No 4

The Chronicle

The Journal of the
Long Wittenham Local History Group

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THE CHRONICLE

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Long Wittenham Local History Group

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Cover illustration: Detail of lead font in St. Mary's church
(See article Brian Holland, Our Puritan Vicar)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Editors would like to thank all the contributors for their interesting articles - which we both know involved much time, research and thought.

Without Linda Francis' art work, pasting-up, negotiations with the printers, etc. etc., and the hard work that the typist, Clare Anglias, has put in getting all the contributions typed, this edition of The Chronicle would not have seen the light of day. Likewise without Edith Cox's line drawings and help in many areas our publication would not be what it is.

We are also grateful to everyone in the village who delved deep into their memories to help the Long Wittenham Local History Group put together many of these stories - and hope you will enjoy seeing the results of your retrospection on paper.

Many thanks to everyone concerned.

Editors: Ruth McCreight & Elizabeth McDougall

Long Wittenham Friendly Society 1836 - 1957

by

Harold Thorpe

At a meeting in the schoolroom at Long Wittenham, on 15th December 1835, it was resolved 'that a benefit club, or Friendly Society be established in the parish of Long Wittenham, extending to Little Wittenham, Appleford, Clifton Hampden and Burcott'. Subsequently extended to Didcot and any place within seven miles of Long Wittenham Church.

The meeting was chaired by William Hayward, who was supported by Rev. Jos. Gibbs, curate of Clifton Hampden, Rev. James Clutterbuck, vicar of Long Wittenham, Mr. Steele of Appleford, Mr. George Hayward, Mr. John Prowse and others.

The object of the Society was to raise by monthly contributions from its Assuring Members, and by donations and subscriptions from its Honorary Members, a stock or fund for the relief and maintenance of its Assuring Members by weekly payments in 'sickness, lameness, blindness, infirmity, and old age', and likewise a reversionary payment by a sum of money on death.

Honorary Members were those donating one payment of £5 or more to become Honorary Members for life, and those making an annual contribution of 10s to be Honorary Members as long as the contribution continued.

The inaugural meeting was held on lst January 1836, at which it was resolved 'to adopt the Rules and Tables presented by the Rev. James Clutterbuck, subject to approval by the Barrister at Law appointed to certify the rules of Benefit Societies'. At this meeting William Hayward, Henry Hannam, and the Rev. James Clutterbuck declared themselves Honorary Members for life on payment of the

appropriate subscription. They were also the first Trustees. George, William and John Hayward, the Rev. Jos. Gibbs, George Dewey, Jos. Hewett, James Prowse, John Stephens and John Field (Wallingford) were enrolled as Honorary Members. William Hayward, and Rev. James Clutterbuck were elected Treasurer and Secretary respectively. Twelve Assuring Members were also enrolled, subject to production of baptism/birth certificate and medical certificate. They also had to certify that their average weekly earnings exceeded the weekly benefit for which they wished to be assured. The majority of applicants could not write and made their mark with a cross. Applicants also had to be recommended by one Honorary Member, or two Assuring Members, or the Minister and Churchwardens of his parish. Finally his election would then take place by ballot at the next meeting.

Contributions depended on age on admission and benefits required. Originally weekly benefits ranged from 2s in sickness and 1s in old age, to 10s in sickness and 5s in old age. Sickness benefit ceased at 65 or 70 years, when old age commenced.

For these benefits monthly contributions ranged from 4d to ls 8d for a man aged 15 next birthday, to ls 3d to 6s 3d for a man aged 45 next birthday.

There was a further benefit of a reversionary payment of £2, £4, £6, £8 or £10 upon death. This could be obtained by a single, or monthly contribution according to age at commencement. A single contribution for £2 on death ranged from 14s 4d at age 15, to £1 ls 3d at 45. Monthly contributions ranged from 1d under age 20, to 2¼d under 50 years. An interesting point is that this benefit would not be payable if the member should 'die at the hands of justice, or fall by duelling, or fighting or by his own hands'. All these benefits continued throughout subject to minor adjustments.

A member disabled from working was paid sickness benefit according to his insured class for fifty two weeks and thereafter half pay so long as the disability continued, and a surgeon would certify

that there was a reasonable hope of recovery. Strict rules prevailed during the receipt of sick pay. Should the recipient go more than three miles from home, or be seen from home after seven o'clock between lst May and 3lst August, or after five o'clock at any other time of the year without permission, his pay would immediately be suspended.

A member being three months in arrears with his subscription paid a fine of ls, or failing that was excluded from the Society. Quite a number of members were excluded, being unable to maintain their subscriptions.

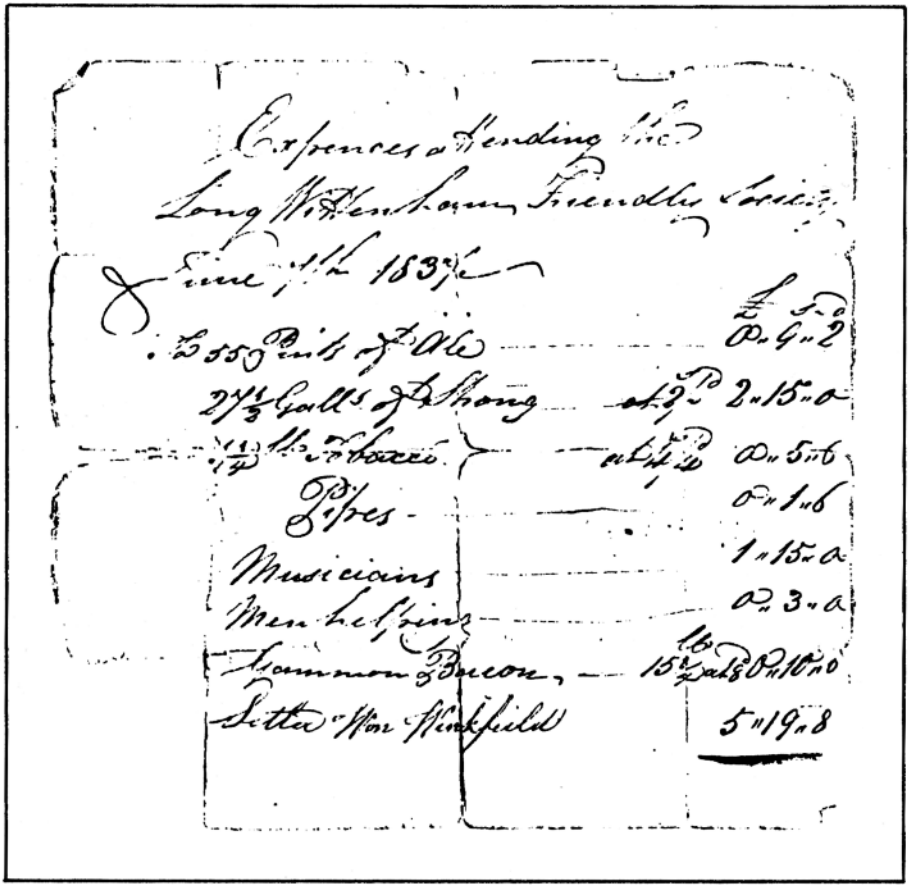
One interesting rule at meetings was that only one person should speak at the same time, and none twice on the same subject, unless agreed by the Chairman. (This might be beneficial to present day organisations!).

On the first anniversary of inauguration a dinner was held, the bill for which included 55 pints Ale 9s 2d, 27⅓ gallons Strong Beer £2 15s, l¼lbs Tobacco 5s 6d, Pipes ls 6d, Musicians £1 15s, 15¾lbs Gammon Bacon 10s 6d, and men helping 3s. It is not clear how many members this accommodated!

Throughout the life of the Society the officers were drawn from the Honorary Members, who devoted an enormous amount of energy and money to its wellbeing. The Rev. James Clutterbuck, one of the founders, served the Society for 50 years. Rev. Francis Capper Clutterbuck who enrolled as an Honorary Member in 1886, served until his death in 1910. Admiral W. R. Clutterbuck served from 1877 to 1923.

In more recent memory Rev. H. C. Roberts 1927-1957, Sir Frederick Hallott 1911-1933, J. S. Ward 1923-1940, A. J. H. Stewart 1941-1957.

The only paid officer was the Secretary at a salary from £4 p.a. - £10 pa. It is interesting to note that during the Society's 120 years



Expenses for the dinner held on June 7th 1837

existence, three Secretaries served for 106 years, i.e. John Bush 1838-1874 (36 years), H. B. Bush 1874-1897 (23 years), James Chambers 1907-1954 (47 years). The Schoolmaster was usually pressed into service for this office, although James Chambers was the local builder.

By the end of 1836 there were 40 Assuring Members rising to about 100 by the turn of the century. Numbers fell with the introduction of the Insurance Acts 1911, and gradually sank to 48 by the Dissolution.

The writer was elected Secretary in 1954 on the death of James Chambers, with the sole purpose of winding-up the Society. At that time time Officers were: Rev. H. G. Roberts, President and Chairman, A. J. H. Stewart, Treasurer, Major V. L. D. Talbot and H. W. R. Cozens, Trustees Reg (Curly) Didcock is the only surviving member of the Committee.

The proposals for winding-up were circulated to all 48 members, 40 of whom were in favour, 7 against, and 1 abstention. £2,632 was available for distribution, the division being assessed on an actuarial valuation by the Registrar of Friendly Societies, which resulted in those on pension, or about to become on pension receiving between £42 and £138, while the other members received between £8 and £15.

The date of Dissolution was 30th March 1956, and the distribution was made at the end of 1957.

The Clifton Hampden - Long Wittenham Boundary Dispute

by

Kathleen Burk Jewess

It may well come as a shock to Wittenham people to learn that Clifton Hampden does not end at the water's edge, or even in the middle of the river, but impinges on the Wittenham side of the Thames. Indeed, a close look at the Ordnance Survey map, or at Figure 1, will show that the boundary between the two parishes, after running down the middle of the river for some distance, suddenly leaps onto the land, follows a zig-zag path for some yards, and then plunges back to the centre of the river. The reason for this was a successful land grab by Robert Hicks Esq. of Clifton Hampden one hundred and eighty years ago.

The occasion for the boundary dispute was the enclosure of the parish of Long Wittenham, which took place over the period 1809 to 1812[1], and which necessitated the surveying of the parish and the final fixing of its boundaries. The Parliamentary Act giving legal authority for the enclosure became law on the 20th May 1809, and six weeks later the three Enclosure Commissioners began the process. On the 18th August 1809 notice was given that on the 3lst October, the Commissioners would meet at the Ferry House at Long Wittenham (now the Barley Mow) 'to perambulate the boundaries' between Long and Little Wittenham and Clifton Hampden[2]. Unfortunately, only one of the three Commissioners, John Allin, showed up and the proceedings were adjourned until the following day.

On the 1st November 1803 Allin and a second Commissioner, John Davis, met at the Lamb Inn, Wallingford, and proceeded to the Ferry House. They had already consulted the available maps, and now they wished to walk the ground. But the Ferry House was also to be the setting for a procedure as old as Anglo-Saxon England when rights

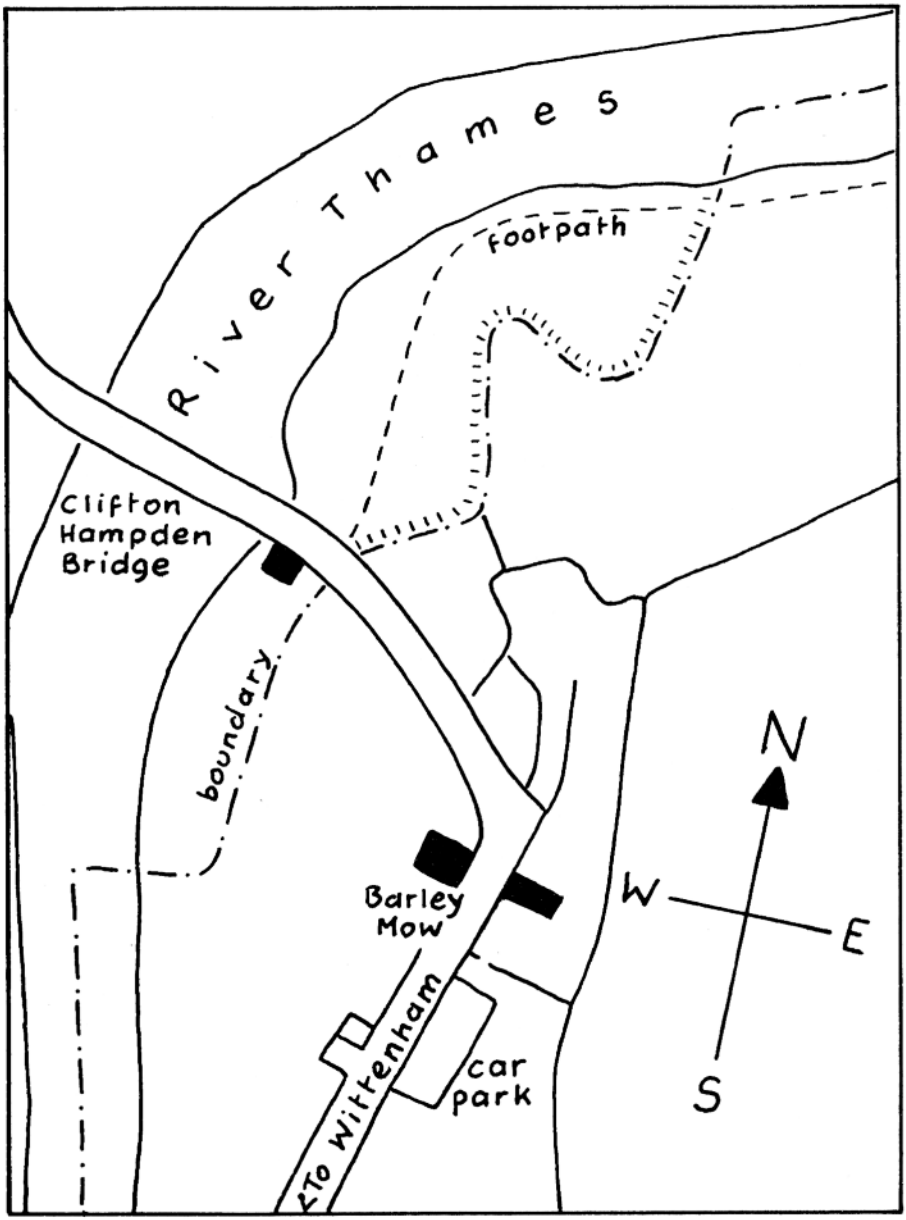


Figure 1: Sketch map showing boundary at Clifton Hampden Bridge as it is today

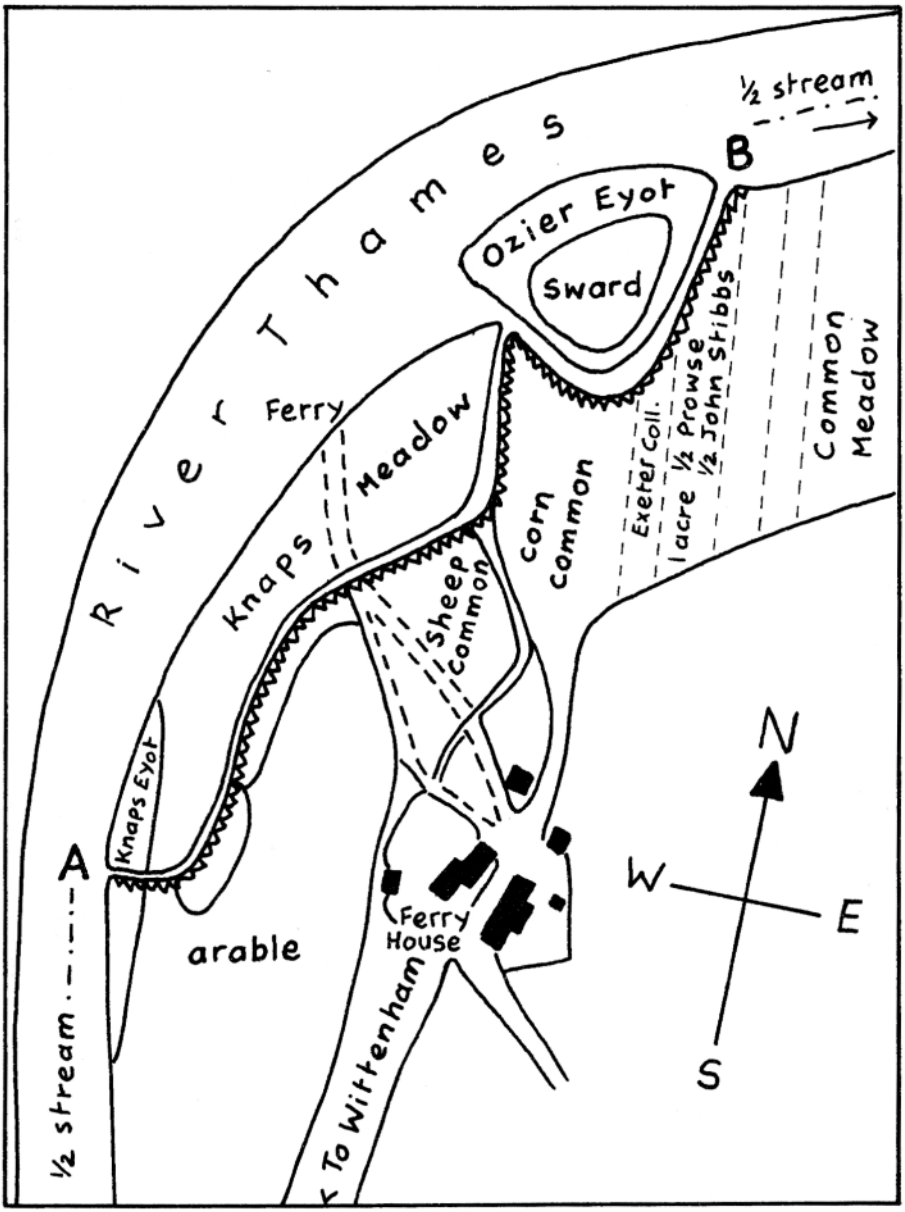


Figure 2: Map based on sketch drawn for the Enclosure Commissioners

over property were in dispute: inhabitants would be asked to state, under oath, what they believed to be the true state of affairs. The reason for this was the need to resolve a dispute between Robert Hicks of Clifton Hampden and the Wittenham landholders over who held the rights to land which had risen out of the River Thames. As shown on Figure 2, the sketch drawn for the Commissioners by their surveyor, Hicks claimed the eyots and Knaps Meadow from the points marked A to B, all of which were apparently cut off from the Wittenham mainland by a natural ditch. In order to settle the dispute, the Commissioners proceeded 'to examine several witnesses to ascertain the boundaries between Long Wittenham and Clifton.'[3]

The first to be interviewed was Timothy James of Long Wittenham, referred to as an 'Earthern ware man'; he had been born and brought up in Clifton Hampden, and was in November 1809 about seventy-five years old. He stated that he had kept Long Wittenham Court about thirty-one years - that is, that he had joined in the general decision-making centred on the Lord of the Manor's Court which decided how to farm the two great open fields, the North Field and the West Field. He said that he 'used to feed on the Knapps Mead East of the Road [the east half of Knaps Meadow on Figure 2] about sixteen or seventeen years ago when he was Cow Keeper last, used to feed from the Mowing Time until Old Hollowtide and used to come to water the Cattle at opentide when feeding the Meadows and next to feed the cattle at Watering times.' The point of this testimony was to establish that Wittenham people had at time within memory regularly used this piece of land, and therefore had the right to continue to do so. That this was one of the points in dispute is suggested by the fact that he added that 'he was forbid by some Clifton people from feeding in the said Mead, of which he informed Mr. Jennings who desired him to persist.'[4]

The next witness to be called was George Laffer of Dorchester, a fisherman. However, he refused to be examined under oath, and was dismissed from the proceedings. No reason was given for his refusal,

but is is quite possible that he was dependent on Hicks for permission to fish.

The third witness was Edward Cherrill of Burcot, a farmer aged about fifty-eight. After being sworn, he 'saith that his father lived at the Ferry House at Wittenham about thirty-eight years ago and at the same time rented of the present Mr. Hicks the Knapps which were called Clifton Knapps and Mr Hicks' Fishery as well, whole stream from A to B in the Map now produced by Mr. Church the Surveyor except the Ditch on the South East side of the Eyot at B which his father rented of Creswell - the rest of the stream only half water. That the said Ditch was at that time much wider than at present. That the Ozier Eyot at B was included in Mr. Hicks' Bargain but is now much larger than formerly. That the Eyot at A was not then formed. Does not remember whether his father ever did or did not mow the Knapps.'[5]

The final witness was John Ashby of Clifton Hampden, a farmer aged about thirty-four. He 'said that he lived with the late Mr. Andrew Prickett about twenty years ago, when Prickett rented a farm at Clifton of Mr. Hicks... Prickett also rented the Fishery Eyot [position unknown] and the Knapps of Mr. Hicks which are now let to Mr. Thos Latham. That Prickett mowed the Knapps, once every year, sometimes twice - till his death about two years ago. That Arthur Slatter rented the Knapps of Mr. Prickett's Executor one year and mowed it twice. He was succeeded by Mr. Thos. Latham, who mowed it twice this year. That Mr. Prickett fished the whole water from A to B in the Map.'[6]

At the end of the day, the Commissioners decided that 'the evidence thus given was not...sufficient...to enable them to form their decision, [and] they adjourned the further examination of evidence to a further meeting.'[7] There is no record in the Minutes of any such further examination, but the interval did allow some private lobbying on the part of John Stibbs of Long Wittenham, who wrote to John Davis on the 14th November 1809 as follows:

'The business you met upon at Wittenham Ferry, to ascertain the right of boundary & of property, is a subject that has [?] occupied my Attention for some years; Mr. Ledwell & myself experienced an Invasion on our property in a similar manner to that at the Ferry. An Accumulation [by which he presumably meant an eyot] took place a small distance from the Shore of an Estate of ours abutting on the River, after a little time it produced a few Rushes [?rocks] or Flag - and approached nearer our shore - & at low water it was joined to & with our estate - but a person having Estate & Fishery on the opposite side of the River, set men to work to make & keep a separation between us & the River [so that Stibbs and Ledwell could not claim the eyot as theirs instead of its belonging to the owner of the fishing rights], which we could by no means accede to, which on our part occasioned the utmost inquiry I could make on the subject without a legal investigation & after many disputes the Commissioners of Navigation told the person he was certainly in the wrong & he gave it up...

With respect to that Increment at the Ferry, & all others of a like nature, it seems a Progressive Evil. For if it first takes place opposite the Estate of "A" as at the Ferry Close Estate (Exeter College Estate), and Increases downstream to Opposite "B" or Wittenham Common and still down stream to opposite "C" which is the first land in the Meadow and Exeter College again and still farther down Stream to opposite "D" which is a freehold Acre betwixt Mr. Prowse and myself and is in part excluded from the river already by such Increment - then it may continue on before or opposite to all the other Estates and Estates and Fishery and all be lost forever... The principle Question is, if an Island arises in a River (as the two lower Knapps below the Ferry) and does not join to either Shore, to whom does such an Island belong? and where is the half Stream fishery at that place — If such [?] Land was at the first wilfully or carelessly neglected by the Tenants of Exeter College or St. John's College, it should

seem, estates should not lose their Right: ...for upon the same principle Clifton may continue planting and possessing down to the piece of ground called the Ferry hook, and so deprive that estate & all others from any Access to the River by setting up an estate between them and the River, and thereby deprive such estate of its Privileges...

I would wish... that a Stop may be put, to what shall appear to you, to be a growing Evil for when the last Survey was taken of Exeter College Ferry Estate, about the year 1772 - what Clifton then pretended to claim was but one Acre and about 23 Poles - now it is descended down to and opposite the Lands in Wittenham Meadow. And if Mr. Prowse and myself and others should have Allotments in that Meadow, it will be very hard to be deprived of Access to the River for Cattle or otherwise.'[8]

What comes through clearly in Stibbs' letter, beyond the complaints about the activities of humans, is frustration at the unpredictable and uncontrollable actions of the River Thames. But he was fighting a losing battle against the common law tradition that usage conferred rights. In this particular case, there was the additional point that all appeared to agree that Hicks owned the fishing rights to the whole stream at that point, and this apparently implied that the land surrounded by the water was also his.

The Commissioners finally announced their decision on the 17th June 1812 at the Crown & Thistle in Abingdon. As a comparison between Figures 1 and 2 will show, Robert Hicks made good his claim and the land as denoted from A to B in Figure 2 was confirmed as his property and part of Clifton Hampden. What appears to have happened to the land involved is that in the fullness of time the ditch between Knapps Meadow and the mainland was either filled in, or the land rose even more from the river, and the Knapps became attached. A careful walker over the ground can still trace the zig-zag boundary on the land itself physical evidence of a dispute which once exercised the

landholders of two parishes, but which has been buried in the bowels of the Bodleian Library for over a century.

Sources:

1. The story of the enclosure and its effect on the people of the parish can be found in Kathleen Burk Jewess, 'The Parish of Long Wittenham. 1800-1920: A Brief History', (Long Wittenham Women's Institute, 1984), pp. 3-9.
2. 'Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commissioners of Long Wittenham Enclosure', Miscellaneous Topographical Berkshire c.32, Bodleian Library, Oxford, f. 52.
3. Ibid., f.53.
4. Ibid., ff. 90, 93.
5. Ibid., f. 93.
6. Ibid.,
7. Ibid., f. 53.
8. Ibid., ff. 99-100.

Brian Holland, Our Puritan Vicar

by

Patricia Lay

Brian Holland became the Parson of Long Wittenham in 1645 after the death of William Prowse. Unusually, he was not a Fellow of Exeter College (the Church Patrons) but of Magdalen College Oxford. At the time that he became parson, or minister, England was in the midst of civil war. This started in 1642 when Charles I had tried to arrest five members of Parliament after a bitter power struggle. His attempt failed and Charles fled north and the war between Cromwell and his Roundheads or Parliamentarians and Charles and his Cavaliers or Royalists began.

Charles had his headquarters in Oxford and this area was largely a Royalist stronghold. Wallingford remained loyal until the end; Abingdon had a more chequered time. In the early days it was a parliamen-tary town but the bells of St. Helens rang in the King's Men in October 1642 with the king himself visiting a few days later. In May 1644 the Earl of Essex was at Hagbourne with ten thousand Parliamentarian soldiers. The royalists held a council of war and decided that Abingdon must be held but as Essex advanced the governor panicked and decided to evacuate, so Abingdon fell to the Parliamentarians. The Royalists tried to recapture it in 1645 and attacked Culham bridge, but failed.

In 1646 Cromwells's men captured Oxford and the Civil War was over - Wallingford was besieged for a further six weeks but finally

surrendered to Lord Fairfax and was then used as a garrison town with the castle becoming a prison.

It can be seen from the above that Long Wittenham was in the centre of all this activity. Fighting was taking place within a few miles and soldiers of both sides must have passed through the village. According to legend Cromwell's men and possibly Cromwell himself are said to have enjoyed the mulberries at "The Old Farmhouse"! The villagers hid the lead font in the church at this time, to save it from being taken by the Roundheads and made into shot. It remained hidden for two hundred years.

The Puritans ruled England from 1646 - 1660. Church benefices were held by Presbyterians, Independants or Baptists. However the Prayer Book was tolerated surreptitiously and even Roman Catholics were less molested. What the people resented most was the suppression of fun. No theatres were open, maypoles were cut down, no sports or past-times were allowed. Sunday was strictly enforced as a day of rest - soldiers could enter houses to check and would even carry off meat found to have been cooked that day. The literate had pamphlets and sermons to read. There were no proper services - anyone who had the 'call' could preach, some of them at length! Happily, the parish registers were kept in good order. No baptisms were registered but births were entered instead.

In 1660 Charles II was restored to the throne after Cromwell's death. The Act of Uniformity of 1662 restored the Prayer Book. Two thousand clergy who refused to declare their loyalty were turned out of their benefices; there was prison or transportation for any caught in dissenting worship. As Brian Holland remained our vicar until his death in 1671/72 he was obviously not a dissenter and must have used the Prayer Book services. The village had survived the Puritan era and become Anglican once again.

Some papers relating to Brian Holland's death are in the County Archives at Reading. There is a declaration by his wife Anne and an

account of monies owed by Holland at his death. I am grateful to Janet Haylett for copying this. Holland left £101 8s 4d. The document reads:

…'Whereof this said Accomptant dischargeth her selfe and allowants for ye necessary expenses payments and charges as followeth:

	£	s	d
Imprimus for a coffin	0	6	8
Item for a shroud	0	3	0
Item for ye Clerke of Long Wittnam	0	2	6
Item for ye Ringers of Morton	0	5	0
Item for m... ye grane and pa..ing it again	0	3	6
Item Expenses at ye funerall	0	18	6
Item for ye letters of Administration under seals	1	l	4 '

This is followed by a list of all the people to whom he owed money, including:

'Payd to Thomas Butler of Long Wittnam for Malt	0	6	8
Payd to Thomas Stibbs of Long Wittnam Mercer	l	5	0
Payd to Mr. Richard Jennings of L.W. for mony borrowed of Adam Land in ye lifetime of ye deed and to be paid	6	4	0
Item payd to John Sadler for wheat	l	8	0
Payd to Mr Sadler of Oxon Mercer	16	9	0
Item payd for drawing this Accompt and passing ye same with ye .... of underseal and other charges	1	12	8

The total sum owed was £45 12s 4d.

Brian Holland's false teeth and silver coffin plate are said to have been found in the Churchyard in the Rev. Clutterbuck's time, according to T. D. Hopkyns, but their whereabouts now is unknown!

So ended a period of great turbulence. The new vicar was John Bickle, a Devon man, with whom the village could look forward to a more settled religious life after so many changes.

Sources:

J. K. Hedges The History of Wallingford Victorian History of England (Berks).

Townsend History of Abingdon

G. M. Trevelyan English Social History

Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor for Long Wittenham 1763 - 1794

by

Jennifer Garlick

Until the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 the relief of the poor was the responsibility of the parishes through their Overseers of the Poor. The office of Overseer of the Poor was established by the Poor Law Act 1597/8 and made compulsory by the Poor Relief Act 1601. At least two persons were appointed yearly by each vestry, subject to the approval of the Justices of the Peace. Their job was to levy a poor rate and supervise its distribution in order to maintain and set the poor to work. The Overseers were selected from among the parishioners, had to take the office whether they wanted it or not, and were untrained and unpaid. The task cannot have been an easy one. Long Wittenham, in common with other rural parishes, was subject to the usual agricultural fluctuations and reflected the national trend, with increases in population and prices resulting in a constant demand on the resources of the parish fund.

These problems are well illustrated in the Long Wittenham Overseers' Accounts book, which covers the period 1763 to 1794, and which gives a good insight into the life of the parish at that time.

The funds were provided by taxation of 'every inhabitant, parson, vicar and other and every occupier of lands, houses, tithes impropriate and propriations of tithes, coal mines, or saleable underwood'.

The list of taxation (Figure 1) for the first half of the year 1774 shows the relative amounts of land held in the parish, with Mr. Prowse clearly the largest landowner with 16¼ yard lands. It should also be noted that the office of Overseer of the Poor was not only held by men. Land-owning widows also took their share of the responsibility for the poor. The tax was levied half yearly and varied according to the state

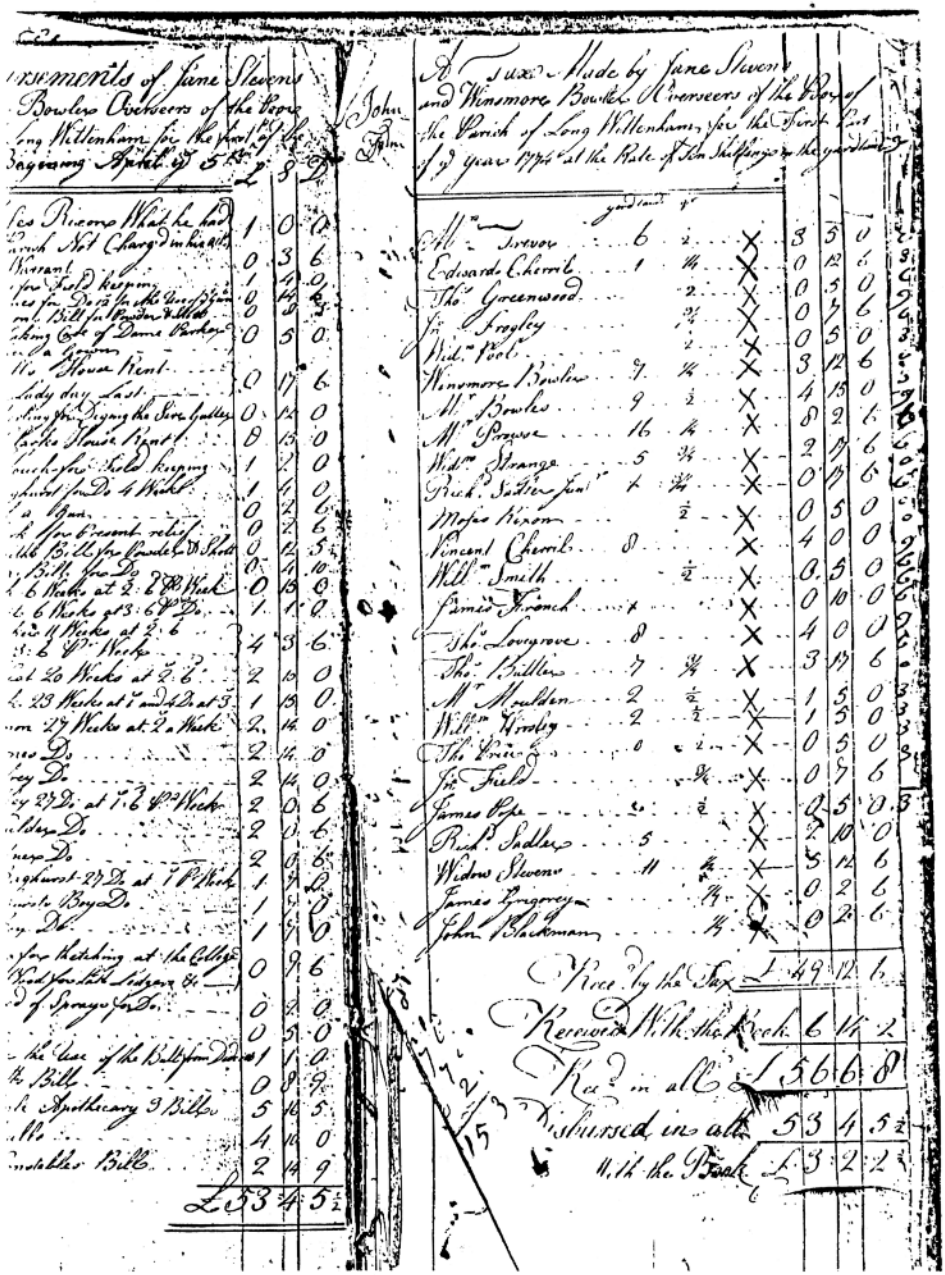


Figure 1: List of taxation for the first half of the year 1774

of the funds and the amount being paid out. The highest, during the years covered by these records, was in 1784/5. Three taxes of 5s, 15s and 3s amounting to the sum of 23s - were paid out in the half year and the staggering sum of £111 15s 4½d was distributed to the poor between Michaelmas and Easter. This did, however, include the vast sum of £52 5s 6d which was paid to 'Mr. Nash the Attorney for the Trial With Upton parish held at the Court of Kings Binch'. Other half years were as heavy in expenditure, perhaps reflecting poor harvests, unemployment, the effect of severe winters and smallpox epidemics.

1784 17 Oct 'pd for a shurt for John Stiff	0	4	4
gave him for the Loas of his time in the harvist Being Leam'	1	1	0

1788, when £102 5s 9¼d was spent on the poor, was obviously a year when smallpox was rife. A note pinned to the accounts states:

'1789 February 10 pd Mr. Sutton for Inoculating and Attending 120 poor People at 2/6 each	£15	0	0'

There are several entries in the accounts including:

1788	Dec 27 'Gave Benj Dixe in his illness with the smallpox	0	6	0
1789	Jan 3 pd Benj Dixey funeral expences with the Smallpoxe and Other expences waiting upon him all	2	3	1½
	Gave Ben Dixey Children	0	2	6'

There were frequent payments to the doctor and another bill attached to the accounts book states:

'The Overseers of Long Wittenham to N. Ley Dr

1792	April 4 An Opening Powder for Cowley			6
	A Mixture		1	6
	A Bleeding		1	0
	A Bottle of Drops		1	6
			4	6
1785	Oct 11 Gave Mr. Finmor of Fullscut towards paying the sugan for John Field having a broken legg	2	10	0'

Poor women, giving birth, were allowed a month of 'lying in', this being the period for which relief was given. The accounts for 1781/82 relate the story of two such women:

'Nov 5	Pd Mary Bowler for Elizabeth Clinch's lodging 7 weeks at 6d per week	0	3	6
Feb 20	Pd Timothy James for a bed mat for Elizabeth Mills	0	2	0
	For 4 ells of hesing cloath to meck hur bed bigar and meking it and thread	0	4	10
	John Field for a Bedsted for her	0	6	6
	Gave hur for presant Relef	0	1	6
	For mending a pear of pot hucks	0	0	4
	Pd for a shift for Elizabeth Mills	0	3	3
	Pd Mrs Bowler for hur Board and Loging at fust	0	6	0
	Pd the Expences for Elezebeth Clinch's Lying in and the Buaral of the Child	2	9	0
	Pd at William Smiths for Elezebeth Mills			

	in hur Lying in for Butter Chees Bred tea			
	and sugar oatmeal & godfres cordjal	0	4	1½
	pd the midwiff for hur	0	5	0
	pd Mrs Bowler for 8 quarts & a pint of			
	ale for hur	0	2	10
	pd for fuss (furze) and wood for her	0	l	6
	pd for the crising (christening) of			
	the child	0	3	0 ‘

All the funeral expenses for the poor had to be met by the Overseers:

‘1787	Apr 11 Pd for the Coffin for T Cowley	0	8	0
	Pd Clark at Douchester for towling Bell	0	l	6
	pd for Leaing out	0	2	6
	pd J Pool towling Bell & diging grave	0	2	6
	gave the men for caring to Church	0	2	0 ‘
‘Oct 20	pd for the Coffin for John Pool wife	0	7	6
	Relieved John Pool	0	2	0
	pd for the Shroud & Leaying on her &			
	sum beer & for washing the things	0	11	7 ‘

In addition to looking after the sick, the Overseers had to find food for the hungry, homes for the parish homeless, maintain existing abodes as well as find clothing and shoes for those who could not do so for themselves. A few of the more interesting examples follow:

‘pd for a Brest of mutton for Salem Pearse		0	2	6
	Gave Salam Percs to buy medsine by order			
	of a vestry		l	0
	Gave Mary Buckner to by a pear spectitels		1	3
	Pd for Bred for Luckers childern	0	0	6
	Pd for a pety Coate a shift & apron a pare			
	of stockens a Cloake Pare of Shoes for Ann			
	Denton	0	13	0
	Pd for 3 pair of shoes for Mills boys			
	1 pair for Rumbles boy	0	13	10
	Pd for 1 shoe for Ralf Rumble	0	2	0 ‘

(The question why Ralf Rumble required only one shoe may be asked, particularly in view of an earlier enigmatic entry -

‘Pd John Field for two new Wood legs and	0	3	0
lengthening two legs for Ralph Rumble	0	0	6 ‘!)

In addition to the many payments made towards the upkeep of the dwellings belonging to the poor, it would seem that in 1780 a new cottage was built:

'Pd the Expences of Jury seting landmarks		5	0
Pd Casey's Bill for Kiln-ware	2	5	0
Pd Bricklayers & Masons Bill	1	12	6
Pd for load of straw	l	1	0
Pd for Thatching and Sprays		6	4
Pd the Glaziers Bill		10	3
Pd for 800 of Rods & Wattling		18	4
Pd Carriage for 1500 Bricks		9	0
Pd fetching mould & caring timber up		3	0
Pd for Beer at the New House		2	0 '

Contributions to cover the cost of fuel must have been an important factor in the survival of the poor, though it did not of course always ensure this.

'Nov 9 paid the Widow Pound for fire and Candle	0	l	0
Dec 25 gave Widw Barns to buy fuil	0	6	0
Jan 31 pd for to Bushils of coals for Widow-Pound	0	3	6
Paid for wood for the Widow Parker	0	3	0
Paid the expenses for her Buriall	0	2	6 '

Even the vestry candle had to be paid for at 1d each. Parish Constables, who worked with the Overseers, were obliged to 'search out rogues and apprehend vagrants and take them before the justices who shall commit them to the house of correction'. The constable's bill had to be paid by the Overseers and regular payments were made towards the upkeep of the Gaol. The following two notes were found attached to the Overseers' Book:

'Berks to Witt

To the Constable of Long Wittenham, By Virtue of a Warrant to me Directed You are Required to make Application to the Churchwardens or Overseers of Your Parish For the sum of 1.13.0 for Goal Money & Bring the same to me Before the Next Quarter Sessions Fail not at Your Perril given under my Hand the 18th Day of March 1779

John Hunt Chief Constable'

‘Berks to Witt Ock hundred
To the Constable of Long Wittenham
By virtue of a warrant to me Directed you are hereby required to make application to the Church Wardens or Overseers of your Parrish for the sum of One pound two shillings for Two Quarters Goal money which I desire you to Bring an Pay into my hands before the 11th Day of January 1780
Given under my hand this 7th Day of January 1780
John Whitchel Chief Constable’

The sum paid quarterly for gaol money varied. The above sum of £1 2s 0d was the lowest recorded. In one quarter £4 19s 0d was paid, presumably due to a sudden increase in the number of convictions. In 1785 an additional sum of £2 4s 0d was ‘pd towards Bilding the house of correction’. In addition to payments for warrants, travelling expenses had to be paid for visits to the justices etc. etc. The distances often necessitated the hire of horses - or even a horse and cart.

‘Pd the expences for having of Edward Lucker to Jestes	0	17	10
Pd the Constables Bill	1	17	10
Willm Keat for going to Marcham for a warrant and hireing a Horse		3	0
Adam Strange for Expences and loss of time going after Edward Clark	1	16	6
Willm Buttler for Garding Edward Clark		3	0’

Unfortunately the records do not explain why Edward Clark needing guarding.

The Constables Bill for 1775 is itemized as follows:

‘Pd for 6 Reburks (rebukes?)	0	6	0
For a List of the Jury	0	1	0
For 6 Gallons of ale at Court	0	8	0
For Bread Cheeze & tobaca	0	l	2
		16	2’

This must have been a particularly long session at the court as the more normal charge was 6s 6d.

‘Pd for the Beer at Court	0	6	6’
‘Pd for Beer a Curt day for the Juery men	0	6	6’

In 1783 4s 6d was ‘Pd for pear of hand cuffs for the use of parish’.
Strangers were not allowed to settle in a parish (and so become a burden on it), unless renting a tenement for at least £10 a year, a sum way beyond the means of most agricultural labourers. In the case of a temporary stay for seasonal farm work, the labourer had to have a certificate (or pass) from his own parish agreeing to take him back. Most travellers were charitably sent on their way, as shown by the following examples:

‘Gave a poor man and his family upon the road home to his parish		l	0
gave a woman with a pass	0	0	6
gave a vagrant on the road hom to his parish	0	0	6
gave a great bellied woman		1	0
gave a traviling man with a family		1	0 ’

Such charity could sometimes be recompensed.

In 1765: ‘Pd Mr. Poils Bill for going after ye Coroner	0	9	5
for a coffin for ye Drownded woman	0	7	6
the bearers	0	4	0 ’

but subsequently the sum of 10s was ‘made of ye drownded womans cloths’.
There may have been some controversy as to whether the Westhill family claimed settlement in Upton or Long Wittenham, as a trial ensued in 1784 with the resultant high cost to the poor fund already mentioned. Although 28 weekly payments at 6s had been made to the Widow Westal - in addition to the provision of ointment and a sheet - the payment of 4s was made for ‘caring the widow westals Fameley hom to Upton’, so settlement must have been proven to be at Upton parish and no further mention is made of the Westhills in Long Wittenham.
Another constant problem was that of illegitimate children. There were several methods of avoiding financial responsibility by the Overseers. Either a) the putative father could be forced to marry the woman before the child’s birth; b) the father could be left to provide for the child himself or c) could be forced to pay for the child’s keep under an order from justices or quarter sessions. The advantage of the first method

was a saving in court fees, transport, meals and accommodation at an inn for at least three people. The disadvantage was that the whole family might eventually become the responsibility of the parish. A marriage appears to have been arranged in at least one case, that of Thomas Austin, when Mr. Hayward 'was paid 2s 3d for 'procuring Austin's marriage: a Letter respecting the same'. In this case the parish appears to have got off lightly. In most cases the father appears to have been forced to pay for the maintenance of the child, and the accounts show expenditure on many such cases. For example in 1781:

'July 4	Pd for the Examination of Eliz. Clinch		1	0
	For a Warrant to Apprehend Caleb Eling for a Bastard child	0	l	0
	Eating & drinking for the driver and Eliz Clinch	0	2	2
	Corn & Hay for the Horse	0	0	6
	Horse & Cart 2.6 Pike 4d	0	2	10
	Myself & Horse	0	0	0 '

The parish constables were responsible for the organisation of the militia. In every parish men were chosen by lot and compelled to serve for three years - or provide £10 for a substitute. The Overseers had the further duty of aiding the families of militiamen who were away on active service, though they were reimbursed by the County for this.

'1779 Recd of the Treasurer for the County the sum of 4.4.0 for James Griffins Family He being Ballotted in the Militia
Rec'd Likewise for Thos Alixander the sum 1.6.0 He being Hired in the Oxford Shire Militia up to June 13 1779
NB The County allow But Half for Alixander'

'1781 Recd of the Treasurer of the County for what was paid to Thomas Allexander's Family: 51 weeks at 3s per week from July 9th 1780 to July 2nd.'

1781 when the said Allexander was Discharged - £7 13 0 ’

‘1792	April Pd John Bridgman overseer of Sutton Courtney for Joseph Dickers wife and child and hur Expences wen Shee Laidin he serving as a Substitute in the militia for William Stivens Being seteled By the Justices of the Peace up to the 20 Day of April	4	0	0
	pd John Bridgman for James Larences Wife he serving as a substitute in the milita for John James	1	0	0
	pd Sameul Cripps overseer of Abingdon for James Larences Wife 29 weeks at 14d per week up to the 5 Day of October	l	13	10
	pd John Bridgman overseer of Sutton cortney for Joseph Dickers Wife & childe 26 weeks at 3s per week up to the 19 day of october	3	18	0 ’

The Overseers were obliged to try and find work for those who were able, though the payment for this often still had to come out of the fund. Men were set to work for the better off members of the parish, which would provide some small recompense for the amount of poor tax they had to pay. The unemployed also carried out necessary tasks around the parish, such as clearing out Moor Ditch, mending bridges, digging gravel, mending the pound, etc. etc. Women were also helped by the provision of spinning wheels:

‘1774	Feb ye 17 Pd for 6 spining wheels	1	7	6
	The 6 Spinning Wheels was Lent to			
	Mary Clinch One			
	Eliz. Thorne One			
	Eliz. Barns two			
	Ann Patey one			
	Hannah Baughu one’			

In order to prevent children being a burden on the poor fund, apprenticeships were often arranged by the Overseers. Each child had an indenture of apprentice-ship signed by two justices of the peace. The person with whom the child was placed had to promise to take him

(or her) for a stated number of years, provide food and lodging and, in addition, teach the child a trade.
In return the employer received a sum of money from the Overseers.

‘1782	26 May gave Sadelers Boy for his InDenters	0	10	6 ’
‘1788	June 17th Pd James Hermon in part or one half of the Money for teaching & Instructing Ralph Rumble his Trade of a Shoemaker NB he is to have two Guineas for teaching him one year’	1	1	0

Children were also put to work bird scaring ('birdkeeping') or fieldkeeping and much effort and money was put into this. In the first part of the year 1780 the following payments were made:

‘April 2	Pd Timothy James for field keeping 6 weeks	1	16	0
	Pd Thomas Prior for field keeping 6 weeks	l	16	0
	Pd for 2 guns	0	5	0
April 12	Pd Moses Rixon for powder & shott	0	14	3
	Pd Thos Smith for powder & shott	0	17	3½
July 29	Jnr Baugast for field keeping 5 weeks 5 days	1	17	6
	Jnr Lovegrove for field keeping 6 weeks and a gun	1	18	6
Aug 6	Moses Rixon for powder and shott		18	7
Sept 21	Thos Smiths bill for powder & shott	0	7	3
Oct 3	pd William Cox for bird keeping 6 days	0	6	0 ’

Another important duty which appears to have fallen to the Overseers of Long Wittenham was the provision of the parish bull. In 1788 £4 10s 0d was ‘pd for or towards three Bulls.’

On the whole it would seem from examination of these records that the Overseers of Long Wittenham carried out their many duties to the best of their ability. It is to be hoped that through their efforts some of the distress which must have been suffered by many of the inhabitants of the village was alleviated.

Year	Rate	Collected	Payments
1763	4s	19 17 0	23 13 7
1768	5s	24 16 3	17 6 5½
	4s	19 17 0	27 1 1
	5s	24 16 3	22 3 8
1773	2s	9 18 6	31 4 0
	7s	34 4 9	25 14 9
	5s	24 16 3	
1778	6s	29 15 6	58 4 6
	5s	24 16 3	64 4 1½
	5s	24 16 3	60 5 2
	5s	24 16 3	
	2s	9 18 6	
1783	5s	24 16 3	
	5s	24 16 3	71 2 11¼
	5s	24 16 3	
	5s	24 16 3	66 16 6
	4s	19 17 0	
1788	5s	24 16 3	
	5s	24 16 3	78 8 3
	5s	24 16 3	
	5s	24 16 3	
	5s	24 16 3	102 5 9¼
	5s	24 16 3	
	10s	49 12 6	
1793	4s	19 17 0	
	6s	29 15 6	
	6s	29 15 6	98 16 5
	5s	24 16 3	
	6s	29 15 6	

Table showing rates of tax, receipts and payments of Long Wittenham Overseers (Extracts from 1763-1793/4)

Sources:

St. John's College Archives XII.65, Long Wittenham Overseers Accounts.

John Richardson, The Local Historian's Encyclopedia,

W. E. Tate, The Parish Chest.

Lottie Thatcher

by

The Long Wittenham Local History Group

Children outside St. John's Row in the early years of the century. Lottie Thatcher's shop is marked with a cross and an arrow

Everyone living in Long Wittenham in the early years of this century remembers Lottie Thatcher and her sweet shop at No. 2 St. John's Row. It was a useful place to pop into for oddments such as tea, biscuits or cigarettes. It was also the favourite place for the many children who lived at that end of the village who, for a few pence, were able to buy liquorice comfits, pear drops, toffee and dolly mixture.

Lottie Thatcher was baptised Charlotte in July 1883. She was the first born of Mark Henry and Sarah Thatcher who had married in 1881 - their only other child, Annie, was baptised in 1884. This was

an unusually small family for the Thatchers, who were nor usually so restrained as to the number of children they produced. John and Dinah, the founders of the Long Wittenham Thatcher family, had fifteen children. They were poor labourers and when times were hard - and John and Dinah getting older - they needed the assistance of poor relief, allocated by the overseers of the poor (see 'Accounts of the Overseers of the Poor for Long Wittenham 1763-1794'). John and Dinah's children fared slightly better in life, although most remained labourers, working on the land for one of the local farmers.

Lottie's paternal grandfather, William, was a labourer, but he was also the village sexton. Joseph Brookings, her maternal grandfather, was the lock-keeper. Lottie's uncle, (Reuben) John Thatcher, was first a carrier, later he became the publican at 'The Three Poplars' [now part of Pendon Museum].

No one can quite remember when Lottie's family moved into St. John's Row. Her father died in 1903 aged 49 - and it may have been then that Sarah, her mother, decided to supplement her income by keeping a small shop in her front room. They also took in a lodger, whose name was Ted. Lottie's sister, Annie, married in 1909. Although by all accounts 'a good looking woman', Lottie herself never married. She remained at home to help her mother and when she died in 1931 - Lottie kept the shop going herself. From that moment on she never went upstairs to bed, preferring to sleep downstairs on the sofa.

Although best remembered for her sweets, Lottie sold other things as well - biscuits, tea, cocoa, cigarettes and tobacco. She did not keep her stock in pretty glass jars, but in cardboard boxes or tins which were spread all over the floor. As much as possible was crammed onto a large table placed in front of the window, and on this table Lottie placed four candles (no candlesticks), sticking them straight onto the table wherever she could find a space in between the tins and boxes. When one burnt down another was put in its place - the wax building up into a greasy mound.

Her fire, accompanied by the usual by-product of soot and dust, made the room dirty - particularly as Lottie did not skimp when it came to fires. She would make it three quarters of the way up the chimney, causing it once or twice to flare up out of the smokestack, upsetting her neighbours considerably. When young, Elsie, (she and her mother, the late Mrs Hermon, were neighbours of Lottie's) would remonstrate with her - 'You know Lottie, one of these days you're going to catch everybody alight. Now look, I swear if this coal had been weighed before you put it on you'd have got nearly a hundredweight in one fire!' Every time she and her mother smelled burning they would rush into Lottie's house, fearing to find the place alight.

Built into the fireplace were shoulders or ledges. Lottie would sit by her hot fire, nursing a cup of tea. When customers came she would put the cup down on one of the ledges to keep warm, taking it up again when they had left. Although the front window was kept open, no one ever went to that side of the house - they always came to the back door. Inevitably some enterprising youngsters exploited this custom. One of them would knock at the back door and, when Lottie went to let them in, an accomplice would help himself to a handful of sweets through the open front window. More conventionally, however, having bought their sherbert or a few aniseed balls for a halfpenny, the children would set and eat them on her front steps.

When Lottie died in 1956 the sweet shop went too - another chapter in Long Wittenham's long history had ended.

Cholera and the Day of Humiliation

by

Ruth McCreight and Elizabeth McDougall

The Cholera's Coming

Song

The Cholera's coming - oh! dear oh! dear
The cholera's coming - oh! dear.
To prevent hunger's call
A kind pest from Bengal
Has come to feed all with the cholera dear.

The people are starving oh! dear, oh! dear,
The people are starving oh! dear.
If they don't quickly hop
To the parish soup shop
They'll go off with a pop from the cholera dear.

The cholera's a humbug oh! dear oh! dear,
The cholera's a humbug oh! dear.
If you can but get fed
Have a blanket and bed
You may lay down your head without any fear.

From 'King Cholera - The Biography of a Disease' by Norman Longmate.

A popular song of the 1830's sung to the tune of 'The Campbells Are Coming'. First published in 'The Harmonists Preceptor or Universal Vocalist Containing All the New Songs' (c. 1837).

Cholera!' - the very word, evoked terror in the nineteenth century and even today it causes dismay tinged with fear.

In the nineteenth century Thomas Allen M.R.C.S. is quoted as saying 'Fear of the disease is a mental weakness'! There were three major epidemics in England during the century - 1832, 1849 and 1854. Cholera first appeared near Jessore, India, in 1817 and spread across the world, reaching east London on the 12th February 1832. It should be noted that during the course of this east London epidemic in fact more people died of tuberculosis than from cholera. A labourer's child only enjoyed a life expectancy of sixteen years. Thus the advent of cholera on an already unhealthy population made a greater impact on public health development than might have been expected from the actual number of deaths.

Death, the Avenger

Cholera was transmitted by drinking water polluted by contaminated sewage - the drains and cesspools in the towns were often sited near the wells from which drinking water was taken. The symptoms were vomiting and diarrhoea, sudden weakness, chills and cramps or spasms. One course of treatment was to put the patient to bed, cover warmly and administer the following; two drops of camphor mixture (1oz. camphor in 6oz. of spirits of wine) on a little pounded sugar in a spoonful of cold water. This dose was to be re-administered in five minutes, and yet again five minutes later. After ten minutes - if there were still no signs of recovery - this procedure was to be gone through again until a total of ten, or twelve drops had been taken. It was piously hoped that this medication, with God's blessing and provided it was started early enough, would effect a cure.

The contagious nature of cholera meant that it was spread by the people themselves. Its march throughout the country can easily be traced by means of a study of the principal waterways, ports and roadways. It spread at a walking pace as travellers and traders moved on, many of them following the local fairs which were very prolific at that time. The disease was more prevalent in the spring and summer, when these itinerant people were moving around, rather than in the autumn and winter when they stayed in winter quarters.

Of course those towns and villages with the worst areas of poor, cramped housing - all sharing a common water supply and with virtually no drainage to speak of were the worst affected. Here in Long Wittenham many houses had their own wells (which can be seen to this day), and the village was reasonably self-sufficient, with most necessary crafts and trades represented within the village itself. Travel out of the village was to buy luxuries and for pleasure rather than for necessities - the Abingdon fair being a popular outing.

In 1849 both Abingdon and Oxford suffered cholera epidemics, but Long Wittenham appears to have escaped. It must be remembered that our village was not on a major route between large towns, and access to and from it was controlled, to a certain extent, by the River Thames. In fact very few villages in Oxfordshire and Berkshire did have cases of cholera in 1849. Steventon was the nearest place to Long Wittenham to record a death from cholera.

The 1849 epidemic was the worst in the area - probably this was true also in the rest of the country and it roused the church to action.

Dickensian Soho: a breeding ground for cholera

The Day of Humiliation

On Wednesday the twenty-sixth of September 1849 the villagers of Long Wittenham did a most unusual thing for the middle of the week - they put down their tools and stopped work. The local farmers, it was particularly noted in the papers, willingly allowed their men time off and, in obedience to the Bishop of Oxford's earnest exhortation, everyone in Long Wittenham (and all the other villages in the area) went to church to pray for both themselves and their communities, so that they might be spared from the cholera scourge that was raging in the countryside around them.

The parishioners of Long Wittenham had the choice of three services on this Day of Humiliation (as it was called), eight and eleven in the morning or seven in the evening. The collection reached the sum of £2 3s 2½d 'for the relief of distress caused by the cholera in Abingdon if this Parish should be mercifully spared...' (Clutterbuck's Memoirs). Whether or not this princely sum was to be retrieved from Abingdon if the unthinkable happened and Long Wittenham was ultimately struck down by the dreaded disease is not clear. From examining the records it would seem that the villagers' heartfelt prayers *were* heard, for there are no indications of an unprecedented number of deaths in the village during the epidemic period, apart from an elderly couple who passed away while in London within a few days of each other, often a sign that cholera was the cause of death. As we do not know how long they had been in London it is probable that if they *did* die from cholera it was contracted during their stay in that city.

There would seem to have been more than one day set aside nationally for prayer. London humiliated itself first (as was fitting for the capital city, well known to humble country folk as being nothing better than a sink of iniquity). Oxford and the surrounding area held their day of prayer nearly two weeks later. The population was asked

by Bishop Wilberforce (Bishop of Oxford) to refrain as much as possible from work or business and to attend the local churches. According to Jackson's Oxford Journal for the period, the day was very well observed by all the parishes around the city. In Bicester, for example, '... the discourse [was] eloquent and powerful, and was listened to with deep attention by the largest congregation we ever saw in Bicester church. It is believed that there must have been 2000 persons present ...' (Jackson's Oxford Journal).

The name 'Day of Humiliation' is interesting, suggesting as it does that the cholera was seen as a sign of God's wrath visited upon an unholy and sinful people. The Rev. Vaughan Thomas, Chairman of the Oxford Board of Health and a clergyman of the established church (Vicar of Yarnton) took the view that 'Disease was a punishment for sin', instructing the Board to look for 'moral and religious guidance as to vicious indulgences...'

Bishop Wilberforce chose St. Aldates Church in which to hold Oxford's Day of Humiliation service, the area 'having been visited with this affliction to a great extent...' He 'then commenced his discourse, selecting for his text the 18th verse of the 17th chapter of the 1st Book of Kings - "And she said to Elijah, what have I to do with thee, O thou Man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" His Lordship dwelt with much force and eloquence on the incidents connected with the raising of the son of the widow of Zarepath by Elijah the Tishbite, and the necessity of a recollection of past sins, which human nature was too prone to suppose were obliterated by the lapse of time. From this his Lordship argued that national pestilences were sent for the special purpose of leading men to feel the presence, of their Maker, and to remember their sins; such a time was the present, when they saw the mysterious march of this new pestilence, which, for the second time, was stalking through the land...' '...It was their duty, however, to notice the predisposing causes which brought it into one locality of the town, and those causes

were, indirectly, *great uncleanness of person and dwelling, which arose from indolence; again, a want of the necessaries of life; again, excess in God's gifts, such as eating or drinking too much, vicious and unclean habits, incontinence, and lust. Habits of drunkenness were a predisposing cause to such a degree that it had been noted that it had mown down drunkards to a great extent, and he had been told that in the Channel Islands the drunkards there had been swept away as though the pestilence had been directed by the hand of man against them…'*
(Jackson's Oxford Journal, Saturday 29th September 1849).

It would appear that pockets of health (like that apparently prevailing in this village) existed all round Oxford, for reasons which we have already gone into. Witney, while noting the date for the Day of Humiliation, says, somewhat smugly; 'We have much pleasure in being able to state that hitherto not one death has occurred in this town from that cause.' They were not so lucky when it came to sheep theft however. '...a single fat ewe sheep, the property of Mr. William Cook, of Crawley, was stolen from a field in the hamlet of Crawley...the thieves decamped with the carcase, leaving behind the skin, head and entrails...' (Jackson's Oxford Journal 22nd September 1849). Obviously these were not thieves in a hurry!

Abingdon suffered its share of cholera deaths and there too the Day of Humiliation was widely observed, '…The Rev. N. Dodson preached a sermon in the morning and afternoon, suited to the occasion, both of which were listened to with devout attention by large congregations.' (Jackson's Oxford Journal). The town was, however, at pains to put the pestilence into perspective: 'It is with great pleasure that we have to notice the decline of this disease in our town. Through the courtesy of the registrar of births and deaths we are enabled to give the following statement; - From the 17th of July last to the 19th of this month, 28 persons died from Cholera, but from that time to the present there has not been one death, nor indeed one case. The general state of the town is healthy, and there is but little fever or other illness.

One of the absurd rumours prevalent in our locality, arising out of the fact of Abingdon having been visited with cholera, is, that this year no Hiring Fair will be held. We are most anxious to dispossess persons of this idea, as, should it be generally spread among our rustic neighbours, it might do injury to the trade of the town, as well as convey an idea that Abingdon is at present in an unhealthy state, which is not the case.'

Long Wittenham, being one of the 'rustic neighbours' referred to, it can only be hoped that our villagers did not allow a little cholera to put them off visiting this popular and useful fair, thereby inflicting an 'injury' on this important market town lying so near to them.

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