Stonehouse History Group Journal

Issue 4 May 2014

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May 2014

Front cover photograph shows Captain B. D. Parkin (see article on pages 14 to 18).

Why not become a member of our group?

We aim to promote interest in the local history of Stonehouse.

We research and store information about all aspects of the town's history

and have a large collection of photographs old and new.

We make this available to the public via our website and through our regular meetings.

We provide a programme of talks and events on a wide range of historical topics.

We hold meetings on the second Wednesday of each month,

usually in the Town Hall at 7:30pm.

£1 members; £2 visitors; annual membership £5

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www.stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk

Stonehouse History Group's website is packed with over 100 pages of local history containing photographs, maps, memories, videos and information about the Town from its early days.

If you have any information about local history that you would like us to add to the web pages, or have any questions about Stonehouse history, please email to the Web Manager, Darrell Webb, at

info@stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk

If you don't have access to email, please leave a note for us at the Town Hall marked "Stonehouse History Group" (and leaving a contact phone number or address).

Stonehouse History Group Journal

Welcome to Issue 4

As it is the centenary of the start of the First World War this year, our thoughts turned to the effects of that War on Stonehouse. This is the theme for the Gloucestershire Local History Association's Annual Local History Day on October 11th, and we shall be preparing a display for that event. We read about local men who fought and decided to investigate the lives and experiences of a few of them. We have been fortunate in being able to contact some of their relatives who have given us photographs and memories of their ancestors. These are incorporated into several articles in this Issue.

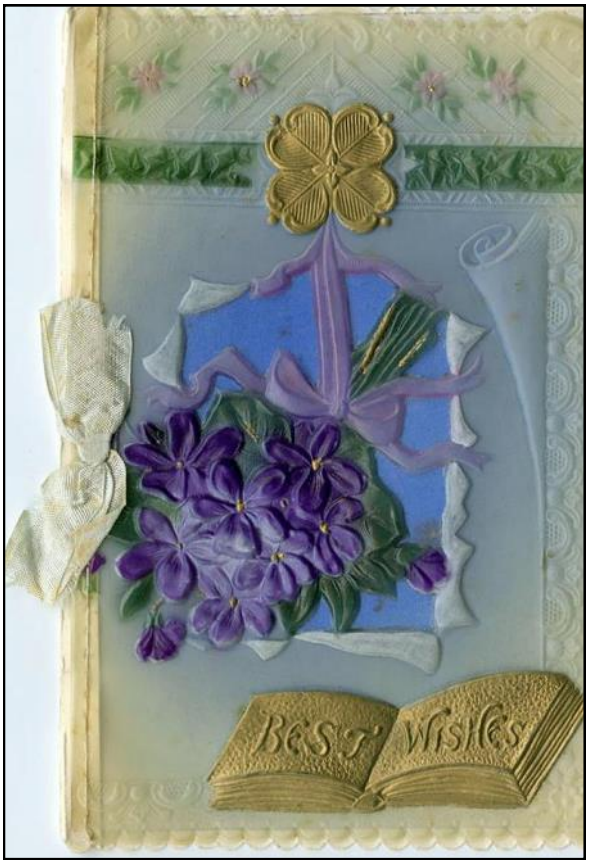
In addition to articles about the War, we have included local people's memories of how Stonehouse has changed. We would be delighted to hear from anyone who would like to contribute an article on any aspect of the history of Stonehouse. Guidelines for writing articles for the Journal can be found on our website: http://www.stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk/.

We also try to include more in-depth research and are pleased to reproduce an article by Stephen Mills on the Willow Plantation which first appeared in the Journal of the Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology for 2009. We have been able to update the original article by adding additional photos and information.

Our research is continuing and we have received new information as a result of people reading previous Journals. If you can give us more information on any of the topics covered in this or previous issues, please contact us via our Website, phone Vicki Walker on (01453) 826 334, or come along to one of our meetings in the Town Hall on the second Wednesday of every month (except August) at 7:30pm.

The Editorial Team

May 2014



Cards sent home to his Mother in 1917 by Lance Corporal Reginald Baker of The Spa Inn, Oldends Lane.

Effects of the First World War on the Stonehouse community

by Shirley Dicker and Jim Dickson

Early days of the War

Stroud News reported that, following the Declaration of War on the night of August Bank Holiday 1914, the local banks were closed for 3 days due to fears that clients would withdraw their funds on a large scale. David Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "*reacted with vigour and confidence in dealing with the immediate monetary crisis*" and restored confidence in the city. Within a week the financial emergency was over. Stroud News also reported "panic buying" of provisions with the result that many local stores were soon short of the more essential provisions.

On 13 November, Stroud News reported that Squadron Sergeant Major Charles Henry Gardiner, 11th Hussars, of Stonehouse (*photo at left*) had been awarded the French Medaille Militaire for gallantry (during operations between 21 and 30 August) and that he had been wounded. After the War, aged 44, he was recorded as a chronic rheumatic and unemployed.

The first mention of the War in Stonehouse Parish Council records came in the minutes of the Annual Meeting in March 1915. Those present stood in silence in memory of two dead soldiers, Private Baker and Rifleman Bullock (*photo at right*). A Book of Condolence was prepared for their families.

Early in 1916 the street lights were turned off for fear of attacks by Zeppelin airships and the Parish Council asked shopkeepers to turn off their outside lights. In March the Government introduced compulsory military service for all single men aged 19 to 41. Two months later conscription was extended to include married men and the lower age limit reduced to 18. In the last months of the War the upper age limit was extended to 51.

Standish Hospital

The King family had rented Standish House from 1884 to 1897. Before the War, Mary King, the eldest daughter of the family, was involved in organising a Red Cross Nursing Association and the training of Red Cross nurses. She realised that, in the event of a European war, there would be a need for hospitals to cope with those wounded. During 1914 while it was empty, Mary approached its owner, Lord Sherborne. He agreed to loan the House for use as a hospital, and to have it decorated, fitted with electric lights, additional baths and toilet facilities.

Stroud News reported that local people were invited to look round the Hospital on Easter Monday 1915 and more than 700 people visited that day. They were asked for gifts to assist in the running of the hospital. When the hospital opened on 13 May there were 100 beds and 8 fully-trained staff plus local volunteers from the Red Cross in Stonehouse and surrounding areas. Many had been trained by Mary King who was the Commandant.

All of the wounded soldiers came from the Beaufort War Hospital in Bristol. The staff had only two hours' notice before the first wounded arrived. There were 31 in the first batch, of which 14 were stretcher cases. Although it was May, snow was falling and it was very cold, so the gardeners had to light the fires throughout the new hospital. It was early-closing day for shops in Stonehouse but local people rallied round to collect food from their homes to feed the soldiers. Local people transported the wounded soldiers from the railway station.

Shortly after the hospital opened, two wooden huts (known as "The Chalets") were built on the grounds. They housed a further 30 beds to accommodate more wounded. Those soldiers who were able to get out of bed were expected to wear their uniforms and to help other soldiers who could not dress or wash themselves (*photo shows soldiers peeling potatoes*). Those who were well enough were allowed to go into Stonehouse during the day. Some even caught the train to Stroud but they had to be back by 6:30pm or they had no supper! They made lots of friends in

the village and sometimes went to the cinema (believed to be the Star Cinema & Theatre at Lansdown in Stroud).

Work on the land and in the factories was unacceptable for women from better off families, but they could help the national war effort by caring for wounded soldiers. Such women joined organisations like the Red Cross and the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs). Standish Hospital had mainly voluntary, unmarried, female Red Cross and VAD staff plus eight professional nursing sisters and several medical staff (only one was resident). There were more than 70 volunteers, most of them part-time. The full-time staff lived in the attic accommodation and in the lodge. Between shifts, most of the volunteers cycled or walked between home and the Hospital. A total of 2292 sick and wounded soldiers were treated at the Hospital by local Red Cross and VAD volunteers.

The nurses became very fond of the soldiers and often brought them extra cigarettes and sweets. In turn, the soldiers put on plays and even taught the nurses how to shoot a gun. Stonehouse had been a quiet village before the War and local people must have found it strange to have a lot of soldiers coming down from Standish every day, in a variety of uniforms, while their own men were away fighting. It must have brought home to the locals how dangerous it was to be a fighting soldier – particularly since the Standish patients would have had first-hand experience.

Mary King stayed in the former butler's room throughout the War and did not join her family at Newark Park until the hospital closed in early 1919. During the War, some of the wounded convalesced at Newark Park to free up beds for those with more serious injuries. Mary was awarded the O.B.E. for her efforts during the War.

First successful landing of an aeroplane in Stonehouse

On 9 August 1916, an aeroplane landed in the field between Bridgend and the railway viaduct at Beard's Mill. Captain Eric Dixon of the Royal Flying Corps had been given permission to come to see his brother Hugh before he left for service in France. Stroud News reported that Captain Dixon landed within a hundred yards of his home (Downton House, Stanley Downton) and that hundreds of people came to see the plane – and awaited his departure at 6pm. There was loud cheering, waving of handkerchiefs and hats when he took off. Captain Dixon circled the area, waved to the crowd and soon disappeared from sight. Two little girls, Marjorie and Doris Flint from Stanley Downton, took a collection on behalf of Standish Hospital. Sadly, following a serious flying accident on 17 August 1917, Captain Dixon died of his injuries. He was 27 years old and had been married for only 9 months.

Food supplies

In early 1915 the German Kaiser announced that the North Sea was a war zone and that all merchant ships, including vessels from neutral countries, were liable to be sunk without warning. The US Government protested strongly. Three months later a German U-boat (submarine) sank the British liner *Lusitania* off the south coast of Ireland. Among the 1201 who died were many women and children including 128 American citizens. This was an important step towards America's declaration of war on Germany in April 1917.

By 1914 almost 60% of the food consumed in this country was imported. By early 1917 the scale of the sinking of British and neutral ships by U-boats was posing a particular danger. In April alone, more than a million tons of shipping was sunk and the Admiralty was at a loss to know

what to do about it. Lloyd George, who had become Prime Minister, proposed the adoption of convoys (merchant ships sailing together and escorted by Royal Navy destroyers) – which the admirals resisted strongly. However, under pressure from Lloyd George, convoys were introduced in May. They were an immediate success, reducing the loss of merchant ships from 25% to 1%. And, by the end of the year, U-boats were being sunk faster than the Germans could build them. So the situation that had caused so much unease early in 1917 had been transformed by the end of the year. Nevertheless, A.J.P. Taylor records that: "*At one time, there was less than a month's supply of wheat in England. The sinking of a single ship, laden with sugar, meant that jam-making had to be forbidden.*" Rationing of meat, sugar and butter, though not of bread, was introduced in February 1918.

The Germans suffered shortages of industrial raw materials and food due to the long-term Allied naval blockade. The British official history attributed almost 800,000 deaths in Germany to the blockade, a number comparable with the deaths of members of the British armed forces.

Allotments in Stonehouse

Additional allotments were provided in 1917 and the Parish Council applied to the County War Agricultural Committee for 30 hundredweight (1500 kg) of seed potatoes for distribution.

Contribution of Wycliffe College

In April 1917 the school's magazine, Wycliffe Star, reported that nearly a hundred of the boys had gardens or potato plots which, the Star noted, had become a "national craze". The whole field on the north side of the Midland Railway Branch Line had been dug over (*see adjacent photo*). In his speech at prize-giving the Headmaster commented: "*Whatever Wycliffe is likely to lack in the coming twelve months, it certainly will not be potatoes!*"

During the summers of 1916 to 1918, aid was provided to local farmers. The usual hours worked by the boys were 11am until 7pm or 2pm until 8pm. Those starting at 11am took their own rations for lunch but farmers were expected to supply tea. All proceeds went to wartime charities.

In the summer of 1918 the Star observed that "by far the greatest harvest modern England ever knew" was ripening in the fields – but the labourers were many thousands fewer than in previous years. The Ministry of National Service gathered volunteers of every sort and appealed for help from the schools throughout the country. Wycliffe provided a party of 50 who were sent to Chitterne on the Wiltshire Downs where there were 3000 acres of corn land. When the party arrived, the binding machines were just beginning their work and, for the next 24 days, the party's main role was to gather up and stook the sheaves. The party worked a total of 6017 hours for which they were paid a total of £100 5s 8d (approximately £5900 in today's money). This, together with the regulation Treasury grant of about 18s a boy, enabled the party to meet all expenses. The Government also provided third-class and cycle tickets. When the party left they had "seen the harvest home" on four farms.

War Memorials

In her diary entry for 17 November 1918, Beatrice Webb (who was born in Standish House) gave an indication of the widespread grief for personal loss: *"Every day one meets saddened women, with haggard faces and lethargic movements, and one dare not ask after husband or son."*

The War ended in 1918 at "*the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month*" - which we commemorate in Stonehouse each year at the War Memorial on the Town Green. St Cyr's Church records state: "*Memorial to Stonehouse men who fell in the Great War, unveiled by Miss Emily Davies and dedicated by the Rev. R. P. Waugh, Vicar, August 12, 1919*."

In a Parish Council meeting in June 1919, the Chairman, John Westacott, remarked that he thought a recreation ground would provide a suitable Peace Memorial. That was strongly support-

ed by the other Councillors. Within six months Mr. J.C.C. Kimmins had acquired the land near Laburnum Walk and offered it to the Parish as a recreation ground. In July 1920, the Comrades of the Great War offered to contribute £40 for the recreation ground then, in October, Mr. A.S. Winterbotham of Stonehouse Court gave £100.

Seventy seven former pupils of Wycliffe College lost their lives in the War. It was decided to add a clock tower and spire to Wycliffe Chapel as a memorial to these men. The clock tower and spire were dedicated in July 1921, having cost £2800 (approximately £110,000 in today's money).

Stroud News recorded the names of 176 Stonehouse men who served in the Armed Forces, 8 who gained distinctions such as the Military Medal, and 52 who were killed, died of their wounds, or were missing. These figures do not represent all who served, as men who joined up after 1915, and survived, are not included. Stroud News reported occasional snippets of information on difficulties being experienced by companies while their employees were serving in the Armed Forces e.g. in October 1917, between 70 and 80 employees of Messrs. W.H. Vowles & Sons (based at Upper Mills) were serving in the Army or Navy.

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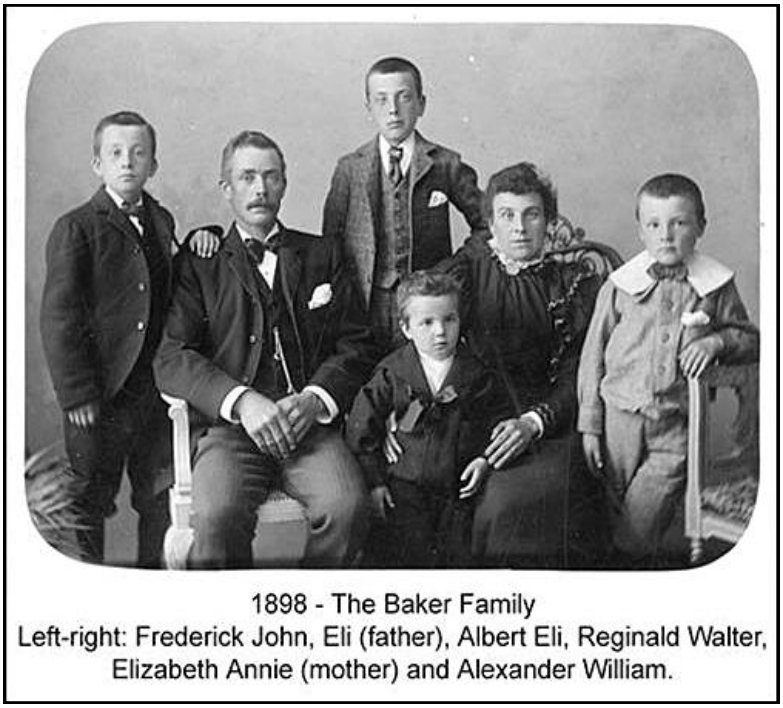
How the First World War brought tragedy to Stonehouse. The Baker Family

by Vicki Walker and Shirley Dicker

War Memorials across the country are a reminder that the most devastating effect of war upon ordinary people was the loss of so many family members in tragic circumstances. Many families suffered the loss of more than one person and the Baker family was typical of those who watched three precious sons go off to war.

Eli and Elizabeth Baker married in 1886. In 1891 they were living at Downfield Terrace between Stroud and Cainscross. Eli was working as a hay trusser while Elizabeth cared for their two young sons Albert, aged 3, and Frederick aged 2. By 1901 the family had moved to 16 Avenue Terrace in Stonehouse. Albert was working as a stable boy and groom while Frederick was a telegram messenger. Alexander, Reginald and Victoria had been born and Cyril was born a few years later.



1898 - The Baker Family
Left-right: Frederick John, Eli (father), Albert Eli, Reginald Walter, Elizabeth Annie (mother) and Alexander William.

In 1914 the family was running the Spa Inn in Oldends Lane. The men were occupied as hay trussers while the women and younger children helped run the pub. The family seemed healthy and happy living the country life. Their eldest son, Albert had joined the army in 1906 as part of the Gloucestershire Regiment. In 1911 he was serving in Malta.

Albert Eli Baker

Albert Eli Baker was born in 1887. In 1901 he was a stable boy and groom. As a member of the Army Reserve, he was one of the first to be mobilised for war in August 1914. His Brigade landed at Le Havre in France on 13th August and engaged in various actions on the Western Front. They were involved in The Battle of Mons and the subsequent retreat, The Battle of the Marne, The Battle of the Aisne and the First Battle of Ypres.

On November 5th 1914 at the battle of Ypres, Albert Baker became one of the first Stonehouse soldiers to be killed.

Albert Baker a soldier serving in Malta

His friend, Albert Townsend, of Minchinhampton wrote a moving letter to his mother which was reproduced in a local newspaper. The two Alberts had enjoyed a long friendship and Albert Baker was engaged to his friend's sister Florence. The men were the same age and had enlisted in the Gloucestershire Regiment together. While in the Army they had both been awarded bronze medallions by the Royal Life Saving Society for saving lives in India and Malta. Since leaving military service they had both been training to be railway signalmen, Baker at Ashby de la Zouche and Townsend at Fishponds in Bristol. The two had travelled in the same brigade to France.

Private Baker was killed by a shell and Private Townsend wrote, *"It was only my luck that I was not killed as well. I miss him every minute of the day. I wish it was me instead of him. I did the best I could for him. I buried him and it was the saddest thing I ever did. I have lost one of my truest friends and I cannot replace him."* Sadly, Lance Corporal Albert Townsend was killed on 23rd December 1914. Neither soldier has a marked grave. Albert Baker is recorded on the Menin Gate at Ypres and Albert Townsend on the Le Touret Memorial in France.

The Stonehouse Parish Council minutes of March 29th 1915 noted - "Mr Jenner-Davies and Mr. Cole proposed a book of condolence with the relatives of Private Baker and Rifleman Bullock, two gallant young soldiers who had fallen in the war. The Chairman and Mr. C. Hill supported the resolution which was carried. All present standing in silence."

In his will Private Baker left £59 3s 11d to his father Eli Baker, beerhouse keeper.

Albert sent this card home to his brother Reginald in 1914

William Baker

The Bakers' third son, Alexander was born in 1893. In 1911 he was living at the Spa Inn and working as a hay trusser for a hay merchant with his father and brothers. In June 1914 he married Lottie Vick. As a married man he may have been excused from joining up immediately. However he became a gunner in the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA). He was in 129th Heavy Battery and probably went to France in 1916.

The role of the Heavy Battery

Heavy Batteries RGA were equipped with heavy guns, sending large-calibre high-explosive shells in fairly flat trajectory fire. As British artillery tactics developed, the Heavy Batteries were most often employed in destroying or neutralising the enemy artillery, as well as putting destructive fire down on strongpoints, dumps, store, roads and railways behind enemy lines. They were shelled and gassed by the enemy.

Alexander

Alexander Baker

Alexander survived until the Armistice but was unlucky enough to die from the effects of gas on 12th November 1918. His great niece, Helen Bell, was told that the family were so traumatised by the loss of two sons that their names were rarely mentioned and it seemed that they scarcely visited Alexander's widow Lottie. She never remarried and died in 1966.

Reginald Walter Baker

Reginald was born on 15th August 1896. By 1901 the family had moved to Avenue Terrace and he went to Eastington Primary School. He followed the rest of his family into the haymaking business.

Before the war

He was a member of the Gloucestershire Yeomanry which divided into separate units during the War. He was in the 1st Royal Gloucestershire Hussars who fought in Egypt and at Gallipoli. As part of the cavalry, he took part in the battles in the Middle East. He became a signaller and also fought in Mesopotamia (Iraq) and India. His brigade was transferred to many different locations as the War progressed and he was lucky to escape with his life when the ship he was travelling on was torpedoed.

In his uniform

On 15 April 1917 the *Cameronia* was torpedoed by the German submarine *U-33* en route from Marseilles to Alexandria, Egypt while carrying 2650 troops and 150 nautical miles from Malta. The *Cameronia* sank in 40 minutes, resulting in 210 deaths. Some of the survivors were picked up by the escorting destroyer, HMS *Rifleman*. As the U-boat was in the area, the remaining survivors had to be picked up the next morning by a sloop from Malta.

Writing to his parents, Reg said:

"just a line to let you know I am saved and un-wounded. I expect you see by the papers that the 'Cameronia' was torpedoed in the Mediterranean. Talk about a panic, I have been in a fix before now but never one like this. We got hit 5:30 Sunday night and in 35 minutes the boat was out of sight. I was one of the lifeboat crew, but we did not stand a rat's chance, as the fellows were mad and before we could get the boat off the pulleys she was packed with men."

"The only thing I worry about is my pal, I believe he has gone under, but of course I cannot say for certain as there were heaps of fellows in the water when our destroyer came away."

In the Gloucestershire Yeomanry (Royal Gloucestershire Hussars)

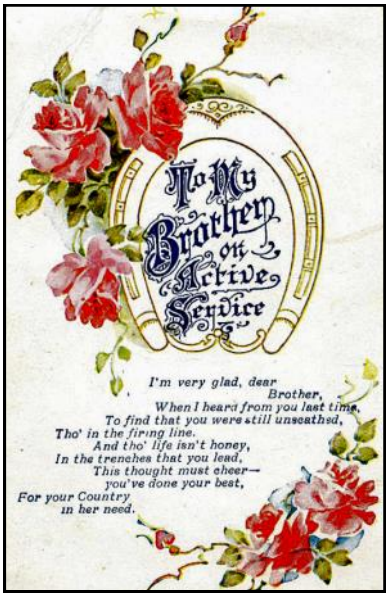
"Of course one is bound to feel the shock. Some of the poor boys were knocked out before they touched the water, and a lot got knocked out by the lifeboats capsizing, but I cannot tell you how many have been put out as I do not know. I am living in hope that there are not many. I have lost everything except what I stand up in, but expect to be issued with some more in a day's time."

"Remember to me to all at home and tell them I am still alive and kicking."

Stroud News 11 May 1917 – Lance Corporal R.W. Baker, Hussars, of Oldends, Stonehouse described his rescue from the "*Cameronia*" which had been torpedoed in the Mediterranean. He praised the fine rescue work of British destroyers.

"*I owe my life to a Jack Tar. If it had not been for him I should have been under the destroyer. He flung a piece of rope to me and pulled me in …….. I think we ought to be proud of the Navy ….. The Captain of the destroyer deserves the DSO. He would not leave until nearly every available man was picked up*."

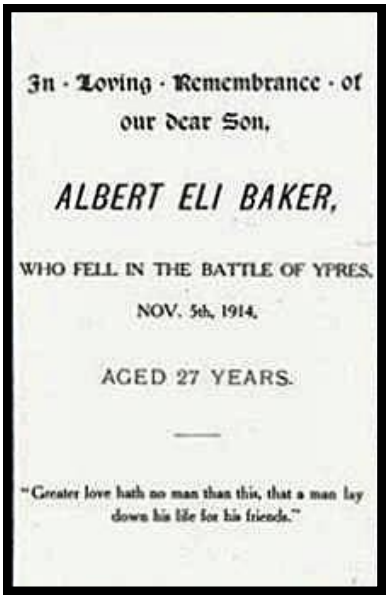
Reginald survived the war and returned to his family. In 1923 he married Hilda Shakespeare and they had two sons and a daughter. He set up a successful haulage business in Stonehouse - R.W. Baker and Sons - which was carried on by his son. He died in 1974.



Card sent to Reg by his sister May

After the War

Like so many others of that generation, the lives of the Baker family were changed for ever. It is said that the parents never recovered from the loss of their two sons. Lottie Baker lost her husband after only a few years during which he was away at the front. Frederick Baker took over the Spa Inn and ran it from 1931 to 1950. Victoria May and Cyril were young enough to rebuild their lives, get married and have children. Thanks to Reginald's daughter Pamela Bird and granddaughter Helen Bell for keeping their memories alive.


In · Loving · Remembrance · of
our dear Son,

ALBERT ELI BAKER,

WHO FELL IN THE BATTLE OF YPRES,
NOV. 5th, 1914,

AGED 27 YEARS.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

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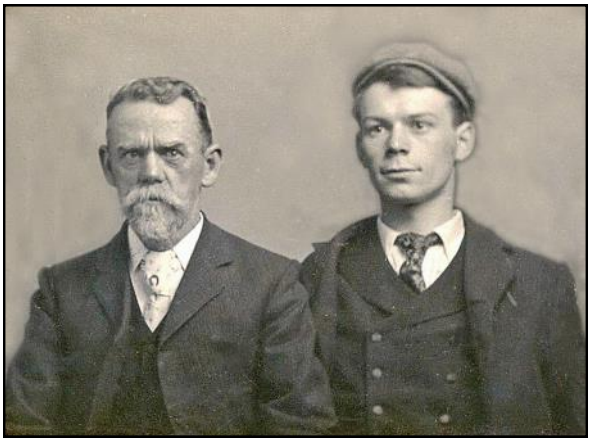
SHG Oral History interviews – Helen Bell and Pamela Bird, April 2014. Photographs © Helen Bell.

Photograph shows three generations of the family - Helen Bell, her son Sebastian Bell and Pamela Bird outside the Royal Oak Inn at Tetbury.

Benjamin Dooley Parkin (1879 - 1962)

by Vicki Walker and Jim Dickson

Captain B. D. Parkin was one of the most influential men of Stonehouse during the first half of the 20th century. He moved to the Town in 1911 to become Headmaster of the Council School and later became Chairman of the Parish Council, Chief A.R.P. Warden for the Stroud area, as well as the president of the Stonehouse Branch of the British Legion and a Justice of the Peace.



Benjamin with his father Samuel c1897

Born on July 2nd 1879 in the village of Riddings near Alfreton in Derbyshire, Benjamin Parkin was the son of Samuel Parkin, a colliery clerk. His mother Elizabeth gave her maiden name, Dooley, to her son as a second name. His grandfathers and uncles had all been mine workers but his father, Samuel, a younger son, was of a more academic bent. In 1861 he was a pupil teacher and in 1871 a clerk. It is likely that he encouraged his eldest son, Benjamin, to get an education.

Teacher

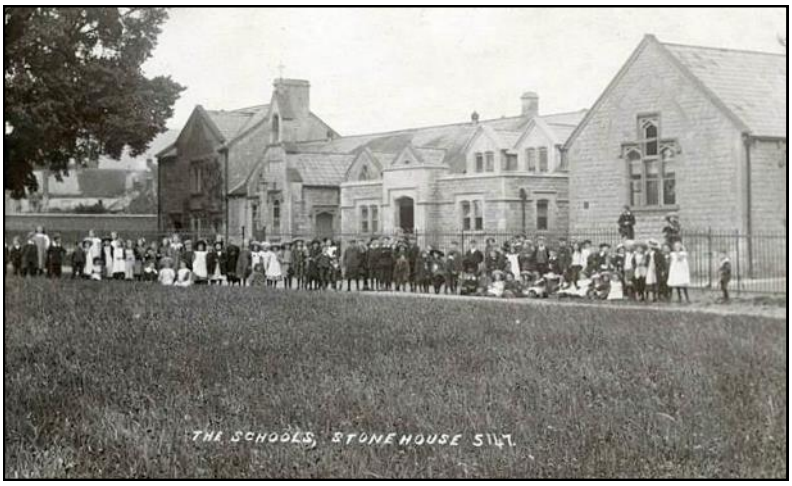
Benjamin qualified as a certificated teacher at St John's College, Battersea, and took up his first appointment at a school in South Hackney in 1900. Battersea College was founded in 1838 by James Kay-Shuttleworth. It was the first ever teacher training college, later taken over by the National Society in 1841 and renamed St John's College. His brother, Thomas, also became a teacher in Hackney.

B. D. Parkin as a young teacher c1900

Benjamin married Mabel Theaker in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1905. They lived in London where their son, Benjamin Theaker Parkin was born in 1906.

In September 1906 B. D. Parkin commenced duties as headmaster of Winterbourne Down All Saints School in Bristol. This was a primary school with 186 children on roll. The previous headmaster had only been in post for a year when he became ill and died. Mr. Parkin found the school needing much improvement. He writes in the school log book that achievement was poor in all subjects and the condition of the buildings was inadequate. According to the inspectors' reports Mr. Parkin improved the teaching and organisation greatly and he also endeavoured to get the buildings brought up to standard.

In 1911 the Headmaster of Stonehouse Council School, Mr. John Westacott, who had been in charge for 38 years, retired. B. D. Parkin, aged 32, applied for the job, was successful and commenced his duties on 18th October 1911. He and his family moved to Stonehouse. Inspectors reported that the school was in an efficient condition.



Stonehouse Council School c1900s.

Soldier

B. D. Parkin had first served in the army while he was a young teacher, as a volunteer in the 2nd South Middlesex Volunteer regiment at the turn of the 20th century, soon

after the start of the Boer War. He was promoted to sergeant and was one of the bodyguards to Queen Victoria when she laid the foundation stone of the South Kensington Museum. When the First World War began in 1914, he volunteered for the Army again. Initially he was rejected on medical grounds. There had been scarlet fever in the school in 1914 and he had been off sick for seven weeks. Also his sight was poor so this may have been a factor. However as more soldiers died in the fighting, regulations were relaxed and he was accepted into his old territorial battalion in June 1916.

Twelve years after the war, B. D. Parkin wrote a diary of his wartime experiences. This was deposited in the Imperial War Museum and Stonehouse History Group has a copy.

Parkin did his initial training and became a Lance Corporal. Those in charge spotted his potential and he was sent on a number of courses where he easily topped the list of N.C.O.s. After having said a sad farewell to his family, on the eve of departure to France he was withdrawn and sent for Officer training. This meant he stayed in England until August 1917. At the end of his training he was again top of his class and selected to sit next to the Colonel at the final dinner. On 28th August he joined the 7th West Riding Regiment and set off for France on 4th November 1917.

Parkin describes the class system that existed in the Army. As a young officer he had a servant who stayed with him throughout the war. However he emphasises that there was a great spirit of togetherness, “officers and men are comrades”. He describes his commanding officer’s speech before heading into battle as, “reminiscent of Henry V”. The officer was 25 years old and was killed a fortnight later from a direct hit by a shell. Later, he describes how devastated the men were when the Brigadier was killed, “we loved him”.

Parkin led a charmed life in the trenches. He suffered terrible conditions as did all the men, but never had to go “over the top” into battle. Because he was a good map reader and an intelligent man, he was appointed as an Intelligence Officer. This meant he had to receive messages from aeroplanes and get them to the Officer in charge. This often meant running along the trenches from shell hole to shell hole under bombardment but, even though men were killed either side of him, Parkin was never wounded. Many of his friends were killed at the battle of Bourlon Wood. Travelling on a train across France, the train was bombed and machine-gunned but miraculously, Parkin remained physically unscathed.

The first time he heard enemy shelling he was terrified. He wanted to find a hole and hide in it. But as time went on he became used to it and would stand at the edge of the trench and watch the Artillery with pride. Most of the time the men were waiting for orders to attack. They were filled with apprehension waiting for the battles at Arras and Vimy Ridge.

B. D. Parkin was promoted to Captain, a rank he was proud to use for the rest of his life. At the end of the war he became an Education Officer with the Army on the Rhine Adult Education Scheme designed to prepare troops for civilian life. When his Division returned to England he was given a similar post with the 51st Highland Division.

Public work

After the war Captain Parkin returned to the Council School on 1st July 1919 where he remained as head-master until he retired in 1939. He and his wife and son moved to “Inglenook” in Queen’s Road, now “Prescott”, and later to Gloucester Road.

In 1922 there was a Parish Council election and Captain Parkin became Chairman. However a controversy arose over the loss of money by the Reddings allotments. The full council rejected the recommendations of the Finance Committee and agreement over the rent could not be reached, leading to the resignation of the Finance Committee including Captain Parkin. The allotments issue was later resolved but Captain Parkin did not return to the Parish Council for another nine years, being elected Chairman again in 1931. Jack Anderson reports that the Chairman was involved in several "differences of opinion" over rights-of-way and access. C. L. Smith, a noted local historian, offered copies of his books to be kept in the Council meeting rooms, but "owing to differences of opinion with the chairman" this offer was withdrawn. Luckily copies were deposited with Mr. Smith's sons so we still have access to these records today.

Captain B. D. Parkin, Chairman of the Parish Council, 1922, 1931-37, 1941-46

Despite this, during Captain Parkin's chairmanship the Lighting Act was adopted for the whole of the parish except for outlying areas, and the new Church Hall was built in Elm Road. Captain Parkin was a guest at the opening of the new Post Office in Queen's Road in 1933. Parkin also took on many roles within the County. He was Chairman of the War Pensions Committee and a member of the Disablement Advisory Committee. He was on the committees for Education and Village Halls and Community Centres. In 1943 he was appointed Justice of the Peace.

After being discharged from the Army, Captain Parkin joined the Comrades of the Great War. Following amalgamation of all the ex-service organisations into the British Legion, he organised the changeover in Stonehouse and became the first secretary of the local branch. Subsequently he was chairman and president in turn. He was the Vice-Chairman of the County Committee and on the Pension and Sports Committees. He was Chairman of the Midland Area and a member of the National Executive Council. He spoke up at Parish Council meetings for special treatment for ex-soldiers when allocating new houses and helped servicemen to claim war pensions.

Photo shows Captain Parkin representing the British Legion in Belgium, laying a wreath at one of many Memorial Services across Europe after the First World War

Chief Warden

By the time World War II broke out, Captain Parkin had retired from the school and taken up the responsibility of organising Stonehouse's Civil Defence Services. He was the Head Air Raid Warden for Stonehouse from 1938 to 1945 and Chairman of the Parish Invasion Committee from 1941 to 1946. He was also the Voluntary Food Organiser and took charge, with others, of money donated to the emergency hospital fund. He went on the first Anti-Gas Course for Wardens in June 1938.

In 1939 a Report and Control Centre was set up in Stroud to co-ordinate communications between wardens. Parkin became a Deputy Sub-Controller and took his turn manning the Centre. On 16th March 1942, Captain Parkin became Chief Warden for the whole of the Stroud and Nailsworth district. (Area Eight).

In his book "Area Eight", the author, P. R. Symonds, who was Co-Ordinating Officer to the Defence Committee, writes this tribute:

"Captain B. D. Parkin J.P., the Head Warden of Stonehouse, but who will be remembered by the service generally, first as Deputy Chief Warden to Mr. Beale and then, during the past three years, as Chief Warden. No man did more to bring the Service to a high standard of efficiency and to hold it together during a difficult period of enemy inaction. He will be remembered for his clear and well thought-out Orders, and his many eloquent and elucidating addresses to Head Wardens."

In 1946 he was awarded the O.B.E. for his work for ex-servicemen.

A man of many parts

As well as his teaching career, war service and community work, Benjamin Parkin had many other interests. Throughout his life he was interested in music. He was a vocalist and pianist and accompanist to the Stonehouse Choral Society. He played the organ at St. Cyr's Church and was a lay reader at Standish Church. He was involved in the Three Choirs Festival at Gloucester.

While living in Stonehouse he started his work as a weather recorder for the Meteorological Office and in 1935 he was made a

Photo shows, left to right: B. D. Parkin, Michael Parkin (grandson), Elizabeth Parkin (mother), Pip Parkin (grandson), B.T. Parkin (son), May Parkin (sister) at B.T. Parkin's house in Pearcroft Road.

Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society. His grandson, Pip Parkin, has kept the weather recording machine (barograph) and still keeps records today.

Recording the weather

His son, Benjamin Theaker Parkin, was educated at Wycliffe College and became a French teacher there. He married Phyllis in 1929 and they lived at Elmsleigh in Pearcroft Road. B. T. Parkin became a Parish Councillor in 1933 and went on to become M.P. for Stroud and then for Paddington North. He had three sons, Michael and Pip with Phyllis, and Nicholas with his second wife Pamela.

In 1932 B. D. Parkin's first wife, Mabel Parkin, died and his sister May came to be his housekeeper. In 1945 he married his second wife, Marjorie and they moved to Rose Cottage, Ruscombe, where they spent many years creating a beautiful garden.

Benjamin and Marjorie at Rose Cottage

Benjamin Dooley Parkin died, aged 82, on 10th January 1962 at Cheltenham Hospital following an operation. He left an impressive legacy of service to his town and country.

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Pip Parkin March 2014. Photographs © Pip Parkin.

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Memories of the Regal Cinema

Peggy Blanch (née Stratford)

In 1933, my Father, Arthur John Stratford, started showing films in the former Church Institute in Laburnum Walk. It was a corrugated iron structure located on the site now occupied by Orchard Place flats [opposite the Co-op car park, alongside an existing bungalow]. *Dad named it the Regal.*

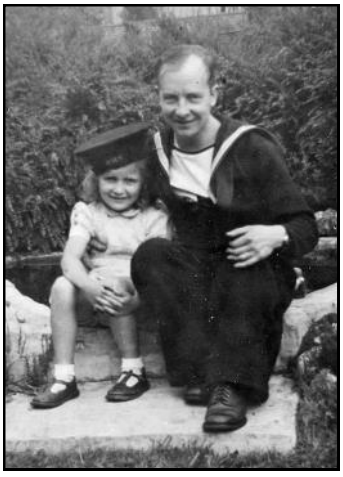
Dad's father was so impressed with the business that he took over an existing cinema in 1935 at Corsham, Wiltshire, and my Father would exchange films with him each week. Sadly my Grandfather died shortly after he started that cinema in Corsham, so my Grandmother and my Auntie ran it between them, helped by my Father, until 1958.

In 1936 the building by Laburnum Walk was destroyed by fire. [A local newspaper reported that the fire was spotted, just before 5am, by Mrs Chapple, who lived in a cottage opposite the cinema. Although Stroud Fire Brigade arrived before 5:30am, the firemen's efforts were to little avail.]

In 1937 my Father had the new Regal Cinema built in Gloucester Road, next to the railway bridge (where the Esso garage is sited today). *The new cinema had 406 seats. Many people will remember the double seats which were always popular with courting couples.*

In 1938 my parents married and I was born. We lived in Church Road, Cainscross.

The house next door to the Cinema was built and our family moved there when I was a year old. My parents named it 'Regalside'.



In 1940 my Father was called up to serve in the Royal Navy in World War II. During his absence my Mother ran the cinema with the help of friends and relatives. Lots of American servicemen visited the cinema at that time and I remember, as a child, asking them: "Got any gum, chum". During the War there were long queues at the cinema and children under 16 would wait outside for someone to take them in. My Grandmother was the cashier, my Auntie was an usherette and Dad's friend and my Uncle were the projectionists — so it was quite a family affair. When my Grandmother became too old to sell tickets, my Auntie took up that task. After the War my Dad took up the reins again.

Dad used to get lots of cowboy films — which my Mother disliked. But Dad always said they were the most profitable. The cinema was profitable for many years until television became popular and then profits started to fall off. [A local newspaper reported that, 3 years before closure, Arthur Stratford had cut the performances to only one each evening — presumably as a measure to cope with the reduction in patrons.]. *Dad sold up in 1959.*

The last film shown at the Regal was 'Operation Amsterdam'. Dad took a job delivering paraffin and, subsequently, was employed at Grundy's until his retirement.

In this photo, Arthur Stratford and his wife (on the left) are saying a sad cheerio and thank you to regular patrons Mr. & Mrs. V. Hitchings. Mrs. J. Hill (on the right) was a member of staff at the Regal.

The cinema building was taken over by a panel beating business. When that business closed in the late 1980s, the building was demolished and Bridge Garage was built.

Other memories of the Regal

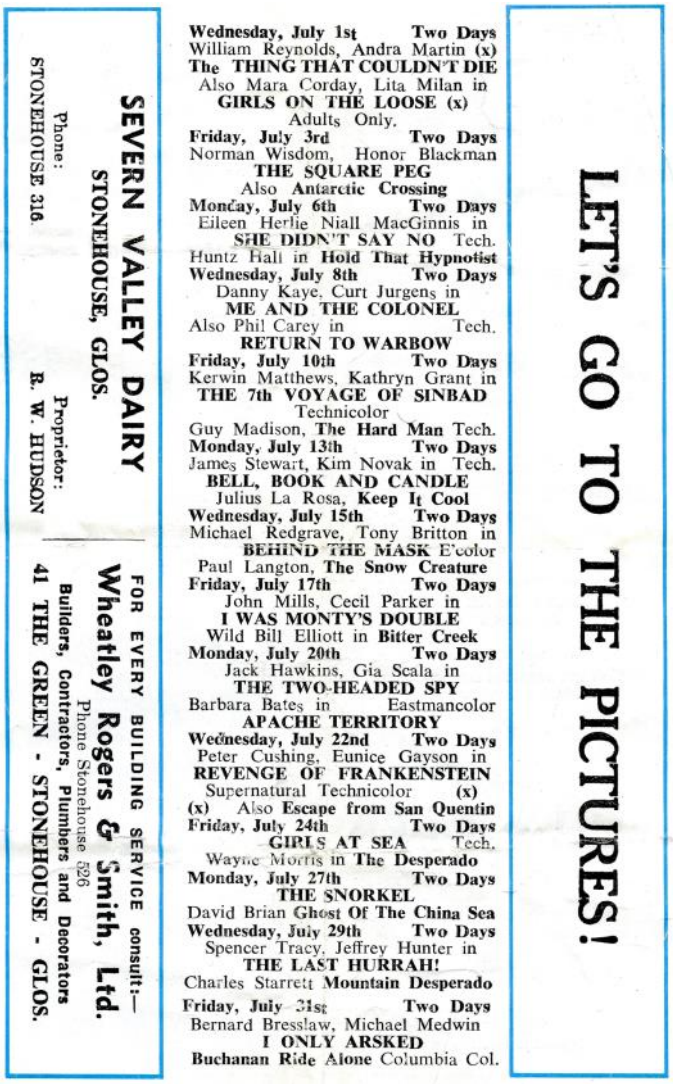
Bob and Ann Mason

The Regal Cinema (or 'Picture House' as we called it) was popular with courting couples in those days because of the double seats in the back row! However, the projection equipment had a reputation for breaking down during the performance.

We remember the Regal well because it was where we met for our first date. As Bob lived in Ebley and Ann lived in Cambridge (down the A38), we decided the Regal in Stonehouse would be a convenient half-way meeting point, and that we would both use our 'push bikes' for transport. The film showing was "Beau Geste" and, true to form, the projection equipment broke down half-way through the performance.

Because of the breakdown, the film ended later than expected and, when we got outside, rain was pouring down. Being the perfect gentleman, Bob accompanied Ann on her journey home. Although he was soaked to the skin, Bob persevered with his new friendship (despite Ann's mum having said 'You won't see him again!'). We were married in 1957 and sixty years on from that first date we are still together and living in Cotswold Green, just about half a mile from the site of the old Regal Cinema.

Darrell Webb



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LET'S GO TO THE PICTURES!

Wednesday, July 1st **Two Days**
William Reynolds, Andra Martin (x)
The THING THAT COULDN'T DIE
Also Mara Corday, Lita Milan in
GIRLS ON THE LOOSE (x)
Adults Only.
Friday, July 3rd **Two Days**
Norman Wisdom, Honor Blackman
THE SQUARE PEG
Also **Antarctic Crossing**
Monday, July 6th **Two Days**
Eileen Herlie Niall MacGinnis in
SHE DIDN'T SAY NO Tech.
Huntz Hall in **Hold That Hypnotist**
Wednesday, July 8th **Two Days**
Danny Kaye, Curt Jurgens in
ME AND THE COLONEL
Also Phil Carey in Tech.
RETURN TO WARBOW
Friday, July 10th **Two Days**
Kerwin Matthews, Kathryn Grant in
THE 7th VOYAGE OF SINBAD
Technicolor
Guy Madison, **The Hard Man** Tech.
Monday, July 13th **Two Days**
James Stewart, Kim Novak in Tech.
BELL, BOOK AND CANDLE
Julius La Rosa, **Keep It Cool**
Wednesday, July 15th **Two Days**
Michael Redgrave, Tony Britton in
BEHIND THE MASK E'color
Paul Langton, **The Snow Creature**
Friday, July 17th **Two Days**
John Mills, Cecil Parker in
I WAS MONTY'S DOUBLE
Wild Bill Elliott in **Bitter Creek**
Monday, July 20th **Two Days**
Jack Hawkins, Gia Scala in
THE TWO-HEADED SPY
Barbara Bates in Eastmancolor
APACHE TERRITORY
Wednesday, July 22nd **Two Days**
Peter Cushing, Eunice Gayson in
REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN
Supernatural Technicolor (x)
(x) Also **Escape from San Quentin**
Friday, July 24th **Two Days**
GIRLS AT SEA Tech.
Wayne Morris in **The Desperado**
Monday, July 27th **Two Days**
THE SNORKEL
David Brian **Ghost Of The China Sea**
Wednesday, July 29th **Two Days**
Spencer Tracy, Jeffrey Hunter in
THE LAST HURRAH!
Charles Starrett **Mountain Desperado**
Friday, July 31st **Two Days**
Bernard Bresslaw, Michael Medwin
I ONLY ARSKED
Buchanan Ride Alone Columbia Col.

In 1958, when I was about 8 or 9, I had a school friend called Michael Stratford who lived in the red brick house next to the Regal Cinema in Gloucester Road [where the Esso garage is now located]. *His father, Arthur Stratford, owned and managed the Cinema. Arthur was a very nice man, small in stature, but I do remember he was nice. My Father worked there for a time as an usher, around 1937 when he was a schoolboy, showing people to their seats with a torch.*

I remember Michael persuading his father to let us climb the metal ladder on the outside of the building to the projector room and watch a film from there. That was the only way to get to the projector room if I remember correctly. We were never allowed up the few steps at the front entrance, in through the double glass doors, into the foyer to the cinema. But I remember clearly the noises coming from the building of the many action films being shown there.

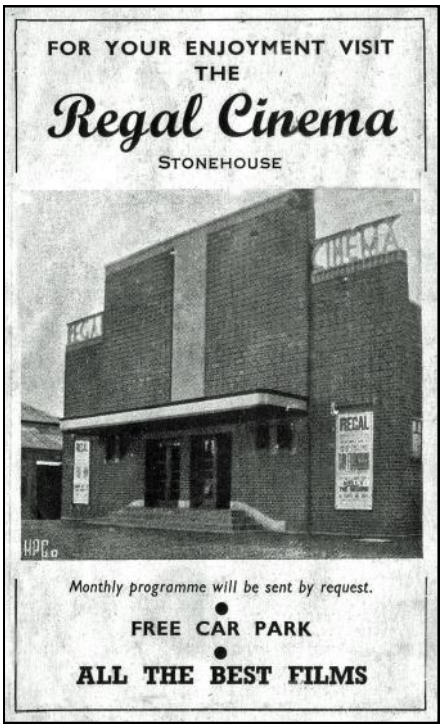
Ruth Williams

The 'Picture House' was made of red brick with four stone steps across nearly the whole width of the front of the building. They led up to two glass doors that led into a grand foyer. Standing outside the glass doors was the doorman Charlie. To me he looked like a grand soldier with his blue uniform and gold braid on his shoulders.

Three times a week my Mum, my Brother, my Sister and myself would all go to the pictures. Mum would often take other children in with us. There were always two films and, after the first film, the ice cream lady would come around and, of course, my Mum always bought us an ice cream.

Colin Wood

I remember all the children from Stonehouse School going to the Regal in 1954 to see the film of the Queen's Coronation. Us kids used to call the Regal 'Arthur's bug hutch', I suppose a bit like the other popular saying about cinemas - 'flea pits'. There was always a fight to get the back seats because they were doubles and we fancied we might get a girl to sit by us if we were lucky. Towards the latter days, the projector got a bit faulty and the film was always breaking down. We used to shout 'Come on Arthur, get it going!' If we got too rowdy he would send the usherette to shine her torch on us (to try to keep us quiet). The trains used to rattle by on the line behind the cinema and often the driver would blow his whistle. Maybe it was because he was coming into the station but we thought he was doing it on purpose.



Police Sergeant George Smith

by Vicki Walker

The recent closure of Stonehouse Police Station caused former Stonehouse resident, Michael Hall, to look at his family history records to find out more about his great-grandfather George Smith, who was the first Sergeant in the new station when it was opened in 1890. We have put together the information and photographs he gave us together with other stories of Sergeant Smith to create a snapshot of this family at the turn of the 20th century.

Sgt George Smith c1902

The Gloucestershire Constabulary was established in 1839 to appoint paid Police Forces. Before this constables were appointed by the manor court or the parish to give some protection to the local population.

The Report of the Commissioners on Handloom Weavers, 1840, notes that John Osbourne is the policeman at Stonehouse. There is another policeman in the district, and they mutually help each other. At busy times he can call a (parish) constable or his brother officer but he "does not find the constables so apt as the police; they are not up to the business".

The censuses from 1851 to 1871 show that the "Police Station" was somewhere near Haywardsend. This would have been the house where the policemen lived. In 1851 John Turner was described as a Policeman of the County of Glos and Peter Newman as a policeman. By 1861 Richard Alley was the Police Sergeant living at Haywardsend with John Packer and Thomas Clarke as constables. In 1862 an old house at the bottom of Pearcroft Road was said to be 'near the county police station'. In 1871 William Eddles, Police Sergeant, and his family with James Smith as constable were living there.

In the 1881 census Frederick William Scriven was the Police Sergeant and James Simpson a Constable. The police station was now in the house on High Street by the railway bridge (where the Break charity shop is in 2014) and this is shown on the 1885 O.S. map. Michael Hall recalls: "*My grandmother Ann Elizabeth (George Smith's daughter) told me that prior to the opening of the Police Station in the High Street, the police station was at Bridge House. My uncle George Poulton and his wife Gwyneth set up home there in the late 1930s and, whilst redecorating, noticed that a false wall had been constructed. On its removal, securing irons and bricked up cell windows were revealed. Diana Bilton (née Poulton) and David Poulton can confirm that, while they were living there, they saw the anchor rings which were removed and placed on the railway embankment, and the blocked up cell windows*."

By 1890 Stonehouse merited its own rather grand Police Station and Petty Sessional Court. It was designed by the County Surveyor, leading Gloucester architect, James Medland, and believed to have been constructed from bricks from Samuel Jefferies and Sons at Ryeford.

The new Police Sergeant was George Smith.

George Smith was born in Woodmancote, North Cerney on 29th May 1852, the youngest of 10 children born to Richard and Ann Smith. By the time of the 1861 census his mother had died and the family of

Richard Smith (seated) with his family in the 1860s. George may be standing front left.

five remaining in North Cerney were all described as agricultural labourers including 8 year old George. By 1871 his father had also died and 18 year old George was working as a general servant to farmer Joseph Freeland in Tewkesbury. In 1874 he had moved to Uckington to work as a labourer for farmer Daniel Theyer.

George was recommended by the local J.P. to join the police. He had a medical on 15th July 1874 and was declared able-bodied and fit to join the force. He was described as 5 feet 7½ inches tall, with grey eyes, light brown hair and a fair complexion. He was officially registered as a 3rd class constable on 20th July 1874. On 1st April 1878 he was promoted to 1st class constable and his character was described as "very good".

In 1881 George was posted to Kingscote where he met and married his wife Emily Chappell, the daughter of the local gamekeeper. From there he was posted to Painswick, where he was made sergeant in 1888.

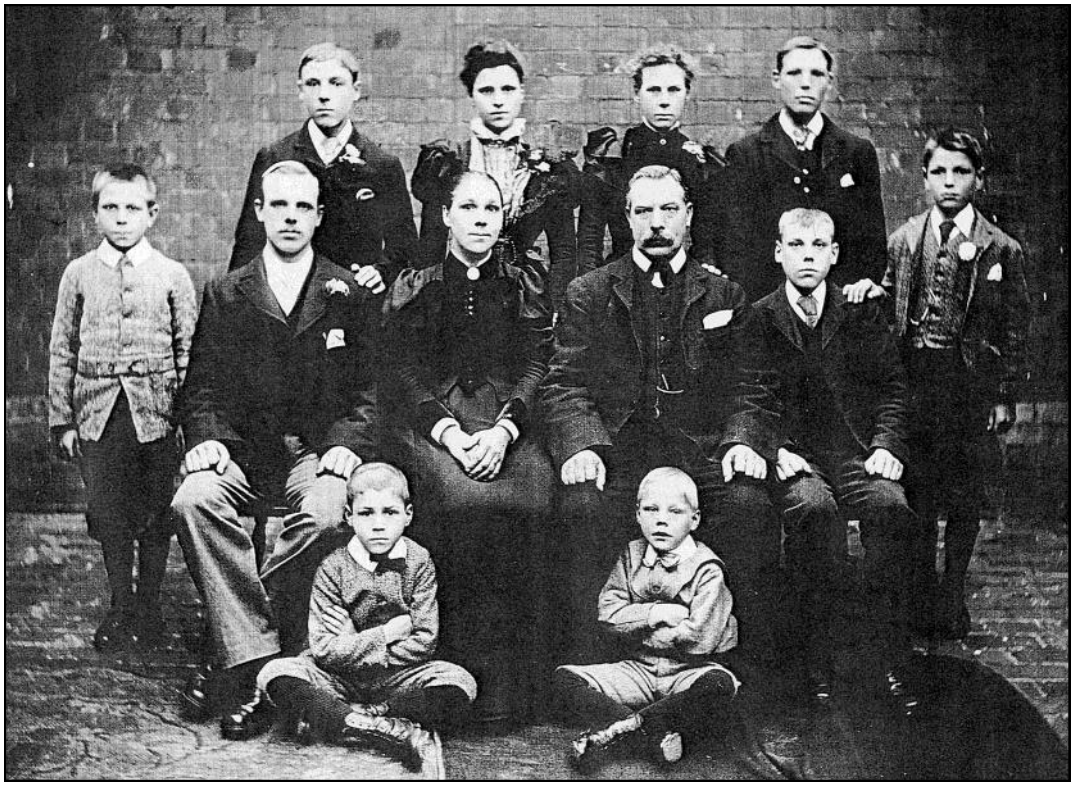
In around 1890 he took up the post as Sergeant at Stonehouse. The census taken in April 1891 shows Sergeant George Smith, his wife Emily and 9 children plus 24 year old Police Constable Henry Brotheridge, all living in the police house by the railway bridge. The new station in High Street had been built but was still empty. The family probably moved in later that year.

Sergeant Smith soon developed a reputation as a man to be respected. In 1899 the Parish Council was involved in a legal fight over the ownership of the piece of Green in front of the Globe Inn. Eventually the Parish won the case and the villagers used this as an excuse for a big celebration in the High Street pubs. The newspaper reports that "*the Parish Councillors went to the Petty Sessions Room at the Police Station to congratulate each other and spent three-quarters of an hour over it — although poor Sergeant Smith was lying under the same roof with two ribs broken in a bicycle tangle*." The Stonehouse band played loudly outside the Crown and Anchor until 11 o'clock when, knowing that Sergeant Smith was ill in bed, they thought they'd better leave!

Another notorious incident was the lighting of the Jubilee bonfire in 1902. A crowd of local people were annoyed that the lighting of the bonfire had been postponed because of the illness of the King. They were determined to set it alight. The bonfire committee rallied round to protect it, accompanied by Sergeant Smith and P.C. Gale "*both bearing traces of intense anxiety*". Things got lively and the Sergeant had to intervene when someone bowled a tar barrel at a member of the committee!

Sergeant Smith was a man who took no nonsense. In his history of Wycliffe College S.G.H. Loosley recounts a story about Dr Arthur Sibly, a teacher at Wycliffe, who apprehended a man ill-treating his pony. Sibly fetched Sgt Smith and, after chasing the man to the top of Selsley, Sergeant Smith "*hurled the villain to the ground*". He was overpowered and handcuffed.

Sergeant Smith was also a generous member of the community. In the records of voluntary contributions towards the Stonehouse National School in 1902, he is shown as having contributed 2 shillings and six pence. However he had sent 10 children to the school!



***L to R, top row**: Harry, Anne, Emily, William*
***L to R, mid row**: Arthur, George, Emily (Mother), George (Father), Joseph, John*
***L to R, front row**: Herbert, Harold*

This photo of the whole family was taken around 1900. Details of the children are as follows:

George Henry, born 1877. In 1891 he was a mill hand, in 1911 a nightwatchman. He enlisted in the Army Service Corps at a much later age and was stationed at Aldershot. He died in 1945.

Annie Elizabeth, born 1878. She was a general domestic servant in 1891. She married William Hall in 1910. She is Michael Hall's grandmother. Annie and her husband retired to Bank Buildings in Regent Street. She died in 1968.

Emily, born 1880, died 1931.

William, born 1881. He was a railway worker in 1901, married in 1907 and became a Police Constable in Cheltenham. In 1915 he joined the Long Range Artillery and, having survived the War, rejoined the police and later became a Sergeant in Stroud. He died in 1947.

Joseph, born 1882, died in Stonehouse in 1917.

Ernest Harry, born 1884. In 1901 he was a labourer at a saw mill, in 1911 a railway porter in Yorkshire. Michael remembers him being a signalman at the L.M.S. station in Stonehouse. He retired to a house in Regent Street. In 1957 he drowned in the canal.

John Charles, born 1886. He was an apprentice grocer in 1901. He married in 1910 and lived at 24 Woodcock Lane (used to be 1 Doverow View) in 1911. In 1913 he emigrated to Australia. He fought in the Australian forces at Arras in France. He died in Australia in 1976.

Arthur Valentine, born 1888. In 1901 he was an errand boy. He died in Stonehouse in 1909.

Herbert, born at Stonehouse Police Station in 1890. In 1911 he was an office clerk at a motor works. He emigrated to Canada to join his brother Harold but died there in 1918 of influenza.

Harold, born at the Police Station in 1893. In 1911 he was working as a baker's boy. He emigrated to Canada in 1911. During the First World War he was badly gassed at Vimy Ridge. He returned to Canada and joined Coca Cola. He became the first representative for that company in this country. He died in Gloucester in 1976.
Michael remembers his relatives explaining why they emigrated. In around 1910 the British Colonies were keen to persuade people to emigrate. The younger Smith boys went to a meeting

in the Subscription Rooms in Regent Street where they were shown slides of how wonderful Australia and Canada were. Reduced fares were offered and sometimes grants of land and other concessions. George Smith was not keen on them going at first but eventually agreed and John, Harold and Herbert went to "new worlds". Only William followed his Father into the police force.

Michael commented: "*The only story my Grandmother told me about her Father (George) was that he was summoned one night by the squire of Frocester to find his missing ducks, only to find that they had got out of their pens swam down the river and were sheltering under a bridge*."

Retirement

Parish Council records note that, in March 1905, tribute was paid to Police Sergeant Smith who was leaving after 16 years in charge of the local police station. He had been extremely popular and had marshalled many processions through Stonehouse on its carnival days.

On 10 February 1905 Stroud News reported: "*Many congratulations have been extended to Sgt. Smith on his appointment as School Attendance Officer. For the long period he has been in charge of the Police Station at Stonehouse he has proved himself a painstaking and able officer. He will relinquish his charge of the Station at the end of this month and will be succeeded by Sgt. Hale who is at present on the Stroud Police staff where he too has been for some years.*"

On 31 March 1905 at the Petty Sessional Court, Superintendent Biggs thanked the Bench for their kind expressions on behalf of Sergeant Smith who was not present. He said that Sergeant Smith did his work in a most excellent manner to the satisfaction of the Chief Constable and he hoped, and believed, to the satisfaction of the Magistrates. Sir William Marling replied, "*I am glad to hear you say so."*

After retirement, George Smith moved to Bank Buildings, Regent Street. He died on 21 February 1933. He left £259.12s 1d in his will, the executor being his son William Smith, retired Police Sergeant.

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Photographs © Michael Hall.

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Thanks to George's Great Grandson, Michael Hall (*pictured right in 2013*), for assistance with information and photographs for this article.

From willow to wicket.
A lost cricket bat willow plantation near Stonehouse

by Stephen Mills

Introduction

Gloucestershire is no stranger to commerce and manufacture, having, over the centuries, hosted a vast range of trades and industries. Many of the local population earned their daily bread working in one of the innumerable activities that thrived throughout the county at different points in its history.

Many industries, such as textiles and engineering, were large and well known. Some employed thousands. At the other extreme were small, out-of-the-way enterprises that supported, perhaps, no more than a few families. Many of these left little record of their very existence and have been largely forgotten. Such was the business that is the subject of this article. This rather unusual niche occupation which was, in essence, an offshoot from local agriculture, employed only a few men and seems to have left little in the way of records to throw more light onto how it was run on a day-to-day basis. The business in question? - the growing of willow trees, specifically for the manufacture of that epitome of English sporting prowess, the cricket bat.

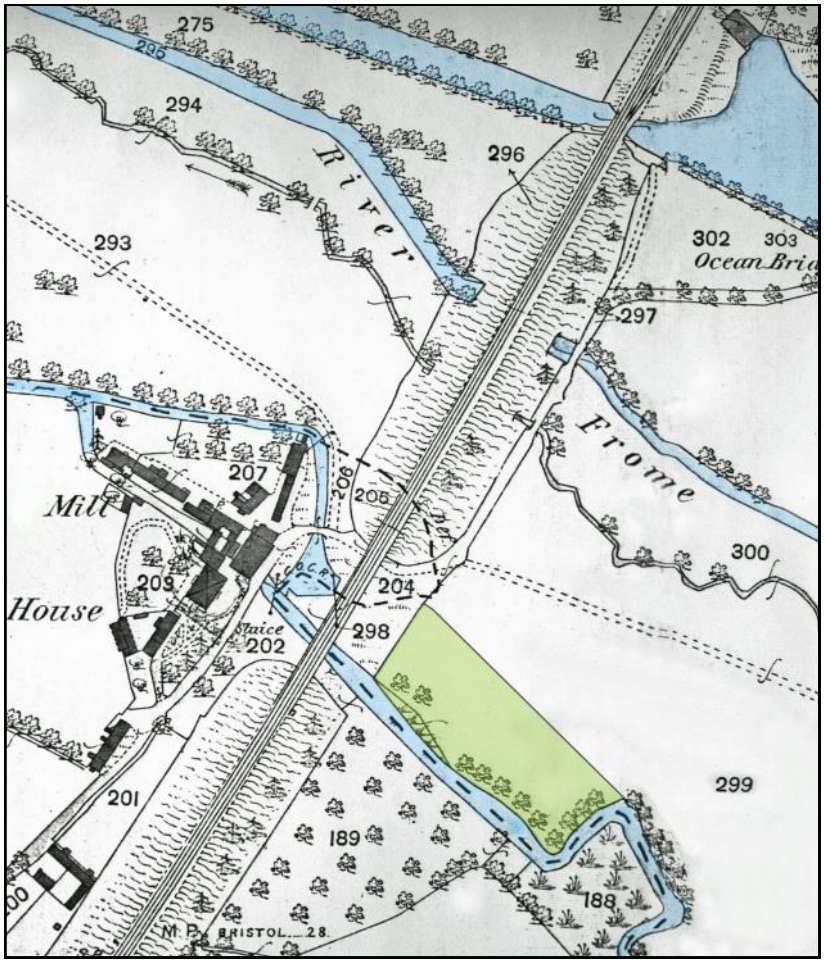

Figure 1: *The Ordnance Survey map of the area in 1884. Sheet XLIX.I – Leonard Stanley, Eastington, Stonehouse and Frocester Parishes. The plantation (shaded green in this map) was created on the strip of land adjacent to the arm of the Frome that runs to Leonard Stanley (Beard's) Mill, between the railway viaduct and the bend in the river between areas 188 and 299 (courtesy of the Ordnance Survey).*

The cricket bat is produced from a specific type of willow tree (English Willow - *Salix alba var. caerulea*), one that was originally introduced from Asia. Ironically, it actually produces wood more suited to bat manufacture when grown under UK conditions. There are many species of willow but, over the years, because of its light weight, toughness and resilience, this proved to be the most suitable type for crafting cricket bats. The tree appears to have been introduced at some point during the first half of the 18th century, a time when the game was evolving into a more 'organised' form. The first written rules reputedly appeared in 1744. However, other sources suggest that the cricket bat was, in fact, around by the 1620s. Whatever the truth, it has been with us for many years and, during this time, there have been specialists who have grown suitable trees and subsequently turned them into bats.

To this day, cricket bat willows continue to be grown in pockets of Gloucestershire. For instance, one is located in a nature reserve at Claymeadow Farm, South Cerney, belonging to the Bathurst Estate. Doubtless there were many such businesses dotted throughout the country.

However, this particular long-forgotten one was located near Stonehouse.

History

The business was carried on by wealthy local businessman, Arthur Strachan Winterbotham who lived nearby in Stonehouse Court. Built around 1601, the Court was formerly a significant country house, long since converted to a hotel. A string of titled nobles are associated with its long history (which greatly pre-dates the current structure), although this part of the story really starts with its purchase in 1906 by Winterbotham. Arthur Winterbotham, born in Dursley in 1864, clearly had a love of cricket, having played as a right-hand batsman and right-arm slow bowler for several teams that included Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Colts, Rugby School, and Marylebone Cricket Club. He played in a number of county matches, including several at Lord's Cricket Ground. Most of these were in the 1880s. He was active in various spheres of business, one of which came to be the growing of willows for cricket bats. He probably viewed this as no more than an interesting sideline but, given his love of cricket, it is easy to see why. The willows were grown on a strip of land a short distance from the back of the Court, bordering one arm of the River Frome as it wends its way down the valley from Stroud towards its eventual outfall into the Severn. The land was adjacent to Beard's (former woollen) Mill and the nearby massive 19th century railway viaduct that looms over both.

As far as can be ascertained, the business operated in the 1920s and 30s. It seems to have been a well organised affair, one which must have involved not inconsiderable resources in both money and labour to create. Early maps (Figure 1) show only fields in the location of what came to be the growing beds. It is not clear where the specialised knowledge needed to set up such an enterprise came from, so perhaps this was brought in from outside.

Figure 2: *A close up showing the remains of one of the water channels and the slot for a control board. U-shaped iron channels were set into each slot to allow the boards to be adjusted easily. A few remain in situ. Most were probably removed for scrap many years ago.*

Growing willow needs a lot of regular watering and the outcome was that the land was reworked so that a network of small water channels, in the form of a grid pattern, was created. Water was admitted to these via a small sluice gate fed from the Frome. The channels were made of concrete and varied between 15 and 18 inches in width and over a foot in depth.

Water flow through this quite sophisticated system was controlled by small secondary sluices, probably no more than simple stop boards of 7 inches to 2 feet in width, that allowed water to flow into the required areas of the beds. Boards were simply slotted into grooves located at the beginning of each channel. It seems that U-shaped iron inserts were set into these slots, so that the boards could be moved easily and possibly sealed better (Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 3: *A pair of iron channel pieces still in place (in April 2014) which would have carried stop boards.*

Clearly, Arthur Winterbotham did not look after the crop himself, and there were two men who seem likely to have been the mainstay of the operation. The first was Percy William Lea, born in 1885. He lived and worked at Stonehouse Court for more than half a century. Percy eventually became head gardener, maintaining 6 acres of gardens and greenhouses, as well as the willow beds. It was reported that bats

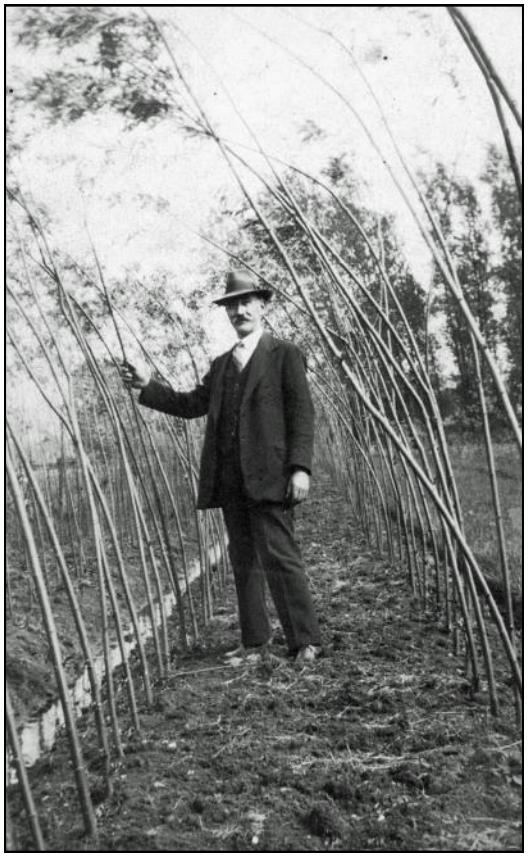

Figure 4: *Part of the willow plantation during the 1920s or 30s, showing rows of young sets. The man is thought to be Percy Lea, the plantation's long term guardian. Several of the irrigation channels are clearly visible.*

made from his trees were exported all over the world. He died in 1969. The second individual was the man who became the foreman, Edgar Watts. It is not known how he first came to be involved with the business, but it was eventually to take over his life. In June 1936, Arthur Winterbotham died and this probably signalled the end of the willow business. It seems likely that the willow plantation was abandoned at this time. Edgar Watts subsequently moved to Bungay in Suffolk and carried on in the same line. Remarkably, the business created by Watts in Bungay is still thriving today. The family-run company now operates a number of garden centres. Until recently, the company advertised as 'Edgar Watts Ltd – The Willow and Poplar People'.

Manufacturing processes involved

It might be assumed that the making of a cricket bat is a fairly straightforward process. However, in reality, when the effort required to successfully grow and nurture the trees is factored in, it is a lengthy and quite complex process.

Cricket bat willows are normally grown from long cuttings called sets, raised in special 'stools' or 'tods' that are planted in the ground, ideally near a fresh water stream.

Figure 5: *As Figure 4 (courtesy D & M Ball).*

Figure 6: *A view of the plantation (presumably taken from the railway viaduct) showing rows of sets and more mature trees. The bend in the river is at the far end.*

Figure 7: *Willows at Stonehouse Court being cut in readiness for cricket bat production (courtesy D & M Ball). The figure second from right is believed to be Arthur Winterbotham.*

When laid out in plantations, they are set in rows around 4 inches apart as they need plenty of air and light (Figures 4, 5 and 6). The sets are allowed to grow and are cropped every fourth year. Particularly during the first year, they require careful weeding and maintenance in order to prevent the young shoots from being overrun by undergrowth. To produce knot-free timber, all shoots and buds need removing from the trunk of the set during the early summer. Once of a suitable size, the trees are then planted out and allowed to mature. Cricket bat willows are one of fastest growing trees in Britain and are ready for harvesting after 12 to 15 years. At this point, they generally stand around 30+ feet tall.

Some of Winterbotham's crop was probably sold on although it seems that at least some was replanted and grown at the rear of the Court (Figure 7). Having attained suitable dimensions, the willows were then felled and the trunks sawn into roughly 28 inch lengths. Using wooden wedges, these were then split with the grain into sections called clefts, each one being used to manufacture one bat. These were then sawn into rough bat shapes that were graded and stacked in drying yards for 9 to 12 months to season before being roughly shaped. This was now termed a 'blade'. Both of the ends were then waxed to prevent splitting, followed by air drying to the required moisture content. After this, blades were carefully graded into several categories prior to shipment and final manufacture. At one extreme, the poorer blades may have gone for school bats, and the best, for a test match!

Remains today

As noted, the plantation was formerly watered via a network of channels. Many of these survive although they are largely inaccessible (Figure 8). It appears that the plantation has not been used for any productive purpose for many years, possibly even since its abandonment in the 1930s, so the remaining evidence is buried in deep undergrowth and tall, dense stinging nettles, as I can attest! Alongside the channels, also lost in the undergrowth, there are several larger concrete structures that may have been water tanks or reservoirs. The remains of the inlet sluice from the Frome was still visible during the early part of the 1990s, but now cannot be traced. There is presumably also an outlet but its location currently remains inaccessible.

Because of the dense undergrowth and decades' worth of rotting vegetation, it has not been possible to record accurately the layout of the channel system, although it is gratifying to note that much still seems to survive.

Update

In 2014, Stonehouse History Group members and retired engineers Jim Dickson and Richard White visited the plantation early in the Spring before it had become inaccessible due to rampant undergrowth. The following photographs were taken by them during that visit.

***Figure 8**: Photo of the plantation taken in 2014. Remnants of a water channel can be seen running in the direction of the railway viaduct by Beard's Mill. The plantation is inaccessible for most of the year due to the dense undergrowth.*

Acknowledgement

This is an amended version of the article that first appeared in the Journal of the Gloucestershire

Society for Industrial Archaeology for 2009.

Richard White provided generous assistance in creating the map based on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map of the area.

Figure 9: *Probable inlet for water from the Frome at the eastern (Stanley Mill) end of the plantation. Pair of iron channel pieces still in place which would have carried a stop board some 2 feet wide. Some form of pump was probably necessary to lift the water from the Frome at this location.*

Figure 10: *Probable remnants of outlet for water from the western (Beard's Mill) end of the plantation.*

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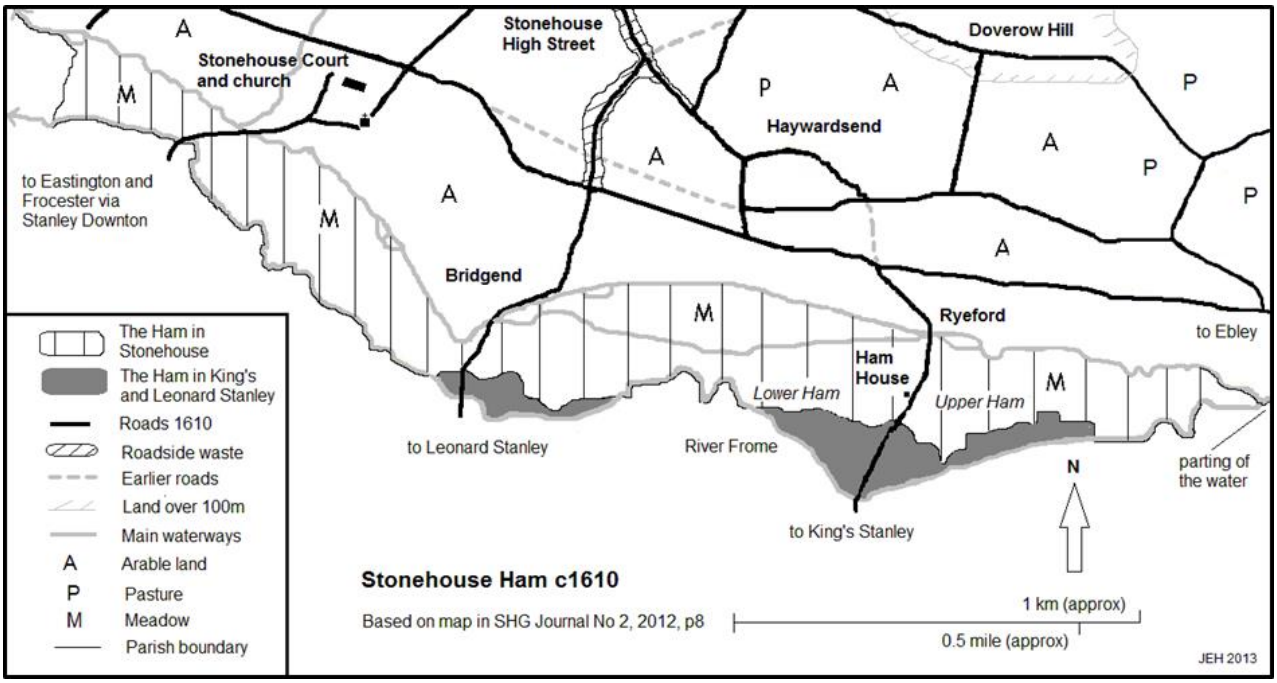
Ham House, Stonehouse

by Janet Hudson

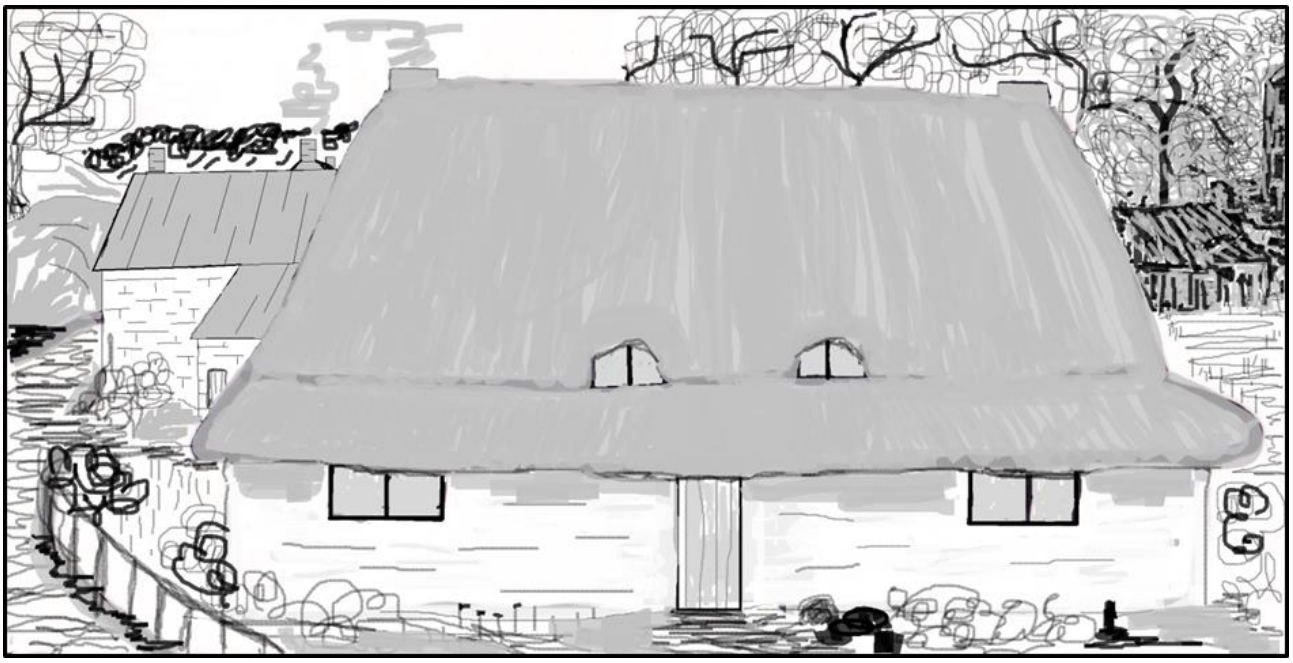
As the River Frome flows westward from Stroud, it divides into two at a place near Ebley, formerly known as the 'wear and parting of the water'. Between the two resulting channels, which reunite at Eastington, lies a floodplain which by the sixteenth century was being managed as a water meadow, or 'ham'. The simplest form of ham in flat wide valleys, such as that of the Frome, was controlled by 'floating', using sluices, or 'floodgates' to hold winter flood water on the land and drain it in spring. This protected land from frost, oxygenated the soil, and spurred early grass growth, producing better hay crops. The meadow would then be grazed until it flooded again [Ham].
Stonehouse Ham, sometimes known as the Broad Ham(me) or Hom(me), was in operation by



1496. Its eastern end was marked by a bridge over the undivided river, probably at or near the 'parting of the water', which was removed in 1631 'from the antient place'. There were only a few places where the Ham itself could be crossed in wintertime, and only one where building was possible. This was a raised area between the two river channels, south of Ryeford, which later became known as Noah's Ark, probably because it was unaffected by the floods. A survey of Stonehouse manor in 1558 says that Nicholas Dangerfield held three houses, with about forty acres of land, including three acres in the Broad Ham. His tenancy was by copyhold, granted in the manor court and verified by a copy of the entry in the court roll. One of these houses has been identified as Ham House, which stood to the north of the existing house called Noah's Ark at Ryeford, and was demolished before 1911. Details are unclear, but the main entrance and garden were probably on the southern, sunny side. It appears to have been timber-framed with stone gable ends and a thatched roof, perhaps with some brick or stone additions [Ham House].

Although called 'the common Ham', the land was not open common. Seventeen Stonehouse copyholders in 1558, about half the total of their number, had rights to between one and three pieces in the Ham, ranging in total area from one to four acres each, and the remainder was shared between about a dozen of the manor freeholders, including the 'glebe' assigned to the parish church. These allocated pieces were marked out from an early date by drainage ditches or boundary stones. Some had been enclosed and were being used by individuals as seasonal arable land. It is unclear whether livestock were allowed to roam within their own manor's lands,

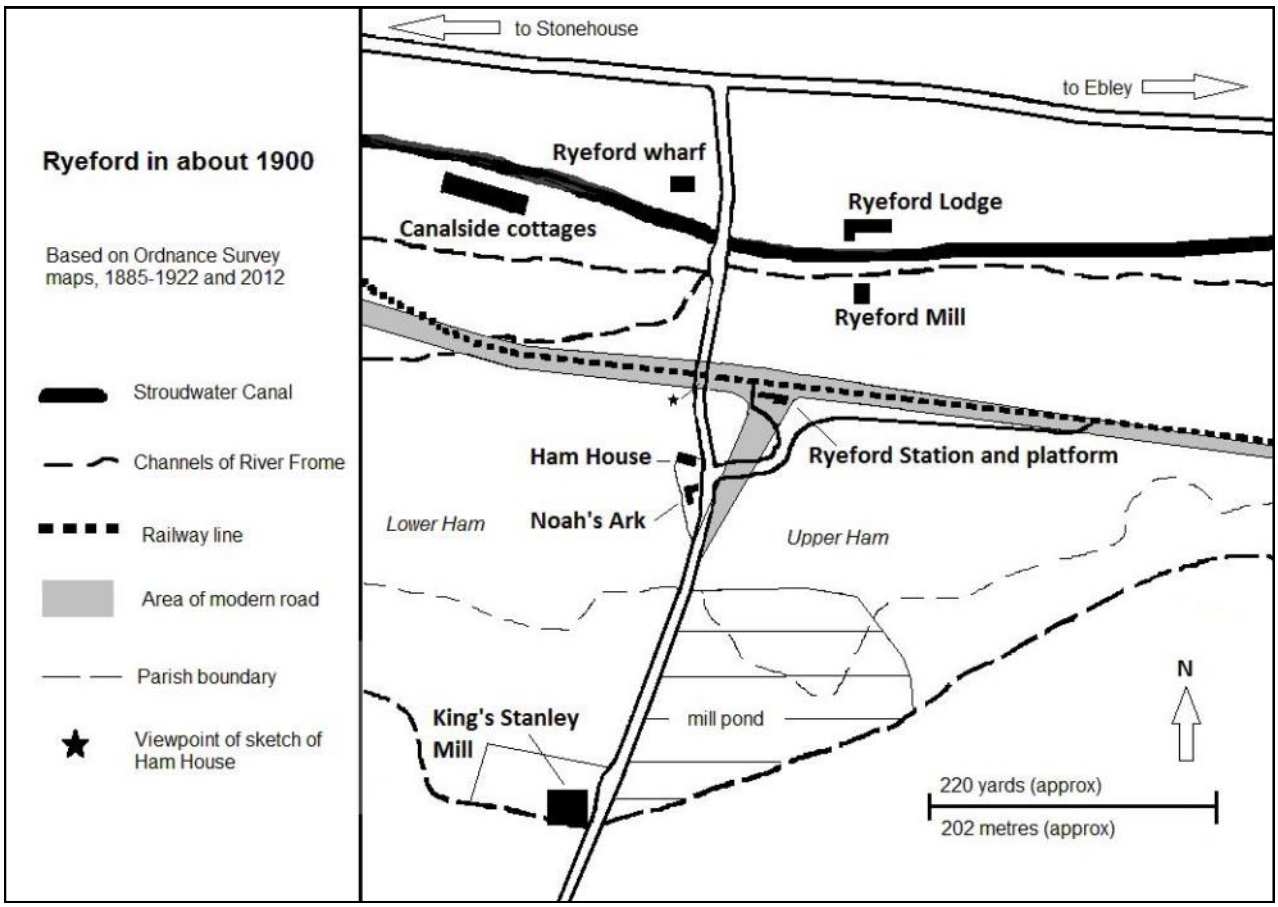
as had perhaps happened originally, or whether each holder grazed his own livestock on his own



Sketch of Ham House looking south from the former railway bridge at Ryeford, as indicated on the map of Ryeford in 1900 (at top of next page). This is how it might have appeared c1902, based on photographs in private hands, maps and observation. Noah's Ark is behind, to the left, and King's Stanley Mill to the right. This is the back of the house, the main entrance being on the south side: it was often occupied by two households.

piece, as would happen increasingly as pieces were enclosed. Either way, there had to be a

Photo taken in April 2014 at rear of the electricity substation on Ebley Bypass, looking towards King's Stanley (same direction as in sketch above). The site of the former Ham House is in the immediate foreground (now covered in dense undergrowth) and Noah's Ark is clearly visible. Stanley Mill can be seen at the rear, extreme right (behind pylon).



commonly recognised date of 'breaking', or letting in livestock, and limits or 'stints' on the number of livestock each holder could put in to graze, which were agreed in the manor court. Ryeford marked a division between the Lower and Upper Ham. The occupants of Ham House would have been in a good position to observe behaviour, although there is no direct evidence that they had such a responsibility. Nicholas Dangerfield, who died in 1571, probably lived in another house, but in 1574 his brother Thomas Dangerfield was ordered to 'clear the way at Ryeford at the back end of the Hame', and was probably living at Ham House [Common].

The Ham was valuable as a source of hay and grazing, and the right to use it was often disputed. In 1577 a case was brought before the Council in the Marches of Wales, which at the time judged manorial affairs in Gloucestershire. Stonehouse Ham was said to contain about eighty acres in Stonehouse, and also about six acres in Leonard Stanley, and about fourteen acres in King's Stanley. However, this may refer only to the area between Bridgend and Ebley, as there were about 140 acres in the whole area between the river channels, according to later surveys of Stonehouse. The meadows west of Bridgend, called 'hams' or 'meads', were attached to the manorial home farm and to freeholds at Bridgend, although they were worked on the same system as the rest. The tenants of the manor of King's Stanley were claiming that they had rights of common grazing in all of Stonehouse Ham, by 'prescription', or ancient right. Stonehouse claimed that the whole Ham, including the areas in Leonard Stanley and King's Stanley, was regulated by orders from the Stonehouse manor court, so that 'their prescription is feyned…for if they had common, then could not an order in Stonehowse courte chaunge the manner of their common'. Any King's Stanley livestock found on Stonehouse ground would be impounded, as it always had been. Depositions were presented from three 'very olde men' of Stonehouse, one of whom was Thomas Dangerfield. There was much other argument, some perhaps for dramatic effect, such as a report of physical combat 'about sixty years past' when William Harmer of Stonehouse 'was put in daunger of his life' for putting in cattle belonging to his brother, a tenant of King's Stanley. The Council eventually dismissed the claim of ancient common rights, but this did not end the disputes. Thomas Dangerfield had died in 1579 without children, and the next occupant of Ham House was probably his nephew, a younger son of Nicholas, John Dangerfield. He was aged about 50 in 1616, when the manor court again found it necessary to agree 'orders for the common Home', to deal with those trying to 'opresse or to usurpe Common'. John

Dangerfield, by now nearing seventy, was one of the Stonehouse holders in the Ham who in 1631 promised to subscribe to a legal fund 'against such of Kings Stanley as usurpe Common in the said homme'. Arguments continued into the later seventeenth century [Disputes].

Ham House had probably been separated from its copyhold by the 1620s, when one subtenant was a young clothier, John Clutterbuck. The Gloucestershire cloth industry was depressed at this time, but survived the Civil Wars of the 1640s and recovered after 1660. Those associated with Ham House in the seventeenth century were often young single men, probably clothworkers connected to the finishing mills at King's Stanley and Ryeford. Samuel Pegler seems to have been a tenant in 1685, followed by Samuel Kinn or Keene, who later became a clothier. The house may also have been a useful home for widows or other female relatives of the owners or tenants. Disputes about the Ham became less frequent, although it was still closely monitored. Giles Phillips and his sons of Ryeford Mill were reprimanded for causing undue flooding in the Ham between 1690 and 1715. According to the vicar's tithe accounts there were at least thirty-five holders of land in Stonehouse Ham in 1709 apart from the manor farm, most still having between one and four acres. Ham House was then occupied by Joseph Frizzell, a labourer, and John Gabb, a weaver, both recently married to sisters. Joseph died in 1712, possibly of smallpox, and his widow Sarah stayed in the cottage, but sadly also lost her young son Joseph in 1713. She had a brief second marriage in 1718 to an elderly Daniel Dangerfield, but was again widowed. William Bird, a labourer and thatcher, is given as the tenant in 1729, but was subletting to John Biddle, probably a clothworker. Biddle was newly married in 1725, and stayed in Ham House until he died in 1777 at the age of seventy-five. He shared it in the 1720s with Daniel Cobb, third husband of the widow Sarah Frizzell/Dangerfield, and in the 1730s with young single clothworkers [Cloth].

Meanwhile the Ham surrounding the house was changing. Land was being enclosed by agreement into fewer, larger fields, no longer managed by the manor court. It was in the interests of the owners of the water-powered cloth mills along the Frome to gain control of the Ham, in order to be sure of their water supplies. Early plans to build a canal in 1730 - 1740 had been defeated over just such concerns. In the 1750s and 1760s Ambrose Reddall, a clothier from Lincolnshire who had taken over Upper Mill, went through a series of exchanges and purchases which consolidated much of the Lower Ham west of Ham House into one holding. Reddall was not alone in this, and by the time of John Elliott's survey in 1804, the number of holders in the Ham had been reduced to eleven, plus the manor farm at the western end. Among these, thirty-one acres were attached to Upper Mill, twenty-five to Bridgend House and the now-demolished Holme Place and Bridgend Mill, and fifteen to Ebley Mill. The whole Ham was described as permanent pasture, the survey having no category for meadow. The Stroudwater Canal, completed in 1779, supplied coal for steam power, but water power was still important, and by 1839 the Ham was mainly shared between Stonehouse manor farm and five mill owners. It remains pasture to the present day, often waterlogged in winter [Enclosure].

In 1756 John Biddle's daughter Sarah married Clement Clements, a clothworker or shearman from Great Barrington, who in 1774 bought Ham House from the manor estate. Clements had four sons and three daughters living, most of whom spent time at Ham House, together with his elderly father-in-law, and lodgers. Clement Clements died in 1790, leaving the house to his wife Sarah for her life, then to his son Thomas Clements. Jasper Evans and his sons were also there, and in 1799 Jemima Clements married Thomas Evans. Nathaniel Clements was the occupant in 1804, with his mother and other family members. The Stroudwater Canal and the cloth industry would have offered many work opportunities. In 1808 Thomas Clements mortgaged his future rights to Ham House, 'some time since converted into two', which he was sharing with William Guy, a waterman on the canal. The reason for the mortgage was probably the cost of the 'new erected cottage' he had built on part of the garden, the house now known as Noah's Ark. Thomas Clements married in 1810, aged nearly forty, and settled at Ham House with his mother. Sarah Clements, widow, died in 1815, her property passing to her son Thomas, but he only enjoyed it for a year before he also died childless in 1816, leaving all his property to his wife Hannah for her life, and then to his brothers and sisters [Clements].

William Guy the waterman was still living at Ham House in 1818, but by 1841 had moved to Arlingham. Hannah Clements, widow of Thomas, married John Harris in 1819, and lived with him at Ham House until she died in 1831. He may be the John Harris, aged sixty, who was keeping

the Haywardsfield turnpike house near Ryeford in 1841. Following Hannah's death, in 1832 the Clements family sold Ham House, 'a cottage now used as two', to Thomas White, a clothier from Chippenham, Wilts. He lived in Leonard Stanley for a time, but by 1837 was running Monks Mill in Wotton under Edge. In 1839 he sold Ham House to Charles Stephens, a clothier who had become the sole owner of the recently rebuilt King's Stanley Mill, which was said to employ up to 900 people, including outworkers. Two of these may have been the clothworkers living in Ham House in 1841, Emanuel Gwinnell and George Andrews, with their families. George Andrews was still in Ham House in 1861, but by 1851 Gwinnell had been replaced by Martha Keen, a clothpicker aged seventy-seven. In 1867 the branch railway between Stonehouse and Nailsworth was opened, with a station at Ryeford, which may have made Ham House more accessible. The occupants in 1871 were Thomas Brinkworth from King's Stanley, with his son Albert, both wool cloth cutters, and George Dean from Box, a labourer in a flour mill. Thomas Brinkworth was probably a second cousin of George Andrews' wife Hannah. By 1881 two men with young families had moved in, Luke Monk, a labourer from Stratton, Wilts, and Henry Lewis from Stroud, a mate on a barge. In 1891 the Monks were alone, and were still present in 1901. In 1911 Luke Monk, aged 54, was the mate on a barge, on which he was living 'near Ryeford Bridge'. Ham House had apparently been demolished between 1902 and 1911. The Nailsworth railway closed to passengers in 1947, but still carried freight until 1966. The electricity substation on land adjoining the site of Ham House was built by 1974, after the railway closed. The railway bed was replaced by a cycle track in 1983, then partly overlaid by the Ebley Bypass in 1994 [Census].

The house now known as 'Noah's Ark', as has been seen, was 'new erected' in 1808 by Thomas Clements**,** and occupied by Joseph Stephens, a clothworker and millman who had married Mary, daughter of Jasper Evans. In 1815 Joseph Stephens bought the house outright, expanded it, and in 1820 sold it to John Critchley of King's Stanley, a coal dealer. Critchley then mortgaged it as two houses with a garden, stable and outhouse. He moved to Ryeford House on the canal wharf, but in 1831 John Critchley of Ryeford, coal dealer and common brewer, was bankrupt, and sold Noah's Ark to Donald Maclean and Charles Stephens, the clothiers running King's Stanley Mill. There were by then three cottages, occupied by Joseph Cooper, William Walters and Tobias Harcomb. In 1839 the occupiers were Richard Lusty, a weaver whose wife Anne was the daughter of Thomas Evans and Jemima Clements, John Gibbins, a clothworker, and Benjamin White, a gardener, all with young families. Gibbins and Lusty had gone by 1841, but White was still there, along with Thomas King, a clothworker, and his family. Between 1851 and 1871 one cottage was taken by Sarah Miller or Millard, a widow from Uley, with her daughters and grand-children. In 1851 she was aged fifty-two and a handloom weaver, whereas her daughter Eliza Cook was a power loom weaver. Another long-term resident between 1851 and 1881 was William Cole, a wool dyer's labourer from Linton in Herefordshire, with his wife Anne, a cloth burler. Other labourers and clothworkers stayed for shorter times. The new railway attracted Henry Collett, a railway porter, and his family in 1871. John Cole, a local labourer aged sixty-six, and his wife Emma, had moved in by 1881, and in 1891 Emma was still there as a widow and clothworker, with two weavers as lodgers. Also by 1891 Enoch Stockwell, a barge waterman, had arrived with his wife Caroline, a clothworker, and five children. The main residents in 1901 and 1911 were John Edmunds, a local man, and his family, all clothworkers. In 1901 there were also Mary Long, a widow and worsted weaver, with five children, and George Cave, a circular timber sawyer from Selsley, recently married and with a baby son, and perhaps working at Ryeford Saw Mills. In 1911 only Frances Jones, a young widow from Leonard Stanley with three children, was with John Edmunds [Noah's Ark].

Noah's Ark has flourished for a hundred years since it lost its neighbour, Ham House, and today still stands dry above the occasional floods which close the Ebley bypass.

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GA = Gloucester Archives.

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Memories of my life

by Valerie Blick with Shirley Dicker

I was born Valerie Clifford and landed in Cheltenham at almost the end of the 1920s. My family had always lived in the town and, although my parents had departed to London when they married, it was their wish that I was to be born in Cheltenham when the time came. However, my early years were spent in London, as my Father was working as a gardener there. He had been trained at Hopwoods, a noted nursery in Cheltenham, but he felt he could find a better opportunity in the London area.

Valerie Clifford, 6th May 1931

When I was about five years old, every Sunday Dad and I would get on the bus to watch the changing of the Guards at Buckingham Palace. Even now I weep at a military band. I can still recall being held on his shoulders to watch the royal carriage pass by at the Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary in 1935. Some Sundays Dad would take me to Paddington Station as my Uncle Charlie was on the foot plate on the big engines coming down from Gloucestershire and I would look up in wonder as he peered down at me from this great height,

I also recall, when I was 5 years old, getting on the train at Paddington for the "daily excursion". The destination was a big secret! When we arrived at last, my Cheltenham Grandparents were waiting and I was in Weston-super-Mare. I saw the sea for the first time - it was lovely! I was also woken up one evening by Dad who perched me on his shoulders saying: "*You will remember this fire forever*." It was the Crystal Palace burning. I was at school when the troubles arose with the new King Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson. We kids all sang: "*Hark the herald angels sing, Mrs Simpson stole our king*".

During his working life my Maternal Grandpa – Frederick Lewis – had been involved in the pony carriage business; in those days there were many ponies in service. When he retired he decided to acquire a bath chair. These were very in vogue in Bath and other spa towns to take the elderly ladies who so wished to eye the shops in the promenade! He acquired such a chair (seen in the photograph probably taken on the day he bought it). I remember, as a four or five year old on my summer holidays, seeing him on the promenade beside the fountain waiting to be engaged in a job. It didn't occur to me then to enquire how much he charged!

Valerie's Grandfather in Chelltenham with his bath chair

About 1937 my Father had the chance of a job as Head Gardener on a private estate in Upminster in Essex. We moved there as war was about to start; that part of the London area had already been issued with air raid shelters. It was suggested that I should go to Canada on an evacuation ship but my Father did not want me to go. Instead I went to my Grandparents in Cheltenham. I remember the ship taking children from England to America was destroyed in the Atlantic by Hitler's air force. Some of my school mates went on it and, unfortunately, it sank and everyone died. I could have been on that ship - but fate intervened.

By now, I was going to school in Cheltenham, and my parents found a flat there in December 1941. Cheltenham was quite badly hit by German aircraft coming up from Bristol. One air raid lasted for many hours - it was on 11th December

Valerie in 1937

1941. Two or three bombs landed quite near us, one hitting the house over the way and another landing on Cheltenham Ladies College tennis court. I spent six hours under the stairs crying with fright.

When I was thirteen I was lucky enough to get a scholarship to the North Gloucestershire Technical College. They taught not only the usual subjects but those that would prepare you for office life. I stayed there for nearly two years but then fate took a hand. Living near us was a man who was head partner in a firm of Cheltenham solicitors. He wanted to train a clerk and asked my Mother if I wanted to apply. I went to the principal of the College and asked if I could leave one term early. Much to my amazement he told me he had already placed me at Lloyds Bank. However I still wanted to be a solicitor's clerk and went to the firm where I worked for 14 years until I married.

I learnt so much in the realm of conveyance work and probate and so enjoyed it all. The office was situated in the centre of the town and I could go home on the bus to lunch. The bus fare was 2d each way. I did not get home till 6:30 at night as the lowly junior had to take the post to the GPO at the end of the day. It was a different world. The managing clerk was very strict – he wouldn't use a fountain pen. If a Will had to be signed at someone's home I would walk through the High Street behind him holding the pen and ink bottle. However I enjoyed it all and by the time I left I was secretary to one of the three partners.

My leisure hours were taken up with tennis night after night in the summer in Montpellier Gardens. It cost 1/6 (18p) for two hours. Later I got involved with the Cheltenham Little Theatre. We performed in Bath Road about three or four times a year. This was hard work but great fun. I took part in a number of productions and stage managed once or twice. Sometimes, when the production was nearing opening night, we practised until "the wee small hours" to get it right then we would stagger home to bed.

Sometime later I had a invitation to a party at the Royal William at Cranham, Three friends on their way to Cheltenham saw all the cars so called in to see what was going on and joined in. Little did I think on that fateful evening I had met Alan Blick, my future husband, as he was one of the three gatecrashers! We went out together for quite a while. We were married at Holy Apostles Church, Charlton Kings, Cheltenham on 14th March 1959. Our short honeymoon was spent in Windsor, as Alan was stationed there during his National Service, before he went to Germany.
We came back to Stonehouse to live at "Prescott" in Queen's Road — where I still live. It was previously known as "Inglenook", which was not an appropriate name for a towering type of house. Alan preferred "Prescott", because of his love of car trials, particularly those of the same name which took place at Prestbury. We had very little furniture simply because it was not

readily available, even quite a few years after the war. I started off as a married woman not really used to the larger house and, for quite a long while, kept going into the wrong rooms!

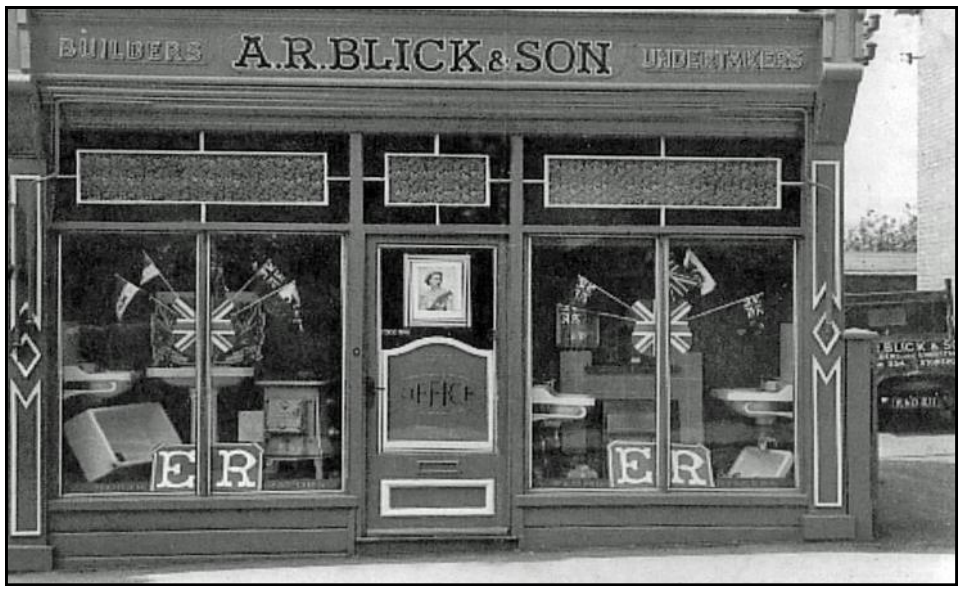
When I arrived in Stonehouse it was a very different place. There were two family grocer shops - Mr. Chandler's and Mr. Gardiner's. The Co-op was wooden-fronted and much smaller but it had a shoe department. Gardiner's Garage took up much of the High Street where the Co-op is today. Elgin Lodge was where the Mall is now and housed a doctor's surgery. Where Barnard Parade is now was Barnard House, which was demolished in 1960. The Town Hall was the G.P.O. sorting office for the postmen and the British Legion Comrades' Club was across the road from us.

The newsagent's was where the Sue Ryder charity shop is now, and Willcox Chemist was on the opposite side of the road. Mr. Mullins had a very good draper's shop on the corner of Regent Street. Then there was the jeweller's shop owned by Neno, next to Ernie and Ivy Owen's "exclusive dress shop". On the other corner was Bradley's, which was a men's clothes shop.

Wycliffe College had a large boarding house called Springfield House on Bath Road, next to the Royal Arms - but both are gone now. Joseph Martin's hairdresser's was a small grocer's shop, On the High Street there was Bramwell Parker's gents' tailor and outfitter shop where the greengrocer's shop is located now. I remember that you could not buy milk readily but had to pop into the dairy and leave your money on the counter for a pint of milk if you ran out.

In Queen's Road we had Mr. Paine the shoe mender, Mrs. Perks the hairdresser and Mr. Sleeman the barber. Jack Anderson had a grocery and sweet shop. On our side of the road Mrs. Tudge had a type of wooden hut wool shop which was on the site of the HSBC Bank's car park. Further along the road there was Mr. Pig-got, an excellent tailor, and the last shop going towards the station was the builder's yard and shop which belonged to my late Father-in-law, Leo Blick. In those days

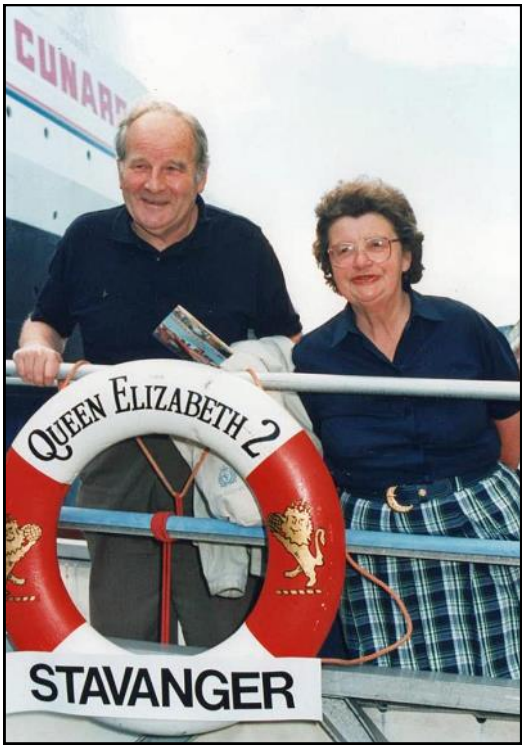
my Father-in-law was running Blick's Builders; he had 14 employees. I manned the phone - there was a phone connection to my Father-in-law's house, office and our home. It was quite a different life for me.



Unfortunately Leo Blick died 18 months after Alan and I were married and I came to Stonehouse. I remember him as such a kind man. Alan took over the business and I was in the office full-time. Alan was building houses in Stonehouse, Eastcombe and Whiteshill. He built the three new shops in Queen's Road and the three houses on the site of the builder's yard. Later on, Alan began to suffer with his back and he did less building work until he retired.

Alan and I spent many holidays caravanning in Spain and, later on, we were lucky enough to go on cruises all over the World which we enjoyed immensely. We were booked to have our Golden Wedding anniversary on a cruise - the special dress I bought is still in the wardrobe - but that situation called "fate" took over and it was not to be. We were very happy together but not blessed with children.

I have made many friends in the past 55 years living in Stonehouse and there is always something to chat about in this little part of Gloucestershire.

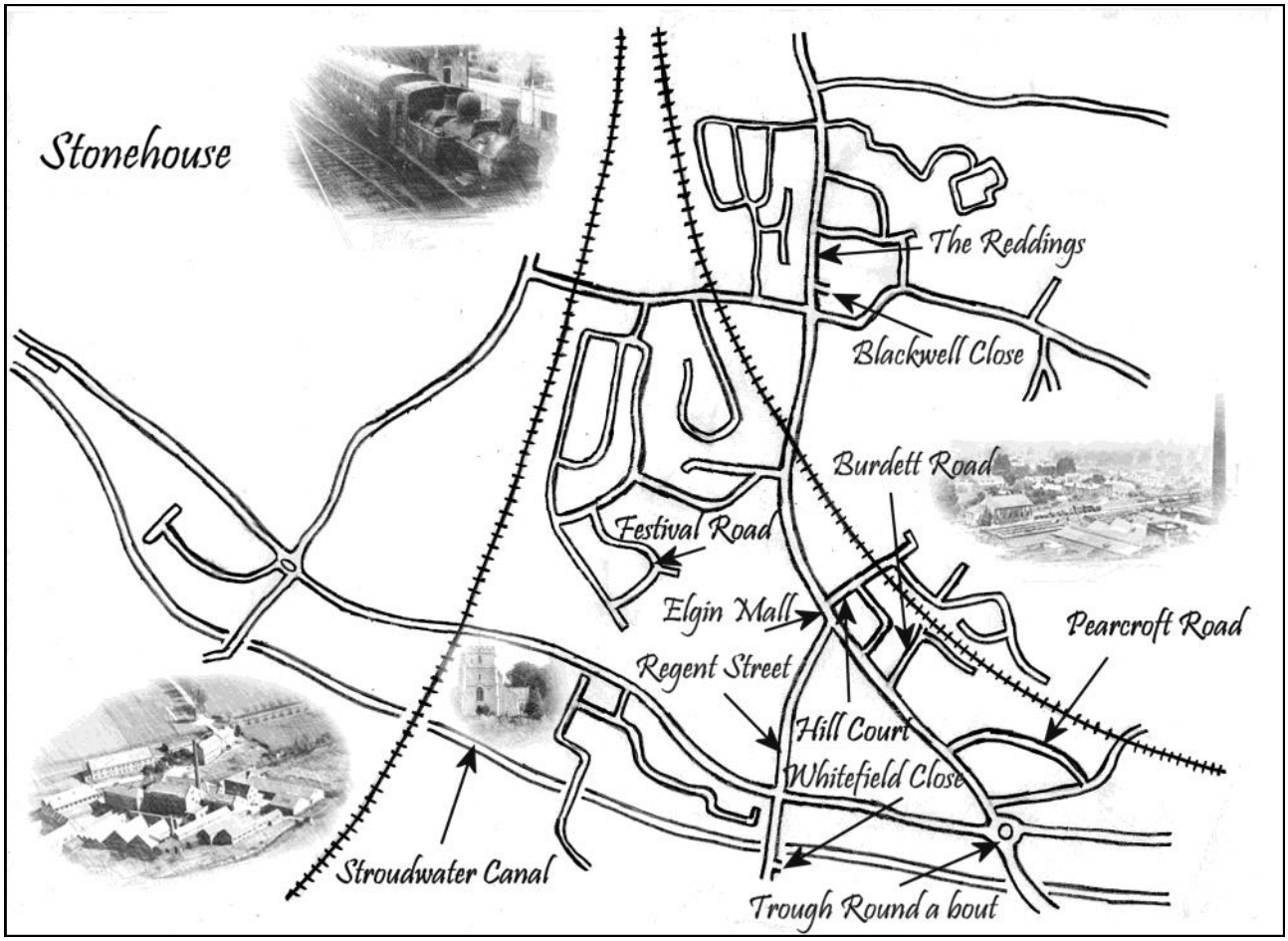


Stonehouse names

by Darrell Webb

Elgin Mall is named after Elgin Lodge, the large house which stood on that site for many years (*photo shows Elgin Lodge, just beyond the entrance to the Woolpack Inn, probably in the 1940s)*. The house was demolished in 1987 to make way for the present Elgin Mall shops. Many doctors lived in this grand house including Dr. John Edward Tilton, Dr. de Carle Prout, Dr. Murray Brown, and Dr. O'Dowd.

Whitefield Close is presumably named after George Whitefield. While Samson Harris was the vicar of St. Cyr's, from 1727 to 1763, the parish was visited several times by his friend George Whitefield, the Methodist leader. Whitefield was born at the Bell Inn, Gloucester. In 1737 Stonehouse church was served for about two months by Whitefield during the vicar's absence; he preached every night and claimed to have increased the congregation during his stay. Whitefield visited Stonehouse again in 1739 and preached in the churchyard in the rain to a crowd, which he estimated at around 3,000. During another visit in 1743 he helped to administer communion in the church.



Pearcroft is a very old name, probably from Pyrcroft Road which ran from High Street through Haywardsfield to Stroud across the bottom of Doverow Hill. In 1840 a cutting was put in from Haywardsend to the Bristol Road (Trough Junction) and the main road renamed Bath Road. The present day Pearcroft Road was left.

The Reddings. James Kimmins owned much of the land around Woodcock Lane and Upper Oldends Lane and it was called 'The Great Reddings fields', which is probably why The Reddings is called such.

Festival Road. The Festival of Britain was a national exhibition held throughout the United Kingdom in the summer of 1951. That year the first of about 400 houses appeared on the Park Estate and the Festival was commemorated by naming this road after it.

Blackwell Close – Named after Percy Blackwell Builders who had their yard on this site for many years.

Regent Street Here is local historian Charles Lister Smith's account written in about 1935: "*In the year 1861, Alfred Davis opened a provision shop in No 1 of the first row of cottages in the lane to the Cross. He fastened a name board marked 'Regent Street' on the front angle of the house, and it is still there. Previous to this date it was the Cross Lane.*" Further research has proved this to be not quite accurate. According to the censuses, the street was known as Cross Lane in 1841. However, by 1851 it was called Regent Street, well before Mr Davis opened his shop.

Burdett Road was originally Glen Lane which ran up Doverow Hill across to the top of Woodcock Lane. When the Great Western Railway came through in 1845 the road was cut in half. The Northern part was named Verney Road and the Southern part was named Great Western Road after the Great Western Railway. In 1890 when the Brick and Tile works started, Queen's Road was put in with the railway bridge over it, to enable the bricks to be transported without having to cross the railway line. Around the turn of the 20th century Great Western Road began to be called Burdett Road. Both names were used until the 1950s when Burdett Road became the preferred name. We have been unable to find any reason for the name.

The Trough Roundabout. (now known as The Horsetrough**).** In September 1914 a Cattle Trough was presented to Stonehouse Parish Council by the Band of Mercy attached to Stonehouse Congregational Church. It was located at the junction of Bath Road and Bristol Road. When the bypass was constructed it was moved from the North-East side of the road to the North-West side. Trough Junction became Horsetrough Round-about.

Hill Court is named for the contribution to Stonehouse of Charles William Hill and family. Charles was a member of the Parish Council from 1904-1941 and Chairman from 1937-1941. It was Charles Hill who recommended the planting of the famous weeping willow tree in the centre of the village; his practical knowledge of pruning (being head gardener of Haywardsfield, Wycliffe College, retiring after 50 years of unbroken service) was responsible for its beautiful symmetry.

Stonehouse History Group

Annual Report 2013 - 14

In May 2014 we celebrate the sixth anniversary of the inauguration of our group. Our membership remains steady at 50 with 110 names on our contacts list. This year we have had 11 events, with an average attendance of 40, plus a walk around the local mills, finishing with tea at Stonehouse Court, during the summer.

We have continued to produce an annual Journal, Issue 4 being out now. Our third calendar, featuring photographs of Stonehouse in the past, sold out very quickly.

Our main event of the year was hosting the Gloucestershire Local History Association (GLHA) Summer Afternoon. We welcomed 70 visitors from local history groups all over the County, who chose from a selection of four different walks led by our members and Steve Mills. Thanks to the Stonehouse W.I. for preparing a delicious tea. This was a very successful afternoon prompting many complimentary comments.

As part of the Summer Afternoon we prepared a range of display boards on the history of our town. These were much admired by the visitors and we have shown them at Town events such as the Celebration Day in September. We also created a display on Special Houses in Stonehouse for the GLHA Local History Day in October, which was voted 2nd best out of 18 displays. We now have a total of 24 display boards and are in the process of creating more.

In January we received a request from Stonehouse Court Hotel to assist with information about the history of the building. We provided them with a Timeline, some photographs and the entry from the Domesday Book about the Manor of Stonehouse. We enjoyed attending the opening of their refurbished lounge and bar and are grateful for a generous donation towards our funds.

We have continued to interview local residents about their memories of Stonehouse. Shirley Dicker, Jim Dickson, and Vicki Walker have interviewed the following:

> Andy and Jim Blockley (Oldends Lane), Michael Hall (Police Sergeant Smith), Peggy Blanch (Regal Cinema), Geoffrey Young (Stonehouse in 1930s and 40s), Pip Parkin (Captain B. D. Parkin), Helen Bell and Pamela Bird (the Baker family).

The Stonehouse History Group website, www.stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk, is maintained and developed by Darrell Webb. It has been successful in prompting residents (past and present) to get in touch, and to communicate their memories to us and sometimes to provide photographs. We have been successful in answering many questions about the history of Stonehouse. We are particularly grateful to Janet Hudson for her valuable help in dealing with these questions.

We have offered more local walks and talks this year. We have taken four different groups around the canal and High Street areas. We have visited Year 5 classes at Park Junior School to help with work on World War II, including a local walk. Vicki Walker and Shirley Dicker have given talks to four different groups on Stonehouse Then and Now, Pubs and Special Houses.

We have a healthy bank balance, benefiting from members' generous contributions to monthly fund raising raffles. This money goes towards paying for the speakers and the hire of the premises. We are very sorry to lose our Treasurer, Carole Crisp, who has done a marvellous job organising the accounts for the past six years. Thanks to Carole for all her hard work.

Committee, May 2013 – April 2014

Chair – John Peters; Vice-Chair – Shirley Dicker;

Secretary – Vicki Walker; Treasurer – Carole Crisp;

Committee – Valerie Blick, David Bowker-Praed, Jim Dickson, Darrell Webb, Colin Wood.

Stonehouse History Group

Events 2013 – 14 (number attending in brackets)

May 8th 2013 (42)
AGM followed by Lionel Walrond – "*Bring your antiques*".
Mr Walrond, former curator at Stroud Museum, gave information about a variety of objects brought along by members.

June 12th (35)
Trevor Radway – "*Postboxes*"Who would have thought there were so many varieties of postbox to be seen around the country!

Saturday July 6th (70)
GLHA Summer Afternoon hosted by SHG. A successful afternoon of local walks followed by tea at the Community Centre.

July 10th (40)
Barry Harrison - "*Lionel Hook & Sons – An Innovative Stroud Engineering Company 1903-1974*".Stroud History Group member, Barry, gave an interesting history of this local firm.

Sunday August 25th (23)
Canal and mills walk with Steve Mills and tea at Stonehouse Court.
Another beautiful day for our walk around Bond's Mill, Beard's Mill and Lower Mills.

September 11th (29)
Stonehouse Quiz
A new venture for us with a lighthearted quiz won by Jim Dickson's team.

October 9th (50)
David Smith – "*The origins of Gloucestershire*".
Another scholarly talk by David Smith about our County.

November 13th (30)
Steven Blake – "*The Bellamy family in Stonehouse*".
Colin Wood brought along the model of St. Cyr's Church probably made by John Bellamy. Steven outlined the story of the travelling showmen who made the models.

December 11th (41)
Adrienne Grinyer & Ingrid Walden - "*Tudor Christmas*".
Christmas entertainment with songs and stories as well as delicious food made by Shirley Dicker.

January 8th 2014 (39)
Howard Beard -"*An A-Z of the Stroud Area in Edwardian photographs*"
Howard treated us to more of his amazing photograph collection.

February 12th (58)
David Aldred - "*Lost Railway Journeys in Gloucestershire".*
Unique photographs of the railway line from Gloucester to Stroud brought back memories to many of us who can remember the old stations before 1965.

March 12th (34)
Anne Crow - "*F W Harvey, Gloucestershire WWI Poet*".
Poetry readings brought alive Will Harvey's wartime experiences.

April 9th (37)
Tony Conder - "*Gloucester Docks Then and Now*".
Tony's marvellous collection of historic photographs added to the story of their development.

Do you have any interesting historical photographs of Stonehouse?

We are interested in, for example, photos of shops or pubs, Stonehouse industries, schools, streets or houses, roads, bridges, railways, fêtes, fairs or other activities. We would like to borrow them to scan for our collection. We can scan them in your home using our laptop or take them away for a few days. We promise to return them safely. If you would like to give us your old photos we will store them safely for the future. Please note that we are particularly interested in photographs from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

May we record your memories?

If you have memories of life in Stonehouse many years ago we would like to talk with you. At the moment we are researching special houses, the pubs, Stonehouse during both World Wars and industries. If you think you could help with information on any of these topics please phone Vicki Walker on (01453) 826 334 or contact us via our Website www.stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk

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