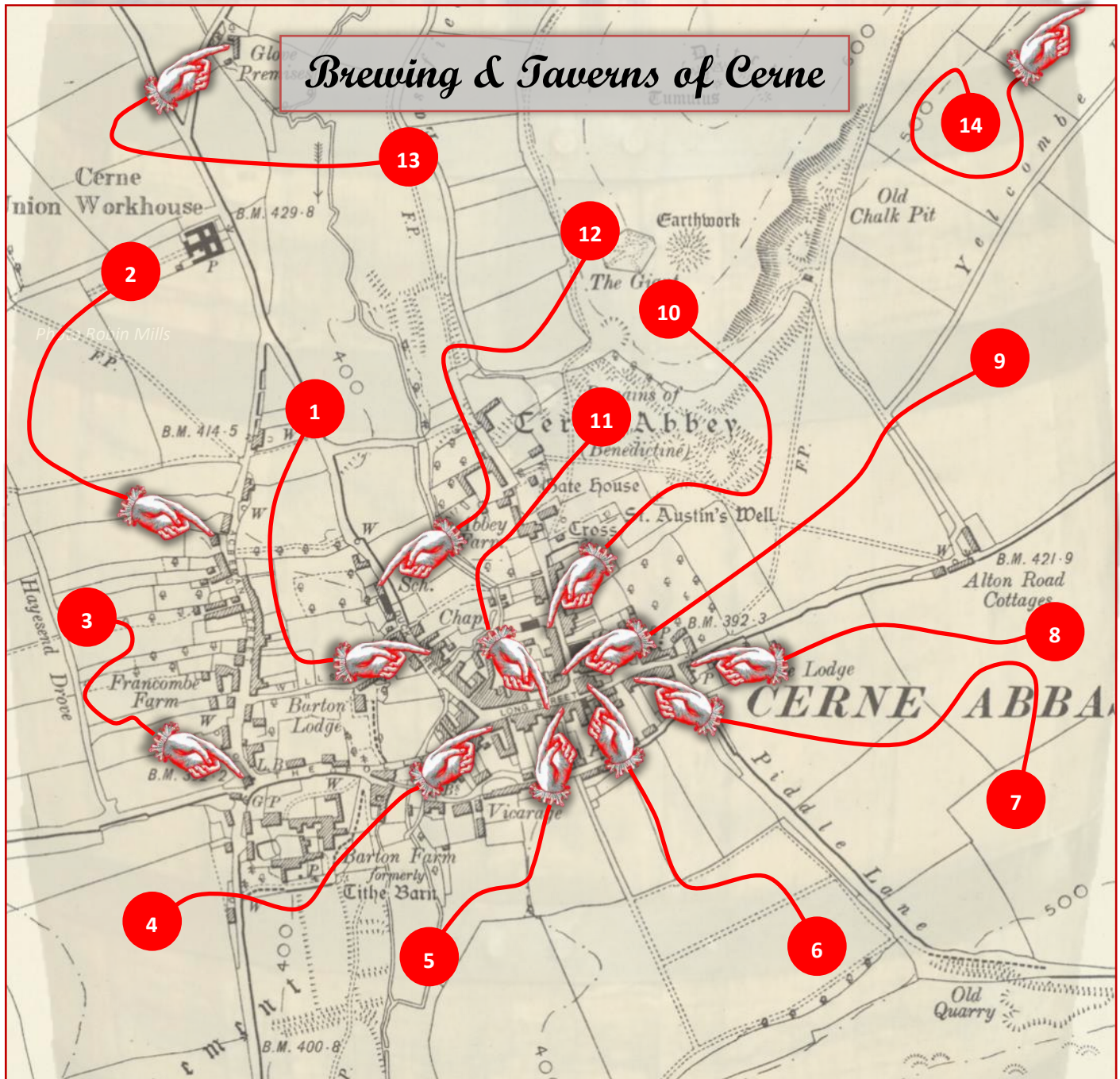




Cerne  
Historical  
Society

# MAGAZINE



-  **Bells Of St Mary's** George Mortimer
-  **Early Soccer in Cerne** Ian Denness
-  **Taverns of Cerne** Robin Mills
-  **In This Month** Ian Denness
-  **Lost & Found** George Mortimer
-  **Letters** George Mortimer

Autumn  
**2021**



Welcome to the Autumn issue of the Society's magazine which is being published a few days before the 23rd September when at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall we will hold our first meeting since February 2020, when Gordon Bartlet gave a talk on The Railway that nearly Came to Cerney. On this occasion the journalist and author Roger Guttridge will be giving a talk on "My Family and Other Smugglers". I do hope you will come if you are able to do so. It should be a very interesting and entertaining evening. In conjunction with the Village Hall we will be taking all reasonable steps we can, including sanitising, ventilation and social distancing, to ensure the meeting is as safe as possible. In case you are unable to attend, the meeting will be accessible via Zoom. The necessary link is being sent out to members. Please remember that the Kettle Bridge car park is closed, so only those with disabled badges will be able to park in the Village Hall spaces.

Our further meetings this year will be held at the Village Hall on 28 October when James Crowden will give a talk on the History of Cider and on November 25 when Liz Merry will talk about Old St Pancras Churchyard, Shelley and the Dorset Connection. We have now arranged virtually all of the Society's programme for 2022 and will announce that by the end of the year. What we can announce now is that we are planning to hold our AGM on the 27 January 2022.

This is the 9<sup>th</sup> issue of the magazine we have produced since the first one was published in April 2020. I am very grateful to all those who have contributed articles to this and previous issues and to those behind the scenes who have also helped make it a resounding success. My particular thanks go to Andrew Popkin who is responsible for the design, graphics and publishing of the magazine and whose hard work and creativity, not only in relation to the magazine but also our website, our Zoom meetings and all other IT activities of the Society, have been incomparable.

Those IT activities are now so extensive that it is essential for us to find other members who can assist us in respect of them. If we cannot obtain such assistance we may, regrettably, have to cease publication of our magazine which would be a very great pity. So, if you do have IT skills and are willing to contribute some of your time to helping us, do please let us know either by emailing me at the address below or by emailing our Treasurer at [cerneabbashistory.org](mailto:cerneabbashistory.org) Alternatively if you would like to hear more about what is involved please speak to me or another member of the Committee either at one of our meetings or the Open Evening the Village Hall is holding on the 15<sup>th</sup> October.

**Contd.**

## Introduction Continued

One of the projects which the Society is engaged in at the moment is the Relics Survey which is progressing well, as you will see from the update George Mortimer has written on page 20. However we think it highly likely that there are many other pieces of masonry in the village and surrounding area which once formed part of Cerne Abbey. If you know of any, please let us know.

Another is entitled “Cerne Abbas in the Covid Pandemic: Living through it”, which forms part of the Society’s Living Histories Project. We are inviting Cerne residents, businesses and organisations to record their experiences of the Covid Pandemic: the effects on their businesses; working, family, and social life; and how this crisis has affected all our lives emotionally. Volunteers will be recording oral interviews with those who wish to take part, and the recordings will be stored for future reference in the CHS digital archives. If you would like to take part in this project, particularly those with frontline experiences to relate, please email Robin Mills at [cerneabbashistory.org/contact-us/](mailto:cerneabbashistory.org/contact-us/)

I very much hope that you will enjoy this issue of the magazine. We plan to publish the next issue, the Winter one in the first half of December

Gordon

**Gordon Bishop – Chair of the Cerne Historical Society**

**Gordon may be easily contacted by using the form on the website [cerneabbashistory.org/contact-us/](mailto:cerneabbashistory.org/contact-us/)**







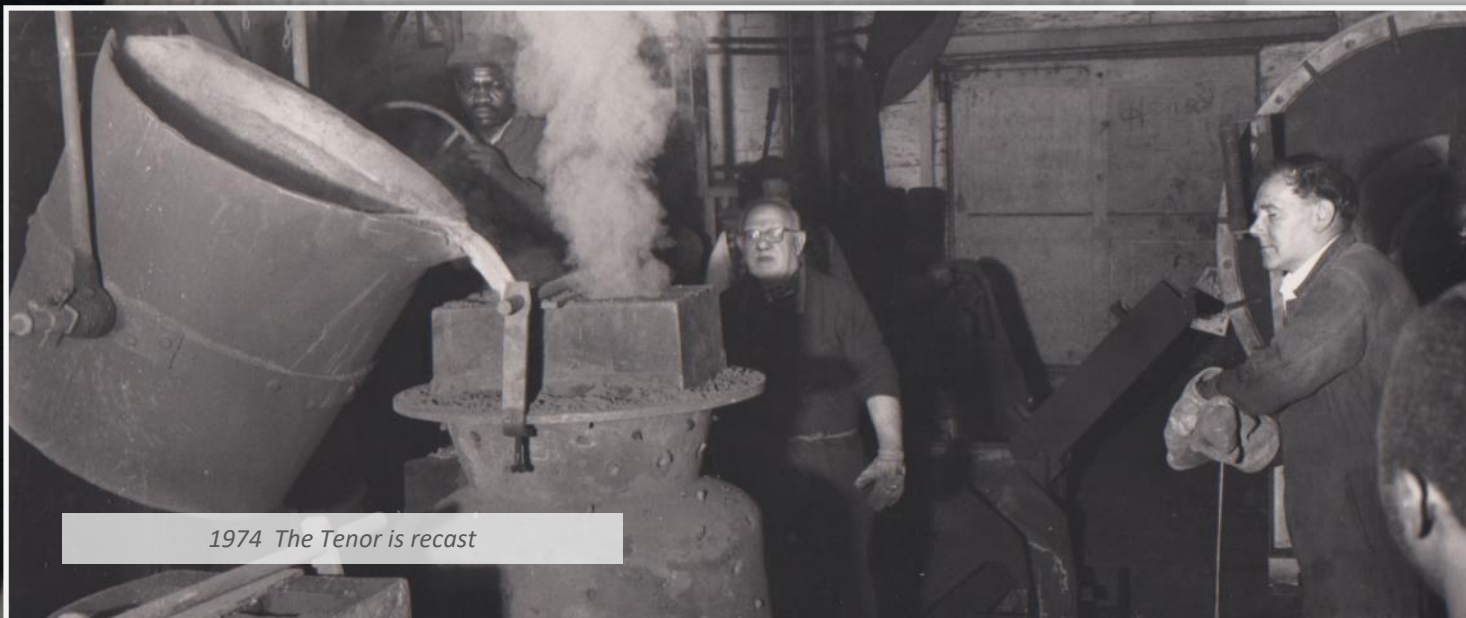
*"According to the Canon Law of the Church as soon as the Sexton receives notice of a Death he should then repair to the Church and pass the Bell as follows. For an infant three strokes: for a woman three strokes -a pause- and three strokes: for a man three strokes -a pause- then three strokes -a pause- then three strokes, making thus three strokes for an infant, six for a woman, and nine for a man, and that when these strokes were knelled then a stroke for every year of the Deceased and that this reviving of the custom would gratify Cerne Parishioners'. [Extract from the PCC minutes for 26 July 1920]*



1974 Three bells leave for Whitechapel

The bells you hear today (or will after the pandemic is finally behind us) date only from the restoration of 1974/5, when the existing five bells were taken down to be surveyed by the Whitechapel foundry and a sixth (treble) bell was added. The restoration cost about £10,800, funded by public subscription including proceeds from the first Open Gardens weekend event in 1975. Prior to the restoration the bells had not been rung since at least July 1919 when the Wyke Regis ringers passed through the village. They reported that the bells could not be rung except by 'clocking' (by manually bringing the clapper up to the bell rather than the normal vice versa) and that on the top of the Tenor bell was an enormous pile of sticks brought in by birds! Thus, the bells were not available to celebrate victories in two World Wars. They were not there either to warn of the threat of invasion in 1940, but thankfully Adolf Hitler did not find out.

The restoration of the bells was initiated by the late and fondly remembered Revd Canon Hugh Mumford in 1974. The Whitechapel foundry recast the treble, third and Tenor bells, but at the same time the opportunity was taken to replace the original old oak bell frame which possibly dated from when the church Tower was built in the early 15<sup>th</sup> Century. Representations were made to preserve this old frame, but it was cut up and mostly burnt, although it is reported that some remains were stored at the Dorset County Museum.



1974 The Tenor is recast





The present six bells, therefore, hang in a modern frame. The weight of the bells, if you add up their individual weights in the attached table, comes to 45cwt 0qt 8lb. If you can remember your tables, perhaps you could check our arithmetic, please?

A note about the Whitechapel foundry at which the restoration took place is relevant. It has a comparable history to St Mary's bells in that the

foundry began in 1570 and includes amongst its most notable bells the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia and Big Ben. The foundry closed, sadly, in 2017.

A 1552 inventory records five bells, but the churchwardens' accounts for 1631 clearly show that by then there were only four. These were recast in 1631 into five new bells by a Roger Purdue of Bristol who had set up a bell foundry at Maiden Newton. His bells can also be found at Charminster and Piddletrenthide. It was he who cast the

Tenor on which is inscribed: **✠ COM WHEN I CALL - TO SERVE GOD ALL 1631**'. This bell survived in its original form until 1974. The churchwardens' accounts record that the total cost for recasting all the bells in 1631 came to £63 14s 10d. These include an item for 6d 'given a boy to goe unto Maydon Newton'. Given the distance and hills between, he surely deserved it! Thereafter, the histories of the bells diverge.

One bell was recast in 1701, we do not know which one, by Thomas Knight of Closworth (5 miles south of Yeovil just off the A37) for £10 2s 0d. The 5<sup>th</sup> bell was recast in 1747 by William Knight, also of Closworth (a son?). It is credited as one of his best bells; also one of his last, possibly marking the end of a family business. It remains as the oldest surviving bell. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> bells were recast in 1762 by Thomas Bilbie II of Chew Stoke in Somerset. The Bilbie family of bell founders and clockmakers lived and worked in Chew Stoke for more than 200 years, from the late 17th century until the 19th century. They produced more than 1,350 church bells, which were hung in churches all over the West Country, including these three in St Mary's.

#### CERNE ABBAS, St. Mary the Virgin

Ring of 6 bells in west tower.

Bell	Inscription	Weight			Note
		Diam.	Cwt. qr. lb.		
Treble	19 (Whitechapel mark) 74 / WHITECHAPEL	29 $\frac{1}{8}$ "	4 3 13		D
2nd	M <sup>r</sup> T <sup>o</sup> BOWRING / M <sup>r</sup> I <sup>o</sup> HASSELL / M <sup>r</sup> C <sup>o</sup> DAUIS / I <sup>o</sup> COCKERAM / CH. WARDENS 1762 / T <sup>o</sup> BILBIE FECIT	31 $\frac{1}{8}$ "	5 3 3		C
3rd	M <sup>r</sup> T <sup>o</sup> BOWRING / M <sup>r</sup> I <sup>o</sup> HASSELL / M <sup>r</sup> C <sup>o</sup> DAUIS / M <sup>r</sup> I <sup>o</sup> COCKERAM CH WARDENS / 1762 T BILBIE CAST ME // RECAST / 19 (Whitechapel mark) 74 / WHITECHAPEL	33 $\frac{1}{8}$ "	6 0 23		Bb
4th	M <sup>r</sup> THOMASBOWRING & M <sup>r</sup> IOHN HASSELL & M <sup>r</sup> CHARLES DAUIS & M <sup>r</sup> IOHN COCKERAM (2 ornaments) / CH WARDENS J762 T BILBIE	34 $\frac{1}{8}$ "	6 2 17		A
5th	(Border of fleurs-de-lis and stars) / PHILLIP WHITE (crown) WILLIAM : DAVISS (crown) C : W (crown) ANO : 1747 (flower, crown, lion) / : (Crown)	36 $\frac{1}{8}$ "	8 2 0		G

W (lion) K (crown) B (crown) F (vine trail) :  
(flower, vine trail, lion, 3 fleurs-de-lis, lion)

Tenor \* COM WHEN I CALL TO SERVE GOD ALL 1631 / RECAST / 19 (Whitechapel mark) 74 / WHITECHAPEL. 43 $\frac{1}{2}$ " 13 0 8 F

Both excerpts from *Bells & Belfries of Dorset* - Dalton





*The 1975 Ringers, Back row: Roy Wareham, Frank Hamblin, Sarah Hamblin, Jacques de Carteret, Peter Grantovskis, Front row: Jean Banner, Yvonne Hall*

Preserved with the restoration in 1974 were the inscriptions on the bells. These record the names of the churchwardens at the time of previous castings in 1747 and 1762 and the bell makers. It is an interesting observation that the fortunes of the village parallel major work on the bells. The village had become sufficiently wealthy in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to fund and maintain a good ring of bells, but its fortunes thereafter were so reduced that by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the bells were silent. It was only in the 1970s that the funds were again forthcoming for their restoration. The restored bells were rung anew in 1975 and this photograph records the team who were there.

However, time does not stand still and in October 2020 the ring of 6 bells in St Mary's had to undergo deep maintenance. The work was carried out by Nicholson Engineering of Bridport which is one



*Nicholson Engineering of Bridport*

of the leading bell engineering companies in the world and an excellent example of Dorset innovation, entrepreneurship and skill. Nicholson's is a family firm and was established in Bridport in the mid-1980s in what was previously the Bridport power station. Until 1947, when Bridport was linked to the national grid, the town's electricity was supplied locally from here by diesel generators.

Nicholson's pride themselves in producing most metal and timber components in their own workshops and, having procured the Whitechapel tuning rig when that foundry closed in 2017, they now only use external suppliers for bell casting. Their contracts have surprising geographical reach, extending as far afield as Australia and Pacific islands, and so St Mary's was very fortunate in having such a splendid industry-leading team just 'down the road'.

A mention here about tuning a bell is appropriate. Its pitch can be fine-tuned by the removal of metal from the bell. It can be 'sharpened', ie its pitch raised slightly, by scraping metal from the lip and thereby slightly reducing the diameter of the bell at that point. To lower the pitch, metal is chipped or scratched away from the inside of the bell. In the past this was done by hand, but today by using a turning machine (lathe). Undoubtedly, the Whitechapel tuning rig now owned by Nicholson's is the latter.



The maintenance effort was very thorough and included dye penetrant crack-testing. Short cracks were discovered in the head of the 4<sup>th</sup> bell and these were 'stopped' by removal of the original cast-in crown staple in the head. A full range of more routine repairs/replacements were carried out on the various pulleys, ropes, bearings, and wooden moving parts and, for those with a deep specialist interest, some headstock twiddle pins were found corroded and replaced. The church bell mechanism lexicon is a fascinating one and reflects the heavy and archaic engineering which is still central to its design and operation. The all-embracing oak frame was also tightened and, overall, the bells have been given a good bill of health to ring well into their future and thus provide us with one of the few remaining elements of the historic rhythm that, in years past, hallmarked life and death in our rural community.

*The Millenium Ringers: Left to Right:*

*Alan Morrell, Adam, Clive Parkin, Frank Hamblin, Barry Smith, Tim Popkin, Dennis Parkin*



**Bell ringing in the village currently depends on several ringers travelling in from reasonably far afield. In order to strengthen the local nucleus of ringers the Tower would welcome more involvement from village residents. If you wish to find out about becoming a bell ringer in Cerne (no experience necessary!) please call Duncan Fergusson (341979).**







*Early village soccer teams were often poorly equipped. Like this Hampshire-based team from 1906, the Cerne Football Club were unlikely to have had matching kit and possibly even played in their working clothes'.*

The activities of Cerne Abbas' late-nineteenth-century cricketers were recalled in an earlier edition of the *Cerne Historical Society Magazine*. The onset of Autumn provides a suitable opportunity to examine the village's experience of another great team sport during that period - association football. The introduction of soccer to Cerne happened at a much later date, and participation was more limited, than the more locally popular cricket. Nevertheless, the village's early and short-lived involvement with the winter game provides a further glimpse into the recreational life of the Victorian village.

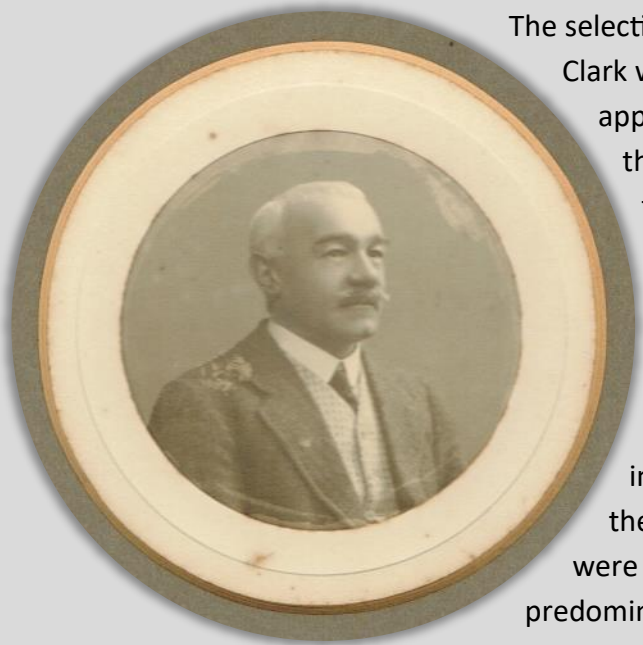
Cerne Abbas' first soccer club was formed shortly before Christmas 1887. On 23 December, the *Western Chronicle* reported that:

A football club has recently been formed here [in Cerne Abbas], a good number of the athletes of the district joining. The Association rules are adopted, the team practicing on Saturday afternoons in a field kindly placed at their disposal by Mr. Pile. General Pitt-Rivers and Lieut.-Col. Batten have honoured the club by becoming respectively president and vice-president. Mr W. Clark is captain, Mr A. Clark is vice-captain, and Mr Newall secretary and treasurer.

'Mr Newall' was Frank Newall, a twenty-six-year-old who had recently moved from his native Cheshire to Cerne to take up a position at the village school. With Newall filling the roles of both its secretary and treasurer, it is probable that the young teacher was the one of the principal instigators behind the soccer club's formation.

*Victorian Football for auction on FCI.com*





*William Clark*

The selection of William Clark as its captain is also of interest. In 1887, Clark was already serving as the captain of the Cerne Cricket Club. His appointment to the same position within the soccer club suggests that the latter was formed partly to provide a winter activity for the village's cricketers. Support for this theory is provided by a match played in the following January in which the Cerne soccer side featured at least nine of the village's cricketers among its players. The club's statement that it intended to adopt the 'Association rules' – i.e., to play soccer – was a necessary one. Throughout the 1870s and 80s, the term 'football' was applied interchangeably to describe both the rugby and soccer forms of the game. By the time that the Cerne club was formed, both codes were widely played within Dorset. However, rugby football was predominantly played by clubs which were based in the county's larger towns and also at the county's more exclusive private schools. Although association football was also played in the towns it was common in the rural villages too. This was the result of a number of combined factors,

including the relative shortage of players in countryside (it was easier to find eleven players for soccer than fifteen for rugby), the comparative complexity of the two games (soccer being easier to learn than rugby), and the availability of local opponents (villages often adopted the game which was played by their near neighbours).

Initially, the Cerne Abbas soccer team adopted the name 'Cerne Giants' and played its first match, against 'Mr Burnett's team' from Dorchester, in January 1888. This first foray into soccer ended abruptly when, during the game, 'a point of honour arose' between two of the players 'the settling of which caused the cessation of play' and the eventual abandonment of the match. In its early matches, the Giants were able to field teams which were entirely composed of village residents. But within a short time, the club came to struggle with enlisting locals to appear and, in response, had to recruit players from outside of Cerne; for one Wednesday game staged in 1890, it was necessary for the Cerne team to recruit four players from the Puddletown Football Club to make up its number.

By the start of the 1890/91 season, the problems that the club had encountered in recruiting players had worsened and needed addressing. At that year's AGM it was announced the club had just twelve members on its books. In aiming to continue 'with a more energetic combination than of last season', the club resolved to recruit more players from the district around Cerne. As part of this strategy, it was decided that the subscription fee to join the club would be reduced to 1s. for a year's membership. At the same meeting, the members decided, at Newall's suggestion, to change the club name from the Cerne Giants to the Cerne Rangers, it being believed that the former name was 'unfit for the length, breadth and height of the members'. The club, however, appears to have dropped the 'Rangers' from its name shortly afterwards.

*1907 Photo above of W Clark kindly supplied by the Clark family*



The club's push to increase its membership was only moderately successful. By the start of the 1891/92 season its number of affiliates had risen to fifteen, although the club entertained hopes that this figure might shortly reach twenty. But the club continued to struggle to recruit a sufficient number of playing members. In order to assemble a team to play the Maiden Newton and Cattistock Wanderers in an away game, the Cerne Rangers were forced to pluck two volunteer players from the watching crowd, and non-Cerne residents are frequently found in the club's team lists throughout the 1890s.

It would be reasonable to ask why the Cerne Football Club experienced difficulties in recruiting players at a time when the village's cricket club faced no comparable problem in fielding a team. Arguably, it might have been expected that finding eleven players to appear for a soccer game, which had a fixed duration of about two hours, would be easier than finding the same number to spend an entire day playing cricket. However, the principal difference was that cricket, being a relatively sedate game, drew players from a wider demographic than football did. The ages of the participants in village cricket could range from the mid-teens to players aged over fifty. In contrast, the vast majority of soccer players were aged between sixteen and twenty-five. In 1891, there were approximately only 70 males of that age living in Cerne Abbas parish. With matches potentially being staged on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday – in addition to the more commonplace Saturday – the erratic scheduling of games reduced player availability still further.

Matches were exclusively played against local opponents, with regular fixtures arranged against Maiden Newton, Piddletrenthide, Buckland Newton and a number of Dorchester-based clubs. Almost all of these were 'friendly' games insofar as the club did not enter a local league competition and neither did it compete in any of the knockout cup competitions organised by the Dorset Football Association. The sole exception was the Cerne club's annual attempt to win the Frisby Cup, which was awarded each year to the winners of a day-long six-per-side contest held each Easter Monday at Dorchester. The club experienced little success in the competition. There are no records of the Cerne team getting further than the second round (and then only after receiving a 'bye' in the opening round) and, in 1891, were soundly beaten 31-0 by the South Dorset team. The severity of that score line is, however, misleading – in six-per-side games, which were played over two twenty-minute halves, four points were awarded for each goal scored and one point for each corner won.

10  
*Neither tripping nor hacking shall be  
allowed and no player shall use his  
hands to hold or push his adversary.*



It is unclear where the soccer club held its home matches. The summit of Black Hill, which was used in the summertime for cricket games, is an unlikely candidate; the level of exposure at the site, combined with its elevation, meant that it was doubly unsuitable to host matches in the winter. The 'Mr Pile' who had, in 1887, 'kindly placed' a field at the disposal of the newly formed club was the tenant of the Abbey House and, presumably, worked the extensive land that formed Abbey Farm. That land included the Beavoir and Simsay fields, both of which were relatively flat - either may have been the site of the original



Cerne pitch. Mention is made in a newspaper report from 1891 of the club holding its Saturday practice sessions on 'a field by the Cerne Union' – a site which today is the open arable field immediately to the south of the Casterbridge Manor care home – and it is possible that the same location was used for its matches. Wherever it was sited, the football pitch was unlikely to have been a permanent feature, but was, instead, almost certainly a field or meadow put into temporary use as sports ground.

The final reports of the Cerne team's matches were published in the local press in 1900, and it is probable that the club was dissolved shortly after that date. If so, this would coincide with the departure from the village of club secretary-cum-treasurer Frank Newall, who left to take up a new teaching post in Westmorland. In common with the village cricket club of the 1860s and 70s, the soccer club's continuance may have been dependent on the ongoing industry of one individual. As was the case with cricket, organised soccer was largely absent from Cerne during the Edwardian period. However, unlike cricket, efforts were made, before the outbreak of the First World War, to re-establish the soccer club. It was reported that a 'Cerne Football Club' had been resurrected for the start of the 1913/14 season, and successfully completed one season before the start of hostilities put an end to much sporting activity. It was not until the late summer of 1920 that another Cerne Football Club – the third to be formed – was established.

13  
*No player shall wear projecting nails,  
iron plates, or gutta percha on the  
soles or heels of his boots -*







The number of pubs in the UK dramatically increased with the birth of the beer house, a largely mid-19th century creation which developed as a result of the 1830 Beer Act (a response to the perceived evils of the gin shop) that granted a licence to serve beer to any ratepayer who could pay the annual Excise Fee. Beer houses (as the name suggests) were only licensed to sell beer, and could simply consist of a person selling beer from their back door, unlike the fully licensed public houses, although many of these began life as beer houses. In Cerne there were beer houses, pubs, and inns which provided accommodation, and it is not easy in this article to distinguish between them. Despite the encouragement by the Beer Act, it remains another of Cerne's mysteries why such a huge proliferation of beer outlets took place in the village (much to the consternation of the congregational pastor Rev James Troubridge who, and perhaps he had a point, in 1862 railed against "vice and immorality on every hand" being the result). Cerne Abbas beer was reputed to be a superior product from Abbey days, a high standard which continued until 1883 when James Northover's brewery closed.

Beer consumption in the UK peaked between 1870 and 1880 to an estimated 272 pints per capita per year, over double the 125 pints we are reckoned to consume even in today's affluent times. One should remember however that beer was a far safer way of quenching a thirst compared to often contaminated water drawn from a well or spring.

If anyone felt brave enough to undertake the challenge of a pub crawl around all the beer outlets of Cerne in their heyday, it is doubtful if after 15 or so hostelries even the most hardened drinker would complete the circuit. But let's start at Hook's corner, the junction of the A352, Sydling Hill and The Folly, where stood the **Greyhound**. One landlord was Thomas Hook, a well-liked ex-Navy character, known as a "Man o' Wars man", whose establishment was well placed to serve those waiting to pay their turnpike toll at Pudding Knapp opposite. The building was demolished for road widening in the 1960s.



*The Greyhound*





Heading north up Acreman Street one would arrive at the **Union Arms** next. In 1880 it was kept by Charles Fox and Mary Anne Bull, also known as “the reddle woman”. The pub was named after the Cerne Union Workhouse further up the road, was sold in the 1919 sale for £360, and closed its doors as a tavern in 1928. The house is now known as the Old Maltings. Further along Acreman Street was said to be the Coopers Arms, but of this there is no record.

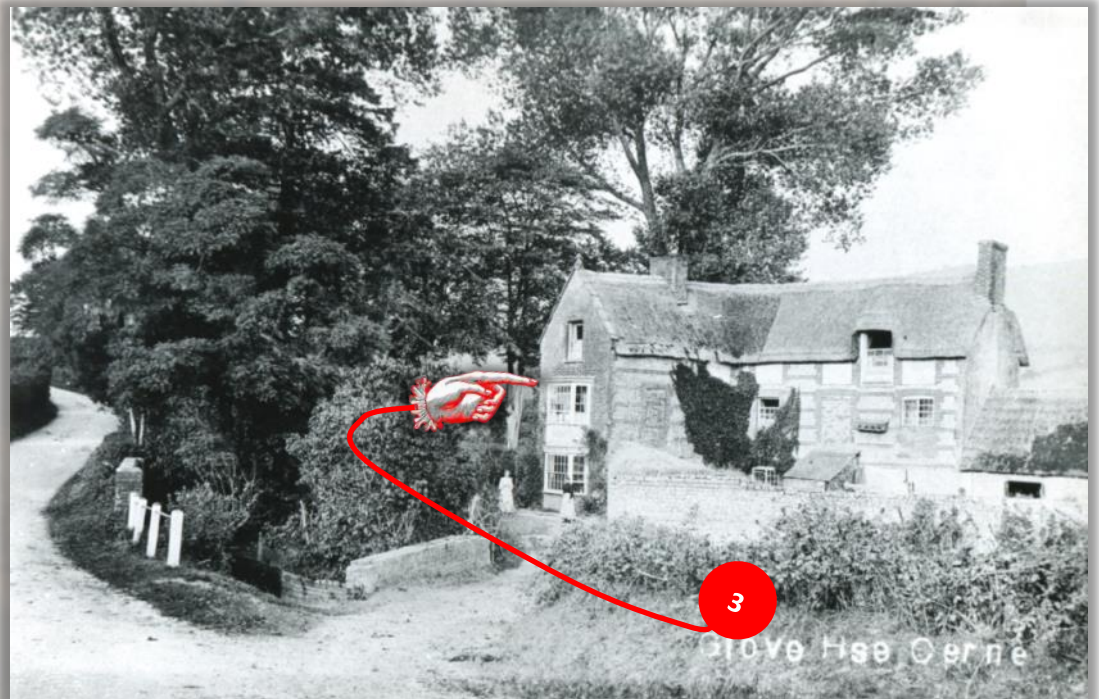
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Above: The Union Arms

Left: Charlie Fox and Mary Anne Bull

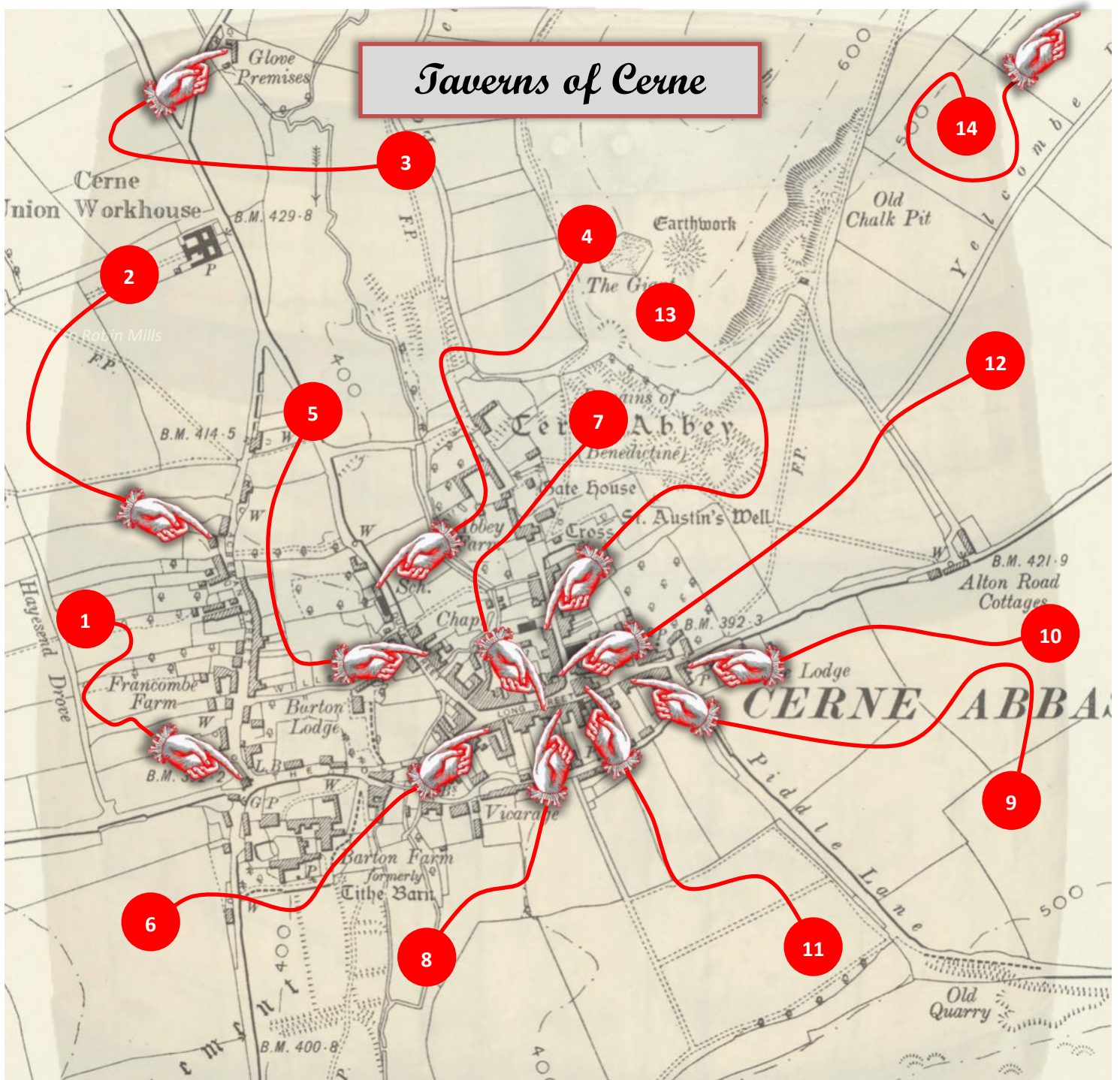
On the edge of the village next to the dip in the road after the turning to Upcerne stood the **Glove Inn**, formerly a glove making premises, which had its licence withdrawn in 1891, along with the Antelope Inn in Long Street. The reasons for this arbitrary decision are explored by Ian Denness in his article “*In This Month*” elsewhere in this issue. Later, as a picturesque private house, it shared the fate of the many old buildings of Upcerne, demolished following the acquisition of the estate by Mr Broadhead in 1964.



3

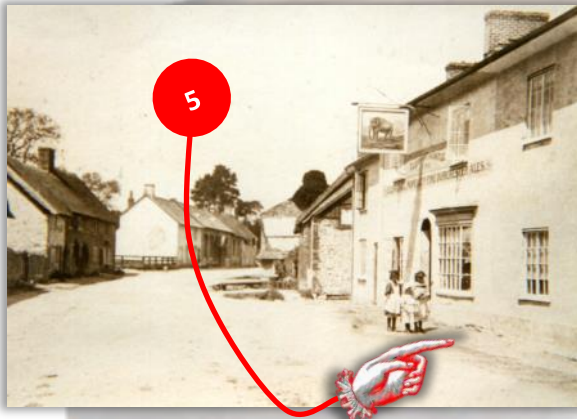
Returning to the village via Duck Street, on the site of the present-day school playground was the **Prince of Wales**, with Charles Dunn as the landlord, which burned down in November 1911.





- |                       |                       |                   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 8 Red Lion Hotel      | Royal Oak 11          | Old Bell 7        |
| 6 New Inn             | The Crown 9           | Prince of Wales 4 |
| 1 The Greyhound       | The Antelope 10       | Glove Inn 3       |
| 2 Union Arms          | The Old House Shop 12 | Giant's Head 14   |
| 5 Elephant and Castle | Nag's Head 13         |                   |





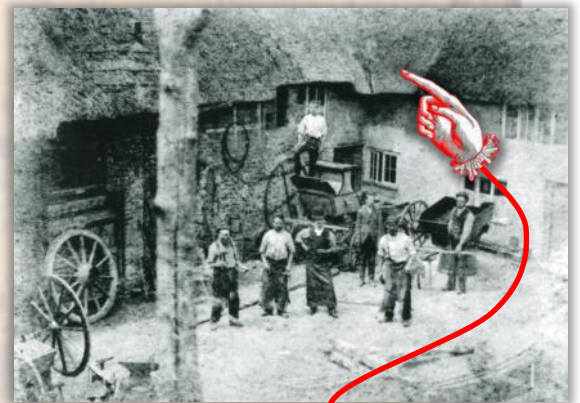
Across the road, a little further up the street, was the **Elephant and Castle**. Looking closely at the photo, the Prince of Wales is just visible beyond the school building. This was the last pub to close in the village, closing its doors in 1978. The pub sign was painted by Cerne artist Joseph Benwell Clark, and featured a small cask on the finial said to mark its one time association with smuggling. In the 1970s I remember it as a friendly pub where a game of darts, cribbage or shove-halfpenny could be enjoyed.

Entering Long Street, the **New Inn**, still a thriving hostelry, was the major coaching inn of the village. Further along the street on the same side was the **Old Bell**, its front door wide enough to allow horses to be led inside, although wagons and coaches arrived at the rear via Back Lane. Also in Long street was the Bull, but its precise whereabouts are unrecorded.

Originally called the **Red Lion Hotel**, the pub now known as The Giant would once also have accommodated travellers with its wide side entrance, in later years advertising its accommodation as being "suitable for cyclists".

On the same side of the road, one would have reached, by now perhaps a little unsteadily, the **Crown**, now called Crown House, but we have no record of when that ceased to be a pub.

At the junction of Long Street and Piddle Lane stood the **Antelope Inn**, the rear of which served as a blacksmith's yard where horses could be shod and carriages repaired. The business closed in 1891 and the building was demolished in the early 1900's, the site used to build a doctor's house and surgery. Across the road was where, according to an 1884 map, James Northover's brewery once operated, the last brewer in Cerne until the much welcomed recent revival of the art form by Vic Irvine and Jodie Moore at Cerne Abbas Brewery.



Stumbling our way back into the village square, there would have been a welcome at the **Royal Oak**, dating back to 1540 and still a very attractive pub, where there was also a forge at the rear. So many forges, so many thatched roofs, small wonder fire was so common an occurrence. At the bottom of Abbey Street, at the **Old House**, was a small shop where Charles Fox, of the Union Arms, also sold beer.

Further up Abbey Street the house now known as Barnwells has a horse's head carved in the front doorframe, a reference to its time as a tavern called the **Nags Head**, also described in greater detail by Ian Denness in his article.

Finally, well outside the village, at a tiresome distance for the village policeman to enforce licencing hours, was the **Giants Head** on the old Sherborne Road. By now, our pub crawler of the 19<sup>th</sup> C could be excused the long climb to it, and allowed to sleep off the effects of such an epic pub tour.







## Brewing in Cerne

September



### The end of the Antelope and The Glove

**September 30, 1891, proved to be something of a dark day for the drinkers of Cerne Abbas.** That day saw the convening of a special session of the local justices whose task it was to award the licences necessary for the pubs of both Cerne Abbas and Piddletrenthide to continue to sell alcohol. Ordinarily, the process of granting licences was performed largely without controversy – each year the justices ratified all and any applications that they had received. But 1891 was to prove an exception.

That there was to be a problem first became apparent at the ordinary licensing meeting – known as the ‘Brewster Session’ – a month earlier. At that meeting, the Chairman of the justices, who had already announced that the decision on whether to renew any licences would be based on the principle of ‘encouraging thrift and temperance’, asked a crowded session whether any members of the public wished to object to the grant of any specific licences. Taking the opportunity presented, two local temperance campaigners - the Vicar of Cerne, the Rev. Henry Grundy, and Henry Payne, a poultryman from Piddletrenthide - protested about the number of pubs in their respective villages. After a short consultation among themselves, the justices decreed that the session should be adjourned until 30 September to allow for any further objections to be submitted.



Rev H Grundy

At the September meeting the Rev. Grundy made clear the basis of his objection. It was not that there had been any increase in insobriety in Cerne - there had been no arrests for drunkenness in the village for many years. Nor was it that any of the local pubs were struggling for customers or were failing as businesses, all were reported to be doing reasonably well. Instead, Grundy’s concerns were principally focused on the number of pubs that were operating in Cerne. He supported this view with statistics. Grundy informed the justices that there were, at present, ten licenced premises in his village, serving 834 residents, the equivalent of twelve pubs per thousand population. This, claimed Grundy, compared unfavourably with the figures calculated for Dorset as a whole (4.2 per thousand) and even surpassed that of Weymouth (7.7 per thousand), and that, as far as he could tell, ‘there is a greater number here in proportion than exists at any other place in the United Kingdom’. Evidently considering it unnecessary to demonstrate any link between beer selling and sinful behaviour, Grundy concluded by urging the magistrates to ‘reduce the number of public-houses in the interests of the morality of Cerne’.

The Chairman was seemingly impressed with Grundy’s representation. But, when Grundy was asked which pubs should be closed, he replied that he would leave that decision to the justices. In response, the justices agreed – rather indiscriminately – to refuse licences of two pubs in Cerne Abbas and one in Piddletrenthide. But which ones? The legal representatives of the local publicans were invited to present arguments as to why their clients’ individual pubs should remain open but, offering a united front, each refused to do so. They reasoned that, as no formal notice had been issued asking them to prepare for any defence, and that the statements received from the Reverend had not been given under oath, that the whole affair was ‘a judicial farce’ and that to close any particular pub without specific reason would be ‘a monstrous injustice’.



# In This Month

But the justices remained unmoved and insisted on the closure of three pubs in the two villages. For thirty minutes they discussed between themselves which of the pubs were to be refused licences. The unfortunate Cerne Abbas pubs selected were the **Glove Inn**, which was located on the road to Sherborne a little beyond what is now the care home, and the **Antelope Inn** which formerly stood at the junction of Piddle Lane and Long Street. The Sun Inn at Piddletrenthide completed the trio. The randomness of these decisions was illustrated by the justification offered by the magistrates for shutting the Antelope, the reason being that it was 'only 140 yards from the Royal Oak' (it could, presumably, have been equally valid to shut the Royal Oak for being just 140 yards from the Antelope!)

Consequently, in late 1891, the number of public houses in Cerne Abbas was reduced from ten to eight. Their closure serves as a testament to the power of the local temperance movement – or, more accurately, to its attractiveness to people with power – during the late nineteenth century. The shutting of the two pubs formed part of an ongoing trend. In 1872 there had been thirteen licenced premises in Cerne, but by the time the Pitt Rivers family sold the village in 1919 only five remained. Since then, a further two pubs have closed, leaving just the current three. So, the next time you find yourself enjoying a drink at the Royal Oak, remember that you are only able to do so due to an arbitrary decision made by the local licensing committee 130 years ago.



Above: The Glove House in abt 1930. Below: the site today





## Thomas 'Tiger' Curtis and his Family in Cerne Abbas



October



On 18 October 1877, the parish church of Buckland Newton witnessed the marriage of Miss Caroline Snook to one of Cerne Abbas' most famous sons, the blacksmith Thomas 'Tiger' Curtis. The occasion this month of their 144<sup>th</sup>

wedding anniversary presents a suitable opportunity to recount the story of this man, his family and their life in Cerne Abbas over a period of a hundred years. Typically, evidence of the activities of nineteenth-century working-class people can be hard to find. However, it has been possible to gather information from newspapers, diaries and other contemporary records to compile a brief biography of Tiger Tom, a man who has recently been memorialised in the name of one of the Cerne Abbas Brewery's beers.



*Tom Curtis and the Cerne Abbas Fire engine*

Thomas Curtis' father, Charles, was a native of Rampisham who had moved to Cerne during the 1840s to take up two connected occupations. One was to take over as the landlord at the Royal Oak, the other was to work as a blacksmith in the forge adjacent to the pub. It was in the Royal Oak that Thomas Curtis was born, on 1 October 1848. Thomas would later recall his early life in the pub. One particular memory was of the soldiers that were temporarily billeted at the Royal Oak while awaiting their embarkation to the Black Sea and the Crimean War during the mid-1850s. The excitement of seeing so many strangers finding accommodation in his home clearly left an impression on the young Tom.

Charles recognised that being a smithy was more financially profitable than being a landlord.

Consequently, in 1858, he gave up the Royal Oak and its forge and sought a location in the village to establish a new blacksmiths shop. The site he chose was on the corner of Duck Street and Mill Lane within the buildings recently vacated by Mr. Beach's Academy after it had relocated to The Lodge in the east of the village. (Coincidentally, this was the school which the young Thomas himself attended). Charles moved his family into what was to be known as Forge Cottage and established his new workshop, which featured two hearths, on Mill Lane. This site was to remain a working forge until the closure of the Cerne Abbas Forge in 2000.

Sometime during the 1870s, Charles quit being a blacksmith and retired to Maiden Newton, ending his days there, aged 90, in 1900. With his father's departure Thomas was left to take over the family forge. At much the same time he married Blandford-born Caroline Snook, eight years his junior and the daughter of a dairyman. They would go on have seven children, four boys and three girls. It was reported that, while celebrating the christening of one of his daughters, the joyous Thomas inadvertently achieved the regrettable feat of sitting on the baby.





A few additional details about Tom and his life have been discovered. As to his appearance, Arnold Gibbons quotes an anonymous source who described him as 'a girt, square, hairy man' – an image which appears to be borne out by the few photographs of him which survive. It was also said that Curtis 'was a fount of information regarding local lore and customs' and that he 'possessed a great sense of humour'. He was civic-minded, serving in a voluntary capacity as the Superintendent of the Cerne Abbas Fire Brigade during the 1880s and 90s. He played in the village brass band and, for sixty-five years, he was active in the local lodge of the Ancient Order of Foresters, one of a number of pre-Welfare State organisations which helped its subscribers with sick pay, pensions and funeral costs. In addition, in 1893, Thomas was elected as one of the local Overseers, a role which entailed assessing and meeting any particular needs arising among the poor of the parish.

The Curtis family were met by tragedy in 1918. The youngest of their four sons, George, was serving in France with the Royal Field Artillery when, on 27 March, he received a gunshot wound to the chest. Despite being transferred to a Military Hospital, he died four days later from his wounds, aged 26. He was buried at the Etaples Military Cemetery, thirteen miles south of Boulogne. The Curtis' were informed of their loss by letter, and a requiem service was held in Cerne Abbas on 12 April.

By the 1920s, Thomas Curtis had retired, after which he seems to have become, possibly from grief, a little listless. At that time, Joseph Benwell Clark, who knew Curtis well, noted that the former blacksmith 'spends his days for the most part watching the motor traffic at the corner of the street'. In 1937, the *Western Gazette* reported on the occasion of Tom and Caroline's 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, a milestone for which they received a letter of congratulations from King George VI and his Queen, Elizabeth. The *Gazette* declared that the Curtis' were 'two of the best known and most respected residents of the village' and that Tom was 'quite the last outstanding character' in Cerne.

However, further heartbreak was to strike the couple in August 1939 when their second oldest son, sixty-year-old Thomas junior, died from complications arising from an earlier leg amputation. In the week which followed, Britain declared war on Nazi Germany. These two events, according to the *Western Gazette*, greatly worried the older Thomas and 'no doubt hastened his end'. Thomas Curtis, 'the Grand Old Man of Cerne', died, aged ninety, on 9 September 1939. Caroline outlived her husband by nine years, herself dying, aged ninety-two, late in 1948. One of their sons, Charles maintained the family blacksmith shop before, in turn, passing it on to his son, Fred. The death of Fred, in 1959, ended the Curtis family's almost 120-year involvement as blacksmiths in Cerne Abbas. But the Curtis' house can still be seen by the entrance to Mill Lane and, should you wish to commemorate Thomas Curtis in a more traditional manner, you can raise a pint glass of the eponymous 'Tiger Tom' in his honour at the Cerne Abbas Brewery.



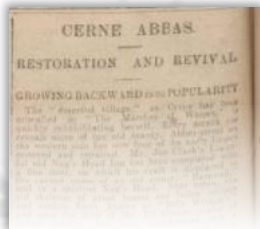


## The Recovery of Cerne Abbas, 1926

In the years leading up to 1919 and its sale by the Pitt-Rivers family, Cerne Abbas was reported to be in state of physical decay.

Visitors to the village at that time noted the effect that its neglect had had there. In his 1906 book

*Highways and Byways in Dorset*, Sir Frederick Treves described Cerne as a place that was 'empty and decaying and strangely silent' and in which 'many houses have been long deserted, many have their windows boarded up, or are falling into listless ruin'. Recalling a trip to the village just before the sale, the writer Frederick Harvey Darton was shocked to find that 'the Abbey Farm was shut and deserted. The lovely orchard behind it many feet deep in grass and nettles, the little fabric of beauty in the old gateway and the oriel window in the barn losing its mortar and drawing still nearer to final decay'. By the time of the sale, Cerne appears to have been crumbling.



However, by 1926 the village was in the throes of making a remarkable recovery. At least, that was the message which was enthusiastically being conveyed in an article which appeared in the *Western Gazette* of 12 November that year. Under the headline 'Restoration and Revival, Growing Backward into Popularity' the report's writer - cryptically known only as 'E.F.H.', but almost certainly Eleanor Frances Hall, who was married to the vicar of Cerne - provided readers with a brief update on the developments that had been undertaken in Cerne since 1919 and the transfer of most of the properties in the village into private ownership. Many of these improvements are of interest because several remain visible today.

Hall began her survey in Abbey Street, where she was particularly impressed with the reconstruction of the houses which form the 'Tudor Range' facing the church. Approving comments were made about the new doorway that had been recently added to the former Nags Head Inn by the then owner, the artist Joseph Benwell Clark, and on which he had demonstrated his woodworking skills 'in the carved name of an old owner, "Barnwell", and in the spirited nags head' which adorned it. Next door, the former workshop of the candlemaker Eli Groves – a house which was then known as "Billy Whittle's" – had

been 'transformed into a lovely place of rounded windows, strange cross-lights, delightful corners and stairs, like its old self, with added beauties and comforts'. After the plaster had been removed from an outer door attached to another house further down the street, a fine piece of oak carving had been revealed, the design of which, it was noted, 'is the same as that in stone that runs around the yellow tower of the church just opposite'. Inside the same house 'marvellous restorations are being made, beams unplastered, fireplaces opened up again into great glowing brick hearths, where a stock inside the chimney is a seat in a cave of warmth'.



Abbey St in abt 1930





Of the church itself, Hall was delighted to note that the early frescos, which had been uncovered after a layer of plaster had been removed the previous summer, appeared to extend further than had been currently exposed. Also, a recently unbricked window in the chancel, with beautiful tracery, was soon to be reglazed. In the process of reopening the window, bits of old carved stone were found amid the removed rubble. These were thought to have previously formed part of the demolished Cerne Abbey, and retained traces of moss which, it was speculated, may have been acquired when the monastery was still standing. Hall was one of the first people to advocate that 'Cerne must find herself a place to be used as a museum, whose scattered relics and mementoes may be collected'.\*

Elsewhere in the village, in Long Street, the restoration of the Old Bell was set to realise the 'great possibilities of [its] rebirth into a place of large pleasant rooms, sunny south dormers, paved garden-room, and a terraced garden'. Across the road, Pitt House had been bought by Miss Mansell, a member of a wealthy Dorchester family, proof that the village was, indeed, 'growing backward to prosperity'. But not everything was positive. The village's New Inn generated a 'sigh for such restoration to be made there, too, and for the fine courtyard at the back, with its poor, rapidly unroofing barn, to be less of a spectacle of shame' which offered 'a poor welcome for prospective guests to be confronted with such derelict splendours'. Despite this, Hall concluded her article on an encouraging note, urging that 'those who want a house in Cerne will have to apply quickly!'

The extensiveness of the improvements that were being made to the fabric of the village during the mid-1920s is not clear from the *Western Gazette* article. No mention is made of any developments taking place in the less-desirable parts of Cerne – what of Back Lane and Acreman Street? But what is evident is that the restoration of the long-neglected village was well underway and that the dilapidated buildings and rotten houses noted earlier by Treves and Harvey Darton were fast becoming a distant memory.

\* Hall would also have approved of the Cerne Historical Society's project to create an inventory of all the known relics from Cerne Abbey. There's still time for you to contribute to this project.

Help fulfil Eleanor Hall's aspiration by recording your relics at <https://cerneabbashistory.org/abbey-relics-survey-2021/>







George Mortimer



In the Summer issue of the Magazine the Society launched the Cerne Abbey Relics Survey. The survey aims to locate and log any item in the area which may have come from the Abbey in the aftermath of the Dissolution of 1539. Such items may have found their way into a garden or house as an ornament or for sentimental reasons, or just simply recycled to improve someone's 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century home.

The response has fulfilled our hopes and expectations and more finds are still coming in. Please don't stop now: look around and if you think you have an item which may have Abbey provenance please let us know. The Summer Magazine tells you how. All the finds are being recorded by the Society and the following are examples of some that have been reported to date.



*This is embedded in a wall of a house in Abbey Street.  
Exactly what it is has yet to be determined.*

*This Cat corbel was found in a garden in Acreman Street.  
A similar surviving corbel can be seen at Romsey Abbey.*



*This carved arch was found in a garden on  
the Dorchester Road*







*This carved arch is embedded in the gable end of a house in Long Street*

*A carving of an Angel? This is embedded in a wall at Nether Cerne.*

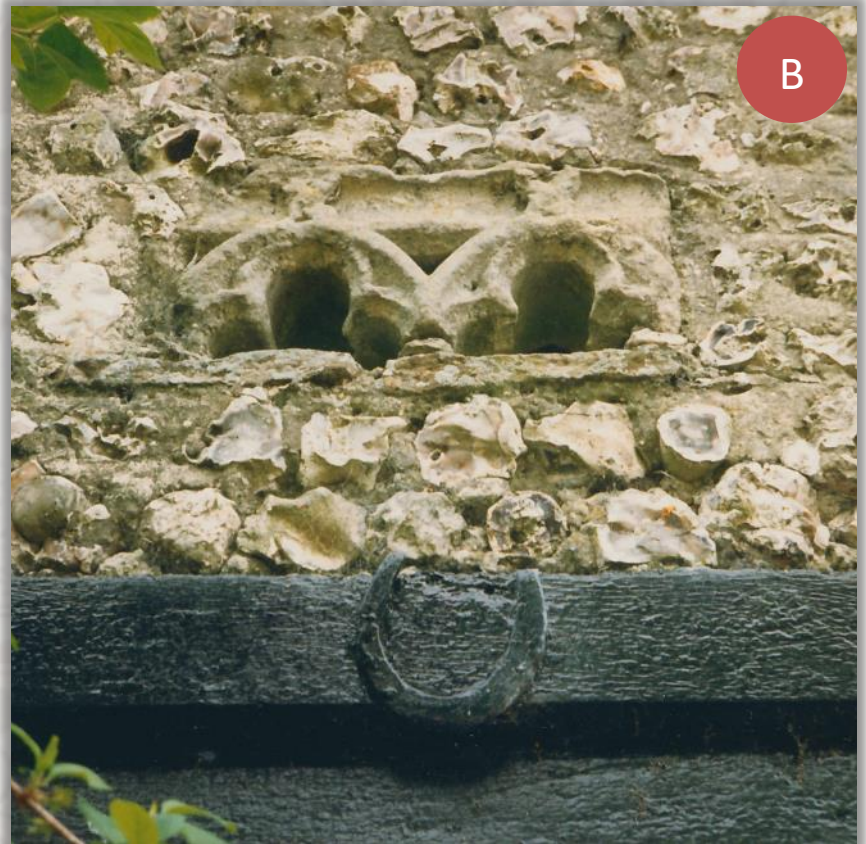


*This fireplace with its shaped Hamstone supporting a huge oak lintel is replicated in many of the older buildings in the village. Recycled material from the Abbey?*

*Are these stones in the wall of a house in Long Street recycled from the Abbey?*







In the CHS archives we also found some photographs of Abbey Relics, but not identified. Can you identify them and their location? If so, please let us know



It is too early to speculate, but a picture is emerging of a village quickly coming to terms with the loss of the Abbey and utilising for its own use whatever survived the initial stripping and destruction by the new owners. The fact that we are still unsure where the Abbey Church was actually sited shows that its demolition was pretty comprehensive and complete within a generation after the Dissolution.



## Some Observations by Janet Bartlet on the Abbey Relics

Janet Bartlet, whose house at Barton Farm was featured in an article in the last Magazine, offers her observations on the stone arising from the demolition of the Abbey Church, monastery buildings, stone mullion windows, ancillary buildings etc. Janet has experience from many archaeological excavations around Dorset, most recently of the Roman villa near Dewlish.

Dressed Stone. Janet suggests that dressed stone, ie that which had been worked to a desired shape and was ready for installation, would have been sold for its suitability for house building. The sandy-coloured Hamstone would have been the most expensive because it was easy to work, but the limestone blocks were also needed for decent foundations and ordinary walls. Perhaps this is why Hamstone can be spotted around the village, but not so the limestone. Hamstone came from the Sherborne area, limestone from the Purbeck quarries.

Carved Stone. Carved stones forming decorative ecclesiastical windows, spouts, figures, columns etc would have been useless for building material and used instead for decoration and in gardens as mementoes.



The stone will have been sold quite quickly, especially as there was no locally available decent stone. Clunch, a mixture of Chalk and limestone, can be obtained locally, but easily spalls. The village does have plenty of flint, and local bricks were also being made, but whether the latter were used in the Abbey buildings is not known.

Barton Farm was constructed using local flints and stones, including clunch. The Hamstone arched lintel over the door frame, together with the Hamstone supporting sides, might have been original to the house, but we cannot say if they came from the Abbey. They may, of course, be earlier if the farmhouse was in use when the Tithe Barn stored the Abbey's tithes of crops and wool. The two stone Mullion windows, which are not of identical design, seem to be similar to the window facing east on the Abbey Porch (see photo).

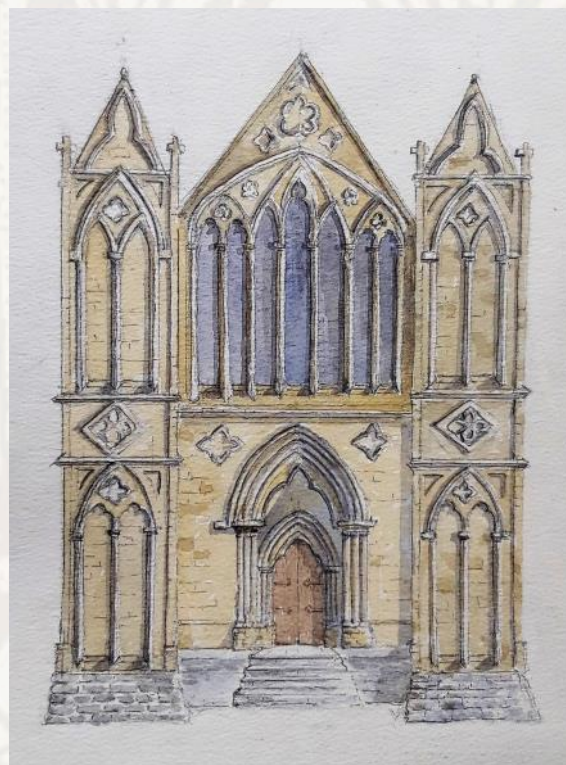


The odd arched window upstairs, made of Hamstone, might be in the same date as the door frame. Martin Papworth (a National Trust archaeologist) thought this window was probably Tudor. The spiral staircase windows were contemporary with the building of the upper floors, so might be the same date as the Mullion windows. So I think we need some professional help to sort out fact from possibilities, when deciding where the Abbey stones went.

### **Editor's Note.**

Janet is spot-on in saying that we need professional help in sorting the 'wheat from the chaff'. Professor Julian Luxford of the University of St Andrews has kindly looked at photos of some of the material reported to date. He says that most of the material looks late medieval. He goes on to say that *'some of it was evidently from interior fittings (including the fireplaces of course), while some of the moulded stones come from window tracery. The fireplaces were late medieval, although they have only a plain chamfer, and such carving could be later. I assume they are from conventual buildings: an abbey like Cerne would normally have had a couple of dozen fireplaces, only a few of which would have been elaborately carved'*.

The Historical Society is actively looking for similar expertise to view the items you have told us about and use it to build a better idea of the architectural richness the Abbey. This may not inform us where the Abbey was actually sited, but it could give a strong pointer to what we have lost.



*Illustration Courtesy Richard Wilkin: see Summer issue*







# Letters

Edited by George Mortimer

**Peter Norman** writes:

*As the grandson of Charles Marsh I found Janet Bartlet's piece on Barton Farmhouse in the Summer magazine absolutely fascinating. I knew that it had previously been the Dairy House, but had no idea that prior to the Tithe Barn conversion it had functioned for several centuries as the original Farmhouse. My sister and I holidayed there regularly during the early 1950s (when we lived in Lancashire) and lived in one of the tied cottages for a few months in 1957 before moving to Dorchester. We remember it looking much as it does in the aerial photo published in the magazine (I recall looking over the wall at the Tithe Barn and being fascinated by the Monkey Puzzle tree!) so I think early 1950s is a good estimate. I don't remember there being a TV set though, so I'm not sure that the absence of an aerial fixes it as pre-Coronation (1953).*

*A couple of other small points:*

*To my knowledge Charles Marsh did not occupy the Tithe Barn as Janet suggests: my understanding is that he and his mother Anna Susan Marsh were tenants of Alton Lane Farm until 1937, when they moved to Barton Farm after it was split into two parts.*

*After Charles's death in 1961 his son Joe continued running the farm along with his elder brother Tom (who does not get a mention in the article, perhaps because I think he retired from the business early).*

*Best wishes*

**Editor's Note:** *Not for this publication, but Janet's article has prompted an exchange of emails between Janet and Peter Norman into more details of the fascinating history of Barton Farmhouse.*

**Graham Clark** writes:

*Well, what a wonderful Magazine the summer edition turned out to be. As you may imagine I was awaiting the cricket article with some excitement and I wasn't disappointed. I have learned so much about cricket in Cerne Abbas and have gained a much fuller view of a whole aspect of life there in the 19th century. And there was so much more in the Magazine as well.*

*I see that the topic of your event tonight is to be on mills, something I should have been interested to hear. Both the Stroud and Dunning families were millers, including at Godsmanstone, Nether Cerne, Mill Lane, the Tucking Mill, Sydling etc.*

*With kind regards*

**Contd.**





## Letters

**Contd.**

**Editor's Note:** *Graham who lives in NZ will be well known to readers and the Historical Society. He is the researcher and archivist for the Clark family of Cerne Abbas. His research into the Land Tax as it applied to Cerne Abbas appears on the website and is a valuable resource for anyone looking into their family history in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.*

**David Kirkpatrick writes:**

*Amazing meeting last night and so pleased that so many members attended. One question I have but did not ask due to the length of the programme, what do we know about our own mill? Because of the membership's interest, this might be a topic for a magazine article.*

*Thanks again for providing an enjoyable range of speakers at the monthly meetings.*

*Enjoy your summer*

**Editor's Note:** *David is our member living in the USA and lives in the Old Courthouse when in Cerne Abbas. He makes a good point: what do we know about our own water mill here in Cerne? Its origins may be from the time of the Abbey and it only ceased operations about 1930. Is there anyone willing to tackle its history?*

**Editor's Note:**

*Our Summer Magazine was shared by Richard Wilkins with his friend, Alan Judd, of the Battle Historical Society. The following is part of the correspondence.*

*Richard,*

*Many thanks for this. It's interesting and well-produced, especially (of course) your piece and the articles about the Giant. I think those two will be of interest to members of our own society, given Battle Abbey and our frequent focus on Anglo-Saxon matters, also the preparations for war in 1937. I'd like, if I may, to circulate it to our committee. Is that OK?*

*Alan.*

*Richard,*

*Reactions so far from our committee members are very positive, not only because they like the articles but because the production quality is so good. It rather shames ours. I might come back to you with various questions but here's one to start with: given that the population of Cerne Abbas is around 880, how do you get 160 of them to join the Society? Are they drawn from a wide surrounding area or are you a hotbed of historians?*

*Alan.*

*This was responded to by our Chair, Gordon Bishop:*

*Dear Alan,*

*Thanks for your email. The Society has been a very active and highly regarded one within the village and the surrounding area since it was formed in 1988, following the millennial celebrations of the founding of the Abbey in 987. It has I believe had a steady membership in excess of 100 since then.*

**Contd.**





## Letters

### Contd.

*The vast majority of the members (over 80 - 90%) live in or within a few miles of Cerne. The villagers are very friendly and welcoming (as my wife and I found when we moved here in 2017) and encourage newcomers to join the Societies they enjoy. The increase from 100 to over 160 in the last 18 months is I believe a result of two main factors:*

*(1). the greater publicity the Society has achieved as a result of (a) the very successful exhibition and other events held in September 2019 to celebrate the Centenary of the Sale of the Village in 1919 by the Pitt-Rivers family, (b) the online magazine we began publishing in April 2020, which has been made available to non-members as well as members and (c) the Zoom monthly meetings we have held this year. The pandemic has given us a captive audience to attract.*

*(2). the influx of new residents to Cerne this year. I do not know the number, only that there have been quite a lot. The PCC delivers a "welcome pack" to each new household which includes an A4 sheet from the Society giving details of our activities and that undoubtedly encourages new members to join.*

*The fact that Cerne has a relatively small population and is a fairly close knit community does I think partially explain why the ratio of the members of the CHS to the population as whole is quite high.*

*Best wishes*

*Gordon*

*Editor's Note: The above is a welcome tribute to the content and quality of our Magazine and an acknowledgment that it is gaining an appreciative audience where even Heineken might not be reaching!*

**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](mailto: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.

**This magazine may be viewed online at [cerneabbashistory.org](http://cerneabbashistory.org)**

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