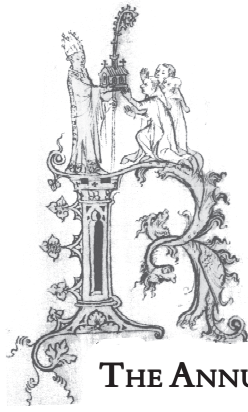


THE RECORDER



THE ANNUAL NEWSLETTER OF THE WILTSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY

EDITORIAL

This year saw the publication of Ian Hicks' excellent volume on early car registrations in Wiltshire, a volume likely to be of interest to car enthusiasts as well as local and family historians. Here is a chance to identify the owners of cars in those wonderful old photographs. John Chandler has worked his usual miracles and, despite a heavy workload, is getting together the manuscript for volume 59, the Probate Inventories of Marlborough, and this should be in print very shortly. Our volumes go from strength to strength, thanks to John's endeavours and his typesetting skills.

Our 2006 AGM was held on a Sunday this year, in the Merchant's House in Marlborough. There was a good turnout and Michael Gray, the Chairman of the Merchant's House Trust, gave a most interesting talk on the history of the house and how the Trust had acquired it. This was followed by tea and tours of the house, where one could see what had been achieved so far in its restoration, what had been uncovered and what the future plans entail. It is a very exciting, on-going project and will surely be of enormous benefit to future generations of students of art, furniture, architecture and social history, as well as of general interest to all those who love to see our heritage preserved. There is an extremely well-stocked library in the house and anyone carrying out historical research of any sort is strongly recommended to approach the Librarian first to find out what the Library holds. Some of its volumes are unique.

This year's AGM will be held on Saturday 2nd June at Steeple Ashton Village Hall, with a tour of the village afterwards. Steeple Ashton has a wealth of old and beautiful vernacular houses and should prove an interesting venue. Further details will be sent nearer the time.

Sally Thomson, Editor

STOCKED UP AT BRINKWORTH

Records of the courts held in respect of Brinkworth and Charlton manors in the later 16th century and earlier 17th are extant in the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office. The lord of the manors in the earlier of those periods was the soldier and MP Sir Henry Knyvett, who held them in the right of his wife, Elizabeth, the daughter and heir of Sir James Stumpe; and in the later period it was the Knyvetts' grandson, the royalist politician, Thomas Howard, Earl of Berkshire. The courts were held in Knyvett's name by his steward, Griffin Curtis, and in Howard's by his steward, John Platt. The stewards held a view of frankpledge, in which leet jurisdiction was exercised and the assize of bread and ale was enforced,

combined with a court of the manor, in which minor pleas between tenants were entered, admittances to land held by copy of court roll were witnessed by the homage and thus validated, and the tenorial and agrarian customs of the manor were recorded, varied and enforced.

Under those headings the courts dealt with a wide range of local affairs. In addition, they sometimes punished statutory offences and, by ordering the repair of highways and trying to prevent undertenants or lodgers from becoming a charge on the parish, involved themselves in parochial business. The courts were evidently well attended, were sometimes held in more than one session, and were not to be treated with contempt. Men were punished for disturbing them with their chatter and verbosity, their bragging and vain-speaking. On one occasion the whole homage disturbed a court with its various pleadings and would not observe silence; and in 1573 a penalty of 20s. was imposed on Richard Shearer who, when charged by the steward to present on his oath, uttered the contumelious and dishonourable words, 'I defy the mace'. The proceedings of the court were to be treated seriously.

A probable example of the vigour of the courts, although just possibly of no more than unusually detailed record keeping, is the frequency with which it was ordered that the stocks at Brinkworth should be used for punishment in the 1570s. The image of offenders restrained in the stocks (*cippi*), seated with their ankles and possibly wrists held in place in front of them by means of a wooden framework, is familiar. Those standing, with wrist and neck restrained, were held in a pillory and, although the making of a new pillory (*collistrignum*) was ordered at Charlton, neither the court at Brinkworth nor that at Charlton ordered offenders to be pilloried.

Between 1571 and 1582 orders were made for 18 offenders to be punished by means of the stocks at Brinkworth. The offenders, and the offences which they had committed, were usually presented to the courts by the jurors. Some offences were minor crimes, such as assault, and the theft of wood, duck and apples. Others involved what might now be called anti-social behaviour and included hedge breaking, the harbouring of 'unknown and extremely suspicious persons', being a chatterer and a scold, and wandering about at night. One Humphrey Jones, described as a disturber and a quarreller, assaulted both the bailiff and the tithingman and, when the tithingman summoned him to the muster, called him 'rascal and scab'. The court seems to have inflicted punishment by means of the stocks slightly more readily on women than on men. Of the 18 offenders thus punished, eight were women and in 1581, when the spoiling of wood by three men and three women were presented, each of the men was punished by a

penalty of 2s. and each of the women by means of the stocks.

It was apparently the duty of the local constable to enforce 'the penalty of the stocks' and the object of the court in imposing such a penalty was presumably to expose the offender to public contempt. In four instances the time at which the penalty was to be inflicted was specified in the court record. In one it was to be at the time of morning prayer on St. Luke's day, exactly a fortnight after the court met, in two it was to be on the Sunday following the meeting of the court, and in one at the time of morning prayer on the following Sunday.

The times at which the penalty was enforced were presumably chosen to expose the offenders to maximum public contempt, and punishment by public humiliation was presumably intended to deter the existing offenders and others from future misdeeds. Possibly on each occasion on which an offender was restrained in the stocks something was exhibited to remind the guilty and inform the innocent of the reasons for the restraint. At Charlton in 1564 a woman who had stolen two geese was to be restrained in the stocks for three hours on each of two days, and for all that time one of the geese was to be tied up in front of her, a punishment which seems rather hard on the goose. In the case of three men restrained in the stocks for three hours at Brinkworth in 1572, the court left no room for doubt: it ordered that the constable should place in front of them a notice made up in very large letters to form the words 'thus are we punished for filching, bribery and as common brawlers and disturbers of the people and neighbours'. The notice presumably carried more weight with the literate than the illiterate.

The earlier 17th century records of the Brinkworth courts contain no reference to the stocks and the contrast between the 1570s, when the court regularly ordered the stocks to be used for punishment, and the 1620s and 1630s, when it made no such order, begs many questions. Were the stocks used in response to unrecorded orders or summarily by the tithingman or constable? Were they used in response to orders by higher courts or officials? Did they go out of use? Or what? It may be supposed that historians envisage all village life in the 1570s to have been like that recorded at Brinkworth, but, at least in Wiltshire, it is rare to find so much direct evidence as there is for Brinkworth: and it is faintly reassuring to know that our mental picture of miscreants in the stocks is not entirely fantasy.

Douglas Crowley

WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON RECORD OFFICE PAST

The impending new Record Office seemed an appropriate prompt to look back at some of the annual reports and minutes of the County Council's Records Sub-Committee.

Now the Record Office has nearly 9,000 visits a year of which 65% are from family historians. Forty years ago the figures were:

	1961	1965	1970
Tutorials	16		
Genealogists	69	167	358
Local history	169	163	293
National	13	27	463
County Council use	61	75	74
	228	432	1,188

In 1961 the office produced only 309 photocopies of documents but by 1970 this had risen to 3,431. The archivist

commented that this was taking up more and more time, as a result of which many new collections were not being catalogued. The huge increase in national inquiries was a result of a change in the universities with many demanding, for the first time, a written project as part of the undergraduate history course.

The Records Sub-Committee, which met three times a year, had an extremely powerful membership under the chairmanship of the Earl of Pembroke. But its activities were limited, decisions were seldom required and there was nothing remotely controversial (unlike the debate about the move to Chippenham!). In May 1960 the committee approved the purchase of a Gischart combined hygrometer and thermometer for 39s. 9d. plus 2s. p. and p. Two years later they rejected a proposal to acquire a microfilm reader even though £150 had been set aside for this in the annual estimates. They did, however, approve a new stapling machine (a Bates Model C) for £3 10s. plus postage. In 1967 £100 was provided for the purchase of documents and the archivist was allowed to spend up to £20 on his own authority provided he reported his action to the next meeting of the committee.

The nearest the committee came to controversy was in September 1972. Marconi had carried out some of his first successful radio experiments at premises in Figsbury near Salisbury (at Hillcrest Bungalow or, later, 'Roving Kennels'). It was proposed that a plaque should be erected on the house to commemorate this achievement. After lengthy deliberation the committee decided to refer the issue to the Finance and Coordinating Committee for guidance.

Would we like to return to the 'good old days'?

Ivor Slocombe

WILTSHIRE NEWSPAPER TRANSCRIPTS

I have been interested in regional newspapers as a source for family and local history since my first visit in the 1980s to the British Newspaper Library. From the mid-18th century regional newspapers survive in substantial quantities, many titles having also been microfilmed. The content offers us a window on our recent past, with unique references to incidents and individuals. Despite their undoubted value, the absence of indexes makes searching newspapers a major challenge, not least because it is very easy to be sidetracked while reading them!

Currently, the best solution of which I am aware, for indexing bulk printed material, is digitalisation. Text images are simply indexed by word, offering quick, flexible searches. Probably the best example at the moment is the Thomson-Gale Digital Archive for the Times Newspaper (1785-1985).

Wiltshire newspapers currently have not been digitalized and as far as I am aware, there are no immediate plans to do so. As an alternative, back in 2003 I started transcribing copies of two well-known Wiltshire newspapers, the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* and the *Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette*. To date, I have finished some 240 examples (mainly 1782-1834), which have been loaded onto my very basic website. Access is, however, free and all transcripts are fully searchable: enter the word or words you wish to search for in the 'Freefind' box; then, after clicking on the page of interest, use Ctrl F to locate the precise reference on a page.

Site address:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~dutilleil/index.html>

Richard Heaton

REVISITING RECORD OFFICE FINDING AIDS

Archivists in the Record Office are working to convert the paper catalogues produced over the last sixty years onto a digital database. This has led us to look again at the work of our predecessors from a time when the title deed was god, and before many of the themes and interests that now drive and inform local history today were in their infancy and, it must be added, before the proliferation of indexes that can assist in more accurate descriptions of archives. (Census indexes which can locate tradesmen whose extant records lack an address are a good example). The following description of the day and ledger books of James Bull (91/2), a tailor, probably in the Melksham area, 1817-1825, found in the Quarter Sessions archives, but removed from there because of uncertain provenance, begged closer scrutiny. Clients' names like Pinnegar, Phipps, Haynes, Overbury and Matravers strongly suggested Westbury as the tailor's place of work. This was confirmed by checking *Early Wiltshire Trade Directories* (WRS vol. 47), which placed Bull in 1822 in Silver (now Maristow) Street.

To establish the original source of such a rare survival adds considerably to its historical importance. The clients mentioned above included several of the leading woollen manufacturers in the town, who may have provided the cloth themselves. In April 1819 Robert Haynes esq. paid 14s. for a livery coat, 4d. for gold lace, 19s. 6d. for a gallon sleeve waistcoat and £1 8s. for cord breeches complete. Family historians often talk about lateral research putting flesh on their ancestors' bones; here they can put the clothes on their backs.

The only matter to sort out was how the books got into the Quarter Sessions archives. The answer can be found in the minute book of the Insolvent Debtors Court in that collection (A1/950). James Bull was presented for debt on 11 July 1825 and was discharged. He was described as formerly of Castle Street, Leicester Square, Middlesex, late of Westbury. The account books do not indicate his financial problems, which may have followed him from London and explained his move from the capital; business was brisk and bills were settled by the Westbury men, no doubt delighted to have a tailor who was presumably in touch with the latest styles amongst them.

An account book with printed almanac for 1756 (2008/1), kept at some time by Henry Green, place not known, aroused similar curiosity. A clue was provided by the names of the children of Henry and Eleanor Green, 1784-1798, and a search by David Carter in his *Nimrod Index of Wiltshire marriages* produced Henry Green and Eleanor Oram, who were married in Market Lavington on 5 January 1784. This tied in nicely with the almanac which was published by Henry Season of Bromham. He is a significant enough figure to merit an entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, as he was a noted astrologer and medical practitioner, whose books entitled *Speculi Anni* are described in the *DNB* as standing 'above the bland repetitive style of his competitors'. Examples of his books for several years between 1748 and 1767 survive among the Gleed family archive in the Record Office (946/309). Each year he set his readers a conundrum and revealed the winners in the following edition. The names are exclusively from the Devizes area, suggesting a strong, loyal, local readership, even though his fame was more widespread, rather than any superior intelligence among the people of central Wiltshire.

Steven Hobbs

THE WILTSHIRE ESTATES OF EDWARD OF SALISBURY

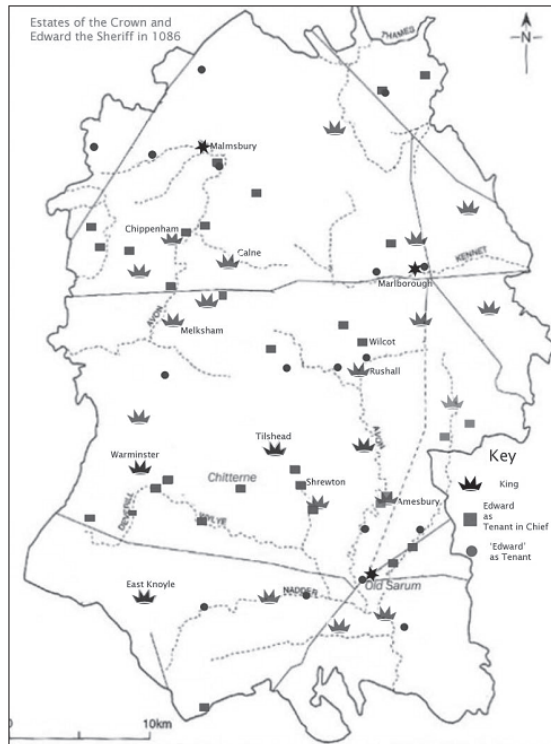
According to the Domesday Survey of 1086, Edward of Salisbury was a wealthy landholder with estates in nine counties in southern England. His largest property comprised adjoining manors on the Dorset/Hampshire border at Canford Magna and Kinson with a combined value, in 1086, of £70. Wilcot was probably his principal Wiltshire manor; this is the first of his estates mentioned in the Survey and had a large house, a vineyard and a new church.

In all, Edward held forty-two estates in Wiltshire as a chief tenant of the Crown; these varied in taxable hidage from 20 hides at Shrewton to ¾ hide at Middleton. Many of these estates appear later as possessions of either Edward's descendants, the Earls of Salisbury, or the de Bohun family, who were related to Edward through marriage. Edward also held land as a subsidiary tenant, although the exact amount is unclear due to a lack of positive identification. However, as land at Mildenhall, Tisbury, Durnford and Boscombe appears in the records of the Earls of Salisbury, it is reasonable to assume that Edward of Salisbury was the tenant in 1086.

The Domesday Survey for Wiltshire gives little indication of how Edward acquired his estates. No 1066 tenants were given for Wilcot, Alton Barnes or Etchilhampton, and this has led to speculation that these manors were in Edward's possession in 1066, either as owner or tenant. Eighteen of his estates (seven in Wiltshire) came from just three 1066 holders of land, Wulfwynn, Azur and Alwine. Edward appears to have received all of Wulfwynn's estates, representing approximately a third of his total Fee, with a value in 1086 of £148.10s. Entries in the Domesday Survey and the earlier Geld Roll give the impression that Edward was avaricious. It is evident there were disputes involving land in Wiltshire with Wulfwi, the former holder at Langley Burrell, Croc the Huntsman (North Tidworth), William de Picigny (Bradenstoke) and Glastonbury Abbey (Little Langford). These were specifically mentioned, but disputes may also have occurred with ecclesiastical authorities at Christian Malford, Bremhill, Ashton and Burcombe.

Most of Edward's Wiltshire estates were in one of three groups: in the north-west of the county, mainly around the Bristol Avon and its tributary the Bybrook; to the north-east of Salisbury Plain in the upper reaches of the Salisbury Avon and the Pewsey Vale; and lastly on the southern part of Salisbury Plain and along the tributaries feeding into the Salisbury Avon. These properties served to support his administrative duties as sheriff; others were exploited for their agricultural incomes; and the remainder were held by his military tenants.

Edward's principal rôle was as the king's representative in the county, and his duties included administering royal estates and collecting revenues; and he may also have had military and judicial duties acting as castellan of Salisbury Castle and attending the shire court. He probably also had duties associated with the king's hunting rights in the county. The distribution of Edward's estates indicate that a number were in close proximity to royal manors at Warminster, Chippenham, Rushall, Calne, Melksham and Ogbourne. Edward's estate at Lacock bordered the forests of Melksham and Chippenham; and manors at Ludgershall and North Tidworth were close to another royal forest at Chute on the Hampshire border. Other indicators of an administrative function are place and occupation names. 'Shrewton', located near the royal domain at Tilshead, is derived from *scirgerefa-tun*, the



Basis for Map: Hundredal Maps in Thorn F & Thorn C *Domesday Book Wiltshire* and Map of 'British and related place names' Eagles B. 'Anglo-Saxon Presence and Culture in Wiltshire cAD450-c675' in *Roman Wiltshire and After* ed. P Ellis (Devizes 2001)

sheriff's settlement; and Edward's tenant at Somerford was Scirweald.

Edward's demesne estates in Wiltshire accounted for approximately two-thirds of the total value of his holdings in the shire, his English tenancies around ten percent and his Norman tenants the remainder. Edward appears to have fully exploited his demesne estates. An analysis indicates extensive areas of pasture and woodland. Pasture was concentrated on manors in the vicinity of Salisbury Plain, principally at Chitterne and Shrewton. Chitterne also had a concentration of woodland, as did Lacock and Poole Keynes on the Gloucestershire border. He also had revenues from several mills, seven of which were on estates held in demesne. Five of Edward's English tenants had estates in the valleys to the west of Chitterne; and they probably assisted in the farming activities of the main estates.

Osmund is probably the only one of the Norman tenants who can be identified with any certainty, as he is likely to have been the Bishop of Salisbury, appointed to the diocese in 1078. He held two small estates at Amesbury, not far from his cathedral seat at Salisbury. The rest of the Norman tenants were likely to have been knights holding land for military service, in all probability consisting of guard duties at Salisbury castle. However, it is worth noting that three of these tenants held land adjacent to major route-ways and river crossings at North Wraxall, Langley Burrell and Blunsdon. Edward's own estates at Porton, Lacock, and his tenancy at Mildenhall were all at major river crossings. These locations could have served to increase Edward's revenues from tolls; but also provided an opportunity to control the movement of people if required.

Jean Martin

PAINÉ'S GRAVE

This story begins with the late Michael Lansdown, for so many years Treasurer of this Society. During the long period that he was editor of the *Wiltshire Times*, he ran, and largely wrote, a column under the name of The Gleaner, which often contained pieces of local history. In one of these (I do not have the date), he commented on the discovery in New York State of a tombstone thought to be that of Thomas Paine, author of *The Rights of Man*.

Michael went on to say that as a child he had been told that the small piece of waste land adjoining London Bridge was called Tom Paine's Grave. For the information of non-Trowbridgians, London Bridge is at the extremity of the parish on the road to Wingfield; the name, recorded in the 17th century, is presumably ironic. He went to the Record Office to investigate and there he found that on the map attached to the Enclosure Award of 1816, there is a dot within a circle, marked Paine's Grave. This is on a small patch of ground on the north side of the road, which was actually an allotment under the award, but has never been worth anybody's while to fence in. I now quote; 'Who was Paine? Was he a local suicide of the 18th or early 19th century? Did the name "Tom" then get added when the revolutionary writer became famous? Who knows?'

There the matter rested until the recent publication of volume 2 of John Young's *Wiltshire Watch and Clock-makers*. His entry about William Paine of Trowbridge includes the following from the Bath and Salisbury papers of 1788: 'On Monday morning last [15 December] one Paine, a respectable watchmaker of Trowbridge, hung himself in his bedchamber. The jury's verdict *felo de se*. His body was buried in the highway.' Paine's Christian name comes from clocks that he made; one, of extremely high quality, is illustrated in Cescinsky and Webster's *English Domestic Clocks*. The addition of 'Tom' arises only from its connection with the surname.

My first thought on reading this was why did I not know about it from our Vol. 36, *Coroners' Bills 1752-1796*? Answer - the bill for that period is missing. How long did the practice of burying suicides in the highway continue? Answer - it was abolished by an Act of 1823 (4 Geo IV c. 52). From then on, coroners were to order private interment in the appropriate graveyard, (without any stake being driven through the body), between the hours of nine and twelve at night. The Act specifically forbade rites of Christian burial. Why did he do it? We are very unlikely ever to know.

A footnote to the episode comes from a pamphlet, *A Brief Memoir of the Life of Mr. John Fryer of Holbrook Farm, Trowbridge, who departed this life, January 17th, 1845, aged 95 years, written by his grandson* [John Astley Fryer]. I cannot do better than to quote this at length:

'...about 40 years since...a man by the name of Daniel Cox committed suicide at Trowbridge, and it was the custom in those days to bury all self-murderers on the cross-roads near to the town. The shrubbery near to our Farm was selected (though I cannot think myself that this could properly be called cross-roads) for his last resting place, and there he was actually buried. Several reports, as may be imagined, were abroad concerning it; some had undoubtedly seen his ghost while passing there of a night, others had heard footsteps, and different kinds of noises at various times; while many said that the ghost brought in Mr. Fryer's cows into the barton every morning. My grandfather, not at all liking such things to be said, and more than that, the fact of his being buried so near the dwelling house, hired one or two men, who quietly set to work by night, and dug the body of this wretched man up,

and conveyed him in a cart to London bridge, on the Wingfield road, where some more men were busy at work opening the same grave that Thomas Paine another suicide was buried in, and there also they put the body of this Daniel Cox, and filled the grave in again; all this was done during the night. Some men however, passing by the next morning, and seeing the earth had been fresh disturbed, reported the case to some more parties, when they commenced digging, found the body, (or rather, the coffin, as I should say) of Daniel Cox, and brought it back to the same spot where it now lies. The stone, where the grave was, may still be seen by the side of London bridge, near Trowle Common.

'The idea of his being removed and brought again to the same spot, raised fresh thoughts in the public mind; persons were actually afraid to pass the road at night for fear of seeing him, and I remember a tale told about my uncle; he was returning home from Trowbridge one evening rather late (it was a beautiful moonlight night) and to come to the house he was obliged to pass over, or very near the grave; he whistled as the schoolboy did, "to keep his courage up", when suddenly he heard someone coming behind him; on looking round, he saw the figure of a man approaching, all dressed in white - he was dreadfully alarmed, what to do he knew not, whether to run or to stand still, when the figure called out to him and said, "don't be frightened, Mr. Fryer, it is only me", and it proved to be a Weaver, who had thrown over him a large white cloth that they use, to keep himself warm, as he was going to fetch a surgeon from Trowbridge to see his wife who was taken suddenly ill.'

The inquest on Daniel Cox, who hanged himself, was held on 4 November 1802. Nothing else has been found about him or his death. The shrubbery was at the corner of Holbrook Lane and Bradley Road. The weaver was almost certainly wrapped in the long white bag which weavers are known to have used to carry home their work.

Kenneth Rogers

IF THIS DOESN'T WORK . . .

In these days of cures for almost everything, it is a sobering thought to find a couple of suggested cures for the common cold in the 17th century. Like most cure-alls, they were based on plants, these being relatively mild concoctions.

for a Cold

take a pottle of spring water putt into itt 3 or 4 elicampane roots small shred & putt into itt mere halfe a pound of sugar & halfe a pounce of reasons of the sonne stoned boile this together till it come to a quart then drink a little glasse full ev(er)y morning fasting & ye like ev(er)y evening & eate now & then a slice of elecampane. Sometimes when you brew take a pottle of wort in stead of the water & then a ¼ of sugar will serve & use it as before.

Take an ounce of powder of Elicampane one ounce of seeds one ounce of white sugar candy halfe an ounce of liquorice a little race of fine ginger (cutting of the outside) beat all this to a powder & finely search them & mingle them together & eat of itt as oft as you will.

Glossary:

pottle = bottle

elicampane = *Inula helenium*, a plant of the Sunflower family, with rather fine petals.

reasons of the sonne = raisins

wort = the infusion of malt which, after fermentation, becomes beer

sugar candy = sugar crystallised by repeated boiling and slow evaporation

race = ginger root

search = sieve

The ingredients would probably not have been easily available, sugar and spices were still the luxury items of the wealthy, which is probably why it appears in Lord Hungerford's manorial book! Though it seems a strange place to record it.

WSRO Ref: 490/1541

Old Court Book of Manors of Sir Edward Hungerford, 4 to 5 Car 1 (1628 -1640)

Sally Thomson

THE VIEW FROM THE WILTSHIRE VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY

This time last year the Victoria County History was preparing to thank Dr Douglas Crowley for 37 years of service. A Celebration of Wiltshire Local History, the conference held in his honour at the University of the West of England Regional History Centre, was a great success. Thanks to all of you who came and made it such an enjoyable occasion. This year there is a new team in the VCH office at County Hall. I was appointed to the post of county editor last April, having been assistant editor since September 2004. James Lee joined me as the new assistant editor in August. Although VCH editors develop an understanding of all periods of English history, from the pre-Conquest era to the present day, we do have our own areas of specialism. I am a medievalist by training and my PhD on parish life, 'Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Religious and Social change in Cambridgeshire 1350-1558' was published in 1996. My interest in religious history continues with my research on the Bridgettine nuns of Syon Abbey 1400-1600. James is more of a political historian and his PhD on 'Political Communication in Early Tudor England' focused on Bristol and the South-West. His book, *Preachers, Pulpits and Politics in the Restoration era* will be published in 2007. Between us our period of detailed knowledge extends from around 1300 to 1714. We are always happy to answer queries in our specialist areas besides more general queries relating to VCH work.

In 2006 staff worked towards the completion of Volume XVIII. Before retirement, Douglas Crowley wrote the history of the town of Cricklade. The volume will also contain parish histories of Ashton Keynes and Leigh, Eisey, Latton, and Lydiard Millicent by assistant editor Carrie Smith, and Marston Meysey by myself. I am currently writing the history of Purton and James is writing the history of Minety. The volume will go to press in 2007. I am already planning research on Volume XIX on Heytesbury hundred, parishes of Boyton, Chitterne All Saints, Chitterne St. Mary, Codford St. Mary, Codford St. Peter, Brixton Deverill, Heytesbury, Horningsham, Imber, Knook, Orcheston St. George, Tytherington and Upton Lovell; and South Damerham Hundred, parishes of Compton Chamberlayne, Longbridge Deverill and Monkton Deverill.

Our next event will be a Book Launch and Local History Fair at Codford Village Hall on Saturday 21 April 2.00-5.00. We will celebrate the publication of the VCH History of Codford by Phillimore & Co. with financial

support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The highlight will be a talk by Rex Sawyer, author of *Little Imber on the Down*. Display stands and admission are free, so do get in touch for details.

The Wiltshire VCH Appeal Trust is organising a series of fund-raising events. Last summer, Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright-Hignett opened their wonderful gardens at Iford Manor to trustees and their guests. Victoria Landell-Mills, Chair of the Trust (01225 863668) has details of a similar evening event to be held at Longford Castle on Friday 8 June and Ivor Slocombe (01225 862525) is planning a public lecture to be held in Bradford-on-Avon. The Trust paid for a travelling exhibition on the work of VCH Wiltshire. It was displayed at the Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office for six months, at several other venues and is available for more bookings. The Trust has also established a bursary towards the fees of a PhD student working on an aspect of Wiltshire History, which will assist VCH staff with research and writing. Initially, we intend to fund a thesis on the Wiltshire estates of Glastonbury Abbey, focusing on those in the area covered by Volume XIX. Contact me for further information.

VCH staff will be teaching on the new MA in Regional History at the University of the West of England from Autumn 2007. James has updated the website and information has been transferred from the old address www.wiltshirepast.net to www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/Wiltshire. The Institute of Historical Research in London added Wiltshire VCH Volume VI to Volumes III, VIII, XVI and XVII on the British History On-line website www.british-history.ac.uk. The VCH office will move to the new Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre at Chippenham later this summer, where we will share office space with other Heritage Services staff.

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MOONRAKING

The Yorkshire village of Slaithwaite, in the Colne Valley near Huddersfield, holds each February a moonraking procession, and last year (and again in 2008) a festival. During 2006 their festival website explained that the moonraking legend originated in Slaithwaite and was transferred to the Devizes area of Wiltshire in 1815 when one of the smugglers, Ken Boot, emigrated there from his Yorkshire home.

The claim is easily disproved. Our Local Studies Library holds a copy of the *Western County Magazine* for the year 1791, which published a letter from a Poulshot farmer headed 'Wiltshire Moon-Rakers'. The correspondent recounts the moonraking story much as in later versions - local smugglers, retrieving contraband from a watery hiding place, are surprised by excisemen, and to evade arrest feign stupidity by pretending that they are raking out what they mistakenly take to be a cheese, but which in fact is the moon's reflection. He locates the event to his native Poulshot, and refers to 'two or three of my countrymen of old' as the moonrakers -

'his grandmother declares it to be so'. This wording would seem to take the story back at least a generation before 1791, say to about 1760, and perhaps earlier.

But it would be nice to have a consensus about when and where the confrontation occurred. Besides the Poulshot claim, ponds or streams at Collingbourne Ducis, Tilshead and in the Bishop's Cannings area are often cited, including the Crammer on Devizes Green (which lay within the parish of Bishop's Cannings until the 19th century). Altogether Les Reeves, who has published a brief study of such matters, found about twenty claimants in Wiltshire, and nationally there are said to be more than forty. The Tilshead claim (a pond called Ben-Shee between Tilshead and Orcheston) was made in 1933 and referred to a named ancestor of the claimant living only about 100 years earlier - so he cannot be the original moonraker. The Cannings strands of the tradition may simply have arisen because, like Gotham near Nottingham, all local examples of rustic stupidity were ascribed to 'Cannings volk'.

What seems clear is that moonraking has to do with smuggling, and perhaps it was a local slang term for the 'gentlemen who passed by' on this illegal but widely condoned occupation. If so, it may have arisen from a real incident, or several real incidents, or perhaps it was just an allusion to people who hid and then fished around for contraband in obscure places under cover of darkness. Moonshine and moonlighting have similar illicit connotations. What is certainly true is that the handling and passage of smuggled goods, which were landed on the south coast and then taken 'up-country' through rural Wiltshire, was a widespread and lucrative activity during the 18th century. The Rowde man, Robert Trotman, killed by excisemen near Poole while leading a band of smugglers in 1765, is only the best known of many Wiltshire practitioners - and Rowde, it should be noted, is next door to Poulshot.

So what evidence we have points to the Devizes area in the mid 18th century as the most likely origin of the moonrakers story. But the concept of moonraking goes back much further. It is found in France, where *les pescalunes* were the simpletons of Aurillac in the Auvergne. The old fable of *Del gupil e de la lune* ('the fox and the moon') was reworked in the 12th-century by Marie de France (fable 58). It tells of a fox who, seeing the moon's reflection in a pond and mistaking it for a cheese, set about drinking the pond dry in order to retrieve it - until he burst. The mysterious Marie is generally regarded as the earliest significant woman writer in French, although it is likely that she lived in England. In fact one quite plausible identification is with Marie, abbess of Shaftesbury from 1181-1216, who was of course a major Wiltshire landowner. Perhaps therefore the story of the reflected cheese, like the phases of the moon, is cyclical.

John Chandler

NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

The membership year started on 1st January and I am most grateful to those who have already paid their subscription. May I remind those who have not yet paid that their subscription is now due. The subscription remains at £15 a year.

Ivor Slocombe, Treasurer