



Cerne
Historical
Society

MAGAZINE



Sir Winston Churchill

'The Colonel' (c1620-1688)

Winter
2021

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On behalf of the Editorial team of the Society may I wish you a very warm welcome to the Winter issue of the magazine, the 10th since we started publication in April 2020

I would like to give a big thank you to all the contributors and those who have been involved in the magazine's design and publication. I am sure you will find a great deal to interest and entertain you in this issue.

We shall not be printing separate copies of this particular issue but we hope at the beginning of 2022 to produce and print copies of a 2021 All in One Edition containing all four issues we have published this year. This will be similar to the 2020 All in One Edition we published last month and which proved to be a great success. We received 44 advance orders from members and others and ordered 50 copies from the printers. We have a few copies left at £12 each but they are unlikely to be available for long. Please send an email to cerneyhistoricalsociety@gmail.com or gordonwbishop@gmail.com if you would like one. The cost of the 2021 Edition is likely to be similar and, to be sure of getting a copy, you will have to pre-order. We will provide details of how to do so early next year.

We would like to continue publishing the magazine for the foreseeable future. However that will only be possible if we can recruit one or more members who have design and/or IT skills to join our committee and help us in both producing the magazine and running our website and the audio visual aspects of our meetings. At the moment virtually all of that burden is borne by one person. If you have such skills and are willing to help us or know of someone who might be willing to do so, **please** let us know via one of the emails in the previous paragraph.

I am delighted to say that we have arranged an excellent programme of speakers and events for 2022. I am very grateful to Mike Clark for all his work on this. The programme is set out on the opposite page. As you will see the AGM will take place on the 27th January. We sincerely hope it can take place in the Village Hall as it is very much a social event. If, because of Covid, it cannot be held there we will hold it via Zoom.

On the 24th February we are planning a symposium in the Village Hall and/or on Zoom at which (a) members of the Committee will bring you up to date with the research we have been carrying out regarding the site of the Abbey (hopefully including the results of the LIDAR survey which is being carried out this month), (b) they will also tell you, with the help of plans and drawings, where they think the buildings were and (c) you will be able to tell us what your views are. It could be a long evening but it will undoubtedly be a very interesting one.

I very much look forward to seeing you all, preferably live at the Village Hall rather than on Zoom, in the early part of next year. In the meantime on behalf of the whole Committee may I wish you a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Gordon Bishop Chair

December 2021



2022 Programme Dates

Thursday January 27

2021 AGM

Thursday February 24

Cerne Abbey, where was it? A symposium on recent research and an opportunity for members to air their views

Thursday March 24

Revising the Dorset Pevsner

Michael Hill

Thursday April 28

Medieval Musical Instruments

Frances Eustace

Thursday May 26

Thomas Coram, Dorset born philanthropist

Kate Adie

Thursday June 23

The History of Cricket in Cerne

Den Denness

July/August

A day visit to Glastonbury, further details later.

Thursday September 22

The 1915 Gallipoli Campaign and the Dorset Connection

Chris Copson

Thursday October 27

Kenelm Digby, a C17th ancestor, courtier and diplomat

Henry Digby

Thursday November 24

The English Civil War in Dorset.

Richard Warren

Gordon Bishop – Chair of the Cerne Historical Society

Gordon may easily be contacted by using the form on the website cerneabbashistory.org/contact-us/





Elizabeth Bishop



Sir Winston Churchill

'The Colonel' (c1620-1688)



We are all familiar with the long and distinguished career of Sir Winston Churchill, our great wartime leader, but are less well acquainted with his forebear and namesake, born in about 1620 and brought up in Wootton Glanville (Glanvilles Wootton) between Sherborne and Dorchester. They shared many characteristics which saw them successfully through two of the most difficult and dangerous periods of British history.

Winston Churchill (later known as 'the Colonel') was the only surviving son of John Churchill and his wife Sarah Winston. John came from humble origins to qualify as a barrister in the Middle Temple before marrying Sarah, a minor heiress and daughter of Sir Henry Winston of Standish, who gave birth to no less than 13 children. John rose to become Deputy-Registrar of Chancery and acquired the lease of Minterne House from Winchester College in the early C17th as well as houses in and near Dorchester and one or two farms in the neighbourhood. After Sarah's death John married again and, on his death in 1659, was buried by his wife Mary under the nave of St. Andrew's church Minterne Magna.



John and Sarah's son, Winston, grew up at Round Chimneys farmhouse, Wootton Glanville and matriculated at St. John's College, Oxford in 1636 at the young age of 15 or 16. There he would have learnt to be loyal to the Crown, High Church and staunchly Protestant. Meanwhile he was admitted as a student at Lincoln's Inn in 1637. The intellectual cut and thrust of life at the Inns of Court would have prepared Winston for many responsibilities later in life when he was clawing his way back to positions of influence and power after the personal disaster of the Civil War.

The English Civil War (in the 1640s) had a devastating effect on many people in the country bringing with it death, starvation, disease and poverty; beautiful paintings, churches and houses were deliberately destroyed. The western counties were mainly Royalist although Dorchester, Lyme and Poole were Parliamentary. Winston's father, John, was a King's commissioner while young Winston was away fighting in the King's army.

The young Cavalier found time in 1643 to marry (a step up) Elizabeth Drake, daughter of Sir John Drake of Ashe, Musbury, near Axminster, Devon. The Drakes were an ancient, leading family of Devon and Parliamentarians but this does not seem to have been a problem.





However, the widowed Lady Drake was, herself, a victim of the fighting. She lived in a large Elizabethan, E-shaped mansion at Ashe where at Christmas 1643 a conversation was overheard and reported to Lady Drake to the effect that the Cavaliers were planning to place a garrison at Ashe, failing which it would have to be burned. When they arrived at Ashe they found that Lady Drake had already got the Roundhead garrison at Lyme to put in a few soldiers so most of the house was burnt down leaving only one wing and an adjacent chapel. Lady Drake had, apparently, already left for the relative safety of Lyme but, in a petition to Parliament, she made the most of her suffering saying that she had been 'stripped almost naked and without shoe to her foot but what she afterward begged' and then 'fled to Lyme for safety'. There she suffered the hardships of a siege and was 'reduced to the spinning and knitting of socks' until she was able to escape to London.

Meanwhile it is known that Winston fought at Lansdown and Roundway Down and was probably part of the victorious army that entered Bristol in 1645 having earlier been wounded in the arm. At the end of the Civil War, following the defeat of Charles I, the captain of horse had to forfeit his estates and joined his wife Elizabeth and his mother-in-law in the surviving wing of Ashe where Elizabeth gave birth to several of their 12 children: these included Winston, their first-born who did not live, the famous John, Duke of Marlborough, George an Admiral, Charles a General under his brother John and Theobald who took orders but died in his twenties. Their daughter, Arabella, became the Duke of York's mistress and mother of his children. Another daughter, Ellen, died aged 21 and is buried beside her grandfather at Minterne. Charles is also buried at Minterne.

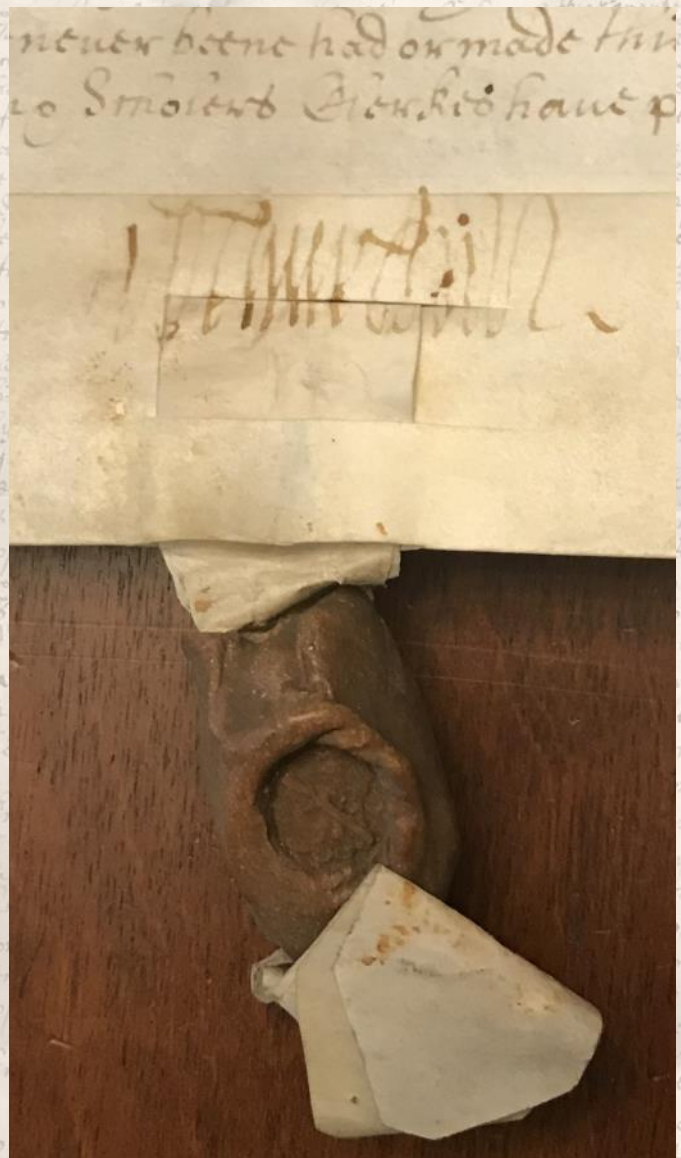


1660

Betweene William Surt Doffen & Dimitrie Gh



By necessity this history of 'the Colonel' omits a huge amount of information about his many achievements. He and his C20th namesake had their faults, like the rest of us, but both were energetic and hard-working, horse riders, adventurers, ambitious, patriotic, risk-takers, brave, loyal to crown and country, able to overcome adversity and rise above depression with hard work and, not least, determined, charming, intelligent and witty. These two Sir Winston Churchills were at the heart of events in the C17th and C20th respectively when the country desperately needed men of real integrity and stature to face the challenges of their time. Inevitably we are more familiar with our World War 2 leader but 'the Colonel' was an important figure who contributed much to the country. He and his wife, Elizabeth, gave birth to talented offspring who inspired the later Winston to achieve, with the Allies, great victories over the forces of evil in Europe and the Far East.



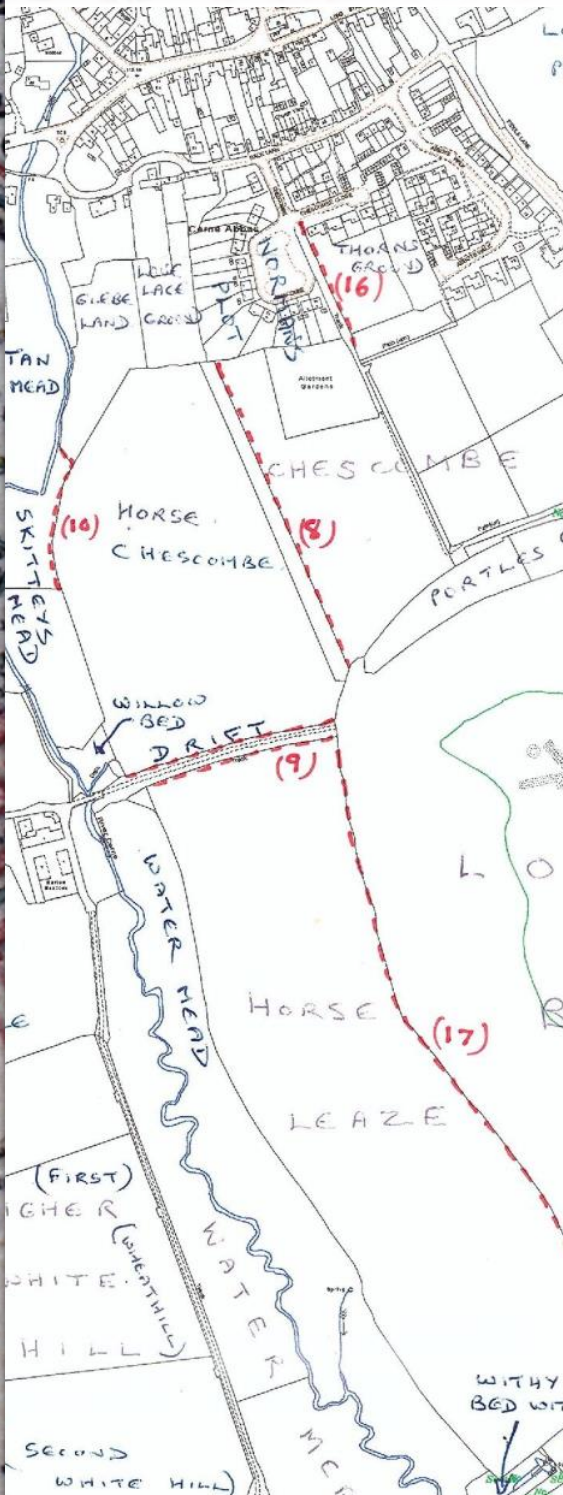


The Curious Field Names of Cerne.

In my farming life it has been a source of fascination that every field on a farm is named.

Sometimes the name is obviously descriptive of the characteristics of the field, e.g. 20-acres, Long Field, 3-Corners, etc. The field name can also denote whose responsibility it is, eg Pitman's Ground, and be useful for clarity when organising work to be done in that field. Whether in medieval days or the 21st century, if one asks Bert the ploughman to plough "yonder field", it's always possible he will head for the wrong one, whereas if everyone working on a farm knows by heart which field is which by its name, there's less margin for error. These days every "parcel" of farmland, however small, is digitally mapped and recorded on the Rural Payments Agency database as a 10 digit number which only computers remember, so fields definitely still need names.

Field names often have archaic roots, which suggest ancient origins. Many of these are on the brilliant survey of field names and hedgerows of the Cerne Abbas parish mapped by Janet Bartlet in 2001. Some names obviously refer to former owners or tenants of those fields, e.g. Durden's Ground, Jacobs Piece, or Marsh's Bottom, although how did Collar Maker's Mead come about? But there are many fields which have common suffixes which denote their suitability or normal use through centuries. The word leaze, or lea, as in William Barnes' well known poem "My O'chard in Linden Lea", occurs frequently, eg Ewe Leaze, Cow Leaze or Horse Leaze, and describes a pasture which is normally used as grazing for particular animals. The word meadow, or mead, comes from Old English "maedwe", a mown field, i.e. one which was often cut for hay. Croft describes an enclosed area of land, usually arable, sometimes with a dwelling, and close similarly describes an enclosed piece of land. These terms occur on the Cerne 2001 field map, but can be repeatedly found over time in the 1795 Enclosure Act of Cerne Abbas, the Tithe Apportionment records of 1845, and in the Pitt Rivers sale details of the Cerne Abbas estate in 1919.



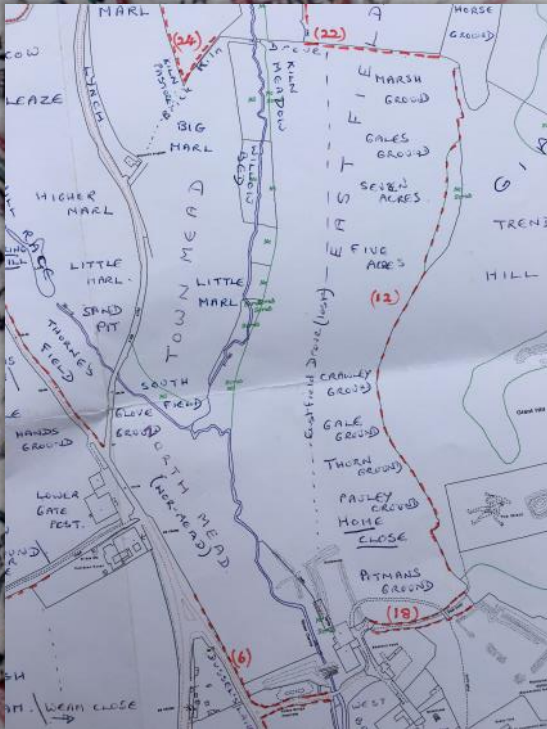
In 1540, following the Dissolution of Cerne Abbey by Henry VIII, the demesne lands of the Abbey were leased to the favoured lutenist at the court of King Henry, Philip Van Wilder, described in earlier issues of this magazine. The Indenture of this transaction lists the following fields by their (quite poetic) names, at the time, as follows:

*“and also all those lands, meadows, pastures and pasturages called **Yelcombe**, **Podingslade**, **Milfurlonge**, **Smalcombe**, **Holcombe**, **Northmeade**, **Horsecrofte**, **?Vingmed**, **Newemedeclose**, **Whittemede**, **Mulcrofte**, **Holcombemedede**, **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**.”*

Confirming also that: *“All and singular which premises are commonly called **lez demayne landis** of the said late monastery”...*

The names in larger font indicate those which can be found on the 2001 field survey, but many of the field names listed above, it has to be said, do not tally with names to be found in the later documents, which indicates that the changes to ownership, uses, and layout could have brought about name change. It also seems possible that field names sometimes came about rather as people have nicknames, and perhaps were similarly fickle. Enclosures which took place from medieval times but were legalised in Cerne Abbas in 1795, over time changed the whole of agricultural ownership and practice, and must have altered field layout and size and thus names. However, there were a few names in the 1540 Indenture which tally with, and one hopes refer to, fields which exist in the 2001 survey, and are familiar to many in Cerne today; two of which are worth exploring in detail.

The large arable field lying below the Giant is known to the many villagers who walk its margins, and to those who farm it today, as North Mead, presumably because it lies to the north of the village. It is named in the 1540 Indenture, but it's not clear to which field it refers. The 2001 map reveals that relatively recently North Mead was the name of the pasture field parallel to it but to the west of the river and adjacent to the Giant view car park, and the large arable field was on the map as East Field.



This field was until the 1960's split north/south by a drove (a double hedged track to facilitate movement of livestock to and from the village). In Abbey days the river Silley crossed it, a channel which fed the Abbey precincts with water diverted from the Cerne. The eastern half, at the base of Giant Hill, was further subdivided into no less than 10 small plots, perhaps indicating a leftover of a feudal layout; on a 1768 map well over 25 smaller plots are shown. No trace remains of the drove or the plots.

The other familiar field, on the eastern fringe of the village with a much loved walk round its margins peppered with orchids in early summer, is Yelcombe. Is it thus named because of the gorse-covered hill it lies below, ablaze with yellow flowers most of the summer? Or was it, before herbicides put paid to many of the colours of arable fields, densely populated by yellow flowered charlock, plus "combe", the ubiquitous name for a steep-sided valley? Yelcombe also had a drove track, now a single hedge running east/west dividing it from the adjacent fields, along which livestock grazing the surrounding hills could be driven to and from the village.

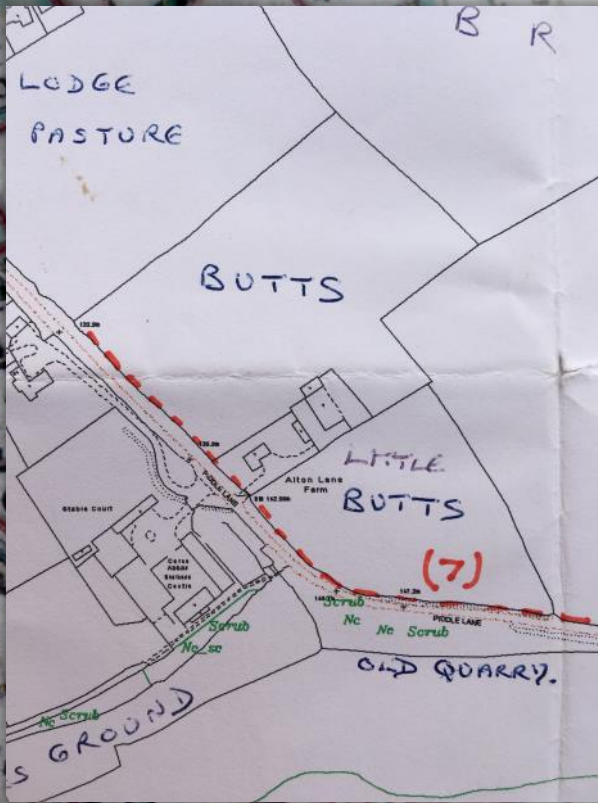
Along the northern boundary of Yelcombe which rises steeply up Giant Hill was a lime kiln, possibly more than one, fed with chalk dug from the base of Giant Hill, and carted from pits on Black Hill to the south. That boundary extends in a dog-leg out into the field, behind which there are distinct terraces formed into the hillside, and now planted both with conifers and Ash trees. The terraces, or lynchets, are probably the remains of chalk quarrying, although there has been speculation they were the site of an Abbey vineyard. The plantation is called "The Lawns". The old use of this word referred to an open space between trees, or glade, and seems quite apt today, but one cannot speculate on how it came about.



Yelcombe. Photo Robin Mills



"The Lawns" Photo Robin Mills



Two adjacent fields to the east of Piddle Lane are called Butts and Little Butts. Butts were the banked up area behind targets used for archery. Archery training, a long process, would have been carried out so that proficient bowmen could be readily recruited from the community in time of war. The weapon that largely won the battles during the 'Hundred Years War' against the French was the longbow. With a range in excess of 300 yards at a shooting rate of perhaps up to six arrows a minute (although this could only be maintained by the strongest), it was the machine gun of its age.

Other names in the Indenture are familiar today.

Chescombe, a possible derivation being Old English "cirice" meaning church, and "combe", a valley. Barton Furlong, Barton from Old English "bere-(barley) tun (an enclosed piece of land), and Furlong, a unit of measurement of 220 yards.



Teasing out the origins of these old names gives us a glimpse of life here in this village over a surprisingly long period of history, although some remain obscure, all the more so because many field names are changed in response to changes in farm management. But perhaps if we knew the answer to all the obscurities of Cerne's rich history, life would be dull indeed.





Den Denness



That's Entertainment!

Drama and Performance Art in Cerne

In the first of two articles exploring the performing arts and amateur dramatics in Cerne Abbas, Ian Denness charts the development of organised public entertainments in the village during the period up to 1950.

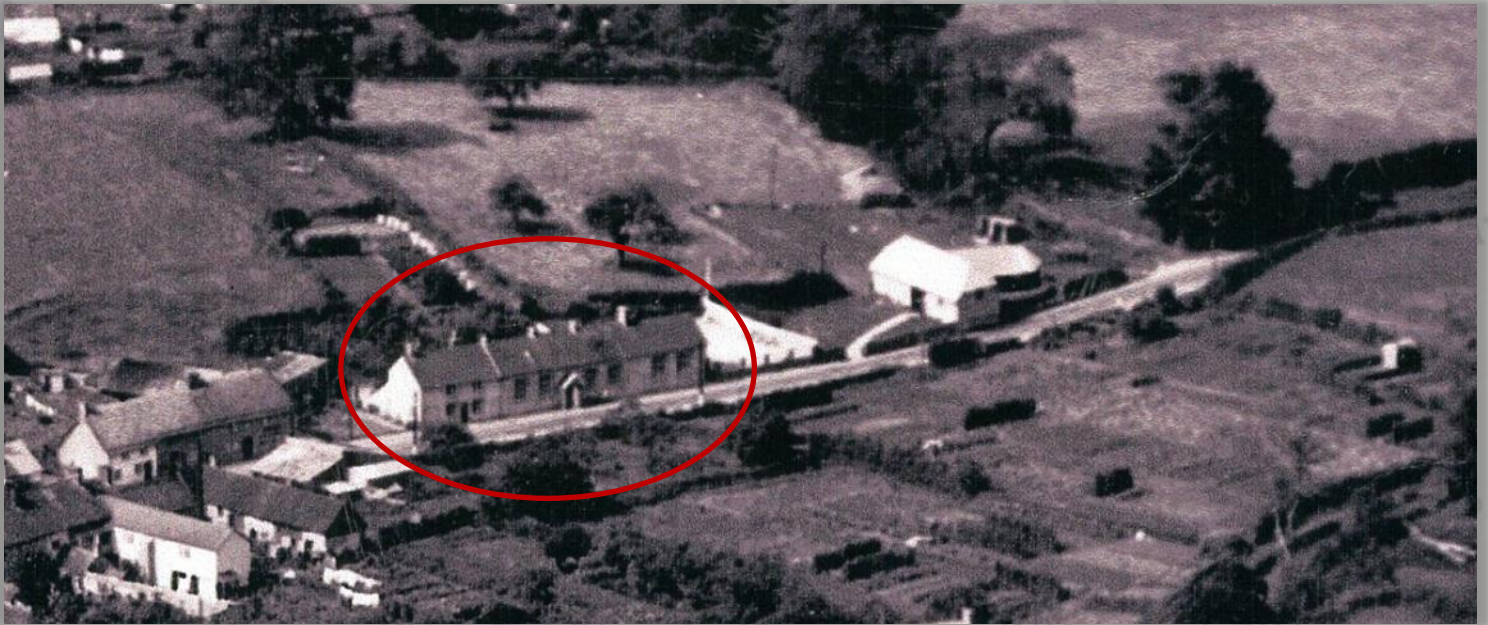
Since the earliest times, humans have sought distraction from the mundane routine of their daily lives. In the distant past this might have come from communal singing, storytelling, dancing or even religious ritual. The latter would have provided much of what passed for entertainment in pre-reformation Cerne Abbas alongside older, pre-Christian practices such as Maypole dancing and wassailing. These early forms of community entertainment had one thing in common – most, with the exception of those which took place in churches, were held outdoors. The construction of indoor venues, with the capacity to accommodate relatively large numbers of people, was required to allow the hosting of regular public entertainments in front of a comfortably seated audience. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Cerne Abbas has had three principal venues capable of hosting public entertainments: the schoolroom, the old village hall and the new village hall. The opening of the first of these venues marks the starting point for this brief history of public performance in Cerne Abbas.



27th July 1910 Maypole dancing at the Forester's Fete at Rear of Union House, Cerne Abbas



The Cerne Abbas school, sited on Duck Street, was formally opened in September 1843. As was standard for the time, the school itself consisted chiefly of a single large room in which the majority of the teaching took place. Although intended for the education of local children, the 'schoolroom' was also used in the evenings and at the weekends, when the children were not present, for non-scholastic purposes. It quickly became the principal venue for a range of social uses, including meetings, lectures and exhibitions.



1938 Aerial view of Cerne School. Courtesy Tommy Dunn

The Cerne Abbas schoolroom also provided the location for numerous public entertainments. During the Victorian and Edwardian periods, it hosted some of the country's more famous travelling acts. For example, the celebrated '**Professor Du Cann**' (real name Charles McGann) appeared there when he visited Dorset in 1867. Du Cann, who was known as '**The Prince of Ventriloquists**', claimed to have performed before 'the Prince and Princess of Prussia, the Emperor and Empress of France, and the President of America'. His Cerne audience was treated to his stage show '**Mirth, Science and Art**' which, reported the *Sherborne Mercury*, was 'very pleasing' noting that Du Cann was a 'first class magician' and that his ventriloquism 'eclipses all we have heard'. Du Cann's performances were not always so well received; three years earlier his ventriloquism was so convincing that he was chased from a Gloucestershire theatre by an audience that thought he was 'endeavouring to bamboozle them'.

Performances by local artists were also staged. By the early 1870s, evenings devoted to popular music, singing and literary readings were regularly held at the schoolroom and were well-received by Cerne residents. It was reported that at one such event held in January 1871 – which featured a vocal performance by **William Cross** of Minterne Parva, a comic song from the New Inn's landlord **Edwin Clark**, and a reading from **Oliver Twist** by the Cerne solicitor, **John Murley** – that 'the room was, as usual, well filled by a respectable and appreciative audience'.



The appetite for live entertainment was maintained throughout the late nineteenth century. In 1882, it was reported that the schoolroom was 'crowded in every part' for an evening of 'turns' performed by fellow villagers. Some of the popular songs of the day were sung, the titles of which, although now largely forgotten, give a sense of the joviality of the affair; these included '**Powder Monkey Joe**', '**Three Jolly Britons**', '**Three Old Maids of Lee**' and '**Pour Out the Rhine Wine**'.

As always, the concert ended with a communal singing of '**God Save the Queen**'.

Entertainments such as these were performed in front of an audience of locals who could, on occasion, be quite unruly. The schoolteacher-diarist Catherine Granville, who was more accustomed to a higher level of cultural sophistication, was shocked when she attended a play performed by an amateur troupe from Piddletrenthide in her schoolroom in 1908. She noted the actors' dirty boots and that 'the acting was crude indeed and a little dance they gave was too [unintentionally] funny for words'. Her fellow attendees also grew restless, resulting in two of the more 'respectable' audience members breaking into an impromptu rendition of a comic song entitled 'My Little Wee Dog' with which others in the crowd 'joined in right heartily'.

The village's first organised amateur dramatics troupe - the '**Cerne Abbas Players**' – was formed in 1925. The driving force behind its creation was Eleanor Frances Hall, the wife of Cerne's newly installed vicar. The Players moved away from the 'lowbrow' entertainment that had previously proved so popular and focused instead on a more edifying brand of culture. After a successful performance of a few short Shakespearean pieces, the troupe ended its inaugural year with an ambitious show consisting of four short plays – three written by Hall herself – interspersed with intervals of music, singing and dancing. The performance, which was staged at the schoolroom, was rewarded by a lengthy review published in the *Western Gazette*. It was approvingly noted that 'no fancy prices were asked for admission' and that, despite the 'innate shyness of the countryside population' from which the performers



Catherine Granville,
Teacher 1908-1910

were drawn, they 'gave the audience a highly-entertaining couple of hours'. The next year, Hall both organised the **Cerne Abbas Shakespearean Festival** - in which excerpts of the Bard's work were performed by a cast of local amateurs – and wrote and produced a 'community nativity play' which was said to have featured 'an eighth of the total population' of Cerne. Neither were performed in the schoolroom, but were staged instead in the more atmospheric, and spacious, surroundings of the village's medieval Tithe Barn. See left.

Eleanor Hall left Cerne in 1935 and much of the local enthusiasm for amateur dramatics appears to have left with



her. The relative lack of live performances recorded in the years that followed were not due to the absence of a suitable venue. For almost a century after its opening, Cerne Abbas' schoolroom served as an unofficial village hall.



However, in 1937 it was relieved of this role when an actual village hall was opened in Wills Lane, on the site of a former orchard. The new venue was spacious, comfortable and was equipped with both a purpose-built stage and a sprung floor. Together, these features made the village hall an ideal place in which to host the dance bands that were currently popular and throughout the 1940s, including during the war, dancing to live music provided a regular and welcome escape from the deprivations of the time.



The depressing austerity of the first post-war decade may have contributed to a renewed interest in staging local amateur entertainments which, in turn, led to the revival of the Cerne Abbas Players. Now under the direction of **Mr E. G. Jackson**, the reformed troupe, unlike its predecessor, focused its attentions on performing comic plays. **The Players'** first public appearance came early in 1949 with a three-act comedy play called **'Charity Begins'** performed in the crowded village hall. A second play, Arnold Ridley's **'Third Time Lucky'**, was staged in the following year.

By the start of the 1950s, the popularity of amateur dramatics was on the rise in Cerne Abbas. Over the subsequent half century numerous plays and dramas were staged at the village hall and elsewhere. In 1986, the **Cerne Abbas Dramatic Society** was formed and ensured that the village's reputation for thespian endeavour continued into the twenty-first century. In the second article in this series, Helen Hewitt will bring us fully up to date by recounting, in her own inimitable style, some of the stories that she has collected from those who were involved in these more recent theatrical productions.



In this second article, Helen Hewitt explores the performing arts and amateur dramatics in Cerne Abbas from 1950 to the present day.

The **Cerne Abbas Players** were formed in the early 1950s, which involved members of the Women's Institute which flourished at that time. Productions included '**Jane Steps Out**' in 1955 (from a 1938 British comedy film) and the '**Marriage Bureau**' in 1956. The photographs of the casts in these productions throw a light on a generation now vanished. One photo includes Mione Fox who was a mine of information for me, but now sadly gone.

Top: Jane Steps Out - 1955 L to R:

Jean Congram, Betty Marsh, Bob Stenhouse, Fred Page, Ena Gibbons, David Pile?, Pam Shutler

Middle: "Yes or No" - 1957:

Mrs. Yearsley, Pam Shutler, Wendy Westmacott, Jeanette House, Fred Page, Jean Congram (school teacher)

Bottom: The Marriage Bureau:

Jean Congram, Pam Shutler, Wendy Westmacott, Mrs. Yearsley, May House (with Bill Hart the postman's dog), Fred Page, Mrs Shutler, Evelyn Yearsley.

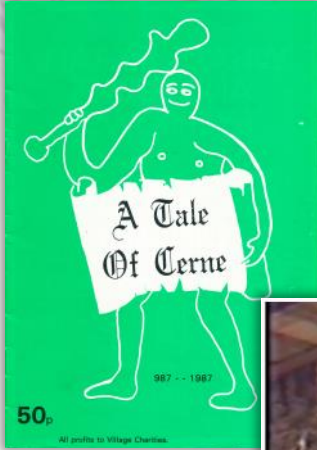
[Ed: Thank you to Alan Lake for info]

Sepia photo: Cerne Abbas Players, thought to be 1951

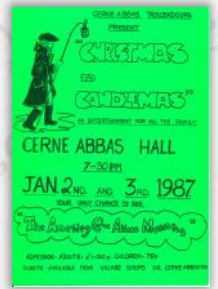
Mrs Reed, Jennifer Shutler, John Whines, Henry Smith, Jeanette House and Wendy Westmacott. [photo courtesy Alan Lake]

The **Cerne Abbas Players** continued to stage performances throughout the 1950s, but few records survive of similar entertainments being staged during the 1960s and 1970s. They may have fallen victim to the increasing popularity of television, which was also said had killed off the cinema. Ironically therefore, Abbey St, Cerne Abbas was chosen for the location of the much loved 1963 film version of 'Tom Jones', starring Albert Finney, Susannah York and Hugh Griffith.





In 1987 the residents of Cerne Abbas marked the millennium of the founding of Cerne Abbey with a series of commemorative events. Together with an exhibition, a fête, and a series of public lectures, villagers were also treated to the **'Tale of Cerne'**, an especially commissioned dramatisation of the history of Cerne Abbas. Funding for the production had been raised through two earlier amateur productions - **'Christmas to Candlemas'** and a **Mummers play** – which had collectively netted over £200. The **'Tale of Cerne'** itself was quite an undertaking.



Produced and directed by **Annie Wright** and her husband Alan, who also directed the music, the event is still remembered by many today.

The play was performed in the barn at Stable Court on Piddle Lane, an impressively large space suitable for covering Cerne's long history. Most of the village participated in one way or another. Jean Rigg knitted the outfits for the knights and they really looked like chain mail! On visiting Annie Wright to obtain information for this article I was shown the video of the performance and it was a joy to watch.



The costumes made by Susie Thorpe from the Old Saddler were spot on. A local television crew from ITV came and filmed **'The Tale of Cerne'** and complete footage of the play can be viewed on YouTube at [A Tale of Cerne - YouTube](#) a still from which is seen above.





The previous year, 1986, saw the founding of the **Cerne Abbas Dramatic Society**, or **CADS**, initially with Norman Watts as Chairman, followed in turn by Alan Morrell, Gill Copson, Barbara Hallett and others. Amateur dramatics became firmly rooted in our village again, with many local residents taking part in the plays that were produced. Between 1989 and 1993 a series of pantomimes were performed: **'A Christmas Cracker'** **'Beastie and The Boots'** and **'Cinderladdin'** to name a few,

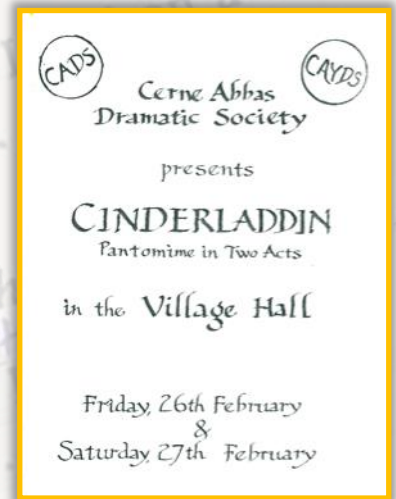
interspersed by a number of other amateur productions.

From 1994 through to 2002 other plays performed included **'Round and Round the Gooseberry Bush'**, **'Tom, Tom the Piper's Son'** and the **'Wedding of the Year'**. The cast lists of those who appeared in these plays include several names that many readers will recognise: Garry Batt, Gill Copson, Sandy Morrell, Moira Pinder and Barbara Hallett (who, for one performance, wore the wedding outfit bought for her son's wedding - that is dedication). Forgive me if your name is missing.

The final performance of CADS to be held at the old village hall in Wills Lane was in 2002, after which its activities moved to the new village hall on Kettle Bridge Lane. Alan and Sandy Morrell did much to keep the group going at this new venue, to continue to entertain the village. Many productions were subsequently produced by **CADS** for a number of years and, although I have seen many of the programmes produced for their shows, the dates when they were staged were not noted, and memories fade! However, with each production many others in the village were involved as production teams, set builders, costume makers, lighting engineers, beverage suppliers, and much else besides. No show can go on without its backstage crew, and this village certainly had a large one. I wish I could list the many involved, including

some familiar family names that have lived here for generations.

Rehearsals at any time create mistakes, and memories survive of people quoting wrong words or gestures. What about 'testaments' replaced by 'testicles'; or the Fairy with a cast on her arm having fallen the week before the first night? The show must go on!



The cast of Cerne Abbas Dramatic Society's pantomime *Beastie and the Beast*.

'Beast' on stage in Cerne

CERNE Abbas Dramatic Society's pantomime this year was a parody of *Beauty and the Beast*.

Beauty and the Beast was performed at the village Hall on Friday and Saturday.

The play, written by C. R. Cook, follows the fortunes of

three young girls called Belinda The Beast, Sarah the Snoot and Gert The Galoot.

Their father is caught stealing a white rose from the beast's garden and his punishment is to offer one of his daughters to the beast as a wife.

The cast, all from Cerne Abbas, had been rehearsing since October. The pantomime was produced by Eve Kelly.

PICTURES: BRUCE LITSON



Sarah (Christine King), left, and her wicked accomplice Gert (Barbara Hallett) boo the Beast (Mandella Collins) and Papa (John Butcher).



The Beast Belinda (Mandella Collins) gets her man, Honest John (Rob Gready), while the Beastie (Alan Morrell) tries to come between them.



Bringing us up to more recent times, the play **'The Day They Sold a Village'** was performed as part of the events arranged by the Cerne Historical Society to commemorate the centenary in 2019 of the sale of Cerne Abbas by the Pitt-Rivers family. For the performance, St Mary's church was employed as the venue for the auction (the original 1919 auction had been at the Corn Exchange in Dorchester) and many villagers, dressed in costume, were involved. Some of the cast made bids to buy the houses that they lived in while others stepped forward to buy a farm. The show included many flashes of comedy and pathos, both of which are always needed in any production of this type. Former village resident and **CADS** player, Garry Batt, made a return visit, to take the lead role as the Auctioneer; an 'easy' task for him as a role he performed in real life! The audience filled the church, with many people also from outside the village. Written and directed by myself, a 'newbie' having only been in Cerne for 10 years, I was incredibly impressed with how committed the cast of 25 were.



This performance too, can be watched online at [1919 Cerne Village Sale Re-enactment Full Length - YouTube](#).

And so ends this brief review of dramatic activity in Cerne, although sadly not recently with **CADS** effectively dormant. The Village Hall is still host to occasional performances by [Artsreach Dorset](#), a charity bringing high quality performances of live theatre, music, dance and family shows to the heart of rural communities.

However, one small mystery remains. We have received information about the existence in the early 1920s of a ladies dance troupe, instructed by a Mrs North who lived in River Cottage, which called itself the 'Cerne Spots'. They took their name from the dresses they wore which were white with black spots. We know that they featured performers such as Elsie Hook (who would later feature among the Cerne Abbas Players in the 1950s), Elsie Baker, Barbara Vincent, Violet White and Dolly Cornick. If any reader recognises any of these names, or has any information about the Cerne Spots, we would be delighted to hear from you.





TO DATE THE CERNE GIANT

Introduction

On 12th May 2021 the National Trust released the findings of their testing programme to date the age of the Cerne Giant and the Cerne Historical Society (CHS) and the village were very kindly given a preview. Martin Papworth, Senior Archaeologist with the Trust, also gave a later talk to CHS to explain the work and results in greater depth and afterwards there was some animated discussion.

The conclusion by the team comprising the National Trust, University of Gloucester (Optical Stimulated Luminescence testing, OSL) and Allen Environmental Archaeology (Snail analysis) was that *'the Giant was probably first constructed in the late Saxon period'*. This was based on one test result from the deepest layer of infill chalk which indicated a date range of AD650 – 1310. This was not what was expected and caused considerable excitement since earlier speculation had postulated either an earlier prehistoric or a later post-Medieval, origin. Coincidentally this places the initial excavation in the same time frame as the Cerne Abbey (AD987 – 1539).

Three points of view have been contributed to our Summer 2021 magazine from a historical perspective. This article stays clear of the historical implications of this work but takes the opportunity to have a closer look at the sampling and testing programme from a geological perspective and the scientific evidence on which the conclusion has been based. The results raise several uncertainties and these are discussed. These are my personal views and it is hoped that this may promote further contributions on the subject in future CHS Magazines. It should be emphasised that this discussion is based on the Trust's presentation of their preliminary results which still have to be confirmed in scientific publication.

The Results

The Trust excavated 4 pits (named 'Trenches' by the Trust but I prefer 'Pit' to avoid confusion with the existing trench that defines the Giant) across the existing trench to reveal the full profile at each location. The locations were the left foot (A), right foot (B), right elbow (C) and left elbow (D) as illustrated in Figure 1. All pits showed a similar pattern and revealed a number of fill layers above the solid chalk. They also showed a slight flattening of the slope upslope and downslope of the trench with a thicker than expected soil profile above the intact chalk. The sample locations are shown in sketches released to CHS by the Trust (Figure 2) but these still have to be confirmed and redrawn in an official publication. Summaries of the sampling and test results are shown in Tables 1 and 2.

Figure 1 Pit Locations



Figure 2 Sample Locations

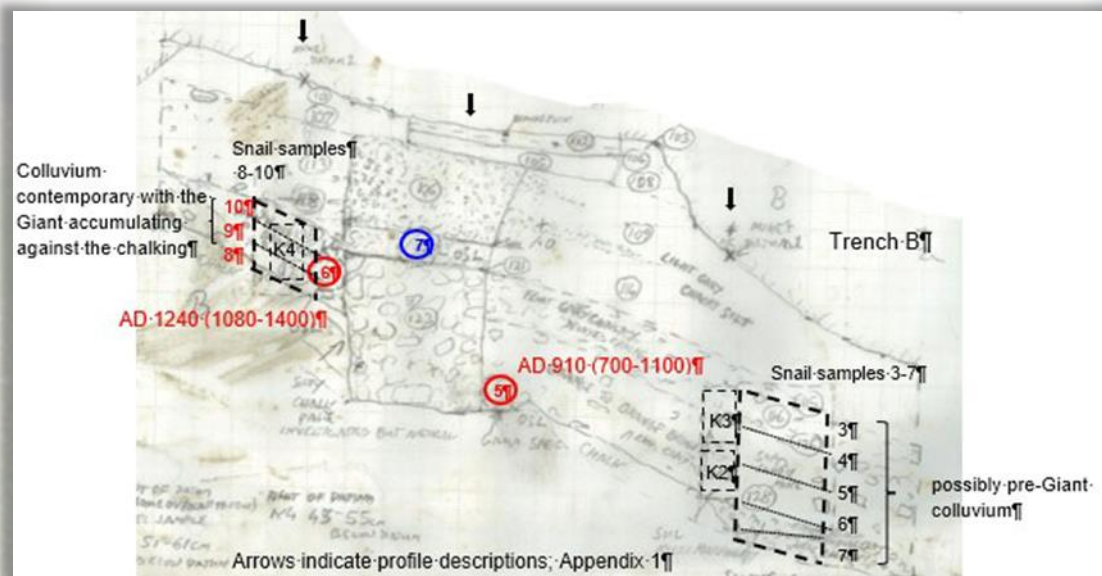
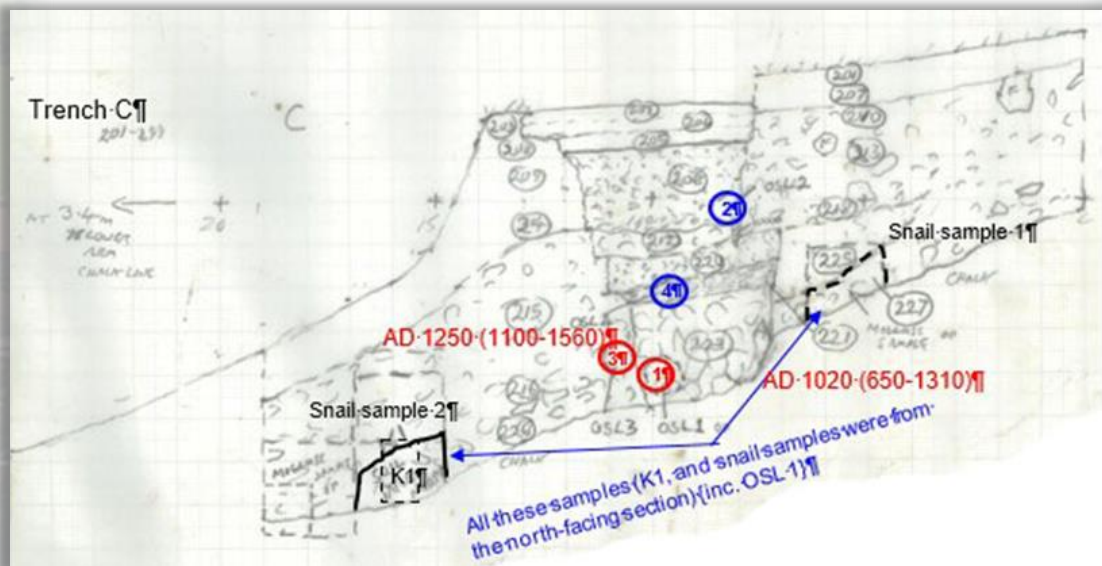


Table 1: Samples taken for Optical Stimulated Luminescence testing (OSL)

Sample Number	Location	Result/Date
1	lowest fill layer from the trench in Pit C (right elbow)	AD1020 (650 – 1310)
3	downslope of the trench in Pit C just above the intact chalk	AD 1250 (1100 – 1560)
5	downslope of the trench in Pit B (right foot) just above the intact chalk	AD910 (700 – 1100) NT suggest pre-Giant colluvium
6	upslope of the trench in Pit B and just above the intact chalk.	AD1240 (1080 – 1400) NT suggest colluvium contemporary with the Giant, accumulating against the chalking.

Table 2: Samples taken to inspect for snail remains

Sample No	Location	Results
1	upslope of trench in Pit C (right elbow) just above intact chalk.	?
2	downslope of trench in Pit C just above intact chalk	?
3	downslope of trench in Pit B (right foot) just above intact chalk, sample 3 shallowest, sample 7 deepest.	NT suggest pre-Giant colluvium Contains snail species introduced in the post-Roman period
4		
5		
6		
7		
8	upslope of trench in Pit B, just above intact chalk, sample 10 shallowest, sample 8 deepest.	NT suggest colluvium contemporary with the Giant, accumulating against the chalking. Contains snail species introduced in the post-Roman period
9		
10		

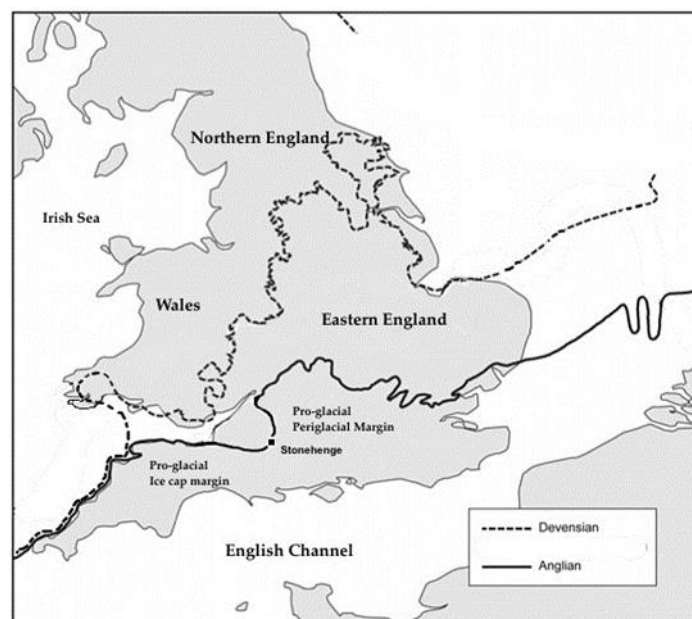
For a summary of these results see various press releases by the Trust, our Summer 2021 newsletter and, in more detail, an article in the August 2020 edition of Current Archaeology, A date with the Giant by Mike Allen and Martin Papworth.

Uncertainties raised by the Results

Interpretation of the geomorphology

The landscape forming processes that moulded Giant Hill took place during the Quaternary period (2.6 million years ago to present) when southern England was affected by many temperature fluctuations and several glacial periods. In the penultimate glacial period, about 140,000 years ago, the Anglian ice sheet extended as far south as Stonehenge and in the last glacial period, about 20,000 years ago the Devensian ice sheet extended into south Wales and north Devon (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Extent of most recent ice sheets



In these cold periods a permafrost regime dominated the area and during the coldest period of the last Devensian glaciation about 20,000 years ago sea levels were about 130m below present levels. During these periods the upper surface of the chalk would have been affected by frost shattering and as the climate began to warm, the current landscape was developed. Thawing of the upper surface released water that eroded the chalk valleys and produced water saturated debris that flowed down the slopes (solifluction). On a slope as steep as Giant Hill this *Colluvium* would have largely continued to the valley floor and formed *Head* deposits. Some shallow deposits of colluvium may have remained on steep hill slopes, but these would be expected to be only of nominal thickness. By about 6000 years ago these processes became relatively stable and have continued as such to the present day. Today, the soil profile of Giant Hill, in common with other chalk slopes across southern Britain, is similar to 6000 years ago, typically comprising a thin layer of thinly vegetated topsoil, possibly overlying a thin colluvial layer, in turn overlying the in-situ chalk which exhibits frost shattering in its upper levels.

The conclusion reached by the Trust that thicker deposits of colluvium are present locally at the elbows and feet of the Giant is very unlikely. In particular, the concept of contemporary colluvium somehow accumulating against the chalking is difficult to accept. This implies that the chalking was a raised feature intercepting hill wash. Sample No 5 taken from the side of the trench in Pit B, downslope and just above the intact chalk is attributed by NT to pre-Giant colluvium.

If the material is colluvium the dates shown by the OSL testing should be thousands of years older than the trench infill sample. They are not, leading to one of two conclusions. Either firstly, the test results are unrepresentative or secondly, these materials are not colluvium but contemporaneous with the initial excavation. I would suggest that the first is unlikely but more tests would be required to provide a statistical basis to confirm this. The second seems more likely and it would seem that during excavation or re-excavation the spoil from the trench was spread adjacent to the trench and this would provide a similar age to the material in the trench. The post-Roman date suggested by the snail samples from these materials does not contradict this interpretation.

The date attributed to the original excavation of the Giant

The date attributed to the original excavation of the Giant of AD1020 (650 – 1310) is based on one sample taken from the lowest fill layer in the trench revealed by Pit C. This requires more testing to provide a statistical basis for the conclusion.

Even so, why does this fill layer define the earliest date for the Giant? The original excavation could have been an open trench and the fill layer added in a later restoration. This would suggest an even earlier date for the origin of the Giant. What can be concluded is that this date represents the first infilling or a later re-filling of the base of the trench.

Summary

The work carried out by the National Trust team has added a much greater understanding of the origin of the Giant and they are to be congratulated on their contribution to the debate and their financial support to allow this work to go ahead. The Trust want to continue with more work to confirm their initial conclusions and let us hope that financing is forthcoming to allow this to happen. Whatever the uncertainties that have been raised in this article it seems clear that one of the postulated theories, that the Giant was post-Medieval, has been scotched, ie. the Giant was constructed no later than the test date and could have been constructed a considerable time before.





St Nicholas,

Hilfield lies in a hidden location through a narrow gap in the hedge on the north side of the lane from Hilfield Friary to Hilfield Manor grid ref 635051.



The journey is worth it for it contains some very remarkable carved pew ends

It is a simple nave plan in stone and flint. If you visit, there is no parking, just a little splay which leaves one's vehicle vulnerable to passing agricultural machinery. Visit on a bike or on foot if you can. The journey is worth it for it contains some very remarkable carved pew ends which have long been credited as survivals from Cerne Abbey, removed there after the Dissolution in 1539.

It has to be admitted boldly that Nikolaus Pevsner decries this notion. He states (The Buildings of England, Dorset, p319) 'Benches and stalls C.17 with the elaborate ends carved by *William Halliday* of Chilton Polden (Somerset), 1848' which information is credited to Julian Orbach. He is a fellow Architectural Historian who lives in Bradford on Avon. Pevsner isn't always right, however he is usually.

There are further things to consider. There are two matching pew ends in Batcombe Church, hung to cover a gap behind the organ, which claim to be from Hilfield church, and there is a very fine tall 'capital' one in St Andrew, Leigh, of St Andrew, which Pevsner also credits to Hilfield Church, because it is evidently by the same hand.

The questions to all these propositions arise from the unusual nature of the pew ends themselves. There is a complete set of four, one for each of the four evangelists: St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John. There are the 'capital' pews with floriated finials of St Andrew in Leigh; pew end 1 in Batcombe Church: a dove; St Michael slaying the Dragon, Christ Triumphant and a Trinitarian design. There are pictorial representations of biblical scenes of King David, the Journey to Bethlehem, a figure with upraised hand, which I now think to be The Sower, the Baptism of Jesus, the Wedding at Cana, The Good Shepherd, Let the Children be!, St Peter's Denial, Christ carrying his Cross, Jesus appearing as the Gardener to Mary on Easter Morning, The Lamb of God, and Holy Writ.

The style is all the same, and appears, with the costumes and settings to be late medieval. There are some texts which are in Latin and reflect a very catholic understanding of the sacraments. What is odd, if the pew ends were carved for Hilfield, is that there is no scheme. The scenes seem to be a rescued selection from somewhere else. There is no St Nicholas, the patron Saint of Hilfield church, and why a St Andrew?

Ultimately this will only be decided by tree ring dating the timber, but there is much to enjoy in the scenes themselves:

St Michael slays the Serpent

This is a scene from the Book of Revelation when St Michael throws down Satan. It is marvellously energetic with Satan depicted as a human faced serpent and a muscular armoured St Michael. It is the scene depicted in bronze by Jacob Epstein on the walls of Coventry Cathedral.

St Andrew

This is in Leigh Church and shows the Apostle holding his diagonal cross of martyrdom.

King David

The King of Israel C1000BC to whom were credited the Psalms, shown with his harp or lyre.

Pew 1 in Batcombe Church

A Dove bearing an olive twig. Latin inscription- perhaps 'Da pace in diem' 'Give peace in our day'?

Pew 2 in Batcombe Church

Inscription "Domus Dei Porta Coelis" 'This is the house of God, the gate of heaven'.





The figure with upraised hand.

Looking at this again I can see a seed pouch slung from the shoulder and this appears to be the 'Sower gone out to sow' from Jesus' parable.



In hoc omnes

This is a celebration of the Mass stating that in the consecrated host 'all things' are contained.



Baptism of Jesus

Jesus is baptised by John the Baptist in the river Jordan, the Holy Spirit hovering overhead in the form of a dove.



Wedding at Cana

Mary stands behind encouraging her son as servants draw the water turned to wine from the jars.



To Bethlehem

Joseph and Mary and the Donkey, but Mary is holding the swaddled Jesus, so it is actually Joseph taking Mary and Jesus into exile as refugees fleeing the persecution of Herod.

The Good Shepherd

With three very little lambs, one across his shoulders and two at his feet.



Let the Children be!

This became a very popular scene in Lutheran churches after the Reformation because it appeared to be Jesus affirming childbearing and families. Jesus is determinedly blessing the children after the disciples had tried to shoo mothers and children away.



St Peter's Denial

Peter denies his Lord for the third time. Satan is shown as a serpent, tempting him to deny Jesus for fear for his own fate. Peter's symbol of the Keys to the Kingdom lie for now in the dust, and a very fine cockerel crows.



Christ carrying his Cross

Jesus is bound with rope and with a halter to be led, as he staggers under the weight of his cross.





The Lamb of God

This is a depiction from the Book of Revelation of the Lamb of God whose sacrificial blood flows into a Chalice to save mankind. There is a strong reference to the Eucharist or Mass. The same symbol was a popular Inn Sign, and the origin of pubs named 'The Lamb' or 'The Lamb and Flag'.



Holy Writ

This dove inspiring Holy Scripture would not be expected in Cerne Abbey pre-Reformation!

(The English Reformation is associated with the Tudor period of 1485 to 1603 and the transformation of England from Catholicism to Protestantism)



St Matthew Gospel Writer

Matthew's symbol is a human being or angel with a human face.



St Mark

Mark is shown with his sign, the Lion.



Jesus as the Gardener with Mary

Mary Magdalene came with her spice pot to anoint Jesus' body on the Sunday morning. She was startled to find someone she at first assumed to be a gardener who spoke to her. She has put her pot down and has fallen to her knees as she realises that the gardener is in fact Jesus, risen from the grave.



The Tudor Rose.

The Tudor Rose is a double bloom combining the Red Rose of Lancaster with the White Rose of York. It symbolises an end to the Wars of the Roses. However, in Medieval Christian Mysticism the opening rose had the meaning of the flowering lotus in Buddhism- an inner spiritual awakening.



St Luke

Luke, wearing the cap of a doctor or healer is shown with his sign, the ox.



Christ Triumphant

The risen Christ, radiant with sunburst behind him, holds his Cross as a triumph after his Resurrection.



St John

John is shown with his sign, the Eagle



Holy Trinity?

The question mark comes because the inscription is difficult to decipher. This carving has been cut into to make the seat of the choir pew fit. It has definitely been brought from elsewhere and adapted to its present location - Mr Pevsner?

I hope you have enjoyed this little excursion.

It is well worth visiting to see the carvings for real. The technical and artistic accomplishment is really quite something in itself, and they remain a local and little known treasure.





Ian Denness



December



1919 – the Installation of the Rev. H.D. Gundry's Memorial Lectern

Many visitors to the parish church of Cerne Abbas are struck by the impressive and elaborately carved seventeenth-century oak pulpit which stands proudly at the northern entrance to the chancel. Consequently, its companion piece standing opposite – the substantial wooden lectern sculpted in the form of an eagle – is often overlooked. It could easily be mistaken for an example of modern church furniture, but it is, in fact, over one hundred years old, having been unveiled to the local congregation amid great ceremony on Tuesday 9 December 1919. An inscription on the small brass plaque which is fixed to the front of lectern's column reveals something of its origin. It reads:



To the Glory of God
And
in Affectionate Memory
of the
Rev. H.D. Gundry M.A.
Vicar of this Parish
1878-1913

This Lectern is the Gift of
His Parishioners and Friends 1919.



Henry Dickinson Gundry was one of Cerne Abbas' longest serving vicars, attending to the parish for 35 years. By way of context, during the 35 years that preceded Gundry's arrival, six individuals had held the position of vicar of Cerne. So, it was little wonder that his parishioners wanted to honour Gundry with the installation of a commemorative lectern.



The long duration of Gundry's service is all the more remarkable considering that he took holy orders relatively late in life. He was born in Loders, near Bridport, on 2 August 1831. His father was both a Presbyterian and a successful wine and spirit merchant. Young Henry initially entered his father's trade and by 1861, was recorded as the 'Manager of the Bridport Brewery'. A decade later Gundry had advanced his career still further, listing himself as a 'Director of a Public Company' and living with his family and servants in a spacious house in Dulwich.

But, during the 1870s, Gundry turned his back on the commercial world and embraced religion, specifically in the form observed by the Church of England. In September 1874, aged 42, he was made a curate at St Andrew's Church at Cullompton, before being ordained as a priest late in 1877. In the following year he was 'presented' to the vicarage at Cerne Abbas by Lord Rivers. He quickly adapted to the varied roles that were expected of a vicar overseeing a rural parish in the nineteenth century. Alongside his religious and pastoral work, he hosted and presented the prizes at the annual flower shower, acted as the President of village cricket team, and oversaw fundraising activities for local 'good causes'.

But the Rev. Gundry's zealous style of Anglicanism was not to the taste of all the members of his flock. Regular readers of the *Cerne Historical Society Magazine* will be familiar with his anti-alcohol stance demonstrated by his involvement with local campaigns promoting temperance. In 1891, Gundry lobbied successfully to have the licences of both the Glove and the Antelope Inns revoked. His concern for the sobriety of his parishioners was notable for his involvement in the brewing trade early in his life. Gundry also delivered quite a 'low' form of puritanical Protestantism. During the Edwardian period his refusal to decorate his church for the Harvest Festival – a practice willingly adopted at the neighbouring churches at Upcerne and Minterne – irritated some members of his congregation. His dull, uninspiring sermons and unimaginative approach to worship led to small numbers attending his services. The local diarist Catherine Granville noted that the only time she witnessed Gundry get animated was when he was abusing the Roman Catholics, for whom 'he had no toleration'; Gundry described some of their rituals as 'ridiculous, idolatrous blasphemy'.

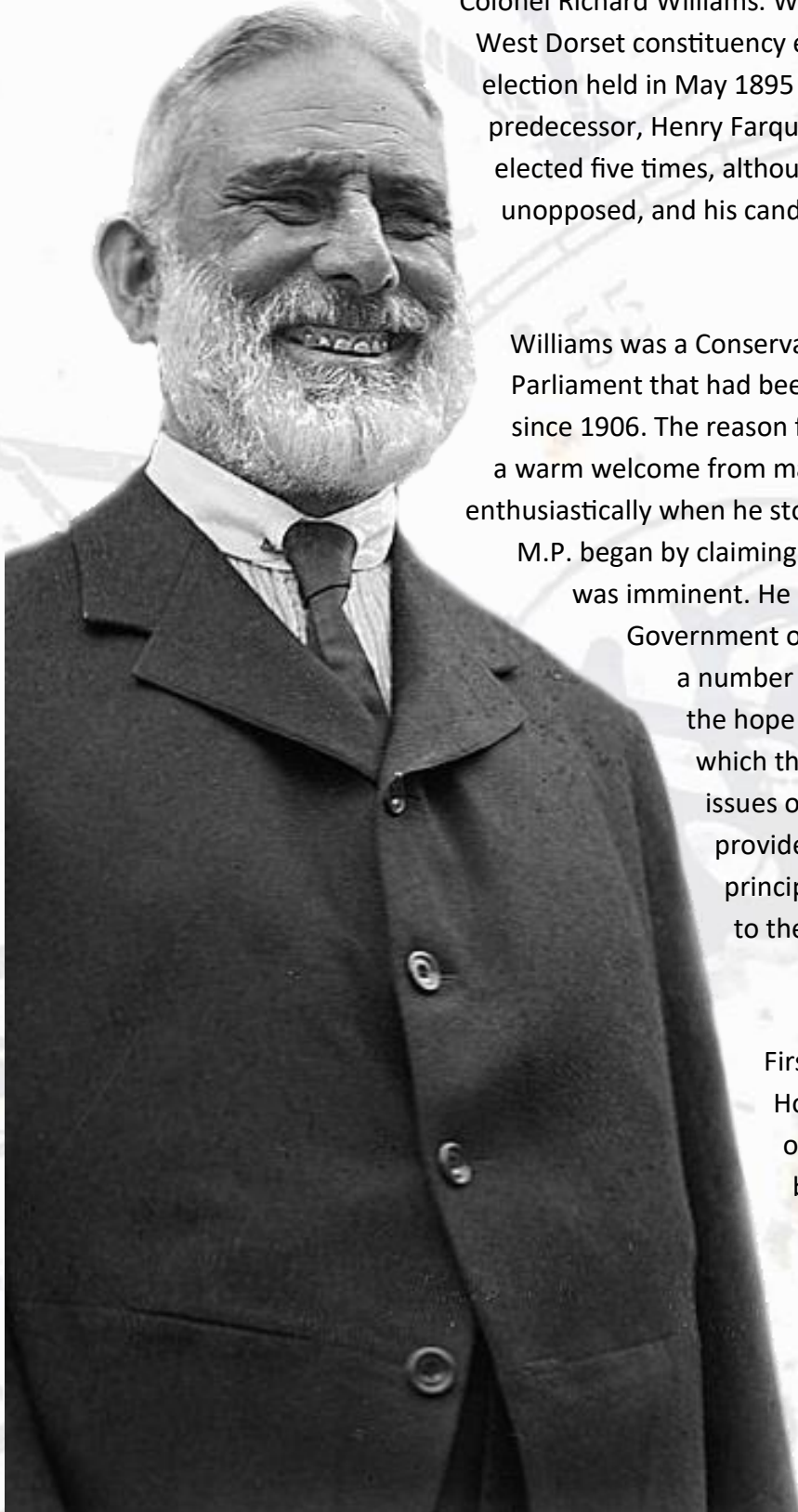
After a year of ill health, and six months of confinement in his vicarage, Gundry died, aged 82, on 6 January 1914. He was interred at the Cerne Abbas burial ground. His son, the Rev. Raymond Hugh Gundry, who had been covering some of his father's duties during his illness, was formally appointed as Cerne's replacement vicar shortly afterwards. But the younger Gundry held the position for less than three years before moving to another Dorset parish. Thereafter it proved difficult to get clergymen to stay in the village; in the 35-year period which followed Henry Gundry's death a further six clergymen held the position of vicar of Cerne Abbas. If nothing else, the memorial lectern installed in the church 102 years ago should stand as a monument to the staying power of the Rev. Henry Dickinson Gundry.



January



**1912 – A Visit to Cerne by the
Village's M.P.**



On 12 January, 1912, Cerne Abbas was paid a visit by its local Member of Parliament, Colonel Richard Williams. Williams had been the representative for the West Dorset constituency ever since winning the two-candidate by-election held in May 1895 following the death by drowning of his predecessor, Henry Farquharson. Since that time, he had been re-elected five times, although on three of these occasions he stood unopposed, and his candidacy was not contested.

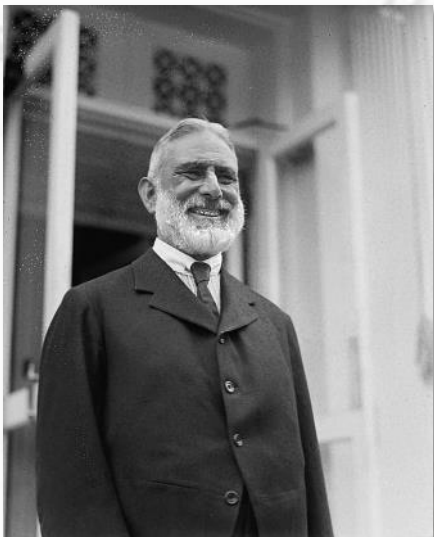
Williams was a Conservative but, at the time of his visit, he sat in a Parliament that had been under the control of the rival Liberal Party since 1906. The reason for his visit to Cerne is unclear, but he received a warm welcome from many of the residents, who cheered enthusiastically when he stood up to address them at the meeting. The M.P. began by claiming that, in his opinion, the next General Election was imminent. He believed that a vote was inevitable because the Government of Herbert Asquith was so hopelessly divided on a number of major issues that it would go to the polls in the hope of losing to relieve themselves of the burdens which they now faced. Williams went on to list the issues on which the Liberals were divided, and these provide an insight into what were regarded as the principal domestic problems during the years leading to the First World War.

First was the thorny – and longstanding - issue of Home Rule for Ireland. In 1912 the entire island of Ireland formed part of the United Kingdom but, for several decades, there had been calls from among the Irish themselves for some form of independent rule.



The Conservatives were committed to maintaining the status quo, but the Liberals were divided on the issue. Williams explained his objections to Home Rule, of which he had two. One involved finance; an Irish state would be unable to afford its own army and navy and would therefore want to maintain their existing contributions to the British armed forces, leading to their wanting a say in how their money was spent, and therefore having a necessary presence in both the British and the Irish parliaments. His second objection was sectarian; 'would my Nonconformist friends in Cerne betray their Nonconformist brethren in Ulster into the hands of a Roman Catholic Government... that was controlled by the Pope?' he reportedly asked.

A further cause of division which Williams identified among the Liberals related to women's suffrage, noting that the Prime Minister was opposed but the Chancellor, David Lloyd George, was in favour. There appeared to be no prospect of a consensus between the two sides and, whichever side eventually lost, how could it 'with any sense of political decency retain office after the vote of the House of Commons had been given against them?'.



The final cause which Williams suggested that the Liberals were split over was the now rather obscure issue of Welsh disestablishment. In 1912, Wales was home to a sizeable population of Nonconformists. These non-Anglican protestants expressed their resentment towards a proportion of their taxes being handed to the Church of England and were consequently campaigning for a separation between Church and State ('disestablishment') in the Principality. In fact, the Liberals were largely united in their support for these changes and the division that actually existed was between them and the Conservatives. In line with the thinking of his party, Williams argued against the Welsh proposals.

The meeting came to end with three cheers for Colonel Williams and a lustily sung National Anthem. Colonel Robert Williams was to continue serving as Cerne's M.P. until he stepped down in 1922. His 1912 prediction of an 'imminent' General Election was not realised. The outbreak of the war saw the scheduled election of 1915 postponed until hostilities had ended and was eventually held in December 1918. Similarly, decisions on women's suffrage and the Home Rule issue were also deferred, but both were eventually resolved with the first votes being cast by a select portion of women in 1918 and the foundation - albeit after a three-year war of independence - of the Irish Free State in 1922. Welsh disestablishment was achieved with the passing of the Welsh Church Act in 1914, although this was not enacted until 1920. Before leaving politics, Williams was knighted and was honoured as the Baronet of Bridehead, a title which took its name from his country house near Little Bredy. When he died, aged 94, in 1943 he was afforded an obituary in *The Times* in which it was said of his political career that 'he was not a frequent speaker in the House, but he was a useful and deeply respected member'. He may not have also been a frequent speaker at Cerne Abbas, but he was clearly held in high regard locally.

February



1805 – An Early Benefits Cheat



From its inception in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Welfare State was intended to provide Britons with a social care safety net 'from the cradle to the grave'. While this provided a welcome revision of the previous antiquated system of support, the new schemes also heralded the arrival of a new bogeyman – the 'Benefits Cheat'. However, readers may be surprised to learn that stories of individuals exploiting the benefits system have a long and established history in this country, extending back significantly further than the late 1940s. Even more of a revelation is that one of the earliest recorded culprits was a resident of Cerne Abbas, John Brodby, whose story made a number of local and national newspapers in February 1805.

Little is known about where Brodby, described as 'a labouring man', and his wife Margaret were living. However, all the contemporary reports describe their family home as being 'a little hut' somewhere in Cerne Abbas. The couple both pleaded poverty. Mrs Brodby was, it was recorded, 'kept by the town', that is, she presented herself as a pauper to the Cerne authorities and was consequently provided with financial relief drawn from contributions made by local ratepayers. Eventually she was admitted to Cerne's small workhouse - the site of which is the subject of speculation but, as suggested in the Vales' *Parish Book of Cerne Abbas*, may have been located in Duck Street. It was while an inmate there in 1797 that Margaret died.

Outwardly, John Brodby's fortunes did not improve. Late in 1804, while seemingly struggling with unavoidable poverty, he, like his wife before him, approached the parish Overseers in the hope of receiving some form of assistance. Claiming to no longer be capable of maintaining himself – and reportedly 'full of vermin' – he asked to be admitted to the workhouse. Seeing little option, the Overseers agreed to this request.

However, some local residents raised concerns over the veracity of Brodby's claims. Suspecting they may have been duped, the Overseers undertook a search of Brodby's 'little hut' where they found, to their astonishment, a stash of cash under the straw which covered the floor. When counted, the value of this hoard amounted to a princely 21 guineas. Apparently, Brodby had gradually accrued this wealth, little by little, over several years. The situation worsened for the would-be claimant when his neighbours informed the Overseers that, when she was alive, Brodby's wife would often refer to her husband 'worshipping his God in the oven'. When the stove was searched, a further 28 guineas was discovered. The two stockpiles, when combined with other cash found hidden in the house, amounted to £55 3s., the equivalent of about £2,500 in today's money. Despite his claims to the contrary, Brodby clearly had access to substantial wealth. His sins were compounded, at least in the eyes of the Overseers, by the discovery of six sacks of potatoes and one of turnips concealed elsewhere in his house.

It is unclear what happened to the money (or the root vegetables), but the newspapers recorded Brodby stating that 'he was glad that *they* had the money'. Perhaps it was commandeered by the Overseers and used to subsidise the village's responsibilities to its poor? Whatever, Brodby was admitted to the workhouse early in 1805 where, it was reported, he said he was 'living like a prince' and was happy to remain there. This happiness was short-lived; later that year his name was added to the parish burial records when he was interred, aged 76, at the Cerne Abbas burial ground on 22 December. The newspapers of the day reported Brodby's deception as a 'Remarkable Occurrence'. One wonders what harsher words modern-day headline writers might employ to summarise the exposure of one of Britain's earliest benefits cheats.



Letters

Edited by George Mortimer

Editor's Note:

A copy of the article on 'The Bells of St Mary's, Cerne Abbas' in the last edition of the Magazine was passed by Duncan Fergusson to Nicholson Engineering at Bridport who carried out the recent overhaul of our bells. This was their response.

Dear Duncan

Very many thanks for copying the magazine over to us. I have just read the article on the bells which is excellent. I am full of admiration for Cerne in being able to sustain a Historical Society and produce an excellent magazine.

Best wishes

Andrew

Nicholson Engineering Ltd, Church Bell Works, St.Swithins Road, Bridport

Theresa Murphy writes:

I was interested to read of the history of The Glove Inn in the CHS magazine. My ancestors were the last to hold the inn's licence. My great-great grandmother Esther Beck was the inn keeper at The Glove Inn, as recorded on the 1881 census. She died aged 74 in 1892, and is buried in the village graveyard. In the 1891 census her son-in-law John Drew, was the publican. Esther was still resident at The Glove Inn in 1891, having transferred the licence to her son-in-law.

Best wishes,

Theresa

Graham Clark writes from New Zealand:

I was able to attend the recent talk on smuggling in Dorset and it was really so good that I was able to do so. I could almost have been there. The talk was excellent and it has been a good reminder to me of an aspect of life in Dorset, especially in the 18th century that is pretty much invisible when one is using many of the records from that time.

Contd.



Letters

Contd. *And it really was a wake-up to me when Roger Guttridge made reference to some Cerne Abbas families. I am familiar with the Randall family as they owned the 30 Long Street property up to the early 1790s. When William Clark purchased the property in 1796 one of the lives was Elizabeth now wife of ____ Trotman late Elizabeth Randall, Spinster. Roger also mentioned a Robert Trotman from Wiltshire, shot dead and buried in Kinson church in 1765. This gave me quite a start. However, I have now looked more closely at Elizabeth and I have found that she married a William Trotman in Salisbury Cathedral in 1794 and she was the daughter of John Randall, who was the vicar of Stinsford for many years. So I assume that the Randall family smuggling connection was broken by the end of the 18th century.*

The recent magazine was up to its usual high standard. It contained a great deal of interest to me. I have also noticed on the CHS website that the description of the Society's Archives has been expanded. It is very good.

With kind regards

Editor's Note: *As readers will know, Graham lives in Auckland, NZ and when he says 'he was able to attend, this was by Zoom. Given the 12 hour time difference we are grateful that Graham makes the time to join us. For readers wondering what 'one of the lives' means, under the Copyhold system of tenure, when the Pitt family owned the village, a property was 'leased for lives'. There were usually three people stated in a lease, so that if one died ownership of the property continued with the remaining 'lives'. Usually another name was then found, normally from the same family. That was a very rough summary of the system of Copyhold. If anyone can explain the system better let's hear from you.*

Alan Lake writes:

I have just read the Summer Magazine article relating to Belle Vue and the Tanyard. In fact, the spelling for Daniel and Harriet was not 'Cheeseman', but Cheesman, ie without the middle 'e'. The Frank M Cheesman who bought Lot 19 (the Tanyard) in the 1919 sale was their son. Frank and Bessie Cheesman brought up (Constance) Mary Bird, my Grandmother, as their daughter and lived in Long Street before moving to Hollybank (the old Glove Inn). Frank Cheesman died in January 1940 and is buried in Cerne, but has no headstone.

I have no date, but a Mrs Westmacott bought Belle Vue, or River Cottage as now called, and she had five sons. Mary Bird, my Grandmother, married Robert Westmacott, one of her sons. Mrs Westmacott died in 1945 and was buried with her husband in Moreton. Robert Westmacott died in August 1940, killed by a bomb at Warmwell, then an airfield for the RAF. Bessie Cheesman and her sister, Maggie Bird, were meant to be buried next to Frank Cheesman, but gave the plots up so that Mary Westmacott could bury her husband in Cerne. Bessie Cheesman and Maggie Bird were cremated instead and their ashes spread on the flowerbeds at Hollybank. My mother used to paddle in the stream at the Tanyard and said the banks were built up with cow bones.

Hope this is some help in filling some gaps in a few different stories.





Letters

Alan Lake also writes:

This is a bit of a long one, but here we go. The north end of Acreman Street just before the Gant viewing point has always been known as 'Rouncebal'. There used to be houses there, but I think they went around 1910. I've been discussing this area with a few others as the term Rouncibal is rarely used nowadays. I started wondering about the meaning of Rouncibal, but on looking it up there appears no explanation for it. However, there was a 'Rounceval' meaning a giant, after Roland of Roncesvalles who died in the battle of Roncevaux Pass, in the Pyrenees in 778AD. He and his men were considered giants and there are a couple of illustrations of Roland dying on the side of a hill. With the most recent dating of the Giant looking for something on or after 700AD, 778AD seems to fit the dates nicely. Is the Giant a depiction of Roland of Roncesvalles?

Editor's Note: *The 1798 Admeasurement Survey of Cerne Abbas shows that Acreman Street became 'Rouncibal Lane' north of 'Water Street', the latter now the footpath opposite The Maltings into Springfield. 'Water Street' was probably pretty descriptive of its normal condition, with floodwater coming off the west via Acreman St into Duck Street. 'Rouncibal Cottage' just below the Giant viewpoint is all that survives from the original road name. Whether 'Rouncibal' is a derivation of 'Roland of Roncesvalles' I leave to others to ponder and discuss.*

Stephen England writes:

I have a small part of the German aircraft that crashed in Up Cerne Wood in the early part of World War 2. It is a compass cap. I cannot confirm the actual crash site, but I was led to believe at a much younger age that the aircraft crashed in the vicinity of the two cottages at Bottom Barn or Up Cerne woo. It was close enough for my grandfather and fellow farm workers and older children to remove a number of items from the crashed plane. I was also told that the aircraft was of a type not seen before at that time which was early in the war. My mother, who is now 84 and still living in Cerne, cannot remember the crash as she was only about 5 at the time.

Editor's Note: *Readers will remember the article in May 2020 on the anniversary of VE Day in which Betty Marsh remembers cycling home to Minterne one day and seeing about 150 German bombers flying overhead with 3 Spitfires attacking them. Betty hid in the bushes in Glove Farm and saw 3 German airmen coming down in parachutes. One had a broken leg and they all seemed happy to be captured. She then went back in the dark and picked up bits of the German plane and handed them into the police station in Cerne. Obviously some bits were kept as souvenirs. We have Googled the details and confirmed that the compasses cover almost certainly came from a Messerschmitt.*

See below



Letters



Photo: © Stephen England

Gerät Nr means: Device No.

Hersteller PATIN means: Manufacturer PATIN

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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