



Cerne
Historical
Society

MAGAZINE

Welcome to the sixth issue of the Cerne Historical Society's Magazine.



Schwabe - the artist Ian Denness

History of the Vicarage Harriet Still

Vanwylder - lutenist Gordon Bishop

It Happened This Month Ian Denness

The Blizzard of 1978 Robin Mills

CHS Hedge Survey Janet Bartlet & George M.

Lost & Found Andrew Popkin

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11
Dec
2020



Cerney Historical Society

A Very Warm Welcome to the Winter issue of the Cerney Historical Society's magazine.

This is the sixth issue of our magazine and the second since we decided to publish it quarterly rather than monthly. It is the largest issue so far and contains articles on a wide range of topics that I very much hope you will find interesting and enjoyable.

If you have missed any issues or would like to read them again all 6 are now available on our website cerneabbashistory.org. This is a much revised and greatly improved version of the old website. It is being re-launched on the 11th December and will be further updated over the next few months. I would like to thank Mike Fountain and Andrew Popkin for the enormous amount of work they have put in over the last year re-designing the website to make it more enjoyable, interesting and easy to use. Do let us know what you think about it and any suggestions you may have regarding it. As with the magazine, your comments are greatly appreciated and will help us to make improvements.

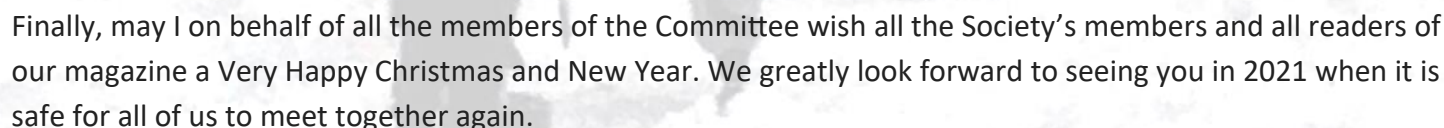
Unfortunately, the research on the site of the Abbey Church and other surrounding buildings that we hoped to carry out this year has been much curtailed by Covid 19. However, over the last few months our Treasurer, John Chalker, has been able to make a number of visits to the National Archives in Kew to obtain copies of Tudor documents relating to the Abbey, some of which have already been "translated". We hope to put the results of this research on the website in the near future. Also available will be a copy of an article about the Society contained in the November issue of the magazine *Current Archaeology*, where we were said to be "the very model of what a local history society should be, but they so rarely are. All societies claim to be 'lively and 'active', but the CHS delivers". We are delighted by this description, which is praise indeed from such a respected and independent source.

In the last couple of months we have also moved our archives, which had for the last 11 years been in the Abbey Pottery, to the Village Hall. Our profound thanks go to Jane Newdick and Michael Parker for providing us with a room in which to keep the archives, without any charge, for such a long period. We would also like to thank the Village Hall Committee for allowing us to keep the archives there for the next year. This is a temporary arrangement whilst we look for a more permanent place to keep them. If you have any suggestions for a permanent home please let us know.

Since we would not have been able to hold our AGM, which was due to take place on 28th January 2021, in the Village Hall and would have had to hold it online, we have decided to postpone it to a time later in the year when the coronavirus epidemic is at an end. We will then be able to hold our usual social event. However, that is unlikely to be before April at the earliest. Fortunately, the archaeologist and local historian, Chris Copson, has kindly agreed to give a talk to members online via Zoom on the 28th January in place of the AGM. We will email members in January to let them know the title of the talk and how to access it. If enough members do access it we will try to arrange further online monthly talks until our normal meetings are able to recommence.



One joint project of the Society and the Parish Council regarding the Giant which has now been completed is the design and manufacture of a new village sign board to replace the rather dilapidated one which is presently in the Giant View car park. A photo of the design, by our graphic artist John Fieldhouse, which has been used is below. It will be mounted in a lectern alongside the National Trust's new board. We hope that the lectern will be built and erected by the National Trust early next year.



B/W Cover photo Mills family 1978






Randolph Schwabe in Cerne Abbas, 1937-40

An article in the June issue of the *Cerne Historical Society Magazine* recalled the visits to Cerne Abbas made by the Victorian watercolourist John Henry Yeend King. In this issue the works of another artist, Randolph Schwabe, who painted a number of scenes in and around the village in the years immediately prior to the Second World War, provide another glimpse into Cerne's artistic past.

Born in Manchester in 1885, Randolph Schwabe spent most of his early years in the less-industrial surroundings of Hemel Hempstead. From a young age, he demonstrated a talent for painting and earned himself a place, aged fourteen, at the Royal College of Art. However, he failed to settle at the College and, a few months later, moved to the Slade School of Fine Art. He was to maintain an association with Slade for the rest of his life, being appointed as Professor and Principal of the Slade in February 1930, a position he held until his death, aged 63, in 1948. He earned recognition as an artist through his original illustrations which accompanied works published by a number of well-known authors, including Walter de la Mere and H. E. Bates, although he is best remembered for his images of buildings and landscapes. His subjects included figures and still life compositions, and he produced illustrations and designs for the theatre. Schwabe also earned acclaim for his role as an Official War Artist in both the First and Second World Wars.

Schwabe is known to have made at least four visits to Cerne Abbas between 1937 and 1940, usually staying with family and friends for the whole of August and September. On the first occasion he stayed at Mrs Jarrett's guest house at the Pitchmarket but, for subsequent visits, he chose instead to stop at the 'Abbey Farm', paying Mrs Vincent three guineas rent per week – plus an extra shilling for each hot bath he took – to stay in a room in which, at night, rain dripped through the ceiling. While in residence at Cerne, Schwabe was visited by several members of the contemporary artistic set, including the poet John Betjeman who recalled dining with the artist at the New Inn during his 1938 stay.



On each of his trips to Cerne, Schwabe executed a number of art works. He was especially busy during his 1938 visit – in his diary he records that daytrips to Maiden Castle and Studland were ‘the only time subtracted from the business of daily drawing’. His stay in Cerne in the previous year seems to have been equally productive - six of the paintings that he had completed while in the village were included in that year’s autumn show of the New English Art Club, displayed at the Suffolk Street galleries in Pall Mall.

The village scenes captured by Schwabe are still readily recognisable today. One painting, *The Pitchmarket, Cerne Abbas*, depicts the view westwards from the east end of St Mary’s Church towards Abbey Street and the house which provided him with lodgings during his stay. The lawn to the side of the church, the edge of the cenotaph, and the wonky windows of the Tudor houses opposite are all strikingly familiar. But at least one long-vanished feature – the wooden door that fills the entrance arch to the church approach – can be spotted.



*See Note 1

The parish church also features in another of Schwabe's paintings, *The Abbey Church, Cerne Abbas*. While the church's distinctive tower provides a clear point of reference, the buildings in the picture's foreground are less familiar to the modern eye. The view is from Back Lane, with a view towards the yellowing wall of the present-day Royal Oak being provided by a gap between the houses on Long Street (this gap has since been filled by the house now numbered 30a). The open land is in use as an allotment and is being tended to by a young woman. A cart stands horseless and idle in the street beyond.



*See Note 1

Street views also provided subject matter for Schwabe's watercolours and drawings. Setting up his easel outside of the New Inn, he painted an evening scene at the junction of Long Street and Duck Street. All of the buildings shown are still standing and largely unaltered. Much of the ironwork outside of the former antiques shop – including the first-floor balcony – is still to be seen, and the bay windows of what is now the Old Saddler remain *in situ*.



Similarly, a further piece - a watercolour of the upper end of Abbey Street, painted from the village pond – is instantly recognisable. Continuity, rather than change, is the overriding impression gained from viewing these pictures.



Schwabe was at Cerne when Prime Minister Chamberlain declared that Britain was at war with Nazi Germany, and also when the Soviets invaded Poland two weeks later. In his diary, Schwabe records his response to the latter event, which was to work 'on a drawing, perhaps the last I shall do at Cerne, in order to forget about it'. He left the village shortly after but returned in December to see in the New Year.

This proved to be his last visit to Cerne, a village which he had described as 'a place I like so much'. Like Yeend King before him, Schwabe was attracted to Cerne by both its picturesque qualities and the sense of timelessness to be found in its streets and surrounding countryside. By the late 1930s, when there was a growing sense of the imminence of war, Schwabe's representation of a never-changing, peaceful and intensely rural village may have provided some relief from the growing anxieties over the conflict to come. Today his paintings offer a glimpse of how our village appeared over eighty years ago, and a reminder of how little its buildings have changed since.

**Note 1. The scans of these paintings have been kindly provided by Sarah Colegrave of Sarah Colegrave Fine Art, London. Details of the paintings, which are for sale, can be found at sarahcolegrave.co.uk*





A Vicarage through Time

Cerne Abbas Vicarage dates back to at least 1711 and has been a vicarage constantly since then. In that time it has housed Revd Waugh and his Anti-Bilious Pill fortune, hosted fetes, employed the unfortunately named Fanny Trash and been variously extended and transformed.

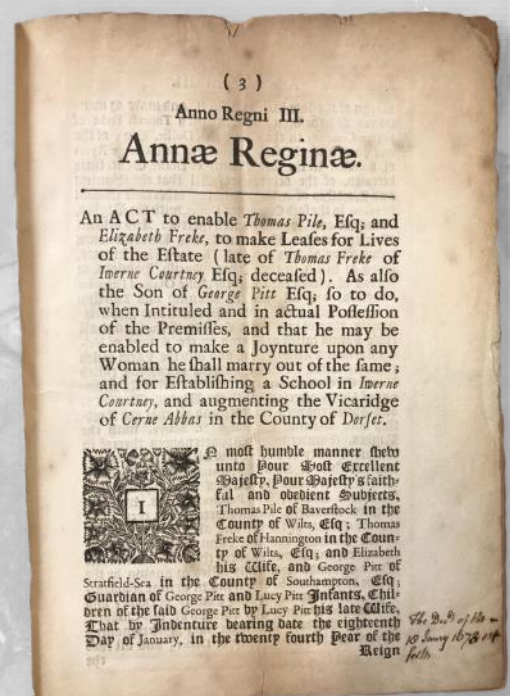


The Vicarage is on what is now called Back Lane but has also been known as Vicarage Lane. Funnily, Back Lane probably has at least as much if not more lineage than Vicarage Lane, being the generic medieval street name for the access to the back of medieval burgrave plots (the long, thin gardens, yards and outbuildings running from behind the buildings on Long Street).

As a quick overview, the current building seems to have been built in 1711 (as the bricks on the western gable proclaim). However, you can't always trust dates on buildings. Some were added to celebrate rebuilds or marriages or repairs. However, in this case it seems to be a good indication of the date of this two and a half storey (attics and basements are always half storeys), symmetrical building we see

today, built in Queen Anne's reign but not a 'Queen Anne style' house (this term refers to later Victorian imitations). It also aligns the rebuild with the transfer of the estate from the Frekes to the Pitts in 1705.

Going back to the very beginning, many vicarages existed on the original glebe land given by their Saxon or Norman benefactors. They were built on a comparable level of grandeur to the estate's manor houses, but by the 18th century, many were falling into disrepair. Over the next century, the church introduced many measures to enable incumbents and parishes to repair and enlarge these houses. The first major one of these was Queen Anne's Bounty. This distributed loans to buy land for benefices of less than £90 pa. This additional land in turn produced income and increased the value of the living. By the mid-C18th, Cerne was valued at £8 pa – a worthy candidate! However, the vicar was saved from destitution by a Private Act of Parliament (dated 12 Jan 1705), which increased this to £40 pa. This Act also shows the succession by which the Pitt family came into possession of Cerne Abbas, which was to last until 1919.



Digging back into the Glebe Terriers (reports presented at the Bishop's Visitation), we can learn something of the original vicarage. Although the assumption is that the current vicarage was built in 1711, these earlier Terriers leave the possibility that the current vicarage may be a heavily altered version of that described in the 1612 Terrier as:

'a Mansion House with Hall parlour Buttery Kitchen Chambers and Garden and Orchards and one Acre of Meadow ... on the south side of the House'.

(The 'buttery' in this case was not where dairy products were stored, but butts of 'small beer'; much safer than the water to drink as the brewing process killed off any bugs)

The idea of the house being built earlier would align with the ashlar masonry found in the attic walls. Another possibility is that Norman's House (next door) was originally the Vicarage, with the current Vicarage being built on the Glebe land.



Splayed window reveals of previous window in present day cupboard

Our current vicarage was originally a single-pile building (one-room deep) with (it seems) a kitchen, parlour and hallway (similar to the 1612 Glebe, but also quite a generic domestic layout) on the ground floor. On the first floor, raised sections on the walls suggest that there were four to five bedrooms. These were lit by additional windows on the east and west walls, which are now blocked in (the west window is visible externally - try to spot it as you next come down Back Lane from the telephone box - and the east window having been converted into a cupboard, still showing the splayed reveals. The attic was divided up into servants' accommodation. This original building was heated by two chimney stacks at either gable end of the building.

Although various alterations have been made, the major revision to this building was a significant extension to the north. This includes an open-well stair (much more civilised than the earlier dog-leg stairs!), utilities room, porch, cloakrooms, back kitchen, servants' kitchen and housekeeper's room. At this point, it seems that it gained an extensive ventilation system (exchanging air with the roof space to mitigate the Victorian fear of 'miasmas' (disease carrying air), and gothic revival openings in the original external north wall.



Ventilation set into internal door; ventilation hatch in wall leading to flue into attic; ventilation grate leading to flue into attic



Strawberry Hill style Gothic Revival openings in external wall of original building

These major changes were mostly financed by the Revd. James Hay Waugh, whose 'Waugh's Family Anti-Bilious Pills' (made from a distillation of cayenne pepper and reputedly used by a young Queen Victoria) earned him a small fortune. These pills financed the multiple changes to the Vicarage, during his short incumbency 1842-45. One interesting feature being that the label moulds above the windows match those of the National School on Duck Street, also built during his incumbency in 1843. He was obviously rather comfortably off, as after only three years he left the position leaving the house to the parish.



Revd. John Ray's wartime vegetable plot, as seen from a 1940s RAF aerial photograph. The long burgage plots running from Long Street to Back Lane, can be seen on the right of the photograph

Label moulds on Revd. Waugh's Cerne Abbas Vicarage and Cerne Abbas School, Duck Street



The garden is similarly littered with clues of the building's past: the flint wall that extends along the east side of the garden is probably a now demolished building's remaining back wall and there are all sorts of bumps and bare patches that appear in the lawns in summer. In the field to the rear can still be traced the wartime 'Dig for Victory' plot of Revd. John Ray.

Although I feel overwhelmed by the amount of information that I have come across there is, of course, plenty more to be discovered. I will keep on investigating and hope to slowly piece together the whys and wherefores of this interesting building. Harriet.

If you would like to research your own historic house, you may wish to see videos by Malcolm Airs about Dorchester-on-Thames and what to look for. The videos are accessible to the uninitiated and very informed (Malcolm is Emeritus Professor of Conservation and the Historic Environment, Oxford University).

The link is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcWs1o8yiOc&feature=youtu.be>

"Enriching the List"

As you may well be aware, Historic England has a catalogue of the country's historic buildings of note. This is now available online and a brilliant resource for anyone wanting to get a bit more information on significant buildings near them. However, they only have limited resources and so they are now inviting people interested in photography and old building to enrich their existing entries. If you love old ruins, churches, monuments or own a listed house, it is a great opportunity to help preserve this heritage and preserve a moment in history. For more information and to set up an account, follow the link:

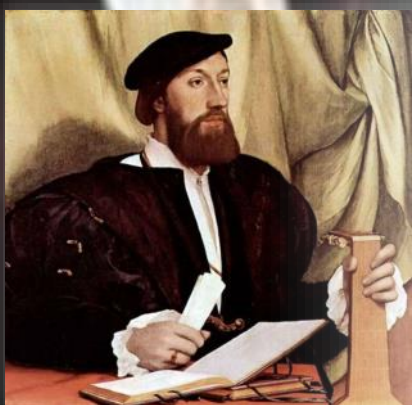
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/enrich-the-list/>.





This portrait painted by Hans Holbein the Younger in about 1534 is thought by some experts to be of Philip Vanwylder, a lutenist at the Court of Henry VIII. His unlikely connection with Cerne Abbey arises from a 50 year lease of the Abbey and its lands that Henry granted to him on 6 February 1540; less than a year after the last Abbot, Thomas Corton, had surrendered the Abbey to the Crown.

As part of the Society’s research into the layout of the Abbey buildings we have recently obtained a copy of the 1540 lease from Winchester College’s archives; Winchester College formerly owned Minterne Magna and many other tracts of land around Cerne. The lease is beautifully written in medieval Latin. A copy of the first page of the lease is shown below. The whole of the original and a translation can be found on our website.



Although the lease does not give any detailed description of the Abbey buildings or where they lay, the description of the “demayne landis of the said late monastery” is of considerable interest, many areas still bearing the same name. The description is as follows:

“the house and site of the late monastery of Cerne in the county of Dorset, now dissolved, together with all houses, buildings, barns, orchards, gardens, waters, pools, fishponds, land and ground, being within the site, enclosure, circuit and precinct of the said monastery...”

Contd...

...and also all those lands, meadows, pastures and pasturages called Yelcombe, Podingslade, Milfurlonge, Smalcombe, Holcombe, Northmeade, Horsecrofte, Vingmed, Newemedeclose, Whittemede, Mulcrofte, Holcombemede, Wythyberye, Brodemeade, Brodebener, Coventbener, Shepeclose, Weneclose, Groveclose, Parkeclose, Barton Furlonge, Barton Close, Withyberye, lying at the foot of Totcombe, Newclose, Chescombe, Pudelway and Totcombe, and one close of land at Totcombe Dykeleydowne. And also one pasture, lying on the north side of the chapel of St Katharine there with their appurtenances."

How did Philip, who was born in 1500, probably near Wormhoulte in what is now the far north of France, obtain leasehold ownership of Cerne Abbey and all its lands? The simple answer is that Henry VIII was a very enthusiastic musician who held Philip in high regard and greatly valued his services as a lutenist and composer. Philip had come to the Tudor court in about 1520, most likely with his brother Peter, following an introduction by their father Mathis who had been there as a lutenist from 1506 to 1517. Philip steadily advanced his position at court and prospered financially.

By 1529 he had become a member of the Privy Chamber and had been granted licences to import goods including Toulouse woad and Gascon wine.

By 1539 he had become entitled to own land and thus profit from the dissolution of the monasteries.

He was granted leases of various monastic properties in London and other parts of Dorset as well as that of Cerne Abbey.

The lute rose to prominence during Henry's reign. He gave one to each of his children Mary, Elizabeth and Edward and employed Philip to teach them.

[illegible]


1



It Happened *This* Month

December



1863. On Wednesday 16 December 1863, the vicar of Cerne, the Rev. W. H. Davies, convened a public meeting at the New Inn to discuss an issue of pressing importance. For some time, Davies and several members of his congregation had expressed their concerns over the state of the organ in the parish church. This was described as an old barrel organ which was considered to 'retard rather than aid the musical portion of public worship' possessing as it did 'eccentric notions of music and will not be guided

by the laws of harmony and concord'. At the meeting, which was well attended, it was resolved that a public subscription should be opened, with potential donors encouraged to contribute to its target of £140, the estimated cost of a new 'finger organ'. A collection committee was formed, and funds were sought in earnest. Happily, the subscription exceeded early expectations. Within a few months, a total of £180 had been raised, which included generous donations from Lords Digby and Rivers. The new organ, built by J. W. Walker of London, was installed and debuted at two special services held in late October 1864. At both events the church organist, Anne James, performed to the great satisfaction of all those present. Cerne's publicly funded organ remains *in situ* in the parish church to this day, replete with a plaque informing visitors that it was 'erected by public subscription A.D. 1864'.



1974. At 6.15pm on Sunday 8 December 1974, the BBC broadcast the first of three 35-minute documentaries collectively titled *Away in a Village*. The three programmes, which were shown over successive weeks, recorded the Christmas preparations that were made – presumably a year previously - in Cerne Abbas. At the time the

films were aired, Britain was experiencing a period of extreme crisis. A combination of rising inflation with caps applied to both public and private sector pay rises resulted in increased poverty and social disquiet. In this context, it's easy to imagine the BBC seeing *Away in a Village* as offering an escape from the upheavals engulfing the nation. The programmes reveal a community where the traditional pillars of social order – church, pub, school, and a whistling postman – had been retained, which may have provided a sense of comfort, stability and continuity for viewers. The programmes were broadcast again the following Christmas. But, forty-five years later, the programmes have a different appeal. They



now provide an historic record of the village, providing a reminder of how much has changed in a relatively short space of time. Acceptable attitudes to car safety – at one point a car is filmed driving to Dorchester with two children sitting, seatbelt free, on the passenger seat – were plainly different. A rickety-looking bus arriving at the (now not-the-) bus stop outside of the Red Lion after descending Alton Lane looks incongruous. And the crowded pubs, especially in these socially distanced times, seem positively dangerous. If you are interested to see what Cerne Abbas was like almost half a century ago, you can watch all three of the programmes, which have been spliced together to form a single 105-minute film, on the CHS website.



1904. Although the world's first model was produced commercially by Daimler in 1885, the motorcycle remained something of an undependable novelty even by the early years of the twentieth century. The machine's unreliability was apparent in the early evening of 6 January 1904 when a rider – who chose to remain anonymous – was travelling on the road between Cerne and Middlemarsh. Having reached the bottom of a slope, he stopped briefly to make some manual adjustment to his motorbike, and

then, being unable to restart it, continued his journey by pushing it along the road. After making a few yards progress he was subjected to what was reported as both an 'attempted highway robbery' and a 'ruffianly attack' by vagabonds who sought to relieve him of his valuables. The fortunate approach of a carriage scared the would-be muggers, who made off empty handed but left the rider lying in the road, covered in mud but unharmed. The shocking event was subsequently reported in several of the Dorset and Somerset newspapers. But not everyone was convinced of the genuineness of the story. A correspondent to the following week's *Western Chronicle*, a resident of Cerne Abbas who gave his name as 'Free Wheel', sought to reassure cyclists of the safety of the local roads. He claimed that, as a local cyclist of many years, he had never seen any tramps in the vicinity after 6.00pm, despite often being out on his bike as late as midnight. He believed that the story was a fiction and that cyclists had little to worry about.

Specifically, Free Wheel felt that 'our lady cyclists' need not be scared to venture out in the evenings and that 'our roads are carefully watched by the local police', to which he added the observation 'which we sometimes find to our inconvenience'.

ATTEMPTED HIGHWAY ROBBERY — MOTOR CYCLIST AND TRAMPS.

RUFFIANLY ATTACK.

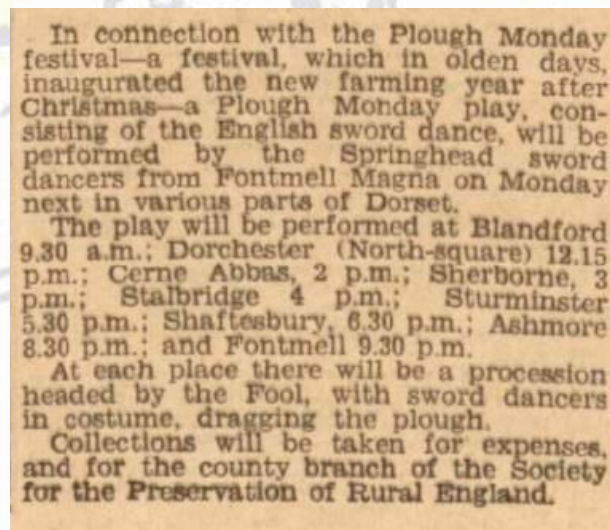
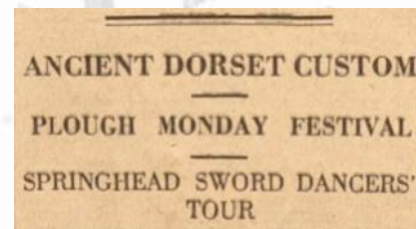
On Wednesday evening, between 8 and 9 o'clock, a motor cyclist (whose name he desires should be withheld at present), was attacked by two vagabonds at a point between Cerne and Middlemarsh, where there is a nasty dip in the road.

It appears that after riding down hill he got off the machine at the point mentioned in order to adjust some part of it and afterwards proceeded to push it up hill.

He had not got many yards before two men sprang upon him. One wrested the machine away and the other closed with the cyclist, brought him to the ground, and was in the act of rifling his pockets when a trap appeared on the scene, with the results that the scoundrels hurriedly departed, leaving their victim covered with mud in the road.

The driver of the trap kindly assisted the cyclist to proceed further on the homeward journey. — *Gillingham Gazette*.

1938. Plough Monday was a festival which was, by tradition, honoured each year on the first Monday after twelfth night. It marked the start, after the Christmas celebrations, of the new farming year and was seen as the final hurrah of the festive season. A feature of the Plough Monday celebrations was the dragging of a plough, decorated with garlands, ribbons and streamers, around the village by a team of agricultural labourers who knocked on the doors of wealthier residents seeking 'donations' to fund the revelries to follow. The failure to make an adequate contribution might result in the plough being employed for destructive purposes on that individual's property – a little like a rural Trick or Treat. After the collection, the festival continued with music, drinking, and an elaborate 'sword dance', the overseeing of which was the responsibility of the Fool, who was always present. However, as was the case for many longstanding popular traditions, the keeping of Plough Monday died out during the nineteenth century. So, the news, published in the *Western Gazette*, that the festival was to be revived that year in Cerne Abbas, might have been greeted with a combination of excitement and curiosity.



Under the headline 'Ancient Dorset Custom', readers were informed that on the following Monday, 9 January, the Springhead Sword Dancers from Fontmell Magna were to perform their Plough Monday play in the Square at 2.00pm. The culmination of the play was the sword dance in which eight performers, accompanied by an accordion and shouts of '*Speed the Plough!*', ceremonially 'beheaded' the Fool, only for the unfortunate decapitee to be resurrected shortly afterwards by the touch of the plough. As in past times, the events were aimed at raising money, but, rather than funding a round of drinks, the sum collected was donated to the Society for the Preservation of Rural England. The revival of this old custom was well received, despite the wet weather that greeted the players. However, the event must have been of a short duration; the Springhead troupe – who travelled to Cerne by van – had other engagements that day at Dorchester at 12.15pm, at Sherborne at 3.00pm, and at Stalbridge at 4.00pm, with two further performances at other locations later that evening. The revival of the Plough Monday celebration was maintained in Dorset for another decade but had, again, fallen by the wayside by the 1950s. The date of the next Plough Monday is 11th January 2021 – you might like to mark the day with a pint of beer and a hearty shout of '*Speed the Plough!*'.

February



1880. The next time you take a stroll down Abbey Street, spare a thought for poor Andrew Partington. Partington was a 47-year-old mason who, on Saturday 7 February 1880, was employed along with Isaac Russell, in removing a damaged chimney pot from the roof of Thomas Groves' house which, today, is numbered 17, Abbey Street. The two men used three ladders to reach their target; a long one which reached from the street to the eaves of the house, and two shorter ones which were tied together to reach the apex of the slate roof.

Both men climbed the first ladder, where Russell remained to hold the base of the two shorter ones while Partington ascended to the summit.

Having reached his goal, Partington removed the chimney pot, placed it on his shoulder, and began his descent. However, having retraced his way down the top three rungs, the conjoined ladder twisted sharply to the left. Despite dropping the chimney pot, which narrowly missed Russell, Partington was unable to keep his balance and fell seventeen feet to the ground, landing on his head and shoulder. He was carried, unconscious, into Groves' house and the village physician, Dr McEnery, was summoned. Despite Partington having now regained consciousness, McEnery knew immediately that his case was a hopeless one. He ordered the injured man to be carried to his home in Back Lane, where he died the next morning from the injuries that he had sustained. The jury at the inquest, held at the New Inn on the following Monday, returned a verdict of accidental death.

1890.

And finally, a dark echo of our present situation and a reminder that there is nothing new under the sun. In its edition of 21 February 1890, the *Bridport News* updated its readers on the 'flu epidemic's progress through Cerne Abbas. That year, the nation was in the grip of what was referred to at the time as the 'Russian Flu', an epidemic which had arrived in Britain the previous year and made recurring appearances through to 1895.

Among its victims, in January 1892, was the Duke of Clarence, the eldest son of the Prince of Wales and who was, at the time of his birth and his death, second in line to the British throne. Many Cerne residents contracted the virus early in 1890 and it was reported that, despite the efforts of the local doctor, 'a large number were placed *hors de combat* in the battle of life'. Both young and old were afflicted – attendances at both the village school and at the meetings of the Ancient Order of Foresters dropped significantly. However, women appeared to suffer the most.

CERNE ABBAS.
THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC.—The influenza has at last settled down among the inhabitants of this town in grim

CERNE ABBAS.

THE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC.—The influenza has at last settled down among the inhabitants of this town in grim earnest, a large number being placed *hors de combat* in the battle of life, and, despite the unflagging exertions of the resident qualified medical practitioner there seems no immediate prospect of showing a clean bill of health. Young and old are indiscriminately attacked, the effect on the school attendance being very serious, and the local branch of the A.O.F. suffering heavily. Among the adults the fair sex have supplied the greatest proportion of victims, and the bare and forsaken appearance of the choir stalls at St. Mary's on Sunday night strikingly illustrated the serious extent of the epidemic, for, with the exception of the organist, the ladies were "conspicuous by their absence," and only four male members were, it is reported, able to attend. Doubtless the well-known delicate and sensitive nature of the vocal organs of singers makes them peculiarly susceptible to the attack of the malignant Muscovite invader, and fully accounts for the almost total collapse of our talented choir. On observing the state of affairs, a slight tremor of consternation was felt by the congregation, but the "basses" presently pluckily essayed the parts of the absent "sopranos," and, aided by a few of the "lay" members, pulled through with surprisingly good effect, and deserve to be congratulated on the success of their unexpected and unrehearsed performance.

While only four men managed to appear for the church choir at a recent service, no women at all were in attendance. However, readers of the *News* were doubtless pleased to discover that the 'Muscovite invader' failed to scupper the choir's performance, as 'the basses pluckily essayed the parts of the absent sopranos' and 'pulled through with surprisingly good effect'.





Robin Mills

The Blizzard of 1978 – The Arctic Comes to Dorset.

In this part of the UK the apparent effects of our warming climate are that the seasons are less defined, there are more extremes of heat and rainfall, and even light falls of snow seem exceptional. Major snowfall is rare indeed.



That rarity is in fact nothing new. Really harsh winters occurred in 1881, 1891, 1947, and 1963. In 1947 there were massive falls of snow, and in '62/'63 the first snow arrived on Boxing Day, the remains of which were still in evidence by Easter, but persistent

and severe cold was the main problem. That winter, at home on the farm, my brother and I honed our skating-rink driving skills as teenagers in an old Ford 8 we had acquired from Tite's scrap yard, climbing slopes (which had defeated the farm tractors) with the rear tyres deflated to barely off the rim to increase traction. Those skills came in handy a few years later.

The winter of 1978 had been otherwise unremarkable, with a mixture of cold snaps and mild wet spells, and one could have been forgiven for thinking spring was around the corner.

In early February moist air was approaching from the Atlantic on a low pressure system. A large blocking high pressure system had built up over Northern Europe and Scandinavia, feeding bitterly cold air across the North Sea and preventing the low system from progressing westwards. On the 9th and 10th the daytime temperature at Hurn airport was minus 7.7C. Reassuringly, the local forecast promised "sleet turning to rain" in the following days. It didn't turn out quite like that.

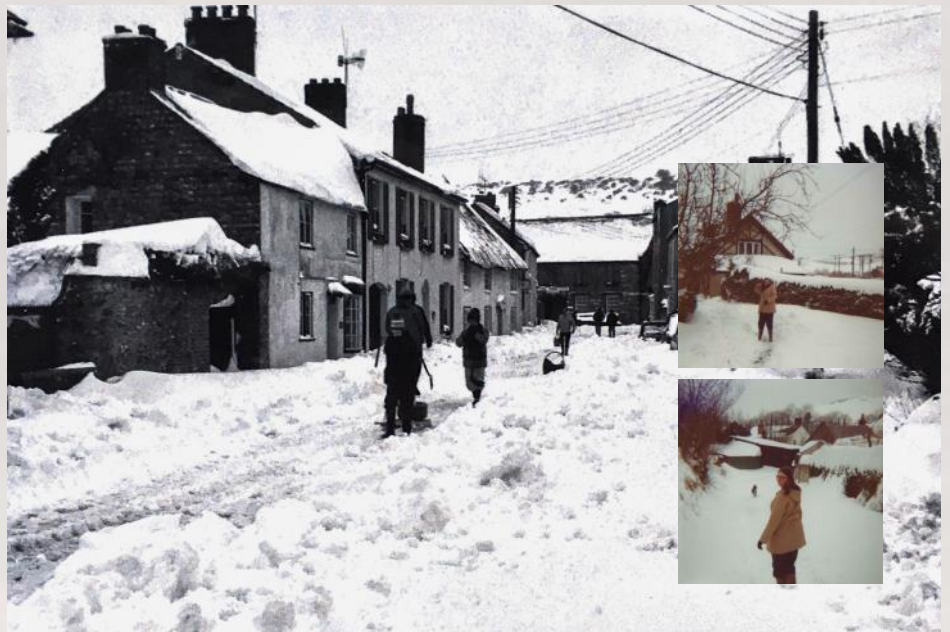


Photo: Dorset Echo

On Wednesday 15th the low system slipped south east, allowing the cold air to funnel across the West Country, mixing with the moist Atlantic air, and causing heavy snow to fall. The exposed main roads of Dorset quickly became blocked, people got stuck in their cars, and snowploughs were hard pressed to keep the roads clear. The following night of the 16th a repeat performance took place, with the snow and slush freezing solid and adding to the treacherous conditions.

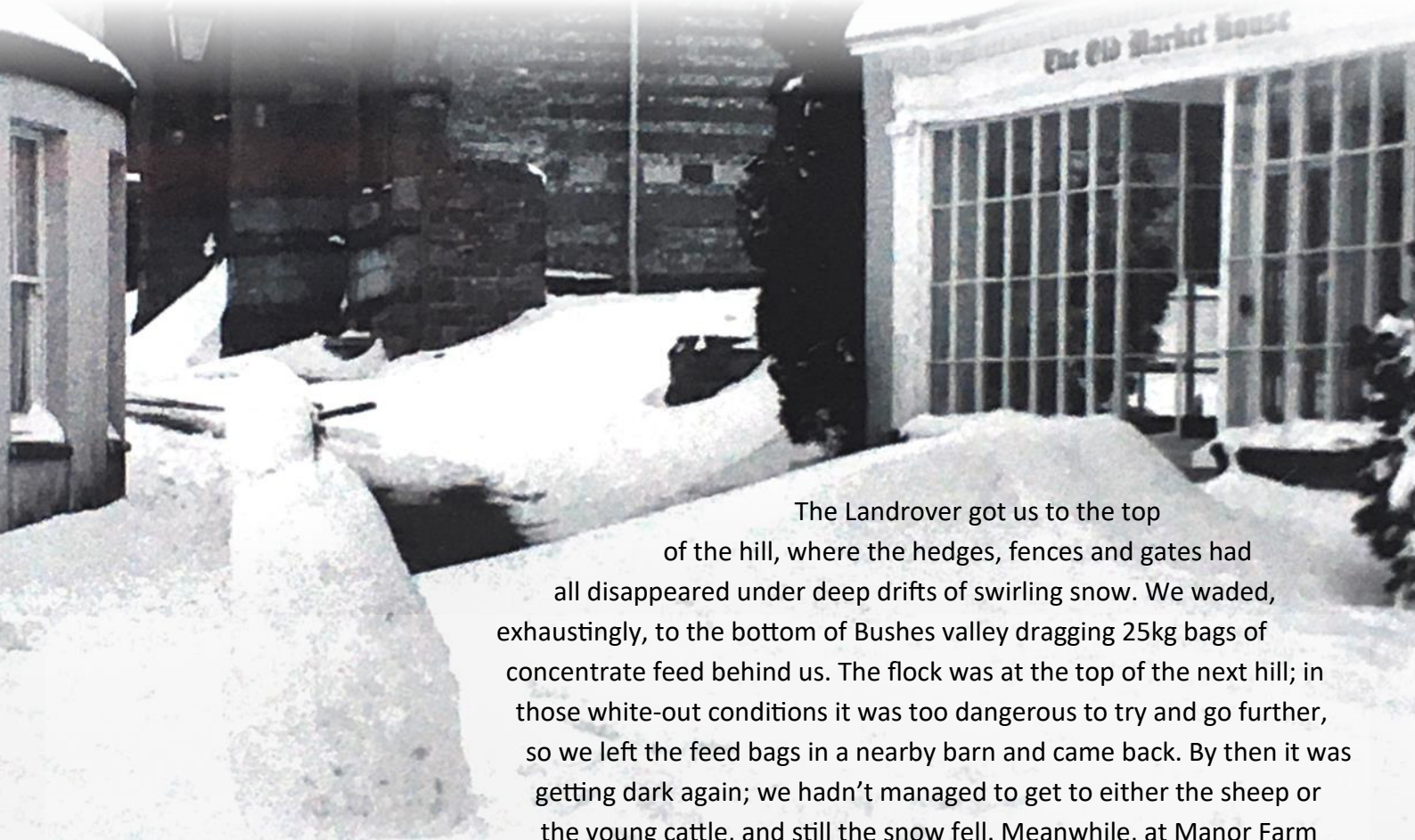


At Watcombe Farm, the family farm at Forston, I was experiencing my second winter after coming back to run the farm with my brother Tim. About 650 acres, it lies to the west of the A352, extending towards the Sydling valley. The buildings and yard are at the SW corner of the holding by the road, and the furthest field is over 2 miles distant, separated by 2 hills rising nearly 600ft above sea level, and a steep valley known as Bushes between. At the time there was a sheep flock of around 200 ewes, due to lamb in March, and a spring calving beef herd of around 50 cows, plus another 50 or so young cattle. The land being free draining we out-wintered all the livestock, and fed mostly hay in small bales. A healthy system which the breeds we kept thrived in, hard weather was not normally a problem. The young cattle and the sheep were wintering in Bushes valley, the sheep in the furthest field. Those first 2 days gave us the usual problems of thawing out frozen water troughs by burning straw against them, and getting through snowdrifts with the Landrover we used for feeding. I had fitted dump truck tyres to the rear wheels which were very effective. One major problem was diesel fuel which “waxed up” in low temperatures, clogging the filters. Engines that won’t start in those conditions waste a massive amount of time.

Saturday the 18th was bitterly cold with a strong east wind. That evening there was a Barn Dance at Cerne Village Hall in Wills Lane in aid of the playgroup, and as parents we joined in the fun. It soon became clear that snow was falling rapidly during the evening so Pauline and I left early, and had an exciting drive home down the valley punching through drifts in our old Triumph 2000. Our neighbour Will Best at Manor Farm went out after dark to give hay to some heifers in the driving snow, but it all blew away before they could eat it.

The next morning, the 19th, it was still snowing hard, and I opened the back door of our house to find the snow 2 feet above the top of it. Digging my way out of the house, and wading down to the farm yard through waist deep snow some 300 yards away, took the best part of an hour.

February was the beginning of calving time for the cows so the priority was to feed and check them. They were reasonably close at hand so we moved the herd to a field by the yard and fed them. One poor cow had slipped under a fence into a steep wood and in the struggle had injured herself severely. We managed to toboggan her down the slope onto a makeshift platform on a tractor, and called a vet when we got her in the shed. He treated her as best he could, and then asked me if I had any whiskey. I had half a bottle. We had a nip each, then poured the rest down the cow’s throat. “At least if she dies she’ll be happy,” said the vet. Later in the day, Ron Wills and Jack Bridle, who worked on the farm, and I, set out to try and get to the sheep.



The Landrover got us to the top of the hill, where the hedges, fences and gates had all disappeared under deep drifts of swirling snow. We waded, exhaustingly, to the bottom of Bushes valley dragging 25kg bags of concentrate feed behind us. The flock was at the top of the next hill; in those white-out conditions it was too dangerous to try and go further, so we left the feed bags in a nearby barn and came back. By then it was getting dark again; we hadn't managed to get to either the sheep or the young cattle, and still the snow fell. Meanwhile, at Manor Farm Pam Best skied to an outlying barn nearly a mile from the yard and fed some heifers taking shelter in some trees, dragging 2 days' worth of hay bales one at a time lashed to her skies across the snowy field, and returning home exhausted just before dark. When I went to bed that night I wondered how many of our livestock could have survived the onslaught.

Early next morning, the 20th, the cavalry started to arrive. My neighbour at Sydling, Jean Morris, phoned to say a RN helicopter pilot living in the village had offered to fly in fodder for the animals, and did we want him to come to us. An hour or so later a Wessex 5 clattered into a nearby field, we loaded hay and concentrates with the rotors still going, and I jumped in. In about 30 minutes we'd fed both young cattle, and the sheep, but it was clear that many of them were buried in a deep drift, and were still impossible to reach with farm vehicles.

Sheep will take shelter under a hedge in a snowstorm, and although they can become buried in the snow, provided they can keep a small air hole open to enable them to breathe, they have been known to survive up to a week eating the grass, and its roots, under their feet. Sadly in this case, the flock returned to the top of the same snowdrift during the latter part of the blizzard, suffocating many of the sheep buried in the first onslaught of snow.

Pam Best and her sister Ros had heroically skied to the sheep field with shovels strapped to their backs. They realised the snow drift burying the flock was in places 3 sheep deep. Digging out 11 live sheep, it was a relief to see them struggle free and get back on their feet, but the day was short, so they reluctantly had to leave the scene, with sheep still buried, to be able to get home before dark. When the rest of us arrived, with bamboo poles to probe the drift, and shovels, and subsequently as it thawed, we dug out another 30 in-lamb sheep. 22 were dead, and of the few we did get out alive, most aborted their lambs.

The Mumford boys, Jamie, Simon and Mark, from Cerne vicarage made their way somehow down the valley bringing whiskey, bless them. The pubs in Cerne, apparently, remained open 24hrs a day.

Another neighbour, John Hansford, from Brooklands Farm, arrived with his crawler tractor to try and punch through the huge drift at the top of the first hill so we could get across the farm easier. He tried several times to penetrate where the snow was a bit less deep without success. "I reckon I might do better straight over the top" he said. Charging up the snow on full power I thought for a moment he might make it, and then with a "crump" noise he disappeared, as his machine broke through the crust on top and sank out of sight. All that was visible was the pom-pom on the top of his woolly hat. The crawler stayed where it was for the next 10 days, but we got John out unscathed.



Over the next few days the weather turned mild again, and astonishingly the massive drifts of snow, some 15ft deep, all thawed and disappeared in just over 2 weeks. Fences and gates were flattened by the weight of snow as it melted. The cattle, clad in their out-wintering woolly coats, all survived and had a successful calving season. Life quickly returned to normal.



Only in 1881 was the depth of snow comparable, making 1978 the worst in nearly 100 years. Will a blizzard like that happen again in my lifetime? There's always that remote possibility. Would it cause as much chaos? Of course it would.

References & Credits:

The Blizzard of 78 – A snowstorm that buried Dorset, by Mark Ching

Will Best's 1978 Farm Diary.

Colour Images: Bob Prowse

B/W photos: Courtesy Mills family.

Skier Photo: [Dorset Echo story](#)





Janet Bartlett edited for the Magazine by George Mortimer

THE HEDGES OF CERNE ABBAS

 *A Millenium Project by CHS*



Hedges are one of the defining features of the British countryside and we would all be the poorer without them. They are made up of many native species of trees and shrubs, but also importantly they are a nature reserve providing home, shelter and food for all manner of wildlife.

The network of hedges across rural England is Bronze Age or possibly even earlier in origin. As the first farmers began clearing wooded areas for cultivation, they left strips of trees as boundaries. These trees encouraged dense and vigorous new growth forms, which became not only stock-proof, but also windproof to protect the crops within. It became a natural cycle. Cattle and sheep grazed on the hills in the warmer months while the arable hedged fields were cultivated. After the harvest the cattle were moved into these fields for protection, with the added benefit of the inevitable manure. These original hedges cost nothing to create, required no importing of materials and, in time, yielded valuable materials and produce of their own. Some trees were allowed to grow tall and served as immovable boundary markers and those that survive today include many of our oldest, grandest trees. To these original hedges were added others, planted by man to define feudal fields and parish boundaries. For example, the Ridgeway hedge which includes the TV mast marks the medieval boundary between the Cerne Abbas and Sydling St Nicholas parishes.

However, other hedges have later origins. Until the 17th century, much of Britain included 'common lands', a strip or open- field system inherited from feudal times which allowed grazing and tilling on these lands by the local peasantry to supplement their existence. Increasingly, landowners found that it was more profitable, for example in Dorset, to give over land to sheep grazing. Over time this led to the introduction of 'Enclosures' of the 'common lands', which required individual Acts of Parliament. Enclosures encouraged more hedges to mark out the landowners' newly enclosed territory. Inevitably, the peasantry were displaced with this erosion of their historical access to 'common lands' and the increasing use of mechanised farming, but that's another story.





Enclosure came late to Cerne Abbas, its Enclosure Act dating only from 1795. Signatories included Lord Rivers and about forty other local worthies, many being Cerne Abbas victuallers perhaps looking to expand or consolidate their businesses. They may have planted their own hedges or utilised the existing; we cannot be sure. Sadly, many hedges began to be removed from the 19th century. This loss accelerated with hills being brought into cultivation during the First World War, and particularly after the Second World War with ever-larger farming machines requiring more room to manoeuvre. Tens of thousands of miles of hedge were ripped out. This happened locally, for example the field we know as Northmead was originally bisected by hedges which followed the course of the old River Silley. This river rose at Minterne Parva and followed the landscape down to the Abbey for which it provided an exclusive water supply. These hedges, probably planted in Abbey times, were grubbed out in the mid-1950s and the field levelled.

Nor has the health of hedges been helped with the loss of traditional hedge-laying ('pleshed' in Dorset speak) every 10 or 20 years, which kept the hedges stock-proof. Hedge-laying would have been a routine winter task for legions of 'agricultural labourers' (the 'Ag Labs' of the 19th century census returns) a century and more ago. With the passing of this source of skilled labour, hedges have been left to the mercies of modern flailing machines, with fences erected to keep fields stock-proof. However, the legacy of this 'pleshing' can still be



seen in our local hedges where the growth, once horizontal, has reverted to a natural vertical instead, and their bases raised. The example seen here was found above Yelcombe Bottom in a field called Lime Kiln Field in the 1919 Sale under Lot 8. Lime burning in the hillside above Yelcombe ceased in the late 19th century, but one of the original kilns can still be found if you look carefully.

With the ever-present threat to our hedgerows an intrepid team of ladies, led by Janet Bartlet, decided to carry out a survey of the present hedges around the village, as a project for the millennium year of 2000. Their aim was to identify the number of different species of indigenous woody perennial trees in a number of selected hedges. Twenty seven hedges were selected from across the local countryside around the village, from as far north as the parish boundaries with Minterne and Alton Pancras and south to include Black Hill. In particular, the hedges included were those marking out the sunken roads towards Up Cerne, which was the ancient road to Evershot, and Piddle Lane to the east of the village.





Maps were of limited value in identifying hedges, except to show trends. The earliest map of the Cerne Abbas is from 1768 which, though indicating the presence of some field boundary hedges, was limited in its cover. The map which accompanied the 1798 Admeasurement Survey provided little further information in this respect, except to show that the medieval strip field pattern was still much in evidence. There was no map to accompany any changes following the 1795 Enclosure, but the nearest indication of its effect was the Tithe map drawn for the 1845 Tithe Survey. The Tithe map clearly showed the reduction in many small strip fields since the Enclosure, being replaced by fewer but larger

fields. The Tithe Survey showed field boundaries and some field names, but not hedges. The same was true with the maps for the 1919 Sale of the village. However, what the 1919 Sale provided was the surviving names of many individual fields. Some of these field names have their origins in antiquity.

Armed with a map produced by Janet, selected hedges were surveyed for their variety of indigenous species in 30m lengths. Why 30m lengths? It has been proposed by a Dr Max Hooper (in 1970), the so-called Hooper formula, that the number of tree and shrub species in a 30 metre length of hedge was an indicator of its age, with one species for each 100 years. Thus, a single species hedge is likely to be less than 100 years old, whilst a 1,000 year old hedge is likely to contain ten to twelve species. The formula has its detractors, but is now generally accepted as a useful rule of thumb if applied with caution and taking other factors into account.

The survey showed that the hedge species that predominated included Ash, Blackthorn (sloe gin!), Dog Rose, Elder, Field Maple, Hawthorn and Hazel. Sadly, mature English Elm trees were few, victims to Dutch Elm disease. What was found was that the average number of species in each 30m length varied between 3 and 11, but with most hedges having an average between 5 and 8. In particular, the hedges on the sunken roads to Up Cerne and on Piddle Lane had a species count that was exceptionally high, at 11 and 10 respectively. On the other hand, the known old Cerne/Sydling boundary on the Ridgeway only averaged 7 per 30m length. This was put down to its relatively exposed position which militated against new seedlings taking root.

What conclusions can be drawn from the survey? The majority of hedges using the Hooper formula survive from Abbey times. Particularly revealing was the exceptional count for the sunken roads to Up Cerne and in Piddle Lane. Taking the Hooper formula literally, these highways were in place even before the Abbey was established. This suggests that they followed a defined route across the Cerne Valley from pre-historic times.



The survey proved overall that we live in an ancient landscape, altered by humans over thousands of years and for which we are only the latest custodians. With regulations recently introduced to protect our more significant and ancient hedges, there is now a better chance that our landscape will survive for future generations and for us to enjoy today.

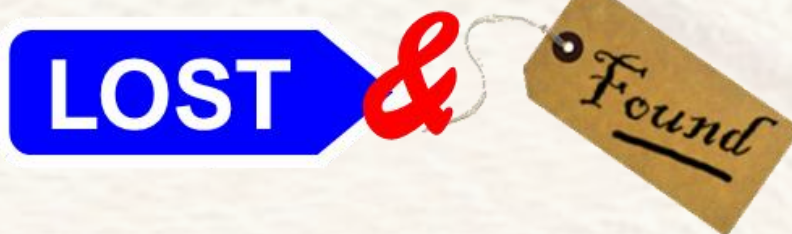


*Photos by John Charman, Jenny Mortimer
and Robin Mills*





Andrew Popkin



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

There is a wealth of everyday objects lying buried in gardens, waiting to be photographed and placed on this page! Please help us with any answers!



Clay pipe bowl. The owner asks who was RAOB?



George III Ha'penny dated 1723.

Hibernia was the Greek name for Ireland. Found No 3 Long St.



Silver Tot or Measure found in the embers of a house renovation bonfire.



What is this double-ended spoon for? Found in garden at No 5 Long St.



Part of a horse brass (hinged side piece)



**Please send me
photos of your finds**

LOST & Found



Clay kitchen bottle.
Found in verge on the
Uperne road.
(pattern below)



Plated necklace. Children's?
Found in garden C20



This object from the last issue is a heel from
a boot similar to one also found in the
garden belonging to the de Candoles in Back
Lane.



Large Belt buckle?

Child's shoe buckle?



Battery Terminal or knob?



Letters

Edited by George Mortimer

Graham Clark writes:

I hope this reaches you well in these strange times. I should like to say how much I have looked forward to and enjoyed the CHS Magazines, and the most recent was no exception. It is very good. Producing something such as this takes a lot of time and energy, but the result is I think adding up to another good resource for Cerne Abbas.

I got quite a surprise to see a photo on page 8, taken from the inside of the Royal Oak, in which the facades of the buildings across the Market Place are visible. I have not seen any other photos of those buildings from this angle. Does a good quality image of this view exist?

Recently I noted that all the Overseers Rates transcriptions have been uploaded onto the CHS website. I think they look very good and hope that people find them useful. I have found them a wonderful resource and only wish other parishes had such a good series.

With kind regards

Auckland, North Island, NZ

Editor's note: Graham is the historian for the Clark family of Cerne Abbas and his researches have provided many fascinating insights into the history of the village over the last 250 years or so. We are particularly grateful for his generosity in giving us his transcription of the Overseers Rates, an invaluable source for genealogical research.



Contd...



Letters

We were unable to provide a better quality image of the buildings from the Royal Oak, but Graham was able to give us a better idea of the houses that existed in the Market Square before they were destroyed by fire in the early 1930s. The fronts of the houses survive as the wall to the garden of No 1 Abbey Street. Graham also provided a sketch drawing done by Joseph Clark (not Joseph Benwell Clark, but his uncle) that has been deposited in the V & A and is shown below. The two right hand buildings can be clearly seen as those in the photo taken from the Royal Oak.



Diana Kimber writes:

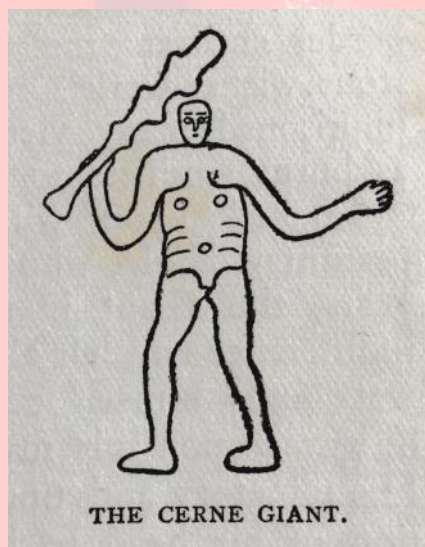
From Charles G Harper's book "The Hardy Country" (Literary Landmarks of the Wessex Novels), published 1904, I culled this gem [image of the Giant]. The image shows that our dear old friend did not always venture on to the hillside with no knickers on! His image here, at this date, causes one to wonder just when he was adapted to appear in his current state of undress. Perhaps this version of him is just a brief interlude of Edwardian modesty. Certainly, by 1939, Eric Ravillious' painting of the Giant shows him as we see him today.

Barton Lodge, Cerne Abbas.

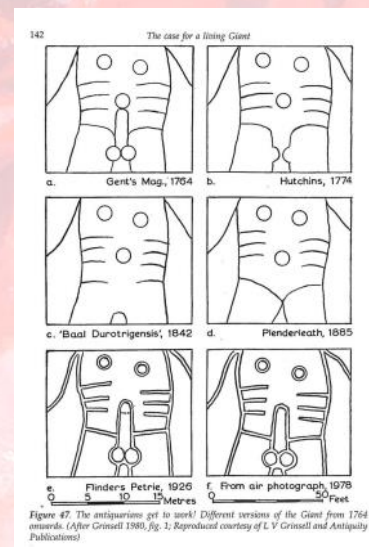
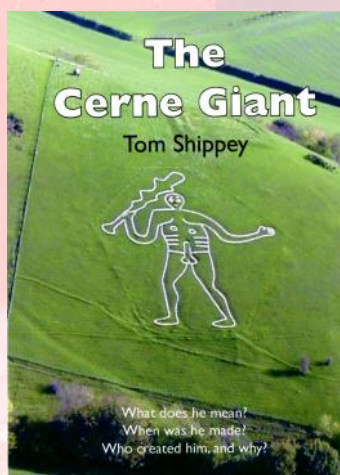


Letters

Editor's note: The Giant, in or not in his full glory, has been portrayed differently in deference to the sensitivities of the age. The 'Gentleman's Magazine' of 1764 has him shown as intended, but with his original navel still in place. The 1774 version was from the Revd Hutchins 'History of Dorset', so no surprises that he was emasculated. The Victorian era was equally censorious, until Flinders Petrie came along. The navel has since been incorporated into the whole, as it were, making his attributes even more pronounced.



For more information read Professor Tom Shippey's book *'The Cerne Giant'* sold by the Society



Jennie Paterson writes:

I always look forward to the CHS Magazine and found the current article on fires in Cerne interesting. Trivial I know by comparison, but we did of course have a fire in 29 Long Street, when the Aga caught fire one Sunday evening around 9 pm, probably in 2014. We had 2 fire engines and we had to get Ken Griffin, living next door, out just in case. Prior to that there was quite a serious fire at 27 Long Street when Gemma and Lee Cornick were renting it.

Stay safe and well

Poole, Dorset

Editor's note: Jennie and John Paterson moved to Poole a few years ago. John was the Chair of the Historical Society and they are still welcome regular visitors to the village. They remain members of the Historical Society.



Letters

Elizabeth Russell-Gaunt writes:

I think you will find that it was the main drainage which came to Cerne in the late 1950s, before that The Old House had a septic tank which probably leaked as my parents never had it emptied, and the water which came out of the pump in the garden from a well was contaminated. My father used it to water the garden. The owners of Crockers, in Long Street, served afternoon teas there in the 1950's, and I remember that the upstairs bathroom which customers were allowed to use had an Elsan loo.

Best wishes

Editor's note: Elizabeth, as most readers will know, is the daughter of George Squibb. She lived in Cerne Abbas in the Old House, No 1 Abbey Street. 'Crockers' is now No 18 Long Street. An interesting perspective into how late the modern conveniences we take for granted came late to rural Dorset. Indeed, main drainage only arrived in Godmanstone within the last decade. One might ask how the effluent from houses was disposed of. Dave Fox recalls that it was put into the river downstream from the village, helped on its way by a head of water built up behind the sluice upstream of the old Mill, to be released on the word of command!

By the Editor:

In response to the article in the July issue of the CHS Magazine on Pumps and Well heads, the story has taken a fascinating turn.

Brian Edwards, a Visiting Research Fellow with The Regional History Centre, UWE Bristol and advising the NT in the current exercise to date the Giant using OSL techniques, sent us the following email.

Congratulations on the Magazine once again. I have always found the Pitchmarket pump head very interesting and to learn of the detective work by Mrs Vale was most encouraging. The photograph in A.O. Gibbons' Cerne Abbas (1962) suggests that the pump head is dated 1691 rather than 1697, the final numeral being strikingly similar if not identical to the first. Gibbons also stated the pump head was in the possession of a Mrs Catherine Mary Vidler (1869 -1967) who was the widow of Oscar Collyer Vidler (1868-1960), an active member of the Dorset Archaeological Society. This suggests a link with the Dorset County Museum. It appears the Vidlers had lived in Icen Way in Dorchester since before the Great War, at some later point acquiring the pump head and perhaps donating it to the Museum's collection. An estate sale was held when an H.E. Tite, a builder with property in Dorchester, died in 1948, so that could potentially be the link. There is then hope the journey of how the pump head came to the Museum may yet be fully revealed. I can only applaud Mrs Vale's efforts and await any further developments with great interest.

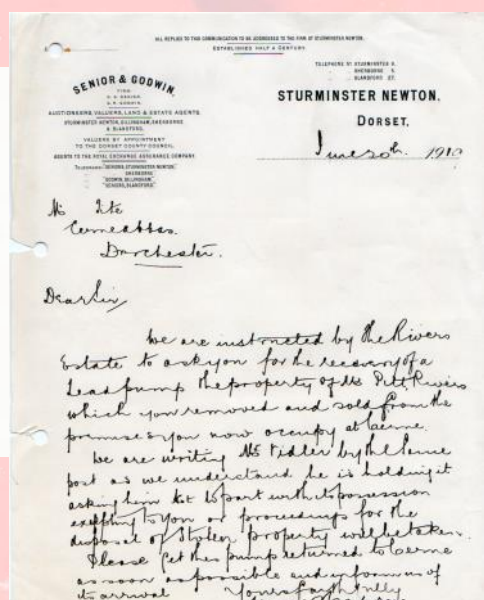




Letters

Readers will remember from the article that the earliest pump well head in Cerne Abbas of which we were aware was one now in the Dorset County Museum. In 1676, a Thomas Washington married Maria Randall in St Mary's. They lived in the Pitchmarket and had four daughters and a son. The pump well head, originally at that house, has the initials 'TMW' and is dated 1691, presumably when the well was commissioned. The circumstances in which it ended up in the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester were not known. With Brian Edwards' help and further research, the story is now much clearer.

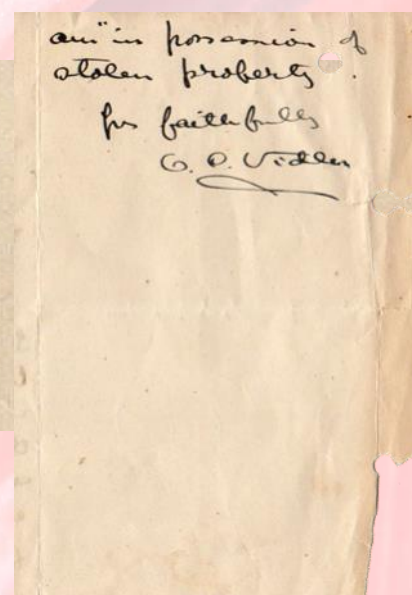
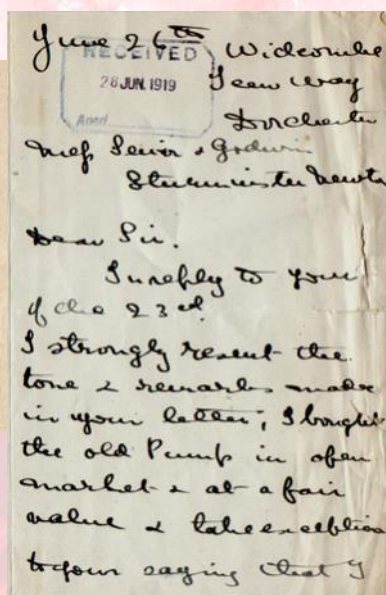
Sifting through the original correspondence recovered from Senior & Godwin, who acted for the Pitt-Rivers Estate for the 1919 Sale of Cerne Abbas, the following came to light. In a letter dated 20 June 1919 from Senior & Godwin to Harry Tite, three months before the date of the Sale, they said that they had been instructed by the Pitt-Rivers Estate:



'to ask for the recovery of the lead pump, the property of Mr Pitt-Rivers, which you removed and sold from the premises you now occupy at Cerne'. We are writing to Mr Vidler by the same post as we understand he is holding it, asking him not to part with its possession excepting to you or proceedings for the disposal of stolen goods will be taken. Please get this pump returned to Cerne as soon as possible and inform us of its arrival'

There is no record of a response from Harry Tite, but obviously the separate letter to Mr Vidler arrived, by the tone of his response to Senior & Godwin:

'In reply to yours of the 23rd, I strongly resent the tone and remarks made in your letter. I bought the old Pump in open market and at a fair value and take exception to your saying that I am in possession of stolen property'.





Letters

His response was, of course, avoiding the main issue: that the pump head was not Harry Tite's to sell. Mr Vidler was in effect in receipt of 'stolen goods', if inadvertently. However, the law in 1919 stated that, if an article was purchased at a market in good faith (i.e. if the buyer had no reason to suspect it might have been stolen), title would transfer to the buyer if the market was established, public, open to everyone and operated during daylight hours. This law, known for good reasons as the "thieves' charter", was abolished in 1995. *[I am obliged to the Chairman for this legal advice]* Hence, the pump head was now 'legally' in the possession of Mr Vidler. The matter appears not to have been taken any further by Senior & Godwin, as they were probably swamped by the other preparations for the Sale. At the time of this furious exchange of letters, Harry Tite, described in the 1911 Census as a building contractor, was living in the Pitchmarket with his wife, Kate. He subsequently bought the medieval range of houses in Abbey Street, Lot 38, for £340 at the Sale on 24 September 1919. He then sold the Pitchmarket to Clarice and Stella Lendon, spinsters of Warwick Square, London, for £200 in February 1926. The conveyance states that Harry Tite was by then living in Dorchester.

The fact that feelings were still quite strong about this at the time can be read in a little dissertation called 'Concerning Cerne' published in 1926, written by one Eleanor Frances Hall. In it she refers to the Washington pump head and states that the '*lead plate of the cottage pump which displays his initials has been looted by a collector*'.

As Brian Edward says above, we know that in the early 1960s the pump head was still in the possession of Catherine Vidler, the widow of Oscar Vidler who was an active member of the Dorset Archaeological Society. This society is now the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, who own and manage the Dorset County Museum. There can be little doubt that the pump head was deposited in the Museum by either Oscar or Catherine Vidler at some time, without the Museum being aware of its provenance, and wrongly attributed to a 'Wellington' of Dorchester. As Patricia Vale relates in the September issue of the Magazine, it was only having been given permission to look in the Museum loft that she found it and its true identity revealed. Perhaps we should be grateful that it has survived.

There can be no doubt that the pump head was improperly removed from its historic home in 1919. Is it not time for this pump head to be reinstated by the Museum to where it was originally installed by Thomas and Maria Washington in 1691 and therefore an integral part of the history of Cerne Abbas? What are the views of readers of the CHS Magazine?

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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