wife, Mary, a third of his estate real and personal for her life. After her death his eldest son Peter is to receive her third of the real estate but the personal goods are to be shared equally between his other children Anne, Elizabeth, Mary, John and William. The residue or final third he puts in the hands of his brothers John, William and Martin with John Andrews, a friend, as Trustees. These men were to allow Mary, his wife, to receive *'the yearly rents income and produce'* of this third for the maintaining, educating and bringing up of his children until they were twenty-one. However he seems to have some worry about his wife's capabilities because if she wished to *'apprentice or place'* any of them *'in their minority'* she needed to ask the Trustees for their consent and approbation before they raised the money for her to do so. Another sign of his care for family is shown in that he once purchased a leasehold property in Milton for his sister Mary who was then living in London. He now wanted that property sold and the proceeds to be put out at interest for his wife to use for the children. This leasehold money was eventually to be shared by his children

apart from Peter to whom property had already been given.

One item in the will was the payment of £50 to his daughter Mary left to her by her uncle Thomas Brookes of London, wine merchant. Finally Peter added a codicil saying that if his son Peter died before he was twenty-one, then his son Thomas should have the freehold Milton property. The will was proved in Oxford on 24th December 1735. He did not sign his will but made a mark.

An item of local history appears in his will when Peter Brookes says that his Leasehold property in Milton was held *'under Rowland Lacy, esquire Lord of the Manor of Milton'*. So far no documents have been found for a manor of Milton. [8]

Mary Brookes, wife of Peter, senior, was buried in Shipton on 31 March 1785 and did not leave a will. Subsequently a bond was made which bound Peter Brookes (junior), of Shipton, yeoman, Thomas Walton of Oxford, writer and Christopher Walton of Oxford, writer, for £1000 to administer Mary's possessions properly which amounted to under £600. It was proved in September 1785. [9]

Peter Brookes, junior, calling himself 'gentleman', son of the Peter and Mary who originally leased the Prebendal House was married in Shipton in 1760 to Mary Gilbert a member of a well-known Lyneham farming family and they had seven children. Two, Richard-Gilbert and Elizabeth both died in 1771 within a month of each other but Ann, Elizabeth, Mary, Peter and Thomas survived. Ann was married to George Carter of Minster Lovell in 1746; Mary to William Reeve of Sarsden in 1755; Thomas to Mary Williams of Gloucester in 1756; Peter junior to Sarah Hemming in 1786, both of Shipton and he was the licensee of the Butchers Arms in Milton; there is no trace of a marriage for Elizabeth.

Thomas moved away from husbandry and went into the Church. He went to Magdalen Hall in Oxford and the Alumni entry for him reads - *Thomas Brookes son of Peter Brookes of Shipton under Wychwood, Oxon, Gent. at Magdalen Hall. Matriculated 15 December 1749 aged 17; Bachelor of Arts 1753; Master of Arts 1756, the same year he married Mary Williams of Gloucester. Thomas became curate of Idbury and perpetual curate of Fifield in 1766 and then Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood on 25th November 1773* [10] *In the Clericus Diocese of Oxon 1542-1908 he appears as - Thomas Brookes – Curate at Idbury 15th June; Perpetual Curate of Fifield 19th August 1766; Vicar of Shipton under Wychwood 25th November 1773 – he died in 1814.*

His reputation in the diocese was not all that it should have been. Bishop Butler of Oxford noted in 1784 that *'Dr Brookes, with so many cures on his hands, is shamefully non resident ' but in 1790 noted that Dr Brookes and his curate were resident in the vicarage.* [11]

He and Mary had several children, Mary Williams Herbert; Amelia; Harriott, Peter, Thomas, Martin, Charlotte and Sophia who are named in his will but some do not appear in Shipton's baptismal or burial registers. Shipton baptisms were - Mary Williams Purbrick 1768; Amelia 1772 and Harriott in 1774, the others were obviously baptised in other parishes where he served before coming to Shipton. There are marriage entries for them - Charlotte to John Tarn, her father's curate in 1776; Thomas to Elizabeth Brookes in 1792; Amelia to William Wrenford in 1795; Peter to Hannah Birch in 1796.

Thomas Brookes left a long will when he died in 1814 in which he names his children but does not mention his wife. There are no entries in Shipton's burial registers for deaths for either Thomas or his wife. His children named in his will were Peter, William, Charlotte widow of the Revd John Tarn, Sophia wife of the Revd James Roe, Mary Eeles, widow and Amelia who married the Revd Morgan Walters Morgan in 1811 after her first husband William Wrenford had died in 1805.

Thomas sounds as if he had trouble with his family. His possessions of all kinds were to be shared between his children but much of it was put in Trustees' hands. Amelia Morgan who married her father's curate at Westcott, Morgan Walter Morgan, had her legacy firmly tied up so that Morgan could not touch it. Thomas obviously shared the view of the Bishop of Oxford who thought very little of the curate. Perhaps he felt Amelia was not very sensible either since in the will he says '*I strictly & most preremptorily enjoin and command*' his daughter to spend £50 pounds to apprentice her son Thomas Wrenford. Sophie who married another cleric had £450 taken off her legacy because so much had already been given her and her husband in Thomas' lifetime. He makes bequests to Henrietta the widow of his son Martin and to their daughter Henrietta Ann. [12]

Even after Thomas's death there was trouble in the family about his will in which he said that any money borrowed from Thomas Williams of Llandilovour in Carmarthanshire, Wales, was to be paid out of his estate. He said in a codicil *I direct that all Sum or Sums of money due from me if any & from all or any of my Sons or daughters to Mr Thomas Williams formerly of King Street Westminster but now of Llandilovaror in Carmarthenshire shall be paid out of my Estate as so much due from me to him (he allowing all just deductions therefrom) & without all or any of my Sons or daughters or their husbands being answerable out of my Estate or otherwise for the same or any part thereof.* Obviously the debt had not been paid by 1821 & cases were taken in Chancery against William Brookes by Thomas Williams and Hannah Brookes widow of Peter Brookes. The sum owed to Thomas Williams was for £20 lent in 1792 and in 1793 and 1794 two years rent of £15 due on a house in Tooley Street, plus the interest on the loans amounting to £87 10s in all. It is not clear from the action whether Hannah

Brookes owed money or was owed some or whether it was a joint Chancery action by Thomas Williams and her. [13] Peter, Hannah's husband, had died in 1814 and in his will had left all his possession to her. [14] Since the Reverend Thomas married a Mary Williams it is possible that that Thomas Williams was a relative.

During his time as Vicar of Shipton Thomas was of great influence in the community and his appearance and signature appears many times on documents of the period. His register entries are clear but he adds no comments on the people concerned, with the exception being his consistent notes of illegitimate births with the names of mother and child and the term 'illegal birth'.

His tithe account book dating between 1785 and 1792 still exists and it has been examined in Wychwoods History number 13. The book gives a good picture of the villages in the parish, the people, their occupations and their tithe payments. [15] He promoted the setting up of an association to protect the parishes of Shipton and Ascott when there was fear of a French invasion on 1798. It read as follows:-

An Intended association for the Protection of the Parishes of Shipton & Ascott

At a meeting of the Vicar and principal inhabitants of Shipton and the chief of Its' Hamlets, together with parish of Ascott annexed (holden this ninth Day of May 1798) - at the Crown Inn - at Shipton it was unanimously resolved.

That We - Loyal and dutiful Subjects of His Majesty King George, and true friend of our Happy Constitution both in Church and State - think it our Duty in this Time of threatened Invasion by our ancient - implacable - unprincipaled Enemy - the French - to guard against all internal Disturbances within our granted Reach - which may be raised or encouraged by perfidious and plundering Promotors thereof.

That in our opinion - the properest and most effectual Way of doing this - is to associate ourselves (at our own Expense, if we can only be provided in Part with arms) in a military Corps - to keep the Foes of our Constitution (if any should discover themselves to us) in becoming awe, in case such actual Invasion, and indeed whilst we continue to threaten therewith: and of Course - to defend our own and our neighbours Property and Persons - from every kind of Rapine and Injury - the projected and expected consequences of such alarming and such criminal Confusion.

That we must cheerfully undertake the Defence of all the above places, and if necessary - any adjoining parishes; but we beg leave to promise or engage no further - though in the Extremity of things - we might be dutifully induced to extend our Aid - in Order (as far as in Us lieth) to enable All the united-regular Forces in the Kingdom (without any possible Call - elsewhere) to meet the daring Enemy upon their first Landing

A list of names - desirous of being permitted by his Grace - the Lord Lieutenant - to form the herein mentioned Association

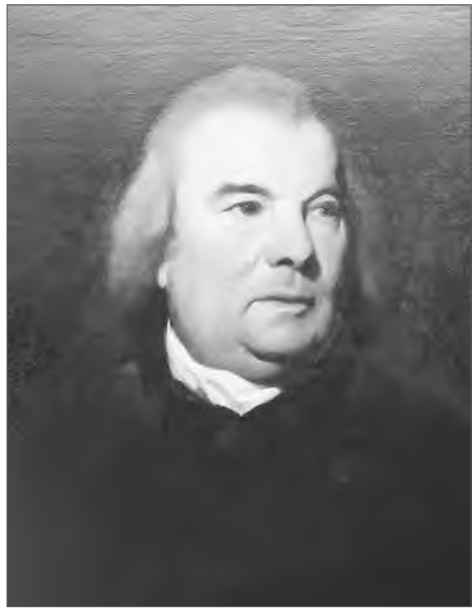
Here follows a list of 72 names from Shipton, Leafield, Langley, Milton and Ascott including - Thomas Brookes, Vicar - a liberal subscriber; Thomas Brookes (Parsonage); Thomas Brookes (in the Lane); Peter Brookes (The Crown); John Brookes; Robert Brookes. The document ends -

Thos: Brookes, Vicar, thanks the above for their loyalty to the Best of Kings, and the Best Constitution in the known World. He promises them his Advice and every other assistance in his power. [16]

There was a great fear of invasion at that time and Thomas obviously felt it behoved him to rally members of the parish to do something to reassure the local communities.

In 2013 a portrait of Thomas Brookes the Vicar came to light. (Reproduced in colour on the front of this Journal.) It was painted in 1783 when he was fifty. It was bought by John Cullom and after he died it went to his brother Peter who, reading 'Rector of Shipton under Wychwood' on the back of the painting generously offered it to the Wychwoods Local History Society. Peter's parents brought the portrait to Shipton and it has been hung, on loan, in the Prebendal House where he had lived.

Thomas the son of the Peter Brookes, junior, married Elizabeth Brookes in 1792, she was his cousin, daughter of another Thomas Brookes, a farmer of Shipton. Her father, also married to an Elizabeth, left her £170 in his will in 1804 naming her as *wife of Thomas Brookes of Parsonage House*. [17] The children were Charlotte baptised 1793; Thomas 1797; Mary 1800; Peter 1802; Elizabeth Yatman 1804; Ann 1806; Harriott 1809. They lived in the Prebendal House.



The Reverend Thomas Brookes D.D.

Their marriages were Charlotte to John Phipps of Leafield 1814; Mary to William Sheppherd of Woolford; Elizabeth Yatman to Thomas Ellis 1832; Ann to Robert Franklin, son of another important Shipton farmer and schoolmaster in 1829; Harriott to Thomas Gilson

1829. Thomas married Sophia Long but not in Shipton, Peter married Hannah Birch of Newbury in 1796. He held the licence for The Crown Inn in Shipton and was responsible for providing the necessary accommodation and refreshment for countless village meetings, in which he was also and important member.

Elizabeth Yatman must have caused her family much unhappiness. The story about her came from descendants in America. It was said that she fell in love with Thomas Ellis, a baker and ran away to get married because her parents did not approve of the match. The marriage was eventually found taking place in Birmingham. It was by licence at St Martin's Church, Birmingham – 16th March 1832 Thomas Ellis to Elizabeth Brookes of this parish. Thomas Brookes was of a family and a farmer of some standing in Shipton parish and involved, as an important man, in parish governance of all sorts. Thomas Ellis' father was not of the same social status and the family was of Milton. According to American evidence, Thomas and Elizabeth emigrated to America in 1832 spent two years in New York before moving on to somewhere near Griggsville in Illinois.[18]

Thomas, grandson of Peter Brookes married Sophia Long and they had the following children baptised in Shipton - Thomas in 1833; Elizabeth in 1834 (died 1834); Elizabeth Elena 1835; Millicent 1836; James 1839. Their mother, Sophia, died in 1839. Thomas died in 1869. They too lived in the Prebendal House often called Parsonage Farm.



Thomas Brookes, farmer of Parsonage Farm
1833 - 1908

Thomas junior followed his father in to the Prebendal House. The 1871 census gives him aged 38 as a farmer of 150 acres employing 7 men 4 women and two boys. [19] He also rented land in Milton, evidence for this is in the Richard Cross papers. [20] He did not marry nor did his sister Millicent or his brother James and they continued to live together until Thomas's death in 1908, when his probate showed an estate worth £3517 14s 11d. Millicent died in 1911 and James in 1916. The 1861 census shows Elizabeth Elena still living with Thomas but she does not appear in later ones. There are no marriage or burial entries for her in the parish registers. Thomas like

other members of the family was very active in village affairs, serving in many of the organisations as his predecessors had. In 1888 he was a prime mover in erecting a Beaconsfield Hall in Shipton. [21] Thomas Brookes bought the house, known also over the years as Parsonage or Rectory Farm, from the Church Commissioners in 1892 for £2,500.

Trying to accurately research the various Thomas Brookes and their families is difficult. It is known that over time there were eleven men called Thomas Brookes, six of them alive at the same time at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century, with several of them having wives called Elizabeth and children baptised with the same names. It is thought that Thomas Brookes '*in the Lane*' mentioned on page 8 and married to Elizabeth Savage in 1805 is the son of Thomas and Elizabeth of Shipton and grandson of William Brookes and Elizabeth of Lyneham. The occupation of the Prebendal house stayed in the family of Peter Brookes through Thomas who married his cousin Elizbeth Brookes in 1792, then Thomas, his grandson, who married Sophia Long about 1830 and finally to Thomas born in 1833. He and his brother, James and his sister Millicent were the last of the family that began this article who lived in the Prebendal House.

During the eighteenth century the descendants of Master John Brookes of Milton became more and more important in Shipton parish, and records show what hours of service they gave to Shipton Church. Peter and Thomas Brookes, when they were churchwardens, gave two pewter offertory plates dated about 1788 with their names engraved on the back and they were members of the Vestry. They participated in the civil tasks required of people in their home villages and their names appear in the records of these activities many times. They were much involved in raising money to help the poor as Poor Law Overseers, acted as Surveyors of the Highways raising money and finding labour for road maintenance. As Constables they organised manorial agricultural activities, dealt with vagrants, collected militia and other taxes and attended at the justices when required. They were Trustees of the Burford to Chipping Norton Toll road. The names of Trustees of the Crown Inn Charity in the 18th century show how many Brookes were involved in its administration, the yeoman Peter acting as Treasurer. They were *John, yeoman; Peter, yeoman; Peter, the elder, farmer; Peter victualler (at the Crown Inn); Thomas, the Vicar; Thomas the younger, eldest son of Peter the elder; Thomas of the Lane, gent.; Thomas son of Thomas Brookes, now the elder* and this is just concerned with Crown Inn Charity, there were similar signatures on many other documents. It is noticeable that Martin Brookes does not appear in any of the records.

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7 Copy of lease of Prebendal House in 1739 to Mary Brookes in WLHS Archives.
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What price a Funeral!

Wendy Pearse

If we imagine Ascott in the 17th century, what do we envisage? A basic, rather inward looking village, not a lot going on apart from the daily grind. A few employers, many labourers. A village mostly devoted to agriculture, with a population of mainly poor people.

So it may surprise you to know that in 1687 a certain Anne Draper decreed in her will that she was to be buried in the Church of Ascott and that £50 of the '*Lawfull money of England*' was to be spent on her funeral. In today's terms this must mean between £3000 to £4000 pounds. [1] It is hard to imagine what this vast amount of money, for those days, was to be spent on.

Anne, in February 1686 when she made her will, appears to have been living with her daughter's family in Burford. She had two sons and three daughters and a large number of grandchildren and relations, all of whom were to receive considerable sums of money relative to their status. In addition there were many household goods, plate and linen which had become Anne's after the death of her husband John Draper, eight years earlier. She lists diligently which items were to go to each offspring. Her son Richard was to have equipment for use around a fire, needed in cooking etc. like spits, shovels, tongs, fire dogs with brass knobs, and a trunk marked with her husband's initials. Son Winchester was to have silver, pewter, sheets and other linen, bed curtains and valance, chairs, pans etc. Daughter Mistress Claridge was to have more linen, bed hangings, blankets etc., silver, chairs and '*a gold Ring with a stone in it*.' Daughter Mistress Johnson was to have silver, linen and pewter. Daughter Emlin Hughes whom she appeared to live with, was to have the rest of Anne's husband's goods. However if any of the children questioned the terms of the Will, they were to have nothing.

But, to return to the funeral. Presumably Ascott Church at that time, must have been adequately maintained for someone of Anne's status to ask to be buried there. Nothing like its condition 160 years later when parts of it were practically collapsing.

1687 was a time of dissension in religious practises since Charles II who practised the Church of England faith, had died two years previously and Roman Catholicism was beginning to rear its head again with the accession of his brother James II. It is unknown how much these forces would have affected

church life in this area but religion may have played a part in people's choice of their final resting place.

However Anne's reason for burial in Ascott was because she wished to be '*neare my deare Husband*' who had already been buried there. The strange twist to this story is that neither John Draper nor Anne Draper are listed in Ascott's Burial register. But - and this is entirely due to a question which Fred Russell asked me a couple of years ago. 'Do you know anything about the grave slabs that are under the carpet in the church vestry?' We lifted the carpet and found on two of the black marble slabs forming the flooring , the words '*Here lieth the body of John Draper the elder late of Brewerne Grainge Gent who departed this life the 27th of November AD 1679*' and '*Here lyeth the body of Ann the wife of John Draper Gent who departed this life 12 September AD 1687*'.

So Anne did get her magnificent funeral and also, as she states in her Will '*and a Marble stone of the value of Fourteene pounds laid over my grave*'. Not quite as she intended however, because the stones were probably moved from their original positions in the chancel, during the renovations by G.E.Street in the 1850s. Still the bones of John and Anne Draper presumably still reside under the chancel floor or wherever they were originally interred.

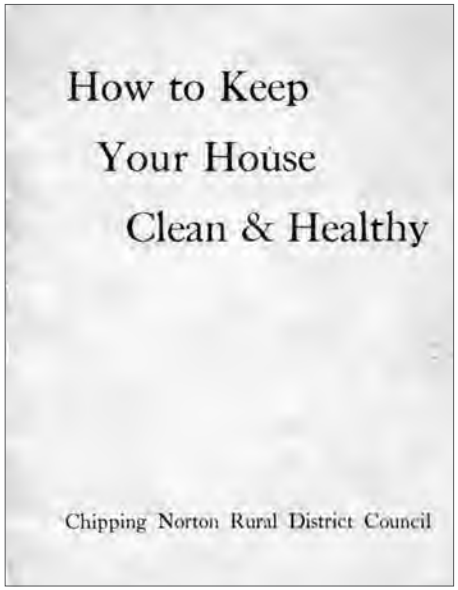
Anne also left an item to Ascott Church, '*a peece of black cloth of the value of Thirty shillings to be kept by the Churchwardens of Ascott for the time being to be made use of for a hearse cloth when any of the inhabitants are to be buried.*' I wonder how long the cloth lasted? Anne must have considered this cloth a worthy gift to the village since although the poor of Shipton and Milton were each to have twenty shillings distributed amongst them, Ascott's poor were to have nothing.

But why did Anne Draper and indeed her husband John Draper, Gent, wish to be buried in Ascott Church? No records have been uncovered which associate them particularly with the village. There are just two records in the parish registers relating to the name Draper in the 17th century. There is a birth of Thomas son of John in 1629 and a death in 1659 of Thomas son of John. And a close at the end of High Street on the south side was in the eighteenth century known as Drapers Close.

We can only conclude that the Draper family must have lived in the village at some time. This must have encouraged John and Anne to desire to have their mortal remains interred in Ascott Church, and in so doing they have left a puzzle for us to ponder over today.

1 Will - Anne Draper - OHC Mss Oxon 18/5/12 - 1687.

How to Keep your House Clean & Healthy



Among the papers given to the Society by Mrs Coombes of Shipton was a small booklet. It was sent in 1934 by Chipping Norton Rural District Council to tenants when they were housed in the new council houses in Pear Tree Close, Milton under Wychwood.

The following notes by the Housing Committee of the District Council, out of their own experience as householders, will help you to look after what is really your own house. If you, as a house proud householder, will see no damage is done to your house you will keep the cost of upkeep low, and help the Council to keep rents low and encourage it to build more houses.

Doors

If a door drags on the floor, do not force it, but tell the Rent Collector at once, especially if it is an outside door.

The Oiled Feather or Oil Can

A drop of oil to a latch or hinge will prevent its getting loose and will make it pleasant to use

Handling Handles Properly

If you polish handles take care that you do not rub off the paint or stain round the handles. Keep a piece of cardboard with a hole in it the size of the handle and place it against the door when doing the work. Like this U

How to shut a window

When you shut a window, fasten it with the handle, but do not screw down the sliding stay; this should be used only when the window is open. Oil the joints and hinges frequently.

Caring for the Bath

Never use the bath for storing things. If you do you will damage it by scratching. Clean only with a soft cloth and paraffin, and polish with a clean cloth. Do not use a gritty cleaner.

The Copper

Be very careful to see that there is water in the copper before you light the fire. After use, the copper must be washed out immediately while still warm. And, of course, you will let some clean water through the pipe to the bath.

W.C.

If you have a W.C. pull the chain gently. Never drop in to the pan things like hair, matches or bits of cloth, or the drain may be clogged. If there should a persistent overflow outside the house, let the Surveyor (Mr. S.P. Bendle, Enstone Road, Charlbury; telephone number Charlbury 31) know.

Gullies

Clean out once a week for health's sake and to keep all sweet

Nails

You have a picture rail so that you do not need to drive nails in the wall. This must not be done.

Curtain Rails

Fix your curtain rails on the brackets attached to the steel windows. Do not attempt to fix them to blocks nailed to the plaster.

Taps

Stop-taps inside the house are of the screw-down kind and need to be turned several times to the right for the water to be turned off completely.

In Time of Frost

At the point at which the water enters your house there is a stop-cock. The Collector will show it to you. In frosty weather turn off the stop-cock at night and empty the water from the pipes by turning on all the taps and flushing the W.C. If the water in the pipes has frozen, or a pipe has burst, turn off the stop-cock and telephone the Surveyor.

Sink

Do not stand in the sink, pails or cans with jagged bottoms which would spoil the surface and make it difficult to keep the sink clean. Do not empty frying pans or bacon water or any fatty water down the sink. It is better used on the garden. Be very careful bits of bones or matches do not enter the drain and make a stoppage. Boiling soda water poured down the sink now and then keeps the waste pipe clear.

The Range

Take care not to let anything heavy drop on the range top. Take care also not to spill cold water on it when it is hot or it may crack. There should be a free space all round between the range and wall.

The Linoleum Danger

You have no doubt noticed in the papers how, in different places, ratepayers have suffered grievous loss owing to dry rot. The tenants of Council Houses have also been put to much discomfort and inconvenience while expensive repairs have to be made to the floors. Usually these floors have had to be completely relaid. A frequent contributory cause of dry rot is the custom of placing linoleum on the whole area of the floor. The result is that enough air does not reach the flooring. The Council has therefore decided that, in its 300 houses, linoleum may not be put down on the ground floors unless a surround of bare board be left within at least one foot from the walls round the rooms. As the bare space of one foot can be stained at a low cost, the appearance of the room is pleasant. Tenants who now have linoleum on their lower floors are asked to cut it away at least a foot from the walls within a month from this date.



A picture of Pear Tree Close, Milton, taken from the booklet

Damage

Tenants are responsible for broken windows and for any careless or wilful damage. Do not drive nails into the outside of the house, or wet will be let in.

What will happen if the Damp Course is covered up

At the foot of the walls outside the house you will notice the damp course which prevents damp rising in the walls. It is most important not to allow garden soil to get above the damp course or to reach the ventilators. If this happens the walls will be damp and floors will be damaged.

Tiles

If a tile comes off, let the Collector know.

Gates

See that the gates are kept closed as they very soon break off their hinges if allowed to swing in the wind. Children must not be allowed to swing on gates.

Water Butts

Clean out your water butts occasionally. Keep a sack in front of them in hot weather. You can increase your water supply by adding more water butts. They can be connected with a piece of pipe. Rain water is healthy to drink if you are short of drinking water. Filter in some such way as this. Make two holes in the bottom of a bucket:- Two inches of fine washed gravel, then a piece of muslin and then a couple of inches of clean sand. This bucket is filled with rain water which filters through into another bucket or similar receptacle placed beneath it. Renew gravel, muslin and sand from time to time

Gutters

When leaves or the hay brought by sparrows collects in gutters try to clear out the obstruction. If you cannot manage it, tell the Collector, for if the obstruction continues there will be an overflow of water which will make your wall damp.

The Profitable E.C.

If you have an Earth Closet, the contents are valuable for the garden, *but only if you use them in the right way*. The pail should be emptied *every day*. Each time it is emptied, put into it a spadeful of good garden soil, *not ashes*. Then have in the E.C., a box of good garden soil, not ashes, and a little shovel. Each person using the E.C. must put in plenty of soil. Tip out the pail in the corner of a shed, and cover the contents with earth if wet. In a very short time the bacteria in the soil will, if it is kept dry, destroy all the excreta, and the pile can be used in the garden. There are two million bacteria in as much *good garden soil* as will go on your little finger nail; a spit down there are much fewer; in ashes there are none. So always use your best soil, and you will get it back with interest. If you can manage to cover up the soil taken from the pails, the bacteria will do their work quicker than if the soil gets wet.

Hedges

When a hedge is common to several gardens, tenants are urged to co-operate so that it may be kept cut uniformly.

Live Stock

Livestock must not cause annoyance to neighbours or the public. Pigs may not be kept without permission.

Gardens and Paths

Prevent as far as possible soil from the garden getting on the gravel of your paths so that you do not give a chance to weeds. The Rural District Council greatly appreciates and is proud of the good gardens of its tenants. Our ideal must be to make the Council cottages the best and nicest looking in their villages.

Structures

No structures of any kind may be put up in gardens without permission. This will be given if the structures are to be built in a workmanlike fashion and are not to be eyesores from the road or neighbours' gardens.

Wireless

Permission for the erection of wireless aerials must be obtained, and

great care must be taken in attaching wire and entering the house to do no damage.

Suggestions

The Chairman of the Housing Committee is always glad to have from Council Tenants - especially Tenants' wives! - suggestions for improvements in new Cottages which the Council may build.

EDWARD KENYON
Clerk to the Rural District Council

Market Place, Chipping Norton, May 1st, 1934

Bruern Abbey 1935-1947

Dick Mason



Bruern Abbey

Our family William(Bill) Mason, Mum Gladys, eldest son Mervyn and me Richard (Dick) arrived at the stable yard Bruern around 1935, Dad as Head Gardener and Farm Bailiff to Mr. Crompton-Wood. 1938 saw an addition to the Masons another boy Micheal was born.

We lived in the right hand house of the square yard the house having a plaque inserted in the wall commemorating Queen Victoria's Silver Jubilee (rumour has it coins were placed behind it ??). The left hand house was occupied by the Greenaways Mr., being the groom, his wife and two sons, Ted and Billy, both boys being the same ages as we Masons. These two houses were the only ones in the yard although some stables in the far left hand corner were converted too accommodate Grandpa Mason, also named Richard, who was the cowman. His wife my Grandmother I never knew although she is buried in Kingham churchyard with him, Mervyn always said she was a Scot. Whether they came with us or before or after I don't know.

The rest of the stable yard consisted of a huge garage facing the entrance, a tack room in the top right corner the rest were stables but never fully occupied as such I can only remember two horses and three cows maximum.

The huge garden had two big greenhouses one contained grapes etc., the other flowers mostly carnations for the house. Plums and peaches were grown against the walls and a soft fruit section was netted off to stop the birds getting at the fruit. Below the garden was an orchard for apples etc., sided by a

house and small saw mill, carpenters' shop and Dad's office. The other houses were down in the Abbey grounds one occupied, by Mr. Duffy the chauffeur.

I know nothing of the owners the Crompton-Woods, how big the family was and have never seen the inside of the Abbey. I did once go into the kitchen with a message for one of the staff and was given some home made ice cream which was full of frozen particles 'yuk'. I did go in the front of the house when the occupants were away, there were well kept lawns with small box hedges of various patterns (great for jumping over like a hurdler). In one corner stood a childrens' summer house packed with beautiful china etc. There were also two ponds, one small and one large with an island in the middle which could only be reached by a rowing boat tied to a small wooden pier This was obviously the monks fish ponds they kept stocked for eating, they are fed by a main river which is diverted for the purpose a field before the Abbey on the Kingham side, rejoining a field after and flowing on to Lyneham, hence the bridges being close together with the railway making one bank of the main channel. The field on south-west side of the Abbey was a cricket pitch with pavilion which was used on Sundays, the estate workers plus others making up the Bruern team - the garage became the tea room large trestle tables erected for sandwiches and a large tea urn. Best of all for me was 'the stop me and buy one' ice cream man on his three wheeled cycle.

Shopping was from Co-op delivery, orders put in on Tuesdays and Fridays which were delivery days, haberdashery paraffin from Fosters once a week.

Two large woods each with a large rookery complete the Abbey home estate, no arable took place this close to the Abbey.

Up from the Abbey was Home Farm (arable) farmed by Mr Charles Bateman an Irishman whose farm workers were the Sheehan's who had three sons, Danny, Jack and Batty, next to them resided the McSheas, Mr. McShea was the game-keeper his son was Eric. Mrs Healey and her son lived in the next block of houses. Finally there was Bateman's farm house.

Further on from Home Farm was Bruern Grange Farm Mr. & Mrs. Joe Griffin and two sons, Bob, Mervyn and daughter Dorothy. This was a far larger farm than Home Farm. Bob's steam engines were hired out for thrashing and ploughing; I saw two of these machines ploughing a large field at Sarsden, an engine each side of the field with a huge pulley underneath which drew a large-sit on plough back and forth on a large hawser. Some of the worker living in farm cottages were the Fowler, Rickett and Freeman families.

The opposite end of the Abbey was only the railway signalman's house as the road crossed the railway lines here, (Kingham to Shipton-u-Wychwood Station), a signal box was necessary to open and close the gates. Mr Arthur

Bunting being the main signalman who lived in the cottage, help came from Ron Underhill from Lyneham and Ivor Townsend from Kingham. Many happy hours I spent with them.

The Abbey or part of it caught fire one year. The sun shone a concave mirror which acted as a magnifying glass and set ablaze curtains on the opposite side of the room, it must have damaged some of the roof as a ladder going over the roof was put in placeand can still be seen today as you come down the hill.

No public services buses came round, we either walked in our early childhood or in later years cycled to where we were going. 'Backs' coaches picked us up for school going to first of all Milton (ages 5-11) and after to Burford School (11-14 years), Dad wanted us to be in work by then. Michael was different, after Milton he had to walk to the top of Lyneham Hill to catch a bus to Chippy Grammer. Sundays we walked through the woods to Milton Church to sing in the choir and then back again for Sunday school.

I loved the Spring time when the rooks all started to nest followed by the house martins who built all around the stable yard eaves. I loved finding birds' nests and I later took to photographing them.

The war came to Bruern and with it Aunty Maud and Uncle Ted McCarthy from Westgate-on-Sea, Aunty Maud being one of Mum's sisters. How did we all manage in that small house for years, I wish I could recall - one tin bath in front of the fire weekly, no running hot water, we kids had the water from the copper after the washing had been boiled in it. Thank goodness the McCarthys had no children.

A couple of lots of British troop's stopped over briefly, Dad had to break up bales of straw for them to fill there sleeping palliasses for them to sleep in the empty stables. The stays were short but two things come to mind, one soldier was killed showing off to some girls from Lyneham on a motorcycle which hit some railings. One day I was walking with Aunty Maud along one side of the river when a squad of soldiers marched along the other side, towels under their arms, up stream towards Foxholes were some flood-gates with a small weir. A happy band of troops, starkers, were in their element, soap bubbles were everywhere and Aunty Maud never batted an eyelid. Uncle Ted by now had borrowed Dads bike and worked for Grove's as a painter and decorator.

One other memory is the bombing of Coventry, we could see the glow from the fires there lighting the night sky withre was a huge orange glow in the clouds. Around this time what I assumed were the servants quarters of the Abbey were turned into a nursery for 'waifs and strays', children who had been bombed out from where-'ever and their nurses.

Around 1944 'Uncle Sam' turned up. A water tower was built, Nisson

huts appeared and a park full of tents blossomed. I made friends with a number of them as they were here for months, the cook house fed me as much as the troops, chicken and ice cream etc., I never refused. Sgt Bill Kennedy married one of the nurses and P.F.C. Germolus came to our house for Sunday teas, he seemed to enjoy the family company. I guess he would have been around 19 years old, he always brought with him a goodies bag. I can still taste the tinned peaches - they made a big fuss of me.

I've tried to trace some of them, I believed they were some sort of engineering company who laid airfields etc. in recaptured Europe. Their lorries, jeeps etc.,were fitted with large pipes on the air intakes and exhaust before they went, I am sure it was after D.Day though. For days before they left, they could only take certain weight per person, so between the rows of tents all sorts were thrown out, suitcases, clothing, boots, shoes, cigarettes even clocks. When the tip at the top of Milton was full, two bulldozers made a huge pit alongside the wood and in went tons of gear and then covered back over. I knew they were going but I didn't know when so went to bed one night and next morning except for two empty Nisson huts and a water tower, there was no sign they had ever been there - no goodbyes, just memories.

When the nursery closed or when Aunty Maud and Uncle Ted went home I haven't a clue.

War ending saw wooden huts appear at the top of the park for Italian prisoners-of-war in their brown uniforms with big yellow patches on front and back and on legs. They did mostly farm work but made rings out of aluminium and perspex and did basket weaving from willows which they cut and then soaked in the brook before debarking and then weaving.

The most notable thing during our stay at Bruern must be Uncle Ted saving my life. I was learning to ride a bike and Mervyn took me wobbling all over the place up the hill, coming down he was holding the saddle with one hand, the bike picked up speed going straight as a die, Merv ran at first, couldn't keep up and let go. I hadn't a clue how to use the brakes and was heading for the same iron railings the motorcyclist had died on. Uncle Ted came ambling out of the yard, hands behind his back on his nightly ramble, summing up what was happening he waited until I arrived going by him when he grabbed me round the waist holding me up whilst the bike smashed itself up.

We left Bruern 1st March 1947

An idyllic Life – Living by an old Oxfordshire Mill before and during the Second World War

Alan Vickers

The following article is based on the written notes of Jeff Broxholme, who has lived at Milton under Wychwood since 1969, supplemented by recorded conversations with Mr Broxholme.

His family lived very simply but Jeff Broxholme still remembers his early life at Combe Mill with affection. Combe Mill is in a valley midway between Long Hanborough and Combe Village in West Oxfordshire. The Oxford Worcester railway shares this valley with the River Evenlode. The Mill is mentioned in the Doomsday Book but was probably not as large as it is today. It is assumed that this earlier mill was a flour mill, powered by a water wheel on the River Evenlode. It has greatly changed since that time. Even the original village has disappeared, possibly because of the Black Death. It is said to have been relocated to the top of the hill where the present village stands, about one mile North of Combe Mill. There are no remains of the original village except for a mound where the church stood. This is on the left near the top of the drive from the road linking Long Hanborough with Combe.

The drive itself leads to the Blenheim Estate Maintenance Yard. It passes two cottages where Jeff Broxholme lived until he was eighteen years old. Part of the first building on the left was a saw mill, in use until around 1980.

His father, Stephen Leonard Broxholme (always known as Leonard) was born in Ragby Lincolnshire in 1901. He worked as a sawyer in the local sawmill until 1927 and then moved to Heythrop to work in the sawmill there. In 1930 he married the housekeeper and cook of the Rectory at Cornwell, Emily Selina Hands from Chipping Norton and needed a house for his new family. He found a position as manager of the sawmill on an old estate yard belonging to the Duke of Marlborough in Combe and moved there in 1931. Jeff was born in the same year and his sister Edith Marina followed in 1934. Jeff's father was the only sawyer at the mill which was very run down following the First World



Jeff Broxholme on an excursion, probably to Southsea in 1938.
He is the young boy in the front, surrounded by girls.

War and the depression of the 1920s. He was to work there from 1931-1949 cutting timber from the Estate Woods for use on the Estate - planks, posts, rails and oak coffin boards for Blenheim Palace.

Jeff's early life was somewhat precarious. At first the family lived in a small thatched cottage in the hamlet of East End Combe. When he was only two, a beam above the cottage fireplace caught fire which spread to the thatch. He still recalls the flames and reflections off the firemens' helmets. He was taken to another house in the hamlet. His mother was rehoused with a friend nearby. Shortly afterwards the family moved to Combe Mill. There he suffered a series of illnesses, possibly due to the poor water quality at the Mill. At first he developed a large swelling in the neck and had this operated on at the Radcliffe, travelling there from the new railway halt at Combe. While recuperating he took some water to drink from a bucket at Mrs Williams', friends of his parents who had helped them following the fire. He slipped and fell on the edge of the bucket undoing all his stitches. Somebody with a car took him back to the Radcliffe. Later he spent time in the isolation ward at Abingdon with scarlet fever.

Life at the Mill

Food was never in short supply. Leonard always had a fried breakfast before going to work. Eggs came from their own chickens. A very impressive cockerel attacked young Jeff but disappeared very shortly afterwards, presumably via the pot. Rabbits and hares could be caught but game birds belonging to the Estate were strictly off the menu (hardly surprising when a gamekeeper was summarily dismissed after a day's shoot just failed to reach a bag of one thousand birds!).



Jeff Broxholme stands in the garden of the cottage in which he spent his early years at Combe Mill

Occasionally there were shooting parties from the Estate in the vicinity of the Mill and Jeff's home would be used for luncheon if required. The servants brought the food in hay boxes. The ladies used the house for powdering their noses – how they got on with the Elsan earth toilet in the garden is not known!

There were domestic rabbits too whose numbers were increased by taking the does to the buck in Long Hanborough. Two pigs were kept in sties at the back of the house. One was killed in March and one in November by the local slaughter man. A straw fire would be lit to burn off the bristles and the carcase hung up to bleed. Milk was delivered from Richard Colliers's farm along the lane. Although the river was close by, fresh fish did not figure on the menu although occasionally eels were caught and eaten and their skins used

for shoe laces. In season, blackberries and hazelnuts could be gathered from the hedgerows close to the mill.

Bread and meat were delivered. The meat came from a butcher in Woodstock. Bread was supplied by the two bakers in Combe. One, Mr Pott, did not have a van and walked everywhere with a large basket. He also delivered telegrams and cooked meat for private households on Sundays. The Coop could be reached by bicycle to Long Hanborough. Some groceries came in Walford's van from Bladon and there was a small grocers in Combe, Teddy Busby Stores. The Combe Post Office also served as a general store. Brookes stores, also in Combe, supplied sweets. Clothes were ordered at Strong and Morris in Woodstock but sometimes items were obtained from Banbury.

Mrs Broxholme made a wheat and potato wine. Other sources of alcoholic beverages were the three public houses which existed at that time in Combe village – the Cock (still in existence today), the Royal Oak and the Marlborough Arms. The Royal Oak suffered a setback when the landlord, Mr Muggeridge, killed himself by jumping off a railway bridge into the river following irregularities with the Christmas fund.

Heating the home was not a problem as the family could burn the offcuts from the sawmill. The same energy supply served for cooking. Electric power only came to the cottage in the 1950s. Light was from paraffin lamps or candles.

Entertainment was from a battery powered radio bought just before the War and attached to a long wire aerial. New batteries were sourced from Woodstock when required. There were no holidays but only the occasional bus trip to the coast, mostly to Southsea which was the closest point on the coast. A train trip to Chipping Norton to visit his maternal grandparents was an infrequent pleasure. This would be either in a diesel car or on a steam train where the driver would sometimes allow you to stand on the footplate. At Kingham one had to change and go over the covered bridge to catch the train to Chippy.

Jeff started his formal education at five years old in the infant department of Combe School. He would be taken the one and half miles on the back of a bicycle ridden by his mother. Because of the earlier injury to his neck, he was always reminded to take extra care and could not take part in sports or games so that he felt isolated from his schoolmates. There was no hot food at school. Most children went home at midday. Some, like Jeff, who lived some distance from the village, were allowed to stay in the school and eat their sandwiches. A large white card was hung on the school gate and the children could not re-enter the school until this was removed. Jeff would be picked up again by his mother at the end of school. In the meantime, his father kept an

eye on Edith, sometimes with the help of a neighbour, until his mother got back.

The School comprised two classes and served around 35 pupils. Mrs Woodward looked after the infants (aged 5 to 7). Jeff was one of the smallest children and was put next to another small boy, Derek Allan, at the front of the class. Next door, the Head teacher, Miss Walker, had four different classes in one room – 7 to 8 year olds, 8 to 9 year olds, 9 to 10 year olds and 10 to 11 year olds.

The ultimate disciplinary sanction was the cane across the hand. Jeff remembers the cane breaking on the hand of a boy called David Oliver.

At the age of eleven, those, who had passed the Scholarship, went to Chipping Norton Grammar School. They cycled to Stonesfield (on bicycles apparently provided by the Council) where they caught a bus. Jeff went instead to the Marlborough Secondary Modern School at Woodstock. Prior to this school being opened in 1939, village children who did not pass the 11+ went by bus to the bigger school in Church Handborough.

The keepers saw to it that there were no raptors in the neighbourhood but Jeff remembers other wild life – otter spraints on the concrete strip near the mill, water voles and lots of hedgehogs. Strangely he does not recall seeing wild ducks but one year there was a wild goose down by the river although this disappeared just four days before Christmas!

The Village Calendar

An important village event was the celebration of Mayday. All the school pupils were taught various dances. The older girls had to decorate an old bath chair with flowers to form a suitable carriage for the May Queen, chosen, along with a May King, by the Head teacher, Miss Walker. This carriage was pulled around the village and a collection made for some unspecified purpose. The girls wore flower patterned dresses with bonnets. The boys had hoods extending over their shoulders in green cotton and long green buttoned coats reaching nearly down to their knees. Costumes were made by Miss Walker's mother who lived with her in the school house. After the dancing on the green, there was a tea party and sports.

The first Sunday after 10th August was the Combe Feast. There was a funfair often with steam engines, on both village greens.

There were other flower and vegetable shows, which were usually held in conjunction with a fete and sports. These took place either at "Combe House" or at Mrs Cottrel Dormer's in the middle of the village. Jeff's father won many prizes for his vegetables and Jeff and his sister usually won certificates for wild flower displays.

At the end of the school year, there was always a school play where Miss Walker attempted to involve every child.

The Second World War

At Sunday school one day, Jeff learned that "there was a war on". When he got home, his father confirmed this. Jeff asked who he was going to join, "the cowboys or the indians"!

With the outbreak of war the pupils were told to stick brown tape to the larger windows of the School. They were issued with a gasmask at home. This was a trunk like contraption with an eyepiece to look out from. The lower part comprised a flat metal attachment which was adjusted by the man who had brought it. The whole thing smelt strongly of rubber. Later everybody had to go to The Royal Oak Public House and line up by a large table to have another bit fitted to their gas mask. The lower part was green and it was fitted by means of some special sticky tape. Apparently this new bit contained charcoal. Gasmasks were kept in a brown cardboard box with a string handle so that they could be carried over the shoulder. This later wore out so a tin tube with a lid and string handle had to be bought to replace it. There were frequent practices at school in putting on the gas mask. Sometimes the eye piece misted up and the Head teacher told the children to rub some soap on the inside of the mask. Great fun could be had by blowing effective raspberries from inside the mask. There was no explanation as to what the brown paper or the gas masks were for. Similarly the children did not know why they were asked to bring cans to school and then hammer them flat.

Many evacuees came to Combe and the surrounding area. They brought their own school teachers. One day two ladies appeared at the Mill with five children from Enfield in tow. The Broxholme family were required to house them – the French family of three (two girls, Betty and Ruth and one boy Derrick) and one boy (Peter) and one girl (Beryl) from a family called Carr. Peter and Derrick took the bus each day from Combe to Marlborough School with Jeff. This unexpected supply of playmates was welcome to Jeff and he does not recall any special friction between the children. They delighted in playing in the surrounding woods and there were Leonard's wonderful sledges to play on in the winter.

Canadian soldiers were billeted at Blenheim Park where cattle and some lambs were said to have ended up on barbecues. The Americans were based at Brize Norton and Heythrop and consequently black troops were a rare sight in Combe. There were few British camps close to Combe apart from one at Finstock (the concrete remains are still visible close to the Garden Centre.) Freeland housed a military hospital. There was a satellite airfield at Kingswood where Spitfires were hidden in the woods.

In the direction of Charlbury, there was a grass strip and a tin hangar housing a Liberator for the personal use of Winston Churchill who was a frequent visitor to Ditchley House.

Actual military activity was hardly in evidence – a few incendiary bombs falling on Stonesfield and Bladon and a Bren Gun Carrier which became stuck in the river close to the Mill. The four Coldstream guardsmen from the Bren Carrier spent six weeks living in the Mill yard stables. Jeff and the evacuees helped clean the river mud off the bullets. His mother did all their cooking and even interceded for them when their officer would not let them go to a local dance!

The closest form of military power was the Home Guard. Jeff's father was a member of the Combe unit. Some of the exercises closely resembled an episode of Dad's Army. For example, on one occasion, the Combe unit managed to penetrate the defences of Brize Norton by using a false floor in a lorry. On another famous day during an exercise which pitted the Combe Home Guard against the forces of Long Hanborough, the Combe unit prevailed when the whole village population turned out and helped arrest the Long Hanborough contingent!

One night Leonard took Jeff out to Combe Hill rise to show him the glow coming from the bombing attack on Coventry.

Leonard Broxholme served in the Home Guard until he had a serious accident. Walking in the blackout to Combe for a Home Guard meeting, the handle of his canvas shoulder bag was caught by a passing car and he was dragged along. He lost an eye and one arm was so damaged that he did not regain the use of it until 1963 when a pit bonesetter in the North of England worked a miracle that was apparently beyond conventional medical practioners in the twenty years since the accident occurred.

Just before D-Day, there were manoeuvres between British and American troops around Combe. Telephone wires were laid in the fields from the back of trucks. Afterwards the wire was carefully harvested by the children just as they had done throughout the War with the aluminium strip broadcast to confuse the enemy radar. This wire made much stronger reed boats than had been possible before the War.

The children did not receive regular pocket money but earned cash by collecting flattened tins and rose hips for the war effort. Rose hips at three pence a pound were particularly worthwhile.

All the children were issued with Wellington boots during the war. Prior to that, wet socks had been hung up around the Tortoise stove in the classroom.

In 1943 Jeff found the Scouts and stayed with them until he was

19, eventually becoming a Kings Scout. It rained on his first camp but the scoutmaster lit a fire and prepared a hot drink and supper. Sacks of straw were obtained from a farmer and these became the boys' beds on the groundsheets. The scout movement became a window to the world beyond rural Oxfordshire when he went to France and Norway with the scouts in the late 1940s.

Members of the Red Spinning Society, a fishing club for London businessmen, would sometimes come down for a weekend of fishing. They would be looked after by Mrs Broxholme. Jeff recalls some splendid characters among the visiting members. A Mr Panyey had been to America and could spin a rope like a cowboy. Another used to bring a microscope and entertain the children with the results from his pond dipping among the reeds. Some were wonderful conversationalists who could conjure up something of life beyond rural Oxfordshire.

Later Career

Leonard moved to the Eynsham Estate in 1948 and worked in the saw mill there until the Mason family lost much of their fortune through the collapse of copper prices. Leonard then worked in Woodstock for Scarsbrook before finally joining the timber department of Groves the builders in Milton under Wychwood in 1954. Jeff became an apprentice carpenter at Tolley Brothers of Bladon in 1945. After two years of National Service with the RAF, He came back to Chipping Norton to work with a former colleague who was setting up as a jobbing builder. In 1954 he too joined Groves in Milton, working as a bricklayer charge hand.

The Mill in Detail

Cut timber was stacked on the right hand side of the drive to dry. Planks were left for seasoning underneath the carpentry shops. Some oak boarding was kept at Blenheim for coffins (including probably Winston Churchill's) The planks and rails had small laths of about 1 1/4" by ½" placed under each piece of timber. It was reckoned that each ¼" of timber needed a year to season.

The timber in the form of tree trunks was brought by contractors, often using Foden steam lorries, and was placed where a small wooden crane (a derrick) could lift them onto a steel plate to be moved to a large circular saw blade. This crane was operated by hand with a winding handle and pulled diagonally as required by a second operator. If the log was too long, it had to be cut by a crosscut saw, a two handled saw blade operated by two people. Jeff remembers seeing his mother use the blade when no other person was available.

The mill was powered by a water wheel driven by shafts and pulleys through a blacksmith's shop connecting with the main machinery under



A cutaway view of Combe Mill as it was.

Produced by Maltings Partnership and reproduced by kind permission of Combe Mill

the saw mill. The water wheel, which is still in place today, was quite large, approximately 13 feet diameter by 8 feet across. It was converted in 1850 to saw mill use (source Oxfordshire Mills by Wilfred Foreman published by Phillimore 1983). The wheel was "breast-fed" ie the water hit the wheel midway between the top and the bottom of the wheel. The resulting power was well used. The first use was for a water pump taking water to the roof of the building where it filled a large tank supplying the adjoining cottages. This was only river water and was not for drinking. There were taps over the kitchen sink and also a copper in the wash house. (Drinking water came from a spring on the other side of the river, about 150 yards away. Two buckets had to be fetched before breakfast.)

The next use of the power from the water wheel was to turn the fans in the blacksmith's shop. This was followed by power to the band saw in what was called the "pattern shop" on the first floor. The cogs for the pit wheel and pinion wheel were made from cast iron coupled with wooden cogs made from hornbeam.

The fourth use of the power was to the sandstone wheel used by foresters to sharpen their axes.

The fifth use was to a large lathe, used mainly to cut the hubs of cart

wheels some of which could reach 15"" in diameter.

The sixth power offtake was to the saw mill itself. This was in the form of a continuous belt to a rack of belt pulleys powering respectively:

1. A small carburundum wheel for sharpening saws
2. A planing tool with a blade of approximately 15" wide, installed around 1944
3. A large saw between 3 to 4 feet diameter
4. A steel plate (called a rack bench) for bringing tree trunks from outside to the saw for ripping. The derrick crane previously mentioned lowered trunks onto this plate.
5. A belt from the steam beam engine (discussed below)
6. A small saw of approximately 30 inches diameter for a hand push bench for much smaller pieces of timber

The steam engine was installed in about 1852 It was used when river water levels were too low following drought or when there was too much water because of flooding. This double acting, condensing, rotating beam engine was only therefore used intermittently between 1852 and 1913 and was in good condition when laid up in 1913. It was left in a locked room until the early 1940s. An auxiliary steam engine was installed during the First World War to cope with the additional throughput of timber needed for pit props and trench supports for the War Office. This was a coal fired agricultural tractor with belt drive. Jeff remembers this engine falling apart during the 1930s and it was probably scrapped around 1936.

The water wheel was in poor condition and required a new shaft when Jeff's father arrived. He arranged for this to be produced at his previous sawmill in Heythrop. The mill workings were generally in bad condition – pully shafts were often missing and wheels had to be replaced. Brass castings were obtained from Daniels in Bridge Street Witney. Heavy mechanical work, including work on the waterwheel, was carried out by Johnson and Son of Standlake. Once the new main shaft for the waterwheel had been installed more people were engaged at the Combe Mill. An assistant, Mr Margates was taken on to help Leonard. Tom Knibbs was the carpenter working in the shop. He was the son of the landlord at the Cock Inn in Combe. A blacksmith, Bert Horn, came in from Bladon when required. A painter lived next door to Jeff's family. The foreman for the estate yard was Charlie Townsend.

The company was completed by a horse named Jolly who could be harnessed to a cart for deliveries. A full time stableman from Long Hanborough

looked after the horse and made the deliveries. The water wheel was used until the 1950s when electric power was installed at the Mill.

The chimney for the beam engine had been knocked down around 1922. As it was only of brick construction it was easily dismantled. Most of the bricks were simply dropped down inside the chimney.

The later Restoration of the Mill

Jeff was first approached by a group interested in restoring the mill chimney in 1968-69. He completely stripped down the old chimney and built a new one which has a date plate for 1972 fixed on the West side. The new chimney was first used in 1973 when the restored beam engine was fired up for the first time and Leonard, much to his delight, was able to witness this not long before his death in 1977. The restoration group was surprised to see how fast the engine fly wheel ran.

The original boiler is still in place but would no longer withstand the required steam pressure. A subsidiary boiler was installed and is used at the present time. The original boiler is of the Cornish type, consisting of a horizontal cylinder or drum and was installed at the same time as the engine. It is thought to be one of the oldest boilers in the country still capable of use.



Jeff looks at his alter ego on the educational video shown to visitors to the Mill

The mill race was blocked up by the Estate but a small reservoir of water has been installed by the restorers. Water is pumped from the river to provide some motion to the wheel. The original sluice gate was also unfortunately destroyed by estate workers in the period 1965-1975. The water run from this sluice gate had produced an enormous hole in the river bed with a pool of 40' diameter and 8' deep, ideal for boating with reed boats, swimming and diving.

The mill building has now been restored thanks to a Lottery grant and is protected as a Grade II listed building. The restoration included the provision of a lift for the disabled. The Mill is now open for visitors and is in steam from March to October on the third Sunday in the month.

Graeme Colin Dempster Cairns

17 August 1930 - 16 December 2013

by Trudy Yates



When the telephone rang on a wintry afternoon in mid-December, I had a premonition. And when I heard the soft, Scottish brogue on the other end of the line, I knew for certain. My very good friend Graeme Cairns had lost his battle with the many vicissitudes of old age. He was only 83 and not in the least ready to take leave of a busy and interesting life in Alloa, not far from Edinburgh and Stirling. His devoted friend, Dr Ian Brown, rang within two hours of Graeme's death, which told me I was 'on the list' that he himself would have prepared for such an eventuality.

And so ended a short but rather intense friendship between a very charming Scotsman and an American woman of similar age and interests, who, by chance, had settled in an Oxfordshire stately home that would serve as a catalyst for the relationship.

I first heard of Graeme Cairns when I was handed a letter he had written in 2005 to our then secretary, Wendy Pearse. In it he explained that he had been given a copy of our Journal No. 19 that we had dedicated in its entirety to Shipton Court. Since I had written the article which interested Graeme most, Wendy passed on the letter. Graeme explained his Walker family's part in the J. G. Thomson tenure at the Court (1919-1929). His maternal grandfather, William Walker, was head groom for John Graeme Thomson and had travelled from Scotland with the Thomsons and his own family - wife Barbara, two sons and daughters. When he added that his mother Annie had named him after Thomson, it was obvious that there was more than master/servant relationship linking the two families.

The letter was full of information, names, dates and sequence of events. There was enough material for a follow-up article but, after I replied with the enthusiasm I most certainly felt, the flood of correspondence and photographs that followed became a 17 page article in Journal No. 21, entitled The Thomsons and Walkers of Shipton Court.

We discussed everything - personalities, relationships, 1920s lifestyle, the inadvertent misogyny of both Thomson and Walker. Nothing escaped our analysis. We were local historians cum psychologists! This was done with no hint of blame or rancour. To know and understand was what we both cared about.

Graeme had not been in Shipton for a number of years. I am certain our continuing correspondence and developing friendship were responsible for the several visits that he made between 2005 and his death. His last trip in the summer of 2013 was certainly the most difficult. His arthritis was crippling and he was in a wheelchair. Still, it was probably the most soul-satisfying as well. He visited and took flowers to his grandparents' refurbished grave. I had seen to the renewal of the gravestone at Graeme's request. It now outshone the Thomson monument only yards away. He was also able to call at his grandparents' final home in Chipping Norton. The present owners graciously welcomed him and his companions, Nicola and Ian Brown. This was especially meaningful because Graeme had spent several of his teenage years with William and Barbara.[1]

And then, of course, we had a celebratory lunch at the Swan in Swinbrook, where we dined on fresh crab salad, surrounded by the pictures of the young Mitfords, enjoying the kind of idyllic Cotswold childhood that the Thomson and Walker youngsters had experienced in the 1920s.

Tea at Shipton Court ended an eventful afternoon - and the day, as far as I was concerned. There was more to come for Graeme, however. He and the Browns had tickets for a production at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford!

The theatre was another of Graeme's passions - not only as a follower of productions in Edinburgh, Stratford and London, but as director of a remarkable 117 productions at the Alman Dramatic Club in Alloa. Included in this extraordinary number were three large-scale musicals and even an opera. He enjoyed telling me that he produced a large number of American plays including those of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Edward Albee, Inge and Wilder.

Other interests of this quiet, unassuming gentleman were mediaeval architecture and monasticism. He and his partner Neil Armstrong, took numerous auto trips to England to visit all of the mediaeval cathedrals in the country. For seven consecutive years, he served as a guide and sacristan at Iona Abbey.

All of these facets of Graeme Cairns' personality interested me. We exchanged long letters which we answered often by return of post. I saved all of the letters and have arranged them in order. I shall put the bulging manila envelope in the society archive. Someone, some time in the future, will read them with fascination for they capture the essence of an enormously intelligent man, to whom Shipton, Shipton Court and the WLHS Journal loomed very large, indeed.

1 William and Barbara Walker lived between 1919 and 1929 in Court Cottage on Plum Lane, presently owned by Peter and Jane Hills. After JGT's death in 1929, they were swiftly evicted by Mrs. Thomson. They moved across the street to Coldstone Farm, which was for rent at the time. Here they lived until Walker completed their Chipping Norton house.

Wychwoods Local History Society Publications in Print

Wychwoods History, an Index to Journals 1-19 (2004)

All the Society's past Wychwoods History journals are in print. Journal 26 is out of print, but is the first to have been digitalised. An Index of articles, contributors, personal names, farms, maps and subject in journals 1-19 is available free on receipt of a self-addressed C5 9229 x 162mm) envelope with two first class stamps. Names from Journals 1-29 are indexed on the Society's website: www.wychwoodshistory.org

Wychwoods History 23 (2008) £3.50
Defiant Women; Joan and Ben Townsend and Albert (Bim) Champness; The Society's Fieldwalk Programme The Final Report Part 2; The Pottery; The Godfrey Case; The Little Girl from Salisbury Place; The St Michael's Connection

Wychwoods History 24 (2009) £3.50
Shipton under Wychwood Churchwardens' Accounts 1554 – 1696; Dear Mr Rawlins; Intrepid Travellers– Three Wychwoods Women in the 1880s; St Michael's: Another Connection; St Mary's Church of England Primary School

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Wychwoods History 26 (2011) £3.50
The Butler of Bruern; St Michael's; Doctor Gordon Scott Revisited – The Wychwoods Social Centre

Wychwoods History 27 (2012) £3.50
Memories of Dees' Stores; More memories of Shipton, The Cross Papers, The Griffin Family of Bruern Grange and their Steam Engines; A brief History of Bruern Abbey and The Great Fire at Bruern Abbey; What makes us Tick?

Wychwoods History 28 (2013) £3.50
Old Beaconsfield Hall; Cow Cubbs and Dung Flakes; a Letter from Dr Scott in 1956; A Wartime Serendipity; Emigrants from Milton to New Zealand; Images emerging from the Archive;

The Wychwoods Local History Society meets once a month from September through to June. Meetings usually alternate between the village halls at Milton and Shipton. Current membership is £15 for an individuals and £20 for a couple or overseas member, which includes a copy of *Wychwoods History* when published.

Further details can be obtained from the Secretary, Paula Nielson.
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An Index of articles, contributors, personal names, farms, maps and subjects in Journals 1-19 is available. See the website for details. The personal names index is also available on the website for Journals 1-27.

Cover illustration:
Thomas Brookes, Vicar at St Mary's Church, Shipton 1723-1814

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