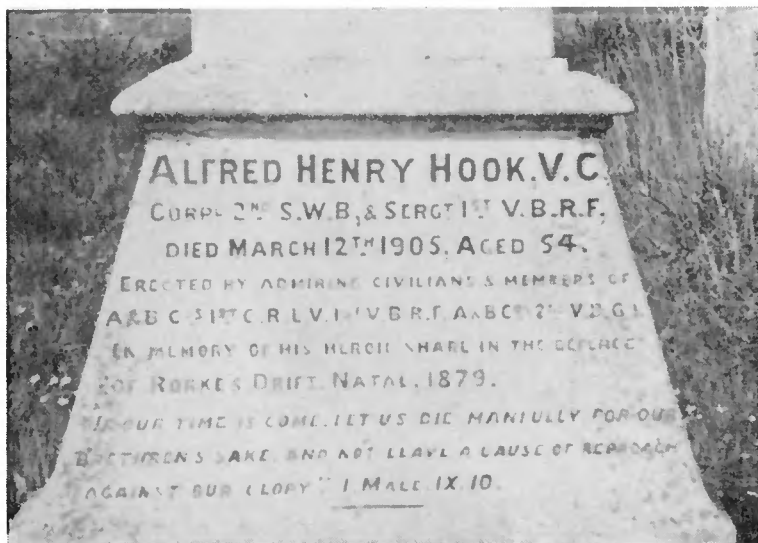


Local History Bulletin

SPRING 1982 — No. 45



Memorial to Alfred Henry Hook, V.C., at Churcham.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S FIRST V.C. — <i>Henry Bunting</i> ..	2
GOTHERINGTON READING ROOM AND VILLAGE CLUB — <i>Owen Stinchcombe</i>	4
J. W. SCOTT AND CHELTENHAM'S HOMECRAFTS — <i>Robert Homan</i>	10
BLOCKLEY — SOME NEW PERSPECTIVES — <i>Bryan Jerrard</i>	13
FACT OR FICTION? — <i>Ann-Rachael Harwood</i>	18



COMMUNITY HOUSE, COLLEGE GREEN,
GLOUCESTER GL1 2LZ
Tel. Gloucester (0452) 28491

EDITORIAL

The Community Council owes a considerable debt to Mr Graham Stockham for taking over at very short notice the editorship of this *Bulletin* in 1978 — a chore that was traditionally linked to his position as Assistant Director. Since that time we have worked closely together in working out the sequence of articles submitted for publication and we have agreed that the time has arrived for a closer definition of responsibilities. Efforts will continue to be made to standardise the style of presentation without insisting on the complexities of accepted Rules — and without cramping the styles of amateur contributors.

These coming days are likely to be much harder for authors as the cost of research in time, travel and access rises but the slow and continuing increase in the circulation of this *Bulletin* is a great encouragement to us at Community House. Articles are always very welcome to supplement those we have for the forthcoming editions. Previous *Bulletins*, including the valuable issue with an up-to-date index, may be obtained from the Community Council.

BRYAN JERRARD,

Chairman, Local History Committee.

ALFRED HENRY HOOK 1850—1905

GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S FIRST V.C.

HENRY, OR HARRY as he was generally known, was born at Birdwood in the Parish of Churcham on the 6 August, 1850. He was the first son of Henry and Ellen Hook, they had two other sons and two daughters. His parents had moved to Birdwood from the village of Taynton where their ancestors were living from the time of the Civil War. There was also a connection with Monmouth as Henry's parents had owned a shop below the Monnow Bridge. Very little is known of Henry's early life and the first definite date recorded after his birth was the 1 June, 1872 when he became a volunteer in the Monmouth Militia, now The Royal Monmouth Royal Engineers (Militia). On the 13 March, 1877 he transferred to the 25th Brigade at Monmouth and became a member of 'B' Company 2nd 24th The Warwicks. Soon afterwards the Battalion sailed for Cape Province, South Africa. Together with the 1st 24th they took part in the Kaffir Wars until their conclusion during 1878.

In Natal Province the Zulus and the Boers were at one another's throats and they were worrying the British administration there. The government at home decided to send a contingent of soldiers to Natal with the idea of calming the situation down with their presence in the Province. However, the Governor, Sir Bartle Frere, seeing an opportunity to further his political aims, decided to mount a threat of invasion on the Zulu, King Cetawayo. Lord Chelmsford who had taken charge as General in Command of the Army, which included British soldiers, settlers, native troops and various irregular mounted volunteers, split his command into three parts. The Zulu King did not respond to the Governor's demands and the army was launched into the invasion of Zululand, the General and his staff attaching themselves to the central group. The two Battalions of the 24th were part of the central group too. They marched with great difficulty through very rough country with dirt roads which were a sea of mud. January was in the winter season. 'B' Company of the 2nd Battalion was detached at Rorke's Drift, which had a ford over the Buffalo River on the frontier with Zululand, together with the reserve supplies and ammunition for the central group. Lord Chelmsford and his command moved on into Zululand engaging in several skirmishes with the Zulus. They marched on to a plateau which on one side contained a mountain known as Isandhwana — which closely resembled the Sphinx which formed part of the 24th's Cap Badge. The date was the 21 January, 1879 and they camped there. A message was delivered to Lord Chelmsford: 'A party of Zulus have been seen moving away to the West'. He then decided to lead part of his command and follow them to try and reach their main force. But, the Zulu army comprising 20—25,000 men, were crouched in a gully not too far from the camp. A small group of native horse who were chasing several Zulus discovered them. They rose up and commenced an encircling movement towards the camp where there were 870 British and 600 native troops. Only a handful lived to tell the tale, the rest were hacked to death and mutilated. The reserve force of the Zulu army, 4,000 men, commenced to move onto Rorke's Drift where 135 men, including a number of sick, were situated.

When informed of the threat, they decided they would have to stay as they could not move the reserve stores away in time. When the attack was about to start Henry Hook, Cole and two Private Williams's were left in the Hospital to guard the sick. Cole escaped before the first wave of Zulus reached them but was killed before reaching the hastily set up defences. Hook had collected a large number of cartridges for his Martini - Henry Rifle and the three men kept up a steady fire until his rifle seized up with a cartridge jammed in the breech due to overheating. Hastily pushing a cleaning rod down the barrel he managed to dislodge it but could not get another round in and he had to use his bayonet until he could escape into the next room with the others. The thatched roof of the building began to blaze and the sick had to escape through a window high up in the wall. One man had a dislocated knee and Hook dragged him through the window, got him on his back and staggered to the rest of the company who were extremely hard pressed. Eventually the Zulus retired leaving 400 dead.

Lord Chelmsford made his way back to the scene of the massacre at Isandhwana with his party too late to see what had transpired. The following morning

they found that they had been sleeping between the dead, after examining some of the gruesome bodies, and noticed that rifles and equipment had gone. They made their way back towards Rorke's Drift expecting the worst. They found that 'B' Company had lost only 18 killed and Lord Chelmsford called for Henry Hook to give him the facts concerning the battle in the Hospital which was now a shambles. In June 1879 Henry Hook, who was still at the site of the battle, received his V.C. from General Sir Garnet Wolseley. This is the only time that a V.C. has been presented at the scene of an heroic deed. On his way home to England a stop over was made at Gibraltar where he bought his discharge for £18 — in June 1880. He had served for three years and 103 days. He was awarded a pension of £10 per annum dated from the battle — 22 January, 1879. He was supposed to have left a wife in England, who, upon hearing that he was missing presumed dead, remarried. This marriage has never been confirmed. His father had died whilst he was overseas and his mother and brothers and sisters were living in Gloucester. He therefore decided to look for a post and wrote to several bodies — The Yeomen of Arms; The Cape Mounted Police and eventually the British Museum. Lord Chelmsford and Sir Garnet Wolseley wrote testimonials for him.

He was given the Post of Labourer (first duster) on 26 December, 1881 at £62.12.0 per annum and in 1894 was promoted to 'Readers' Umbrellas' at £67.16.4 per annum. He resigned from the British Museum on 31 December, 1904 due to ill health and retired to Gloucester. However, he joined the 1st Batt. Royal Fusiliers on 20 April, 1896 where he became 6308 Sergeant Henry Hook — Musketry Instructor until he resigned on 23 January, 1905. He met and married Miss Ada L. Taylor, a Scot of the Valentine family of Dundee on 10 April, 1897 at St. Andrews, Islington. They had two daughters — Victoria Catherine and Letitia Jean. They moved to Gloucester in December 1904 where after continuous ill health he died on 12 March, 1906 at home. After a full military funeral which marched from his home out to Churcham he was buried with full military honours by his comrades and family. A public subscription enabled a marble memorial with a Victoria Cross depicted on it, to be raised.

HENRY BUNTING,

Grandson of Alfred Henry Hook.

GOTHERINGTON READING ROOM AND VILLAGE CLUB: 1885-1939

GOTHERINGTON OWES ITS Reading Room (now the Village Hall) to the lucky chance that in 1882 Frank and Elizabeth Malleison, driven by indifferent health to leave London and seek semi-retirement in the country, decided to take a long lease on Dixton Manor House. The Malleisons' talent for practical reform, which had culminated in the founding of a College for Working Women in Bloomsbury in 1864, might have been expected to atrophy in this isolated country retreat, especially as they could now indulge their hobby of breeding carriage horses. But the plight of working families in the surrounding villages soon aroused their concern and, within a few years of their arrival, they were again deeply involved in education and welfare schemes: providing a trained

midwife and nurse for Gotherington and district and developing this into the nationwide Rural Nursing Association, organising technical education in the Winchcombe district on behalf of the new Gloucestershire County Council and establishing a Reading Room and Village Club in Gotherington, with offshoots in Alstone and Alderton.

The Reading Room project arose out of sympathy for the wretched conditions in which most villagers lived during the winter months. A farm labourer could normally afford to heat only one room in his cottage, and here the activities of the entire family down to the latest arrival had to take place. Husband and working sons had no opportunity for quiet relaxation, a situation aptly described as a "fruitful source of discord". The Malleasons therefore decided to provide a warm, cheerful room in the centre of Gotherington, where the men could find amusement, enlightenment and peace.

During 1885 two rooms, one above the other, were rented from Mrs Willis at "Ivyville". The walls and ceilings were decorated, a stove installed and bright curtains hung. On 14 October, 1885 a Provisional Committee of Management was formed, consisting of Frank and Elizabeth Malleeson and several of the more prosperous local artisans and their wives.

As a result of their London experience the Malleasons were by this time accomplished organisers, and part of their technique, when planning a new project, was to try to secure the backing of influential people. In the case of the Gotherington Reading Room the key figure was the local Lord of the Manor, James Hutchinson, J.P. But Mr Hutchinson proved obstinately unco-operative. The main stumbling-block was politics. The Malleasons were Liberals, and as recently as 3 October, 1885 Frank Malleeson had been reported in the press as chairing a meeting at Gretton which had been addressed by the Liberal candidate for the Tewkesbury Division in the forthcoming general election. Mr Hutchinson was a Tory, and he suspected that the proposed Reading Room would be used to propagate radical ideas. After an abortive exchange of correspondence Mr Hutchinson met the Committee on 13 November, 1885 and reiterated his belief that it would prove impossible to keep the Club non-political. He also expressed disapproval of the fact that some members of the Committee were women, professing to be concerned that, when taking their turn to supervise Club evenings, they would be unable to stomach the rough talk and common tobacco smoke of the farm labourers. He even cast doubt on the financial viability of the venture, fearing that, if he supported it and it failed, he would be called upon to pay the debts. Although the Committee patiently answered each objection, he refused to become an honorary member of the Reading Room or to subscribe to it. But, on being pressed, he grudgingly agreed that the Chairman might quote him as wishing the enterprise well. This seems to have satisfied the Malleasons, and it is likely that they incorporated a reference to Mr Hutchinson's good-will in whatever prospectus or handbill they circulated.

The Reading Room and Club was formally opened by Frank Malleeson on 19 November, 1885, and for many years its name could be seen on the oil lamp fixed outside. The rooms were open during the winter only, the season lasting from October or November to April or May. (Late working on the farms or cultivating allotments occupied summer evenings.) The Club was a mixture of reading room, lending and reference library, men's club, youth

club, debating society and centre for adult education. Although there were women on the Management Committee, only men and boys over 14 could be Club members. The rooms were open from 7 to 10 p.m. every evening except Sunday, but boys under 16 had to leave at 9 o'clock. The membership fee was 1d. a week, but this left many expenses to be covered by gifts, subscriptions and the proceeds of bazaars and jumble sales. Very soon after it opened notices had to be put up warning against noise and bad language. Mr Hutchinson clearly knew his farm labourers! But in spite of misgivings by the Committee, smoking was tolerated, even by boys under 16.

As its title implied the main object was to provide a selection of daily and weekly papers and magazines for the men of the village to read. For many years the *Birmingham Post* and a London paper such as the *Standard*, *Daily Mail* or *Daily Telegraph* were taken. Later the evening *Gloucestershire Echo* was added, and the weekly *Evesham Journal* also appeared for a time. Among a variety of weekly magazines the most popular was *Farm, Field and Fireside*, while *Chums* was ordered for the boys. One of the sons of the Mallesons' coachman was paid 6d. to deliver the weekly papers and magazines in an oilskin wrapper before school every Monday morning.

Committee members attended on a rota basis one evening a fortnight to superintend Club activities and by "their presence and influence give a good tone to the place." Another of their jobs was to exchange library books. The lending library was built up with gifts from individuals and institutions such as University College, London, and augmented by purchases made from local subscriptions. The novels of Dickens, Kingsley and Cooper formed the core of the collection. A plan of book purchases was drawn up, but popular requests, e.g. for Mrs Craig's *John Halifax*, *Gentleman* could be bought out of turn. The extent and nature of the reference library is not known, except that 'a good English dictionary' was an early purchase and a grant of books worth £8 from the Working Men's Memorial to Sir Robert Peel included 'some valuable reference works'.

While the lower room was set aside for quiet reading, the upper was used for games. These consisted of bagatelle, draughts, dominoes and cards. The Committee had some initial qualms about permitting card games and sought advice from Reading Room Committees at Toddington and Beckford, but the conclusion was that cards were acceptable if not played for money or money's worth.

The sanctioning of card games, however, quickly landed the Committee in trouble. In early December 1885 Elizabeth Malleson received an anonymous letter, signed 'An English Workman'. The *nom-de-plume* had no doubt been deliberately chosen because of Mrs Malleson's earlier association with the College for Working Women. The letter was cleverly written and heavily sarcastic in tone. Although it deplored the absence of Bible reading and hinted at the encouragement of political discussion, its main target was the alleged sponsorship of gambling:

'How thankful we mothers . . . must be to know that our boys . . . are learning something that will be useful to them when they go out into the world, as instead of having to pay for all their beer they can win much of it off their mates — and some of them will

no doubt be able to give up nasty work and make a living by (gambling)'.

Anonymous letters seem to have been treated with more respect in the 19th century than they are to-day and, instead of ignoring it, the Committee decided to ask the *Cheltenham Free Press* to publish it together with a reply. The letters appeared in the issue of 2 December, 1885. Mrs Malleson's reply stated that the Club's constitution forbade the playing of cards for money and that supervision prevented any infringement of this rule. It also pointed out that providing an opportunity to play 'harmless games' was only one part of the Club's purpose and that the Committee were equally concerned to foster 'the reading of papers and magazines and similar intellectual pursuits'. The Committee felt that they had supplied a want in the Village and noted that in general the Reading Room experiment had been received 'in good spirit'.

It is significant that Mrs Malleson should have stressed the positive aim of encouraging intellectual pursuits and harmless recreation. Some Reading Rooms of the period were established with the negative aim of temperance. That opened in Bishop's Cleeve in December 1885, for example, was entirely financed by the President of the local Temperance Society.

From the outset it proved difficult to maintain the more ambitiously intellectual activities of debating and adult education because there was insufficient grass-roots demand from a membership of only around 30. Nevertheless the Committee struggled to run occasional courses, invite lecturers and hold a Saturday evening discussion once a month during the winter season. The only classes mentioned in the minutes are for first aid and letter writing, but Hope Malleson records that dancing classes were provided one winter and that her father acted as superintendent for these, 'walking the 2 miles each way to the Reading Room, wet or fine, along muddy and pitch-dark roads'. Lecture subjects included 'Stanley's Exploration of Africa', 'Gloucestershire Birds' and 'the British Constitution'. Subjects for monthly debates included 'Amusements' and the topical issues of *Free Education and Emigration*.

The Mallesons had been devotees of the theatre from their London days, and Ellen Terry was a frequent guest at Dixon Manor, but play-reading and amateur theatricals were presumably considered too ambitious for the Club members. However, the Management Committee found themselves co-opted into an informal drama group, reading *Macbeth* and *She Stoops to Conquer* and helping to stage plays at the annual entertainment presented by the Mallesons at Dixon Manor during the Christmas season.

In her biography of her mother Hope Malleson says that the management of the Reading Room was conducted on 'strictly democratic principles'. 'Benevolent despotism' would be a more apt description. Frank Malleson was Chairman and Treasurer from 1885 until his death in 1903, while Elizabeth was Secretary from 1885 until about 1912. There appear to have been no Annual General Meetings, and changes in the composition of the Committee were resolved by the Committee itself. But certainly a wide range of people were accepted on to the Committee. Trouble-makers were sometimes nominated in the hope, often realised, that 'the honour and responsibility would produce a civilising effect'. It was also the policy to have young people on the Committee. Elizabeth Malleson had at an early age taken over from her rather feckless

parents the role of mother and teacher to her 10 younger brothers and sisters and she would never afterwards accept that youth and inexperience should in themselves be a bar to the assumption of responsibility.

Elizabeth Malleson and her daughters Mabel and Hope opened the Reading Room separately from the Club two afternoons a week to enable any village women who were interested to read the newspapers and magazines and attend specially organised classes in reading, knitting and simple cookery. Mabel Malleson also started wood-carving classes for local boys in the Reading Room as part of the County Council's technical education scheme, but these were later transferred to Dixton Manor to make it easier for boys also from Gretton and Alderton to attend.

The rooms were used once a year for the bazaar which provided funds for the Club, and they were always available for public meetings and 'any useful village purposes'.

After the original opposition from the squire and the anonymous complaint about gambling, everything went along smoothly until 1903, when problems arose about renting the 'Ivyville' rooms, and a Sub-Committee was formed to find fresh premises. The upshot was the building of what is now the front part of the Village Hall. The land was purchased from Mr Holliday, the owner of Moat Farm and a Cheltenham butcher, who helped by paying the legal costs for both sides. The new Reading Room was built at a cost of £300 by Collins and Godfrey, who 53 years later also built the new school.

The total cost was £300, of which Mrs Malleson provided £140 from a recent legacy, her friends and relatives £50 and the proceeds of two bazaars £30, leaving an initial debt of £80. The new room could be divided into two by folding doors, the larger part being used for games and the smaller part for reading, and there was a small kitchen and a cloakroom. It was opened for use on 13 February, 1905, and the weekly fee was increased to 2d. The official opening ceremony in October 1905 should have been performed by Reginald Lane Poole of Balliol College, Oxford, husband of the Mallesons' second daughter Rachael, but in the event the Revd. T. Jesson, Rector of Bishop's Cleeve presided. Mabel Malleson gave an account of the Club's 20-year history, contrasting its vigorous state with the failure of similar enterprises in neighbouring villages. Very soon after it opened the new Reading Room was let in the daytime to the Gloucestershire Education Committee for the Infants Class from the village school while the Master's house was being converted into an extra classroom, and the County Council also hired it for the occasional 'domestic economy' classes they ran for the older girls from Gotherington and neighbouring schools.

Although membership of the Reading Room and Club remained restricted to men and youths, a new feature from about 1908 was the holding of three social evenings, including dancing, during each winter season. Ladies could attend these by invitation of a Committee member. From 1911 the room was let on Monday evenings to a 'Musical Society for the practice of Singing', and from 1912 it became the regular venue for Parish Council meetings.

During the period up to the end of World War I there was surprisingly little interplay between the Reading Room and the school. Mr Martin (Master from 1892 to 1897) was 'elected' to the Management Committee in November

1892 but was quickly dropped after failing to attend on his designated evenings for supervisory duties. In October 1910 Mr Slack (Master from 1908 to 1912) joined the Committee, but his only recorded contribution was to persuade his fellow members to subscribe to the *Journal of the Board of Agriculture*.

Many of the Reading Room activities, and especially the afternoon classes for women, needed the knowledge, training, vision and drive of the Malleson ladies to survive. When Elizabeth Malleson died aged 88 in 1916, Mabel moved out of Dixton Manor and Hope and already left the district, and as a result the Club's intellectual pursuits quickly withered away. The feminine influence also disappeared, and after 30 years the Reading Room Management Committee became, like the Parish Council and the School Managers, an all-male preserve. The Schoolmistress and School Managers did their modest best to take over the adult education function of the Reading Room, providing occasional evening classes in dancing, needlework and first aid, but no attempt was made to replace the lectures and debates.

The Reading Room took another knock shortly after World War I, when the new County Rural Library Service began to send boxes of books by rail to the school each month. As the titles were far more varied than those the Reading Room could offer, villagers soon acquired the habit of visiting the school for their library books, and the library function of the Reading Room became redundant.

Soon the only facilities that remained available to the Village Club were newspapers and magazines to read and cards and bagatelle to play. For this reduced service the fees were increased to 4d. a week. By the mid-1930s membership had declined to about 10, and at one stage the *Gloucestershire Echo* was the only newspaper provided, although most years the *News Chronicle* was also ordered. By this time the cheapness of newspapers and the growing availability of radio had undermined the original *raison d'être* of the Reading Room.

Although living outside the area, first at Winchcombe and later at Charlton Kings, and no longer concerned with the running of the Reading Room's affairs, Mabel Malleson remained the Senior Trustee until her death in 1931. Samuel Price attended her funeral to mark Gotherington's appreciation of her and her family's contribution to the village. The Trust is believed to have survived until the deeds of the, renamed, Village Hall were lodged with the Charities Commission in the early 1960s. By then the population had grown sufficiently to support a wide variety of individual recreational and cultural societies. But it is surprising how many of to-day's activities were pursued by the Village Club during its 1885-1916 hey-day, thanks to the initiative of the Malleson family.

OWEN STINCHCOMBE.

- Sources: (1) Minute Book of the Management Committee of the Gotherington Reading Room and Club.
- (2) Extracts from "Elizabeth Malleson, 1826-1916" by Hope Malleson held in the Gloucestershire Record Office.
- (3) Press reports.

J. W. SCOTT AND CHELTENHAM'S HOMECROFTS

GLOUCESTERSHIRE'S predominantly rural economy has never provided a firm basis for political radicalism, and the turmoil associated with the Reform Act of 1832 and the People's Charter was both short-lived and confined to the principal towns of Bristol and Cheltenham. (1) Nevertheless, the county has seen a number of novel social experiments rooted in the hope that rural settlements would prove to be the panacea for the growing problems of an industrial society. Some of the communities were part of broadly based organisations, including, for example, O'Connor's Chartist land colonies at Lowbands and Snig's End in the 1840s, and an Owenite Co-operative Community planned for Cheltenham in 1842.(2) Others, such as the village of Whiteway established in 1898 and modelled on Tolstoy's principles, and C. R. Ashbee's community at Chipping Campden, were of a more idiosyncratic nature.(3) Falling between the two groups was the Homecroft Settlement established in 1927 on the outskirts of Cheltenham.

The Homecroft concept was developed in the U.S.A. by George H. Maxwell Heberd and was imported into Britain by John Waugh Scott, Professor of Philosophy at the University College of Cardiff. Scott gave the basic definition of homecrofting as "the art of making your own food with your own hands, so that you do not need to buy it." In addition to this notion of self-sufficiency, Scott, writing in the early 1920s, added the aim of reducing the impact of unemployment on the working population. "The suggestion is, take advantage of the short industrial hours. Aim at two shifts a day for the man: one shift at his industrial work earning wages: and another shorter shift, with his wife and children in his garden, producing food . . . The unemployment problem is the problem of giving a man the work that keeps away want. The Homecroft plan offers the work that keeps away want."(4)

Just as in earlier periods of economic and social stress a solution was seen in a return to the land, so in the early 1920s schemes for settling the unemployed and ex-servicemen on small-holdings were widely considered, and in Gloucestershire in 1919 and 1920, 11,849 acres of land were so provided.(5) Scott's plan, however, was based on the slogan "sustenance not sales", a theme which would protect homecrofters from the market fluctuations which were putting some small-holders out of business.(6)

Scott found the editor of the *Spectator* to be a willing publicist for the homecroft movement and in 1924 the magazine suggested that an experimental croft should be established in order to assess the practicalities of the scheme. In this task Scott was supported by James Agg Gardner, M.P. for Cheltenham, and a number of the town's businessmen, and supplied with information by G. P. Hopcraft of Southam.(7)

Despite this core of interest the movement lacked any coherent financial backing. Consequently the purchase in 1925 of an option on a plot of land in Cheltenham was premature and quickly fell through due to a lack of funds.(8) The important organisational structure was provided by the National Homecroft Association which was formed at a public meeting held in London in June 1926.(9) A further search for land ensued and the Association acquired a ten acre plot to the west of Cheltenham, adjoining the Tewkesbury Road.

Scott glowingly described the plot as "a smiling piece of land — a beautiful, flat, loamy, gravelly piece of fruit bearing soil, of the best in Gloucestershire." (10)

The Association started the development of the small estate, also described as "their own corner of England's pleasant land" (11), with the construction of ten homecrofts, each consisting of a three bedroomed house built of concrete slabs made on the site, a shed divided into compartments for poultry, goats and rabbits, and two-fifths of an acre of land. Crofters were charged a purchasing rent of 16/3d. a week so that at the end of a 25 year period they became owner-occupiers. (12)

The first cottages of the experiment were opened by Earl Beauchamp who, on 19 November, 1927, cut a ribbon stretched across the road and then inspected and reported favourably on the new houses. (13) This was, however, to be only the pioneering start of a much larger scheme to eventually consist of 25 crofts together with a school of home economics and small-holding. (14) In this latter context, under Scott's influence, the Association maintained a close interest in the problems of small-scale, part-time food production. Initially students from Cardiff spent their vacations on the crofts helping to break in the new land, and later experiments were made in the use of rotary cultivators. (15).

By 1929 Scott's forward looking experiment was in operation with ten crofts tenanted by former Cheltenham residents. However, both the Association and the crofters were increasingly aware of a series of problems, not the least of which was the lack of capital. The Association depended on funds raised by an invitation to the readers of the *Spectator* and to the population of Cheltenham to become shareholders with the promise of a 5% return on their investment. Despite the interest of such as Lloyd George, who put up £300, the Association lacked the £7,000 needed to complete the settlement. (16) In addition the emergence of a homecrofting life-style was strained by the heavy clay soil and by a severe first winter which found out the weaknesses in the novel method of house building. Above all, however, the full potential of the experiment depended on two issues over which the Association had little control. Firstly, Scott's plan required that the homecrofters not only acquired the skills of cultivation but also adapted to an essentially communal way of life, such that the crofts worked as an organic whole with the exchange between crofters of surplus produce. (17) This is a recurrent theme in Scott's writing, but on the whole he seems to have assumed that the crofters would readily make the transition in outlook and behaviour as they moved from town to country. The absence of such a neat link was a persistent stumbling block for the experiment. The second problem was highlighted by a *Daily Express* correspondent reporting the opening ceremony, who suggested that "in days to come, when every worker has his own motor car or motor cycle, the scheme suggests the possibility of a vast migration of town workers to homecrofts in the countryside." (18) However, such levels of private transport were not even approached in the 1920s and the first car did not appear on the estate until the mid-1950s. In the meantime the homecrofters had to rely on a bicycle or rural bus to reach the local engineering firms which provided their employment.

Thus far Scott's homecrofts had paralleled the settlements of the Distributist League, four of which were established in the 1920s and all of which gradually

failed in the 1930s.(19) Scott later moved closer to the League and its broad theoretical aim that "the property of the nation should be distributed among the people of the nation" with mass-production industry and agriculture replaced by the local workshop and small-holding.(20)

In 1956 the Cheltenham Homecroft Association was finally wound up, all shares were repaid in full and the houses were sold off. The original ten crofts still stand, although much altered architecturally and only one occupied by an original homecrofter. In marked contrast the rest of the site is covered by modern detached bungalows and Homecroft Drive now has the air of a suburban retreat for commuters and pensioners.

Acknowledgement. I am grateful to Mrs Anger of Uckington and Mrs Ellaway of Charlton Kings for their information about homecrofing.

ROBERT HOMAN

NOTES

1. For the Bristol Riots of 1831 see Thompson E. P., *The making of the English working class*, 1968, p. 81; for the Cheltenham church demonstration of 1839 see Yeo E. "Christianity in Chartist struggle, 1838-1842", *Post and Present*, 1981, pp. 109-139.
2. Hadfield A. M. *The Chortist Land Company* 1970; *Cheltenham Free Press* 9 July, 1842.
3. Darley G., *Villages of vision*, 1978, pp. 173-175.
4. Scott J. W., *Unemployment: o suggested policy*, 1925.
5. Davies A. E. and Evans D., *Lond notionolisotion*, 1921, p. 94. Gloucestershire had the third largest total area behind Somerset and Norfolk.
6. *Spectator*, 12 September, 1925.
7. *Loc. cit.*, 11 July, 1925, 12 September, 1925.
8. *Loc. cit.*, 1 May, 1926.
9. *Loc. cit.*, 5 June, 1926.
10. *Loc. cit.*, 6 November, 1926.
11. *Echo*, 21 November, 1926, reporting the speech of Miss Geddes, chairman of the Council of the Homecroft Association, at the opening ceremony. She suggested that the Association was "trying to build a little bit of Jerusalem."
12. *Echo*, 21 November, 1926; *The Tim s*, 5 May, 1927.
13. *Doily Express*, 21 November, 1927.
14. *The Times*, 5 May, 1927.
15. *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 20 April, 1929.
16. *Echo*, 21 November, 1927.
17. To a small extent the principle of sharing was built into the scheme as each croft was planted with different types of fruit trees.
18. *Daily Express*, 21 November, 1927.
19. Barker D., G. K. *Chesterton*, 1973; Scott J. W., *Barter*, 1937.
20. Barker D., *op. cit.*, p. 258.

BLOCKLEY — SOME NEW PERSPECTIVES

THERE CAN BE very few villages in Gloucestershire which have been so carefully researched as Blockley. Incorporated into the County from Worcestershire fifty years ago in 1931 its history has been written by H. E. M. Icely, *Blockley through Twelve Centuries*, while the publications of the Blockley Antiquarian Society increase each year in both diversity and interest. Noteworthy among these is the new edition of Norah Marshall's *Blockley and the Silk Trade* which gives a thorough description of the industry which brought considerable prosperity to the village and its associated hamlets in the mid-nineteenth century until the cold winds of foreign competition and changing fashion brought distress and emigration.

Although the majority of the records relating to Blockley and especially Northwick Hall, the adjacent home of the Rushout family, remain in the Hereford and Worcestershire Record Office at Worcester, the Gloucester Record Office now holds the parish registers from Blockley parish church, other primary sources and the microfilm of the 1851 census. Using the 1851 Census it is possible to analyse more minutely than hitherto various features of Blockley in 1851.

First it is possible to ascertain an age profile of those who worked in the silk mills and the following figures show a close coincidence with those of Marshall(1979) and both sets of figures include the adjacent hamlets of Ashford, Aston Magna, Batsford, Dorn, Draycott, Northwick and Paxford.

TABLE I

BLOCKLEY SILK MILL WORKERS BY AGE, CENSUS 1851

	Marshall	
Age: 8—10 years	49	53*
11—20 "	153	151
21—40 "	105	105
41—60 "	40	40
61—70 "	4	5
71—80 "	3	3
TOTALS	354	357

*Includes 4 children aged under 8 years.

From the above table it is clear that young people aged 11 to 20 years made up nearly half the labour force. Most of these were women. The divergence in totals in the youngest age group may be explained by noting that a girl and boy both aged 6 years and another pair aged 7 years were listed as working in the mills in 1851 and have been included in the category of those aged 8—10 years. Altogether 132 households of the 182 had members, including lodgers, employed in silk. How dependent were these households on the silk trade and how may dependence be measured? Clearly, a family with one child employed as a silk throwster was not so dependent as a family where each member of the household was so employed. Altogether the Census recorded ten families totally dependent and by this is meant households of single persons or where *both* husband and wife were recorded as in the silk industry. Using this index there were 38 other families where half the household or more were dependent and another 40 households where at least a quarter were tied to the fortunes

of the silk trade. These last often relied on lodgers in the household to supplement their income.

From the Census the size of families may be computed and lodgers were not included nor adult offspring aged over 20 years. This is somewhat arbitrary but gives the following picture of families not found in other published work on Blockley.

TABLE II
HOUSEHOLD SIZE and NUMBER IN THE SILK TRADE,
BLOCKLEY CENSUS, 1851

<i>Household size</i>	<i>No. of families</i>	<i>Household size</i>	<i>No. of families</i>
1	5	6	17
2	13	7	14
3	16	8	9
4	24	9	2
5	28	10	4

From the table above household size varied from one to ten and it may be seen that, on the left hand side, there were a total of 86 families in the silk trade with from one to all five members connected with this economy. It may also be noted that those with three children (under households size 5) predominated while there were 15 families with 6, 7 or 8 children — the last three groups listed on the right hand side of the table. This sample relates to the 132 in the silk trade whereas for all the 182 households a similar predominance of 3 children under 20 years of age emerges as the most common, closely followed by those with 4 children. Some 33 of the 182 households were what is popularly known as the typical, large Victorian family with 5 or more children.

Although silk may have dominated the economy at Blockley the Census also shows the undoubted strength of agriculture as an occupation. Altogether 58 households recorded an agricultural labourer as its head and half of these were aged from 21 to 40 years. Among labourers as *members* of households there were four aged 8—10 years while at the other extreme two soldiered on into their 70s.

A profile of other occupations may be seen among the men. There were ten shoemakers and among the eight stone-masons listed was Thomas Powell who employed seven other masons and seven labourers. Carpenters numbered seven while gardeners, grooms and tailors were represented by five in each category; there were four grocers and three bakers. One eighty year old described himself as a 'Pensioner of Club' — I wonder what he really meant. Among female occupations represented at Blockley were nine dressmakers (providing for the local rather than the wider market one suspects) and only one each of the following:— a steam bonnet maker, a stay maker, a laundress, a postmistress and the schoolmistress, Mary Joiner. Her husband, John, was a grocer's assistant, her child James was two months old and lodging with them in 1851 was Elizabeth Baitey, also an assistant mistress, aged 22 years from Berkshire and Ann Crump, aged 17 years, a servant from Winchcombe.

There were relatively few households with servants — 12 out of 182 whereas in Dursley at this time, when the cloth trade was diminishing, there were over 100 among the 166 households in one street alone. In Blockley there were three times as many female servants (27) as male and 13 of these were teenagers, nine were aged from 21 to 40 years, four were aged 41 to 60 years and one was over 70 years. Most of these servants came from elsewhere and this may be best illustrated by detailed reference to the household of Lord Northwick, whose memorial may be seen in the church. John Rushout, Lord Northwick, a bachelor aged 82 in 1851, described himself as 'a peer and occupier of land' from Middlesex. His house steward was Louis Mayland, single, aged 84, from Switzerland and the household consisted of William Pike a married man of 38 years, the 'upper gardner'; John Mace aged 51 years the footman and Ann Watts, the housekeeper aged 65 years, and single. She hailed from Hampshire. Lower down in status was Mary Juxton a widow of 41 years from Dublin who was the laundry maid; Anne Adams, single, aged 15 and the stillroom maid from Cheltenham; Jane Pike, married, aged 39 years and a cook from Shoreham; Ann Yates, single, aged 27 years, a kitchen maid locally born; Elizabeth Haynes a spinster of 28 years and the dairy maid from Cirencester and two other housemaids, both aged 27 years and both from Gloucester. Four male labourers made up the household though the estate required many other hands to work it.

Much more may be derived from the 1851 Census. However, it provides a static analysis of a dynamic, prosperous village. Several questions arise from the Census. For example, 111 children were listed as scholars (including Sunday School children) though this total bears no relation to the attendance given in various directories at the free school and the National School (about 26-28 each.) Even allowing for half-time schooling which could theoretically explain most of the 111 children as scholars, what sort of education in terms of literacy was gained? Again, there were only 23 men and 24 women described as householders in Blockley and environs who were born outside Worcestershire suggesting, as one would expect, a highly localised population yet the Figgures family, a well known and large local family, were represented in the Census of 1851 by only two families.

Reference to the parish registers may go some way in answering these and related questions. These sources are often suspect and always need to be used with caution, just as the printed digit of later Census returns. If we take the Census years from 1821 to 1881 inclusive, the register of baptisms at Blockley shows 345 christenings whereas the burial register shows on the same basis 272 deaths. Many of these were of children who never went to school; in 1821 for example ten boys and seven girls aged 5 years or less died representing 53% of all burials for that year. This proportion declines somewhat until 1871 when children made up 30% of parish church burials. The strong Baptist cause in Blockley suggests that these figures under-represent deaths among children since Baptist children were unlikely to be represented in these figures. There is a tradition that Methodists sometimes used parish burial grounds. Was this the case in Blockley?

Besides, are the figures for burials what one might expect? To help answer this question *Table III* below compares the burial register at Blockley with the

register from the comparable Gloucestershire town of Winchcombe where there is also a considerable silk industry, to show infant burials.

TABLE III

TOTAL BURIALS AND BURIALS OF CHILDREN AGED 5 YEARS OR LESS AS A PERCENTAGE IN BLOCKLEY PARISH AND WINCOMBE PARISH, CENSUS YEARS, 1821-1881.

	Blockley Burials			Winchcombe Burials		
	Total	Children	%	Total	Children	%
1821	32	17	53	34	5	15
1831	39	11	28	49	13	27
1841	41	7	17	49	19	38
1851	49	18	37	69	21	30
1861	49	15	31	44	13	29
1871	27	8	30	41	13	32
1881	35	4	11	29	4	13

Using this 10% sample the table for Blockley shows a slow decline with levels in 1851 and 1861 higher than those at Winchcombe though both places showing considerable infant deaths throughout this sample period. These levels are similar to other parishes studied for this period.

For those that survived, the marriage register may provide some general clues to the level of literacy provided by a Victorian schooling in Blockley and figures for Winchcombe have been added, as well as national figures when these became available after 1837. These latter percentages have been derived from the totals in the Returns for the Registrars' General whereas the small numbers involved in both Blockley and Winchcombe are statistically less significant. However, they are the only evidence generally accepted as an indicator of literacy and the only evidence we have.

TABLE IV

THE NUMBERS OF MARRIAGES AND THE PERCENTAGES OF MEN AND WOMEN SIGNING WITH A CROSS, PARISHES OF BLOCKLEY AND WINCHCOMBE, CENSUS YEARS, 1821-1871, AND PERCENTAGES FOR MEN AND WOMEN, 1841-1871, ENGLAND AND WALES.

	Blockley Marriages			Winchcombe Marriages			England & Wales	
	Total	Men as %	Women as %	Total	Men as %	Women as %	Men as %	Women as %
1821	17	41	65	19	58	79	n/a	n/a
1831	15	66	73	14	7	7	n/a	n/a
1841	22	41	59	19	68	79	32	48
1851	27	67	63	18	39	39	30	45
1861	13	15	23	7	29	29	30	42
1871 (part)8	—	—	—	7	29	—	19	26

Both Blockley and Winchcombe percentages show a generally high number unable to sign the register in the earlier years and the fall after 1851 is more dramatic in Blockley than in Winchcombe. Both parishes illustrate the national situation where women's rates are generally higher than those for men until later in the nineteenth century when in Winchcombe in 1871 the reverse is the case.

Perhaps a more helpful approach is to take all the marriages at both parish churches from 1815 to 1834 and from 1875 to 1894 and compare literacy using a bigger sample. In Blockley from 1815 to 1834 51% of the men and 69% of the women signed with a cross out of 325 marriages contracted whereas in Winchcombe the comparable figures are 39% and 56% in 329 marriages. In the later period from 1875 to 1894 at 206 marriages in Blockley 14% of the men and only 1.5% of the women signed with a cross and at Winchcombe the figure for men was exactly the same — 14% — and for women 6.7%. These higher figures for men in both places are somewhat unusually against the trend found in other Gloucestershire parishes — and nationally. Dare we conclude that girls on maturity at marriage seemed to have gained more from local schools than boys? We might suggest from the table that when the 1851 Census was taken well over half of those married at Blockley parish church were unable to sign the marriage register.

The Census only recorded two Figgures' households whereas even a cursory investigation of the parish registers shows a considerably larger family. The 1851 representatives were John Figgures, 62, a slater and plasterer, his wife Elizabeth aged 61 and their children:— Hannah, a 33 year old dress-maker, James, aged 29 and following his father's work; John, 19 and Elizabeth aged 15 years. The other family enumerated was that of Joshua Figgures, a road labourer and landlord of the 'Crown', aged 46 years, his wife Elizabeth, 39 and Isabella 6 years, David 3 years and Myra aged 1 year. The baptismal register for the years from 1831 to 1839 records another four identifiable families which one would expect to find recorded in 1851. In 1831 a Thomas and Ann Figgures had Thomas christened; in 1832 William and Sarah (married in 1831) had Mary — and in 1833, George christened. On Christmas Day, 1835 William and Elizabeth Figgures brought their daughter to the parish church and a Charles and Mary Figgures had their four children baptised on the same day in June, 1839. Where does George Figgures, the relieving officer identified in Pigot's *Directory* of 1842, fit in and, above all, what happened to these four families by 1851? The burial register does not record a cataclysmic tragedy. Why might they have left Blockley at a time of considerable local prosperity? A valuation of the parish in 1877 shows that Ann Figgures owned 14 properties and Elizabeth some 9 while Warren and Charles Figgures feature as occupiers as well.

The purpose of this exercise has been to raise questions — and sometimes to beg them — in trying to show how Census data may be used to supplement even the best published works on a village and to illuminate the economic dependence of families on the silk industry so that its demise in the next years may be more fully appreciated. An attempt has been made to put Blockley into a perspective with a comparable parish in 1851, also with a silk industry, and into a national perspective — if we may cautiously suggest some literacy profiles. Not all the MSS records have been included, nor the Census returns.

for other obvious years. The principal aim has been to encourage others to delve behind *V.C.H.* volumes and other academic texts and research and write their own parish history.

BRYAN JERRARD.

Principal sources:

Glos. R.O. P.52 IN 1/2-4, 1/10-12, 1/21-23, VE 1/1, CO 2/9

Census, 1851, microfilm.

Pigot's *Directory*, 1842, Kellys, 1851, 1888.

Parish Church, Winchcombe, registers (consulted 1978-80).

Bodleian, Parliamentary Papers:— P.P. 1843 (516), Vol. XXI, P.P. 1852-53 (1665), Vol. XL, P.P. 1869 (4155), Vol. LXII, P.P. 1873 (c. 806), Vol. XX.

**FACT OR FICTION — FRENCH PRISONERS OF WAR
AT NORTHLEACH**

NORTHLEACH RESIDENTS HAVE a wealth of tales to tell about the French held in the local house of correction. These unknown men have caused mingled fear and curiosity, only partly satisfied by surviving works of art produced by their hands. Shadowy figures, hard to imagine — did they ever have flesh and bones?

In November 1803, the Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs of the City of Bristol found themselves facing the alarming prospect of 3,000 Napoleonic prisoners of war housed in Stapleton Gaol. Fearing a revolt, the authorities wrote to Sir Charles Yorke, Principal Secretary of State for War, begging to be relieved of the burden. They asked whether 'it would not be conducive to the interests of this city in particular, as well as to the general Welfare of the Empire to have the French prisoners removed from their present situation, to the Houses of Correction unoccupied in the County of Gloucester.'

Charles Yorke, in consultation with the Commissioners for the Management of the Transport Service — the body responsible for prisoners of war — applied to the Earl of Berkeley, Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire, for his views on the subject. The Government officials stressed that it would be 'very desirable' for 'the welfare of the Kingdom' to appropriate to the use of prisoners of war, under a military guard, 'some of the newly built Gaols of the Kingdom and among others one or more of the spacious and well conducted prisons of the County of Gloucester which are supposed to be more than adequate to the purposes for which they were erected.'

So far so good — but Sir George Onesiphorus Paul, the designer of Northleach and the other houses of correction, was not anxious to see his years of work squandered on foreigners. Following the maxim that the best form of defence is attack, he called on Sir Charles Yorke on the morning of 2 December 'to know what were his wishes and intentions' regarding the houses of correction and further, a significant point, 'to learn the proposals of the said Government

regarding the expense and other necessary arrangements.' In typical government fashion, Sir George found himself referred to another department — which in turn failed to provide the necessary answers.

A written report seemed the only solution. That same day, Sir George set down his views in a diplomatically worded document that must rank among the earliest prison manifestos. He assured the Government that the Gloucestershire magistrates, of whom he was one, were only too ready to participate with their fellow subjects in the 'general burthens and inconveniences produced by the peculiar circumstances of the times' but was it right to subject them to extra expense just because of their 'distinguished exertions' in prison reform?

Secondly, although housing the prisoners of war in Stapelton Gaol might present a danger to Bristol, it would also present a danger to the surrounding area, of which Gloucestershire would surely be a prime target? Paul wondered whether removing the French to other prisons in the same county would 'so decidedly relieve the danger apprehended as to be worth the expense and inconvenience of carrying the measure into execution'. A subtle point, as the Transport Board rather than the counties paid the costs of moving prisoners of war.

Besides these moral and economic considerations, Sir George feared that Mr Yorke and the commissioners had been misled — none of the houses of correction was unoccupied; none had been built to accommodate more people than Gloucestershire had previously had in bridewells and gaols; and only one house of correction could be withdrawn from use without great inconvenience; furthermore the numbers of inmates could not be substantially increased without major rebuilding. The houses of correction had been designed on the Howardian system which meant in practice that each prisoner was allotted a single cell, built to a minimum size required under health laws, 7—8' long, 5' 6" —6' wide. Even if the Government were prepared to overlook health considerations and two prisoners were allotted to one cell, Gloucestershire could still only house a maximum of 322 people — nothing like the 3,000 suggested.

Finally, Sir George ventured to ask that unless the new prisons were peculiarly suited to the task of housing French prisoners of war, Gloucestershire should be treated on the same terms as other counties.

Once the document had been despatched, Paul and his fellow magistrates could do no more but hope and pray. The final decision rested with the Government. There was not long to wait.

On 5 December, just 3 days after Sir George's initial visit, a letter was received from the Government stating 'that the very small number of persons which those prisons, or any of them are capable of containing does not appear to render them an object of consideration nor by any means worthy of the expense which would attend to many establishments for prisoners of war.' Three cheers for Sir George! Gloucestershire was saved.

So no prisoners of war at Northleach. Unless evidence is found to the contrary, the shadowy figures will remain as they are — people of popular legend.

ANN-RACHAEL HARWOOD.

Sources: Glos. R.O. Quarter Sessions Order Books (Q/SO).

The quotations are from the volume for 1804 (44 Geo III).

FDN LTD.