



Cerne
Historical
Society

MAGAZINE

The Spring issue of the Cerne Historical Society's Magazine.

In Search of an Abbey



In Search of an Abbey Gordon Bishop



The Cerne Deer Park Mike Clark



Tanning in Cerne Abbas Robin Mills



In This Month Ian Denness



Family Research & Records George M



The Smith's Arms Robin Mills



Lost & Found Andrew Popkin



Letters George Mortimer

Spring
2021



Welcome to the Spring Issue of the Cerne Historical Society's magazine, the seventh we have published since our first issue in May last year. I hope that you will find much in here of interest and that you will enjoy reading it. I would like to thank everyone involved in producing it, but in particular Andrew Popkin for all the time and effort he has spent creating such an attractive magazine from all the text and photos showered upon him. We are very fortunate to have the use of Andrew's technical and artistic skills to aid the production of this magazine to such a high standard.

The arrival of Spring and the easing of the Covid restrictions will hopefully enable us to visit some of the historic places which have been closed to us over most of the past 12 months. Unfortunately, we are highly unlikely to be able, as a Society, to make the trip we were planning to Glastonbury Abbey in July or August this year, but we will of course be able to make such visits as individuals. Personally, as part of our research into the Abbey, I'm intending to go to as many Benedictine and Cistercian Abbeys within a reasonable distance of Cerne as I can, starting with Muchelney, Shaftesbury and Abbotsbury.

Although all but two of our Village Hall meetings and our planned visit to the Larmer Tree Gardens in 2020 had to be cancelled because of the pandemic, we hope we have managed to maintain the interest of our members by producing this magazine and, since January, arranging for our monthly talks to be given via Zoom. I have to admit to being sceptical about using Zoom (I thought only a handful of people would attend) and I am very grateful to John Chalker, our Treasurer, for persuading me to "give it a go". The first talk in January, given by our local archaeologist Chris Copson on *The Roman Conquest of Dorset*, attracted 80 members and guests, and 75 attended last month's talk on the Dorset Assizes in the 19th century by the Dorchester historian Brian Bates. The overall success of our activities has resulted in our membership increasing from 120 last year to 150 now.

Our next meeting via Zoom will take place at 7.30 pm on Thursday 25th March. The talk by Steve Wallis, Dorset Council's Senior Archaeologist, will be on *The Roman Town House in Dorchester*, the only example of a fully exposed Roman Town House in the country. An invitation to attend will be sent to all paid-up members a week or so before the meeting.

We hope to return to holding our meetings in the Village Hall later this year, although we are unable to give any clear indication of when at the moment. In the meantime, we are starting to plan our programme of talks for 2022. In the past we have received very helpful suggestions from our members as to subjects which they would like talks to cover and speakers they would like to hear. If you have any suggestions or ideas, or if you would like or be willing to give a talk yourself, please let us know.

The next issue of the magazine, the Summer one, will be published in June. We have recently been told by the National Trust that the long awaited results of the tests they have carried out on the Giant will be announced at the end of April. Assuming that does happen, you can be sure that several articles in our Summer Issue will be on that subject.





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And finally, a request for your help. One of our committee members, Ian Denness, is currently researching the sporting past of Cerne Abbas. He is eager to know if any readers have any early, ideally pre-1914,

photographs of the village's football or cricket teams or any anecdotal stories on the activities of either.

Ian will be extremely grateful if you could pass on any useful information, either directly to him via email at Mr_denness@yahoo.co.uk or in person to any Historical Society committee member. Thank you.



Gordon Bishop – Chair of the Cerne Historical Society

This magazine may be viewed online at cerneabbashistory.org

The Summer issue will be published in June 2021





In 2020 the Society decided to make a renewed effort to discover where the buildings of Cerne Abbey that were demolished following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539 had stood. The site of the Abbey Church is a particular mystery. As Mike Clarke said in the May issue of this magazine “It’s difficult to believe that the Abbey Church, a building possibly on the scale of Sherborne Abbey, can have disappeared without leaving any visible evidence as to its exact location.”

But there were also many other buildings which would have made up the Abbey complex but of which there is no longer any obvious sign. Where were they sited? The church was the most important building and was always the first to be built when a Benedictine monastery was founded but a number of other buildings were essential to the functioning of an abbey and the monastic life practised there. Those buildings included a chapter house, a refectory, a kitchen, a cellarium, a dormitory, a warming room, a reredorter (latrines). Invariably they were contained in the buildings constructed around the cloisters, and the cloisters, normally square, were usually attached to the south side of the church. The south side received more light and heat from the sun and gave protection from the north winds. However, in some abbeys the cloisters were built to the north because of the topography. The layout of a typical Benedictine or Cistercian Abbey is shown in Fig 3. The plan is of Roche Abbey in South Yorkshire, which was Cistercian, but the layout of a Benedictine monastery would have been very similar. In both Sherborne and Milton the cloisters were to the north of the Abbey Church rather than the south.



*Fig 1 Funerary effigy of an Abbot of Cerne of about 1215 (now in the Cleveland Museum of Art)
See page 8*



Fig 2 West front of the Abbey Church as drawn by Rodney Castleden from a C13th abbatial seal.

An abbey which had been established for some time usually had other buildings and facilities in addition to the essential ones mentioned on the previous page. In the case of Cerne we know that it had an infirmary as it is referred to in the Cartulary of Cerne Abbey, a collection of its charters and records which forms part of the Book of Cerne. There it is recorded that in 1311 “Lord Gilbert, the Bishop of Annadown, in Ireland, dedicated the whole chapel of the Infirmary of Cerne in honour of the glorious Virgin Mary and of S. Margaret and of S. Apollonia.”

We also know from depositions taken in the 1570s and 1580s from some elderly villagers who had known the Abbey at the time of the Dissolution that it had many other buildings and facilities. The depositions were taken by commissioners appointed by Elizabeth I in

respect of a number of legal disputes regarding rights to land. In their testimony the old men and one old lady refer to a buttery, mill, brewery, fish ponds, a north and south gate and three burial grounds, two for the villagers of Cerne and Nether Cerne and one, called Muncken Lytten or Mouncken buryall, for the monks. Abbots were likely to have been buried in the church or chapter house.

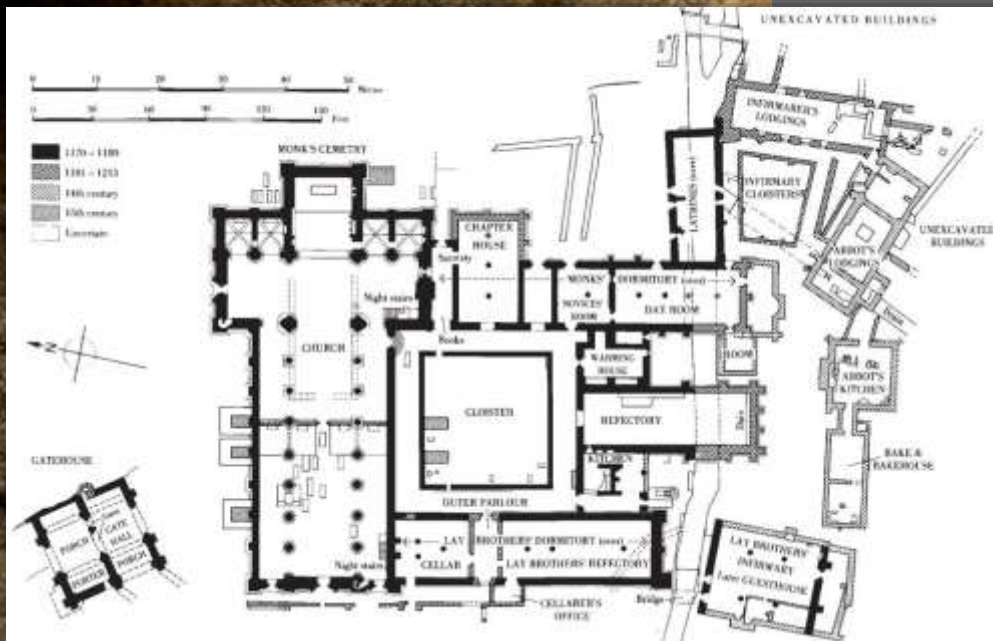


Fig 3 Plan of Roche Abbey, S Yorks

The depositions are important documents because not only do they tell us of various buildings which formed part of the Abbey but they provide some clues as to where those buildings and facilities were in relation to each other and the church. It was for that reason that we decided in 2020 to try to get copies of the original depositions rather than relying solely on the summaries of them which appear in the books which have been written about the village (notably by Mary D. Jones, A.O. Gibson and Vivian and Patricia Vale) and books and papers written by J.A. Bettey. The originals, which are in the National Archives, proved difficult to obtain because of Covid, but our Treasurer, John Chalker, managed to obtain copies at the end of last year, some in Medieval English and some in Medieval Latin. Fig 4 shows the first page of the Interrogatories in answer to which the depositions were given. They were then kindly translated for us by Liz Eastlake of Sheffield University and Anthony Wilsdon of the Dorset Archives Trust, to whom we are very grateful.

What is said in the depositions taken on the 8th June 1585 which has some relation to the Abbey Church is as follows:

“**William Rogers** of Cerne Fisher aged 67 years or thereabout sworn and examined to the first interrogatory says that he does well know the precinct of the late monastery of Cerne and has known the same all the time of his remembrance being born and brought up there and does also know the said parcel of ground called the churchyard and buryall place **Likewise** he says he has measured the said parcel of ground called the buryall and it contains five and thirty perches or lugs and is adjoining to the house of the said late monastery on the north and bounded with a wall on the west with a way by which the late abbot brought in his carriages and his horses to a ground called the Bewer on the south. And while the abbey stood with the church which now is down over the east. And also says the said parcel of ground lies distant from the now parish church 24 perches and a half or lugs”. (A perch is 5.5 yards and a square perch is 30.25 square yards. Thus 24.5 perches is 132 yards which is very close to the distance between the north wall of St Mary’s church and the south wall of the present Burial Ground)



Fig 4
The Interrogatories served in 1585 in the case of
R v Robert Freke

William Rogers contd “.... the said parcel of ground called the buryall before the abbey was put down and since lay ever open with a little ground also called the buryall for Nether Cerne containing by measure 8 perches or luggs and so with a ground called Muncken Lytten or Mouncken buryall adjoining to the ground called the Bewer. Moreover he says that about 17 or 18 years ago as he remembers one Henry Adyn also Barbet did make a hedge upon some part of that which was the abbey's church and therewith enclosed the Mouncken Lytten all the Mouncken buryall and did hold all the same enclosed ground from the then vicar or of the farmer of the domain.”

“**Henry Adyn** also Barbet of Cerne Victele aged 70 years or thereabouts sworn and examined ... says that about sixteen years past this deponent took a piece of ground of Thomas Miller then farmer of the domains of Cerne which piece of ground does contain the said buryall and also the buryall of Nether Cerne and also one other piece of ground called the Mouncken buryall and also part of the ground upon which the abbey church did stand before it was razed all with ground.”

The other deponents answered the questions asked of them in very similar terms which is perhaps not surprising since they were answering the same questions put before them in written interrogatories. Indeed they may have been shown or told the answers given by the other deponents or been in the same room when the other deponents were examined. They were not parties to the dispute and there is no obvious reason for them to have given incorrect evidence.



Other clues as to where the Abbey Church may have stood have been provided by artefacts that have been found close to the north wall of the Burial Ground. It is reported that a large number of pieces of tile have been found there including fragments from a tile bearing the Royal Arms of England from 1189-1360 which has been reconstructed and is now in the County Museum (Fig 5).

But perhaps of most interest is a funerary effigy of an abbot of Cerne of about 1215 , which was found in 1810 just north of the north wall of the Burial Ground (Fig 1 & 6). The partly damaged effigy was placed by Augustus Pitt-Rivers in his Museum in Farnham, Wiltshire and remained there until 1975. When in that year the museum closed the exhibits relating to Wessex were meant to be transferred to the Salisbury Museum but the effigy somehow found its way via a London dealer to the Cleveland Museum of Art in Ohio which now holds it as a prized exhibit in its Medieval Art collection. Further photos and details of the effigy can be found at the Museum's website (www.clevelandart.org).

The 1870 edition of Hutchins' History of Dorset says that "the monuments of two abbots of black marble broken, in 1810 laid across a ditch" were found. One of them is undoubtedly now in Cleveland, Ohio; of the other there is no trace.



Fig 6 The recumbent effigy from the Cleveland Museum of Art



Fig 5 Tile reconstructed from pieces found in Burial Ground (bearing Royal Arms of England from 1189-1360)

It has become clear to us over the last year that new documentary evidence about the Abbey will be very difficult to find. Although many documents containing information about it must have been created by the abbots, monks and others very few seem to have survived. . Nevertheless occasionally we do come across a document which we have not seen before. One is *Miscellanea Cerne Abbey* in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, a book written in the 13th century. We hoped it would contain much about the Abbey but we have found only one relevant page, page 11. The remainder seems to be full of arithmetical puzzles, music, games and similar material. A copy of the original page 11 together with a transliteration in Latin and a translation in English, which Anthony Wilsdon has very kindly produced for us, are below (Fig 6/7). It was presumably written by monks at the Abbey. Meanwhile the search for clues as to where the Abbey Church and other buildings stood continues.



Fig 6/7 Page from C13th book
'Miscellanea Cerne Abbey'.
Excerpts and English translations below

Quem video laus digna deo laus debita detur.

Let worthy praise, let due praise, be given to God, whom I see.

Cernelium, quia cerno deum, locus iste vocetur.

Let this place be called "Cernel", because I see God.

'El' est hebraicum verbum, et 'cerno' latinum.

'El' is a Hebrew word, and 'cerno' is Latin.

Ex hiis compositum discite 'cernelium'.

Learn that 'Cernel' is composed from these.

'El' deus est; cuncti 'cerno' novere latini.

'El' is God. All the Latins *knew* 'cerno'.

Signat 'cernelium' sic bene 'cerno deum'.

'Cernel' therefore rightly means 'I see God'.

Integra stat 'cernel', si iunxeris hec duo 'cern' 'el'.

'Cernel' stands complete, if you join these two, "cern" and "El", together.

Ex iunctis 'cern' 'el' fit villula nomine 'cernel'.

From 'cern' and "El" joined, the village by the name of Cernel is made.

O felix cernel, urbs iam non villula cernel.

O fortunate Cernel, now a town, not a village!

Quod sic crevisti tribuit tibi visio Christi.

That you have grown in this way was granted to you by a vision of Christ.

Hic Augustini fons est, ad cuius honorem

Here is the well of Augustine, in whose honour

Sepius in vini convertitur unda saporem.

Water is often converted to the flavour of wine!

Hic deus oranti comparuit; hic prece sancti.

Here God appeared to one praying; here, by the prayer of the saint.

Rupes nativa producit flumina viva.

The native rock produces living rivers.





Photo Robin Mills

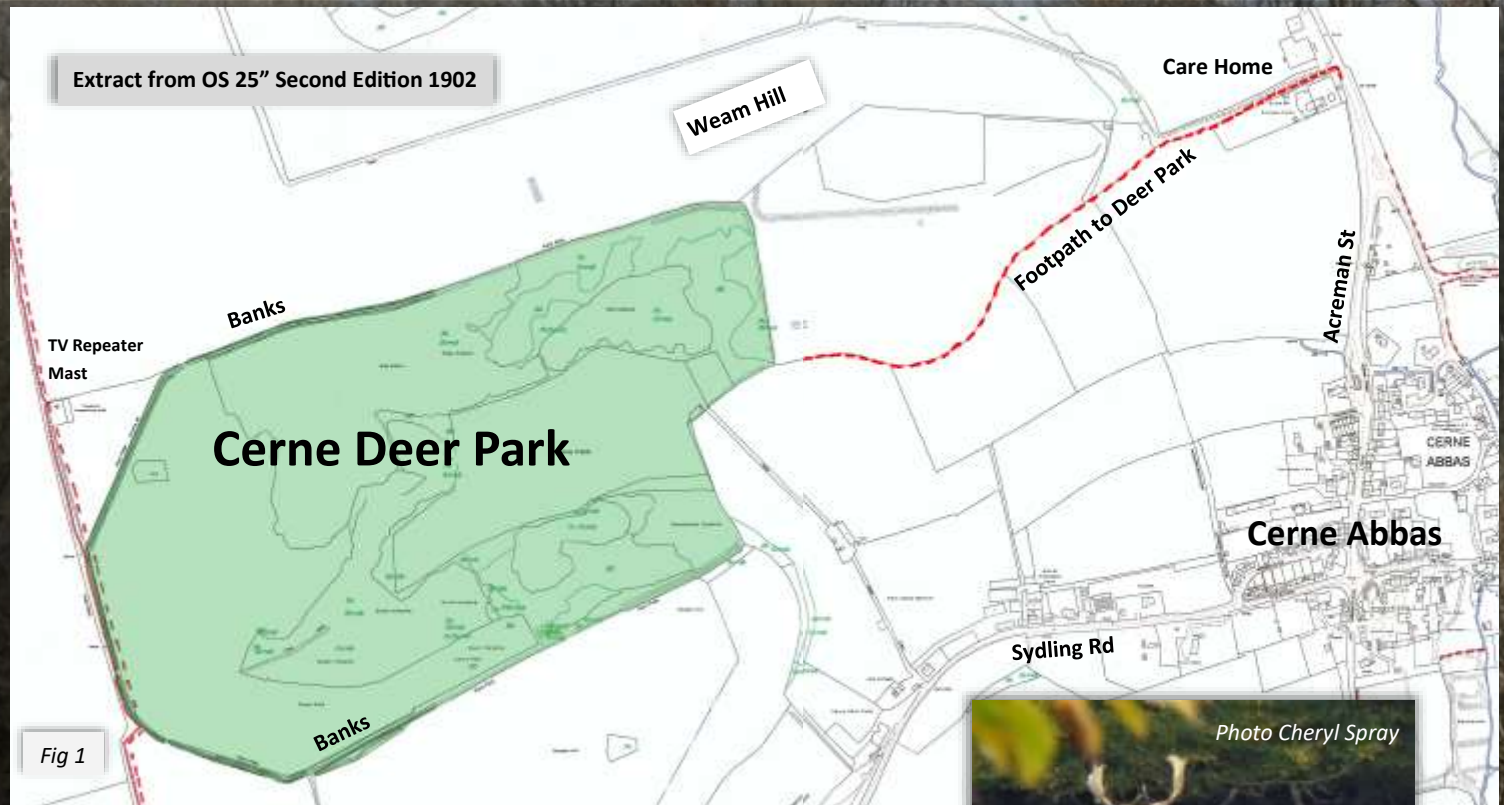
In the middle ages, hunting was important as a pastime as well as for putting food on the table. To facilitate this, there were several tiers of hunting land put aside for this purpose. At the top was the 'forest' a large tract of land, partly wooded, which was owned by the crown. The most famous example is the New Forest but near to home was the Forest of Blackmore. Forests had their own forest law and came under the jurisdiction of forest officials. The next in importance was the chase. Some of the nobility and senior clergy had their own hunting grounds on their estates. Cranborne Chase is the best known example in Dorset. Next came the deer park, owned by local nobility, clergy and religious houses. These differed from other hunting areas as they were always enclosed so that the deer they contained could not escape. Mostly fallow deer were used which were introduced into England for that purpose around the year 1100. Lastly came the warrens which enabled the lord to hunt smaller game on his estates; the fox, hare, rabbit, pheasant and partridge.



Photo Cheryl Spray

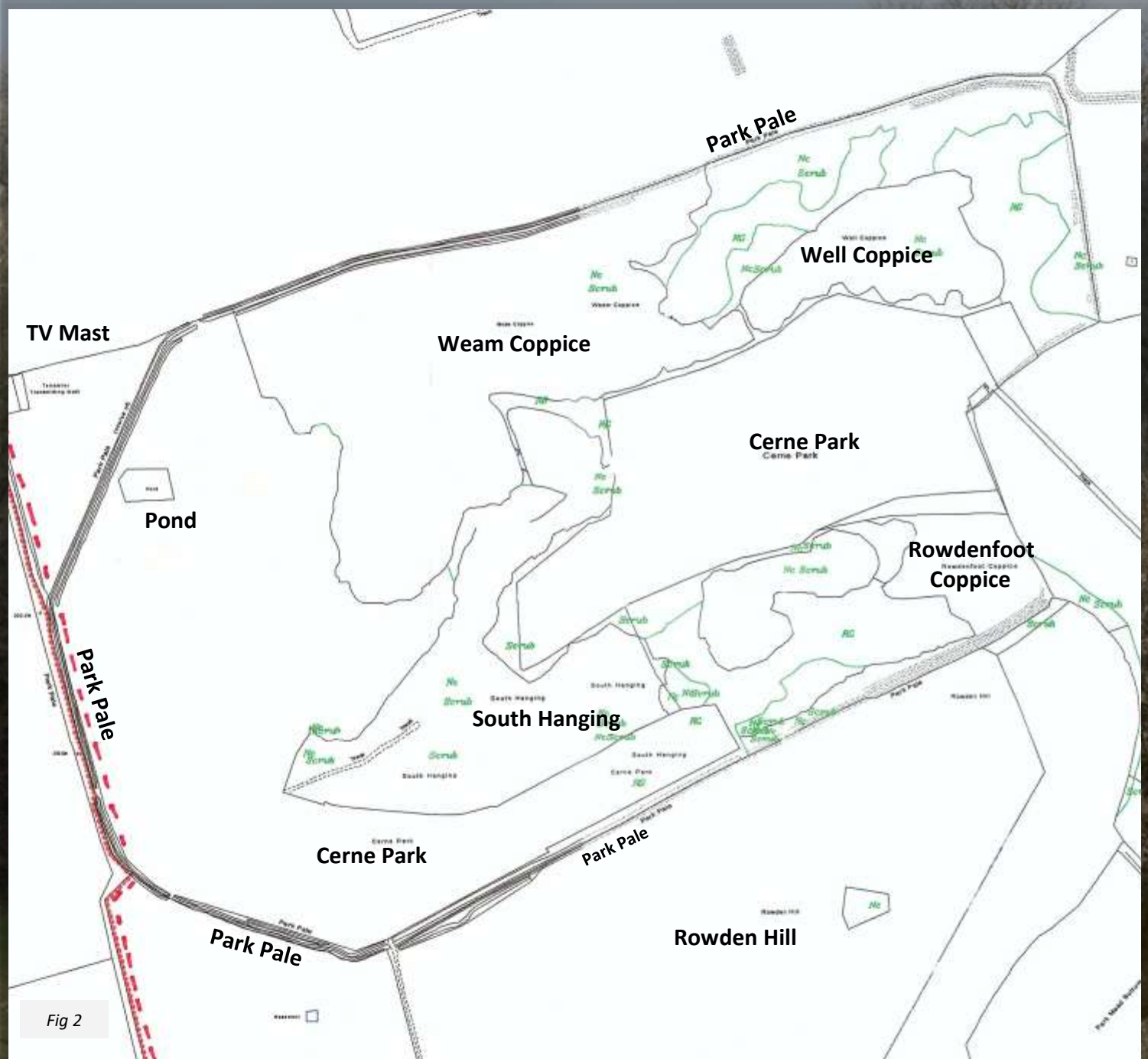
Photo Robin Mills

There may have been over 30 deer parks in Dorset. Few are marked on maps because there is now no visible evidence. Their presence can be deduced from tithe maps and apportionments, OS maps and field names.



The Cerne park belonged to the Abbey. It can be found by walking the track alongside the Care Home and continuing west for about half a mile until the eastern bank is reached, beyond which is an open area within the combe as shown in Fig1. The park is bounded by Weam Common Hill to the north, Rowden Hill on the south and the Ridgeway with the television mast to the west. According to Oliver Rackham (see note below), the total area was about 107 acres, making it just less than average size for a medieval deer park. Although the most visible, the eastern side has the least defined boundary and, as the map shows, there is a bite out of the south-east corner which is where the park abutted on to one of the open fields of Cerne.

The park boundary is marked on the OS map as Park Pales. (Fig 2). Those on the north and south, not visible unless you go in search of them are located on the brow of the hill which would take advantage of the upward slope to increase the height of the bank which would have been topped by wooden fencing (the pales), altogether providing very effective containment. The bank is now at its most impressive on the south where at one point it has been sliced through to provide access for farm vehicles (see fig 2). Here it was as much as 20 feet wide and 10 feet tall which would have required considerable manpower to both construct and maintain. This does emphasise how impressive the banks were, given that they have probably not been maintained for 500 years. To emphasise the height of the barrier there would be a ditch from which the spoil was removed for the bank. Normally with deer parks this was on the inside to keep the animals in, as opposed to medieval woods, where the ditch was on the outside to keep animals out. At Cerne, the ditch can be found sometimes on the inside and sometimes the outside, possibly determined by the nature of the terrain.



A deer park such as at Cerne was a glorified larder for fresh meat as the deer were contained and the whole of modest size. The Rule of St. Benedict stipulated the quality and quantity of food consumed by the monks of Benedictine Abbeys. 'The flesh of four-footed animals is prohibited except for the sick and the weak.' Was this always strictly adhered to? There was some woodland, much of it hazel which was regularly coppiced, but this would have been strictly controlled and not as extensive as today. Coppicing was important throughout the middle ages and into more recent times. Hazel was used for hurdle making, house construction and thatching. There is evidence that hurdle makers lived in Cerne park during the winter months into the C20th. The 1901 census records the park being inhabited by a general labourer, a rabbit-net maker and woodsman and hurdle maker. There was a Keeper's Lodge, shown on the 1887 map. It was on a steep slope, now hidden within trees, without which it would be well-placed to overlook the lower slopes of the park. A platform is all that now remains.

A 1983 gazetteer of the medieval deer parks of England refers to the Cerne Park in a 1356 inquisition post-mortem on Richard de Osmington, Abbot of Cerne. Rackham says that the context implies that it had existed for an unknown length of time. When the Abbey was dissolved in 1539 the estates would have been distributed through Henry VIII's Augmentation Office. Now that the Cerne Historical Society is seeking to learn more about our Abbey and its precise location, it may be possible to obtain a description and valuation of the Cerne lands in the National Archives at Kew. It would be instructive to discover what happened to these lands between the Dissolution and the 1919 sale of their Cerne estate by the Pitt-Rivers family, to whom it then belonged, when it was sold as part of lot 11 for £2,850. It is now in the ownership of the Up Cerne Estate. The bottom of the combe is used for grazing. Today, the deer park is one of the tangible remains from the former Cerne Abbey. Whilst the Abbot's Porch, monks guest house and tithe barn are in more visible bricks and mortar and within the village itself, we should not overlook the deer park. A public footpath now runs through it up to the television mast on the ridgeway.



Photo Mike Clark

The cut banks of the Park (fig 2 above)



Photo Robin Mills



Photo Cheryl Spray

Note. According to an obituary, Oliver Rackham was 'the leading historian and ecologist of British woodlands and then of the landscape as a whole.' A Cambridge don, every summer he came to the Kingcombe Centre to run field courses on the Dorset landscape. In 2014 he held a one-day field trip looking at the ecology and history of the Cerne medieval deer park which I was able to attend. Much of this article is based on that event and notes he provided, augmented by the work of other researchers described in the Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society. Oliver Rackham died in 2015.

Photo Robin Mills





On Swan Green, where Back Lane joins the Folly, stand two icons of modern history – the broadband cabinet which contains the technology we all depend upon for most aspects of C21st life, and the K6 phone box, first introduced in 1936, its function today limited mainly that of a useful landmark when giving directions to strangers. Gone are the stocks in which shameful miscreants were locked, said to have been placed here, and now lying outside the Church for the interest of visitors. Three layers of history on a small patch of grass, behind which there was until the late 19thC a busy, thriving, and above all overwhelmingly smelly complex of buildings, pits and containers which constituted Cerne's tanyard. Its proximity to the river as it flows out of the village was essential for the disposal of waste, but placed on the south west village boundary the prevailing winds would have borne a regular reminder to the whole population of its existence. (Fig 1.)



Fig 1 Detail from 1768 map



Fig 2 detail from 1888 map

Last Will and Testament of Thomas Andrews in 1747 bequeaths his "Tann Yard" to his wife. The map of 1888 (fig 2.), the first map to identify the site, shows our house, (marked 2, Back Lane in fig 2) shaped rather differently.

I believe it to have originally been a pair of humble cottages, the gable end of the eastern one now missing, leaving a vertical gable which doesn't match the opposite end. I claim our north and west walls to be the wonkiest in Cerne Abbas. (Fig 3).

Mankind has been curing animal skins for their preservation ever since he or she discovered that if you removed the skin from the animal you'd just killed and wrapped yourself in it, you stayed warmer. If you didn't cure it, rapid decomposition meant you soon needed another, and one imagines the pong made you unpopular with your companions. As techniques of preservation developed to mention uses of hide in clothing, boots, gloves, harness, saddlery, armoury, farm tools, blacksmiths' bellows, and parchment probably only scratches the surface. The parchment used in the Sherborne Missal for instance, from 1400 probably the largest and most lavishly decorated English service book to survive from the Middle Ages, is reputed to have required the skins of 600 sheep.

At what date an organised tanyard became established in Cerne is not known, but it is safe to assume, for the same reasons that there must have been blacksmiths and breweries, that the village supported at least one tannery since the earliest times. More recently, the



Fig 3

The main buildings were on the west side of the carrier stream which flows along the edge of our garden (dug in 1640 to supply the flooding of the water meadows), roughly in a courtyard pattern where nos. 4 and 6 The Folly now stand. We also know that part of the tanning process was carried out in what is now called Cerne River Cottage, (marked C.R.C. in fig 2), with its flow of water through the garden convenient for washing hides. Inside there was a trap door through which hides could be dropped from first floor to ground floor. Any digging in our garden or next door's inevitably reveals fragments of brick and tile, and long dry spells reveal in the lawn where once there were walls. Cow horns and other detritus can still easily be seen lying in the bed of the carrier stream.

The process of tanning in the 19thC was not for the squeamish. It consisted of firstly soaking the hides (which arrived from the slaughterer with heads, horns and feet attached) in lime, to soften the skin and make the removal of bits of flesh, fat, and hair easier, with a semi-circular blade called a scudding knife. Solutions containing pigeon droppings and dog faeces were also used. Hides were hung over a beam for scraping, and beaten to soften them. When this was complete, the hides were immersed in the oak bark tanning solution, a weak one to start with, then in progressively stronger solutions.



The whole process, as still practiced by traditional tanners F & FJ Bakers of Colyton, can take around 12 months, with hides being moved from solution to solution to get an even tan, followed by drying. It is remarkable that a process which starts in such deeply unpleasant circumstances ends with a product, leather, the smell and texture of which we all enjoy. (Fig4.) Tannin is a compound which exists in many plants, but oak bark contains large concentrations, and was thus a product in huge demand. In 1974, Clarkson's study *The English Bark Trade 1680 - 1830* found that the demand for oak bark by the 1790's was 80,000 tons annually. Bark was peeled from standing or felled trees, and ground into chips for use in tanning. The near absence of mature oak trees in and around Cerne may possibly be explained by its usefulness for tanning, and of course as building timber second to none.



Fig 4

Photo F & FJ Bakers of Colyton

Census records reveal a number of named Cerne residents to have been employed in the business. In 1851 the name Henry William Norman appears, aged 43, and it is safe to say he was the last master tanner of the village, living at one time in Cerne River Cottage with his sisters Emma and Eliza, who kept school in a small building in the garden. His name can be found on every census at 10 year intervals right up to the age of 84 in 1891, when a Henry J Norman aged 46 also appears, having been first recorded in 1861 as a 16 year old apprentice. In that year there were 6 further men recorded as working in associated skills. The number dwindled in later years, and by 1901 there was but one, James Young, aged 75, tanner/labourer, recorded as a pauper in the Union workhouse. Henry Norman's business would have given work to the skilled men who worked in the tanyard, mostly recorded in the census records. Among these were: skimmers – who skinned the animals and prepared the hides for tanning; fellmongers – dealers in hides, particularly sheepskins; beam men – who de-fleshed the hides hung over a beam; and curriers – who dressed, coloured and finished hides; and tanner labourers who did the heavy lifting of hides in and out of pits and tanks. The village was also home to saddlers and harness makers (never to be confused), parchment makers, and boot and shoe makers (also known as cordwainers). Glove making was carried on by Messrs. Frampton and Crocker, registered in the Trade Directory of 1830, just out of the village on the Sherborne road, next to what was once a pub called "The Glove". But gloving was also widely carried out by womenfolk at home, often widows, to supplement their income. 12 women were recorded in the 1871 census as glovers, but by 1901 only one remained, again a pauper in the workhouse.

The eventual demise of the business was most likely due to the general decline in prosperity of the village in the second half of the 19thC, brought about by recurrent agricultural depressions, and the railway age encouraging the industrialisation of tanning in cities. Dickens describes in his *Dictionary of London 1879*, and in the novel *Oliver Twist*, the human squalor and degradation to be found in Bermondsey, London, where tens of thousands of hides were processed in a number of tanneries, surrounded by associated trades which supplied them or utilised the leather products. One third of the country's needs came from there as early as 1742, and many of the original buildings survive today serving very much more upmarket purposes.



Fig 5

We do not know the date of this photo (Fig 5.) of the west side of the Tanyard, or who the characters in it are. We doubt they are a couple - standing too far apart - and the gentleman is not in his best clothes whilst the lady is formally dressed. We would guess at 1860 - 1890? The house is thatched (burnt in 1960) and there is a strikingly clearer view through to Brook Cottage, now obscured by trees.





March



March 15, 1318 was to prove an important date in the history of Cerne Abbey. On that day, the Bishop of Salisbury, Roger Matival, granted the Abbey – and the town – a possibly lucrative gift. As recorded in the *Cartulary of Cerne*, the Bishop:

“Dedicated the great altar of the church of the monastery of Cerne in honour of Mary, the mother of God, and St Peter, chief of the apostles, and he granted for ever an indulgence of 40 days at each of their feasts”.

The award of the ‘indulgence’ was a potential money spinner. The medieval Catholic Church taught that, upon their deaths, three possible destinations lay ahead for Christians; Heaven for the virtuous, Hell for the hopeless sinners, and Purgatory for those who had been formally forgiven their sins, but still had some outstanding penance to perform before their souls were deemed fully cleansed. Those headed for Purgatory were to remain there until they had fully atoned for the evils that they had committed in life, before finally being permitted to enter Heaven. However, the time that one was to spend in Purgatory could be reduced in advance by the acquisition of ‘indulgences’. These could be earned through vigorous prayer, good works, or acts of pilgrimage. The grant made by Bishop Matival to Cerne Abbey meant that any pilgrim who paid homage at its altar to either Mary or Peter on their respective feast days would earn themselves a 40-day reduction in the time that they would be confined in Purgatory. As had been the case at other holy sites, the opportunity to earn an indulgence proved to be a great attractor of pilgrims seeking to ease their passage into



Pilgrims as represented in a C15th woodcut - the badges worn in their hats were collected during pilgrimage to holy sites



Pilgrims visited holy sites for absolution of their sins and in the hope of curing infirmities

Paradise. The resultant influx of the devout to Cerne would have bolstered the Abbey’s coffers, and the inns and shops of the village would also have benefited financially from the increased number of visitors to the area. Paradoxically, objections to the granting of indulgences was to become one of the principal grievances espoused by Martin Luther and other later followers of Protestantism, a movement which, through its exploitation by Henry VIII, led to the Dissolution and the destruction of Cerne Abbey in 1539. So, the indulgences that were granted to Cerne were possibly not, in the long term, such a lucrative gift after all.



April, 1855. By the Spring of 1855, the combined armies of Britain, France and Turkey had been waging a furious war against the forces of Imperial Russia for over eighteen months. During that time, the allies had participated in a number of battles whose names – Alma, Inkerman, Balaclava - remain familiar to this day. Although the conflict also took place along the Black Sea coasts of modern-day Bulgaria and Romania, it has become known as the Crimean War after the Russian peninsula where most of the fighting took place.

Among the British soldiers was a thirty-four-year-old man of Dorset, Captain Thomas Davis, who was serving with the 95th (Derbyshire) Regiment. Davis was the son of a surgeon, also called Thomas, who lived on the Dorchester Road in Cerne Abbas. Despite contracting dysentery early in the campaign, the younger Thomas proved to be something of a hero during the Crimean War. He fought bravely at Alma and forced himself from his sickbed to fight at Inkerman. At the latter battle, and after his two immediate superior officers were wounded, he assumed command of his regiment. He reportedly acquitted himself well, so well in fact that the commander of the British forces, Lord Raglan, personally promoted him to the rank of major.



Cathcart Hill: A contemporary photograph of the Cathcart Hill cemetery on the Crimea. Major Tom Davis was interred here in 1855

The war culminated in the horrendous year-long siege of Crimea's capital and main port, Sebastopol. But Davis was not to witness the fall of the city on 11 September 1855, as he succumbed to fever during the siege five months earlier, on 5 April. He was buried at Cathcart's Hill cemetery in the Crimea.

With his earthly remains interred in Southern Russia, Davis' family and friends sought to create a permanent commemoration to his sacrifice back in Britain. To that end, a public subscription was launched to raise funds to erect a monument to Major Davis in his parish church at Cerne Abbas. This was clearly successful because in April 1856, a year after his death, a wall mounted tablet to his memory, located in the north west corner of the church, was unveiled. The *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* described it as 'richly sculpted in Caen stone, and consists of a central canopy, flanked by clustered buttresses, and supported by corbels bearing shields, on which are grouped the initials of the deceased'. The same newspaper expressed its approval that the monument reflected 'the respect in which the late deceased was held, his valorous conduct in the Crimea, and the melancholy circumstances attending his death'.

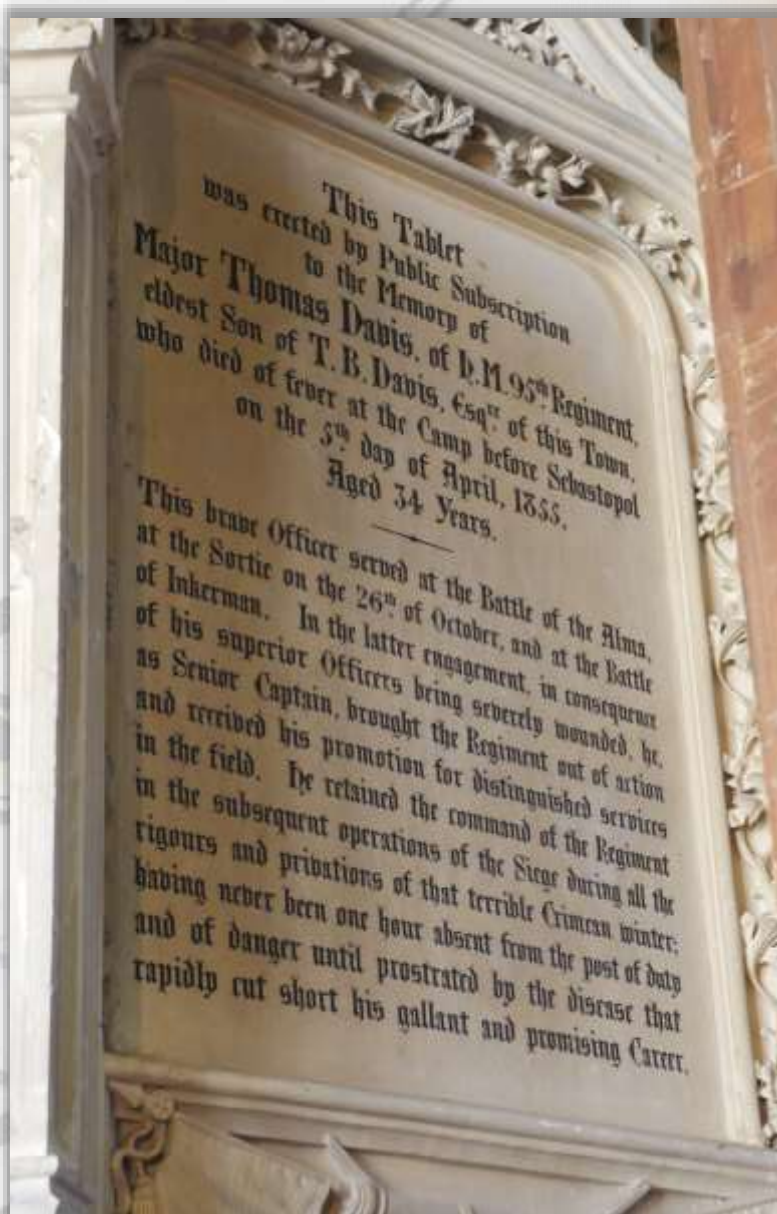




Crimean War veterans of the 95th Derbyshire Regiment. These soldiers would have known Major Tom Davis personally.



It is, then, perhaps surprising that the monument was largely obscured in the early 1870s after the church organ was removed from the church's soon-to-be-demolished western gallery and repositioned immediately in front of Davis' memorial. One can only speculate whether its concealment prompted any outrage among village residents, many of whom would surely have held memories of the dead soldier. Regardless, the organ was to remain in its new location, its pipes ignominiously concealing the elaborately carved tribute to Cerne's Crimean War hero. Yet, despite this, it remains an impressive monument, and one worth seeking out when we are able, post-Covid lockdown, to return to the church.





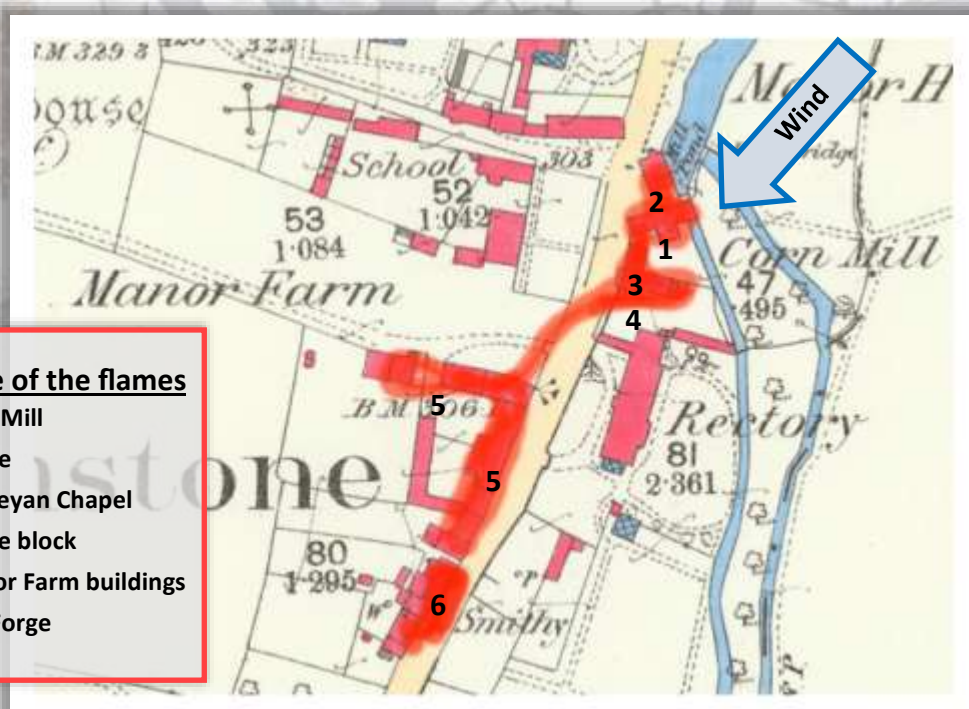
May, 1876. In last Autumn's edition of the *Cerne Historical Society Magazine*, George Mortimer recalled some of the many fires which had affected Cerne Abbas over the years. George identified that the traditional style of building in Dorset, with cobb walls and thatched roofs, was a major contributor to the prevalence of house fires in the county. It is therefore no surprise to find that other Dorset villages also faced destructive fires.

One such event, on the evening of Wednesday 10 May 1876, devastated the village of Godmanstone. Although the cause of the fire remains uncertain, it is known to have started in the village flour mill at about 6.00pm. Although the mill was owned by the widowed Sarah Groves of Cerne Abbas, it was let to a former police constable, Thomas Ballson. Ballson was away in Dorchester at the time so the fire at the mill was not detected until it was too late. A story which was later to circulate the village was that, being new to the milling process, Ballson had left the mill's grinding stones in action with no grain to grind, the resulting friction producing a heat which then ignited the buildings interior. Whatever the cause, the flames spread quickly, passing first to the Wesleyan chapel next door before igniting a recently built stable block attached to the vicarage. The situation worsened when, courtesy of the stiff north-easterly wind, the fire was carried across the road and set light to the Manor House and the granary of its neighbouring farm. Fire engines were summoned from Cerne and Dorchester and, by midnight, the fire had been successfully extinguished. But by that time, the mill, the chapel, the stable, the Manor House, the smithy, eight cottages and several farm buildings had been destroyed, and the overall cost of the fire was estimated to be in the region of 'several thousand pounds'. Fortunately, most of the property owners had wisely taken out insurance. The sole exception seems to have been the unfortunate Sarah Groves, who was to remain uncompensated for her substantial losses. The subsequent stress that she endured may have taken a heavy toll on her, for she died, aged 57, in the following year.



Although it occurred almost 150 years ago, evidence of the catastrophic fire is visible in Godmanstone in the present day. The current resident of the former Manor Farm damaged in the fire, Will Best, tells of a number of charred lintels that can still be seen in his house. Also, the upper levels of the external brickwork of his property are noticeably different to that found at the base of its walls – a legacy of the rebuilding which was undertaken after the conflagration.

Astonishingly, Will also recalls talking - as a very young boy - to one Annie Mitchell, an octogenarian who had first-hand memories of the fire. The event left a lasting impression on the then four-year-old Annie who retained a dread of fire and flames for the remainder of her long life.





George Mortimer

Family Research and Burial Records in Cerne Abbas

Ian Denness, in his '**It Happened This Month**' in the December issue of the Magazine, observed that, in the context of the present pandemic, nothing was new under the sun. This followed the report in the Bridport News about the arrival of the 'Russian Flu' in Cerne in February 1890. This flu pandemic was first reported in May 1889 in Central Asia in the Russian Empire and quickly spread throughout Europe. It arrived in London in December 1889 before spreading across the UK. By mid-1890 it was being reported from around the world. The original outbreak was succeeded by recurrences in the following years, until the flu finally disappeared in about 1895. As Ian also observes, one of its victims was Prince Albert, Duke of Clarence. Albert had become engaged to Princess Mary of Teck in late 1891, but he died of the flu a few weeks later. She subsequently married his brother, George, who became King George V. Our Queen Elizabeth II is her granddaughter. How different our Royal history might have been without the Russian Flu (and an Abdication).

The Cerne Historical Society has copies of the Burial Registers from 1885 to 2004, loaned by the Cerne Valley Parish Council for research purposes. From these registers it was possible to discern that there was a measurable increase in recorded burials in the winter months of 1890/91 and again in the winter months of 1891/92. Burials thereafter appeared to settle down to their 'normal' seasonal rhythm. To determine whether a cause of death was from the Russian Flu or from natural causes, or a combination of both, one would need to look at individual death certificates. (These are available from the General Register Office at £11 each) However, whatever the causes, we can be grateful that today we have the combination of a modern local Surgery, a National Health Service, and vaccines to protect us; advantages not remotely available to previous generations.

The Society is often asked about ancestors who may have lived and died in Cerne over the centuries and where they might be buried. For those researching their family history, it will be useful to know what resources are available. A little local history will therefore be helpful, starting with the Cerne Abbas Burial Ground itself.

The origins of the Cerne Abbas Burial Ground go back centuries and there is evidence from post-Dissolution records that the Abbey granted land during their tenure for parish burials within the present burial ground. Following the Dissolution, it came into the ownership of the incumbent of St Mary's Church. The attractive 1768 map of the village shows that, by this date, the 'Church Yard' covered a rough rectangle, bounded by St Augustine's Well to the south.



1768 Map of Cerne

Responsibility for the burial ground passed in 1881 to a Burial Board, by which time it was already obvious that it was becoming full and Lord Pitt-Rivers was approached about extending the burial ground on land to the east and south beyond St Augustine's Well. The Churchwardens' accounts for 1884 show that the Burial Board was 'authorised to borrow the sum of £160 secured in the rates of this Parish in enlarging the present churchyard'. The conveyance of the land was duly completed and the piece of ground presented to the Parish by General Pitt-Rivers was consecrated by the Bishop of Salisbury on 16 October 1886, thus completing the Burial Ground we recognise today. The Local Government Act 1894 transferred the powers, duties, property and liabilities of the Burial Boards in rural parishes to the parish councils. Hence, today, the responsibilities for the burial ground are with the Cerne Valley Parish Council.

Cerne Burial Register 1743

Up until 1837, when Civil Registration was introduced, parish churches were responsible for recording burials. For St Mary's Church the burial registers survive from 1653 to 1862, although as the accompanying 1743 extract shows, the vicar sometimes economised by recording other events such as baptisms in the same register. (Note, interestingly, in this extract the rather uncompromising entry for August 14: 'James the Bastard of Mary Stickland, Bapt'. Bastardy had implications at that time, not just as a moral judgement, but whether the child and mother might become a burden on the Parish Rates. However, that's another story.) The original registers are now in the Dorset History Centre for perusal, but have been transcribed by an On-line Parish Clerk (OPC) for family research. The results are available on their website. An OPC has no connection with the Cerne Valley Parish Council and is a volunteer who has taken on the task of transcribing parish church records such as Baptisms, Marriages, Burials, and much besides, to assist those researching their family history in Dorset parishes. (The Cerne Abbas OPC lives in Canada and is a distant relative of Thomas Coombs who lived in No. 29 Long Street in the 18th century). If anyone has the

inclination, it would be an interesting exercise to research these old church registers to see if Cerne was affected by outbreaks of other pandemics through the ages; for example in the 17th Century when, as we all know, London suffered the Great Plague of 1665. This pandemic led to the deaths of about 15% of the City's population and Samuel Pepys gives a vivid account of it in his diary. It also spread to many other parts of England, but whether it came to Cerne is not known.

Date	Name	Description
April 1	John Son of W ^m & Elij. Dombry	Bapt
17	George Summers Son of Sar ^h Foot	B
	George Son of Andrew & Sar ^h Gape	B
May 14	Dorethy Daug. of Tho. Andrews	Bapt
15	George Son of Joseph Antell	Bapt
July 24	John the Son of John & Mary Coombe	Bur
Aug 7	Jolly Roberts & Bastard of Joan Childs	Bapt
14	James the Bastard of Mary Stickland	Bapt
14	George the Son of John & Mary Coombe	Bur
21	James the Son of James & Mary Wright	Bur
Sept 2	Mary & Wife of Thomas Coombe	Bur
2	Molly & Daughter of Rich ^d . Dowding	Bur
4	Elizabeth Daughter of Joseph & Edith Foches	Bur
6	Susannah & Daughter of Charles Fuch	Bur
11	Thomas the Son of John Thomas	Bur
12	Roger Hodder was	Bur
18	George Antell was	Bur
Oct 2	William the Son of Will. & Eliz. Gillingham	Bapt
23	George Summers Foot was	Bur
Nov 1	Joseph Fiddling was	Bur
27	Mary & Daughter of Thomas & Mary Cocheran	Bapt
Dec 1	Mary & Daughter of John & Jane Agal	Bapt
11	Anne the Daughter of Henry White was	Bur
16	Mary & Daughter of Tho. Stickland	Bapt
24	Henry the Son of Henry & Mary Davis	Bapt
Jan 12	William Stickland was	Bur
17	Mary & Daughter of Joseph & Edith Hodges	Bapt

The parish church burial registers record limited details about the person being buried and the date, but not where the grave was sited. Many were probably simple burials and left no visible sign over time. Some, however, left more permanent memorials on headstones, table monuments, stone surrounds, plaques in the church, or whatever was the prevailing fashion or what relatives could afford. On many of these memorials can still be seen the details of the person or persons commemorated. These details are called Memorial Inscriptions (MIs) by genealogists and some monuments include the lives of whole families. The MI shown here is for the Clark family who were clockmakers and milliners in Cerne Abbas from the late 18th century. In 1994 the Cerne Historical Society conducted a survey of the surviving MIs, where they were still decipherable, in the Burial Ground and on plaques in the church. The results of that survey can be seen on the Society's website with a plan of where the graves and plaques can be found and an index of names from the MIs. This index gives basic information about each MI, but the Society may be able to provide supplementary information if asked.



Clark Family memorial inscription in Cerne Burial Ground

The Burial Board started recording burials in customised Burial Registers from 1885 and, in succession, by the Cerne Valley Parish Council after 1894. A copy of these registers from 1885 to 2004 has been loaned to the Society by the Cerne Valley Parish Council for the purposes of research, as stated earlier. The registers record burials in much more detail than the old church parish registers, as this extract from the 1885 register shows, but are subject to recent statutory limitations on disclosure.

Cerne Burial Register 1885

REGISTER OF							BURIALS.						
No. of Entry	NAME OF PERSON BURIED	Rank in Profession	Sex	Age	Place where Buried	Date of Burial	By whom Buried	By whom Buried was given (under Burial Laws Amendment Act, 1881)	Description and Situation of Grave Space	No. of Grave Space	Is Occupied	Is Unoccupied	From what Parish removed
1	Thomas Clark	Son of a Shepherd	Male	16	Cerne Abbas	3 Nov 85	Rev. H. D. Sanders	—	—	1	Yes	—	—
2	Mabel Mary Riles	Daughter of a Carpenter	Female	6	Cerne Abbas	24 Feb 85	Rev. H. D. Sanders	—	—	2	Yes	—	—
3	Harriet R. Riles	Widow of a Blacksmith	Female	47	Little Munsell Road, Cerne	7 Feb 85	Rev. H. D. Sanders	—	—	3	Yes	—	Rushland, Dorset
4	Eloa Hall	Widow of a Labourer	Female	75	Cerne Abbas	1 Nov 85	—	Joseph M. Harty	—	4	Yes	—	—
5	Anna M. Riles	Daughter of a Mason	Female	16	Cerne Abbas	9 Feb 85	Rev. H. D. Sanders	—	—	5	Yes	—	—
6	Mary Riles	Widow of a Labourer	Female	47	Cerne Abbas	25 Feb 85	Rev. H. D. Sanders	—	—	6	Yes	—	—
7	Charlotte Riles	Widow of a Labourer	Female	47	Cerne Abbas	2 Feb 85	Rev. H. D. Sanders	—	—	7	Yes	—	—
8	Ellen R. Riles	Widow of a Labourer	Female	42	Little Munsell Road, Cerne	12 Feb 85	Rev. H. D. Sanders	—	—	8	Yes	—	Rushland, Dorset

The Society has the approval of the Parish Council to answer any individual queries relating to family research, but not to release the registers in their entirety. Queries on burials later than 2004 will be referred to the Parish Council for resolution.





Further to our previous publication of extracts from Bryan Palmer's entertaining reminiscences of his boyhood in wartime Cerne Valley, this chapter relives his memories of his grandad's tenure as landlord of the Smiths Arms, Godmanstone, from 1942.

GODMANSTONE AND "THE SMITH'S ARMS"



About a mile due south of us at Nether Cerne was the neighbouring village of Godmanstone which straddled the main road to Dorchester. Much larger than our tiny hamlet, Godmanstone boasted a Post Office and a Pub and a Shop. The pub was called the "Smith's Arms" and was reputed to be the smallest inn in England. Measuring only about twenty feet by ten feet, this little thatched building was originally a blacksmith's shop. Legend had it that King Charles II had been riding nearby when his horse cast a shoe. The blacksmith offered the King some home-brewed ale while he waited for the necessary repairs. The King was evidently so impressed with the excellence

of this good black-smith's ale that he granted him a publican's license on the spot. Whereas the pub probably dated from the fifteenth century, the adjoining house, which not only served as the licensee's living quarters but also included the shop, was probably Victorian and the whole property belonged to Devenish's Brewery. The current tenants appeared to be a sort of commune of artists and sculptors, with their women-folk and children. The men were long-haired and heavily bearded and the women all wore long loose-fitting garments and sandals, while the children were often seen running around stark naked. Their Bohemian life-style, coupled with the common knowledge that they were conscientious objectors, did not endear them to the local population. Anyway, for whatever reason, they had decided to leave the district and a vacancy was thereby created for a new incumbent. Grandad applied for the licence and tenancy and, with Dad's moral and financial help, put in a bid for the stock and the fixtures. Subject to the Brewery undertaking some restoration work and improvements to the living accommodation, an agreement was signed and we prepared to move in. Once again the floor-boards and the joists of the cottage scullery ceiling had to be taken out and Grandad's bedroom furniture extracted. We now found ourselves back in the twentieth century again, with all the luxuries of main drainage, hot and cold running water, a proper lavatory and even a telephone!

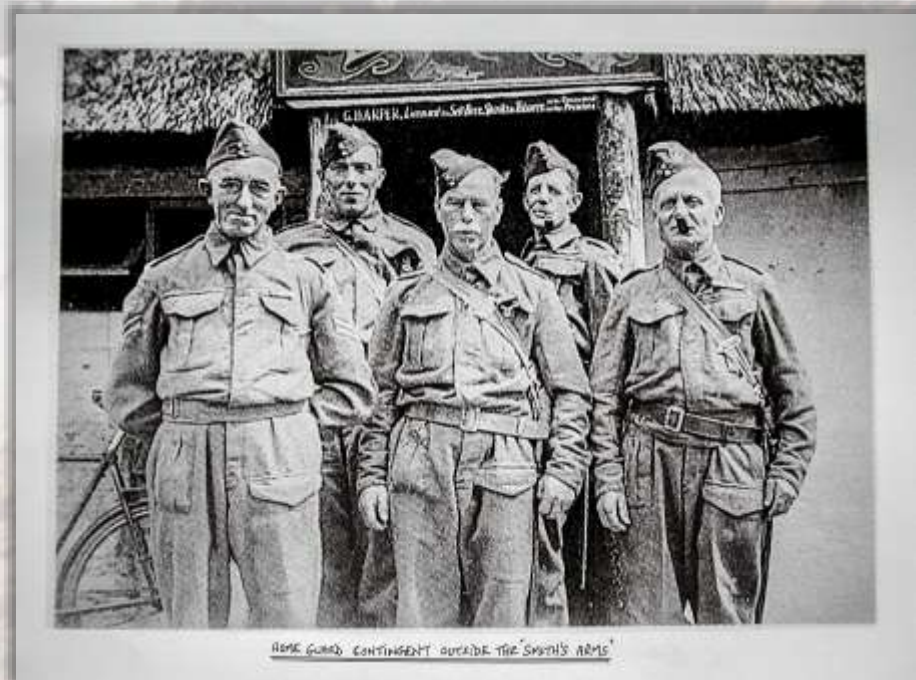


The pub itself was a tiny detached building, set back a little from the road and at a somewhat acute angle to the house. A porch enclosed the doorway and above it was a colourful sign illustrating a blacksmith working at his forge. Immediately below this, in white lettering on a black background, were the newly painted words:-

"G. Harper, Licensed to Sell Beer, Spirits & Tobacco: To be Consumed on the Premises".

Thus, Grandad's claim to be the new licensee was publicly advertised. The pub door faced onto a tarmac area with just enough room to park two or three cars off the main road. A narrow path, bordered by green-painted iron railings, ran down the right-hand side of the pub, leading to the enclosed Gents' toilet hard up against the riverside at the rear. The left-hand corner of the pub was separated from the house by a high, brown wooden gate that opened into the garden behind the house. That part of the garden nearest to the pub had been laid out as a lawn surrounded by rose-bearing rustic work and, pre-war, had served as a "Tea Garden" for the benefit of customers. The downstairs room of the house, nearest the pub, had double doors which opened onto the car-park and, although this room was part of the licensed premises, it was only pressed into service when winter flooding in the pub bar became too deep for comfort and threatened to put out the fire. Then, barrels and crates would be temporarily rigged up in this room and seats arranged for our clients.

A small, detached building, which served as the pub's Ladies toilet, stood quite close to the gate by the river and was usually kept locked. Between this structure and the high hedge bordering the river was an enclosed space, well out of sight of the house. It was in this spot, some months later, that I conducted my one and only experiment in designing a hand-held flame-thrower, using a bicycle pump and a can of lighter fuel.



If I hadn't managed to douse the flames in time, Grandad's lady customers would have been, quite literally, inconvenienced.

The pub had a public bar that was little bigger than a single garage, with tiny windows deep-set in the thickness of the walls. Two very high backed wooden settles stood, one on each side of a brick fireplace, which was adorned with highly polished brass ornaments and horse brasses. As far as I can remember, there were a few chairs and small tables dotted about and these often had to be pushed to one side to make room for darts players, particularly when Pat, one of our local Land Army girls, was playing. The wooden partition wall at the far end of the bar, opposite the front door, contained a serving-hatch through which drinks were served and a stable door through which the landlord could make his entrance, when necessary. Behind this partition was the cellar, where the old forge used to be, with a row of barrels perched on a stout wooden stand. The whole place reeked deliciously of draught beer and cider. The worm-eaten thick beams and the ash-poles that supported the thatched roof were concealed by a false ceiling in the bar but were fully exposed in the cellar.

In Grandad's absence, one day, my cousin, Barrie, and I explored this ancient roof-space and came down covered from head to foot in thick dust and long trailing cobwebs that must have lain up there, undisturbed, for hundreds of years.



Although Grandad had received some instruction, by helping out in the pub for a week or so before he took up his official position as landlord, his inexperience showed when he came to tap his first barrel. There is an art in hammering in the brass tap using a large wooden mallet, with just enough force to knock the cork bung inside the barrel at the same time as the tap is firmly driven home. Get it wrong and the bung goes into the barrel but the tap is shot out again by the pressure of the beer inside. Clearly, Grandad hadn't got it quite right that morning and came into the house soaked in beer from the waist down. He had learned his lesson, though, and it never happened again. Apart from this and the odd hiccup with the automatic, gravity-fed, spirits dispenser (which once automatically dispensed half a precious bottle of whisky all over the counter unaided) and the temporary loss of the key to the ladies toilet, he soon got the hang of things and, from then on, he ran a very tight ship. Although he was now in his seventy-first year and not very tall, he was very powerfully built and as strong as a bull. His years as a stevedore had given him arms that were almost as stout as most men's legs and his huge hands, with their thick, battered and broken fingers, gave him a grip like a vice. These physical attributes, plus a pair of steely blue eyes that seemed to bore right through you when his anger was roused, stood him in good stead and I cannot recall him ever having any trouble with drunks. He was very strict in his running of the pub and he never allowed Win or Mum to help him behind the bar. Being under-aged I was, of course, totally banned from the premises during licensing hours. By all accounts, Grandad had been a bit of a drinking-man in his younger years but now he rarely touched a drop and kept a small whisky bottle, partly filled with cold tea, under the bar counter. Whenever he was offered a drink by a customer, he would gratefully accept their payment and pour himself a small glass from this bottle and drink their health with it. Thus, he managed to avoid offence and yet still remained stone-cold sober, no matter how convivial the subsequent proceedings might turn out to be.

With petrol in short supply and the blackout in force, most of his customers were local people who would arrive either on foot or on bicycles. Strangers, from further afield, were relatively rare. There was one night when Douglas Bader, accompanied by a number of his fellow fighter-pilots, turned up on a spree from Warmwell air-field. Other than the odd occasion like this, however, business with outsiders didn't really pick up until much later, when the Yanks began to arrive "over here" in large numbers.





Andrew Popkin

This column is for things which others have lost or thrown out but that you have found.



This issue features finds by ex-resident John Staley and his team, on the Water Meadows in Cerne Abbas, during conservation a number of years ago.



Pendant bell



Small pendant, enamelled?



Button with crown and wreath



Key for Barrel tap



Cow horn protectors



Victorian thimble

Georgian domestic buttons



Barrel cap key



Georgian Watch Winder

Photos Andrew Popkin

Birmingham token 1788



C16th buttons



Part of medieval plate



Falconer's or Dog whistle



Dandy's button



George III 'Cartwheel' penny 1797



Lead Tally token C17th





Letters

Edited by George Mortimer

Sarah Colegrave writes:

What a beautifully produced magazine. It's wonderful. My congratulations.

Thanks for sending it.

Best wishes

Banbury, Oxfordshire

Editor's Note: *the Magazine is indebted to Sarah for providing some of the photos of the Schwabe paintings featured in the article about Randolph Schwabe in the last issue.*

Patricia Vale writes:

Further to Robin Mill's article on the great Blizzard of 1978, may I add some gossip anecdotes? Bob and Mary Stenhouse continued to milk from their farm in Acreman Street and Hugh Mumford's sons from the Vicarage dragged the milk round the village on a sledge. When they got to one Brigadier's widow they were greeted with 'never mind the milk, dear boys, as long as the whisky doesn't run out'. And when they got as far as a couple of ladies who lived in Long Street it was 'but we always have cream on Sundays'.

Some people are never satisfied!

Middle House, Long Street

By the Editor

There were numerous responses to things 'Lost and Found' in the last Magazine. Here is a selection of them.

Chris Copson writes:



Congratulations on a splendid magazine. In answer to some of the found objects: RAOB - the pipe bowl - is Royal and Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes - a Friendly Society of the late 19th/20th Centuries. May still exist, I think.

Photo Andrew Popkin

Contd...



Letters

Chris Copson contd.

The large belt buckle is the tag end of a military webbing belt, either 1908 or 1937 Pattern depending on the size.



Diana Kimber writes:

I am very much enjoying reading the December edition of the Historical Magazine. Lovely to see that it is getting bigger and fatter (aren't we all this year?) as time goes on. The bowl of the wonderful clay pipe must have belonged to a member of 'the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes: my Grandfather in Burton upon Trent was a member. He also used to tell me that he belonged to the order of Frothblowers as well!)

Jonathan Still writes:

The **Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes** (RAOB) is one of the largest fraternal organisations in the United Kingdom. The order started in 1822 and is known as the Buffs to members. The RAOB organisation aids members, their families, dependents of former members and other [charitable](#) organisations. The Order's motto is "No Man Is At All Times Wise" (Latin: Nemo Mortalium Omnibus Horis Sapit) and it has the maxim of "Justice, Truth and Philanthropy". The Order has a Rule Book, Manual of Instruction and Ceremony Lectures issued and revised by the Grand Lodge of England. The 'lodge' description for branch organisation and headquarters was adopted in imitation of [Freemasonry](#).



27th Monday. Lovely weather. Foresters' Fete for Ceine. School opened in the morning until 11 o'clock. At 11.45 there was a service in the church before which, headed by a brass band the Foresters had paraded the principal streets. Then after the service which was the heartiest I have heard in Ceine Church (Rev Barclay from Mintern. preached), the men adj^{our}ned to the marquee erected for the purpose in a field next to the Workhouse & had dinner. After dinner we joined the merry makers (everyone comes for miles round & makes holiday). There were the merry-go-round braying out popular tunes in a most doleful manner, swing-boats, coconut shies, try-your-strength machine, Hunt Sally, a shooting range and various other stalls & booths. In the afternoon there were pony races, bicycle races, flat races etc.



Letters

Jonathan Still contd.

I knew of it from North Petherton. [Jonathan took a living there] It is one of many mutual societies which existed in rural villages. There are photos of processions through Cerne of the Odd Fellows etc. Members paid in a penny a week for rudimentary 'cover' 'benefits' and community in an otherwise unfriendly world. They would have annual processions and banners and a set of banners and staffs (I saw the brass finials for these many years ago on an old lady's mantelpiece in Petherton). Cerne would have has one or two similar.



Editor's note: as Jonathan says, Cerne had its own mutual society, a branch of the Ancient Order of Foresters. The Order dates from 1834 and survives to this day. On the evening of September 24th 1860, fifty men of The Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society met in the Elephant and Castle Inn in Duck Street to form the 'Cerne Abbas Court'. Their motto woven on their banner was 'Unity is Strength, United we Stand.' They had their annual parade through the

village and this photograph can be accurately dated to 27 July 1908 as it was recorded by Miss Catherine Granville in her diary. She also records that after church the Foresters retired to the field next the Workhouse for an afternoon of merry-making.

The Letters Page Editor will be pleased to hear from you on any subject that will increase a mutual understanding of our shared history.

gcmortimer@btinternet.com or put a note through the door at 3 Abbey Court, if you prefer.

We reserve the right to publish if no objection is expressed in your email or letter.

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Design, Graphics & Publishing: Andrew Popkin