

WOODBURY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

2011 NEWSLETTER



“THE MIST’S OF TIME”

They say that “Time is of the essence”. This of course is very true, and the older one gets, the faster it seems to go! It could also be said, that with this high speed of “Life’s rich pattern”, one is in danger of forgetting the past unless it has been documented, even the recent past, quite quickly. Therefore all should put pen to paper if at all possible, to tell their story, especially if they are local.

The picture above documents the refurbishing of the clock at St Swithun’s in 1994, when local sign writer Eric Veale volunteered to re-gild the clock face. This was a job that his father Walter had done some 60 years before. The numerals and hands were given a coat of 23 carat gold leaf, which should last for generations, which will ensure that time will go on in Woodbury. “I was born and bred in Woodbury within sight of the church clock, and although I moved away from there in the 1950’s, I wanted to do something for the village”, said Eric. Inside this newsletter are some articles by local people who wanted to record their stories. One of these is from Kenneth Downs, who now lives a long way from here, but put pen to paper so that we could hear his story. Gillian Selley has also given us an interesting and informative account of being a village apprentice in the 18th and 19th centuries. Gill also advises that there has been a clock on the tower since at least 1661, so the hands have been around well over three million times since then. The Mist’s of Time indeed!



~ Webbers Farm 1932 - 1984 ~

My father went in to Webbers Farm as a tenant of the then Rolle Estate in 1932. Now of course it is the Clinton Devon Estates. The farm had become vacant following the previous tenancy of Harry Glanvill coming to an end. At this point in time agriculture was in a particularly poor state and few people wanted to go into farming. There were no particular uptakers of the Webbers tenancy, so my Grandfather went to the Rolle Estate office and said to the agent “My son would like this farm”. The deal was done and my father moved in.

He gradually built up a herd of cows which were hand milked in the shippons surrounding the main courtyard. In the 1940’s more mechanised methods became available using a simple vacuum pump to extract the milk from the cows putting it into small churns. In the early days the family operated a milk round around the village and also via a small dairy at the farm. All the shippons had storage areas above where hay and straw would be kept for the winter. It was hard work to put the fodder up there as it was all “uphill!”

The house was large with 6 bedrooms and two staircases. The front stairs and the back stairs. The house also had two distinct ends – the “posh” end and the servants end. I hasten to add that I was brought up in the servants end! The “posh” or owners end had nicely planed oak floorboards, whereas the servants end had ill fitting elm floorboards. A central door in the landing upstairs, and another in the passage downstairs divided the two areas. It seems amazing to me that such a differential should have been built into the original house. There must have been a definite “upstairs and downstairs” attitude in the early days.

On the ground floor there were two large reception rooms, a kitchen which then was called a scullery where all the food was prepared, and a large room actually called the kitchen which was where all the farm workers would come for their meals around a large table. This room also contained a large inglenook fireplace, on each side of which were, and I expect still are, two bread ovens. The chimney was large and open and straight up to the top. I can remember putting an extending ladder right up to the top from inside the fireplace, and going up to the top and looking out! However, such chimneys had major disadvantages. My parents used to sit on benches on either side of the roaring fire in an effort to keep warm, but the draft up the chimney took all the heat upwards so that they had lovely rosy faces but frozen feet! Eventually they blocked off the inglenook with a brick front in an effort to keep the house warmer. This lasted until the early 1970’s when my wife and I took it out again and reverted to the inglenook. However, by then woodburners had come in and drafts could be controlled, so we were able to have the best of both worlds.

At the end of the house was a dairy room, which was in effect a cold room where all the food was kept, and sides of pork, chickens and turkeys were hung from large hooks in the ceiling. A large slate slab provided a cold base for butter storage and other such items. Under the “posh” end of the house there was a cellar and a basic toilet. Stairs from inside the house led down to the cellar then out into the farmyard. In my days coal and fuel was stored down here, although during the war it was used as an air raid shelter as well. Although I wasn’t very old I do have a vision of seeing a German bomber flying overhead on route to bomb Exeter. Under the servants end there was a well below the scullery floor and two small cellars. In the outhouse just outside the back door there was a trap door in the floor through which all

the ashes from the fire and the range were dropped into a separate small cellar. These were cleared out from below once a year.

The farm buildings adjoined the house, firstly by the stable and tack room. There were stalls for four shire horses and a loft for fodder over. Next to this was a small dairy room where the milk was cooled by water, and a steriliser for cleaning all the utensils. Milk was also sold from here through the small door in the wall to the road. The shadow of this can still be observed if you walk down Bonfire Lane. I'll mention this door again later.

Next to this was a 7 cow shippon (known as 7 house) with loft above. The main farm entrance was next in a gap in the buildings. This is now blocked off. The next building contained the Root House, a dark room where the root crops, mainly mangolds were kept for feeding to the cows in winter.

Next to that was a 12 cow shippon (known as 12 house) with loft over. We are now at the current courtyard entrance. The other side of this entrance was a small 4 cow shippon, which was later turned into a better dairy. Next along was a 10 cow shippon with granary over. In the granary was stored all the grain which had been threshed after harvest. Behind the granary was the Round House, (which was actually square!) but in which a horse would go round and round in draft turning wooden gears, shafts and belts and pulleys to power the grinding machinery in the granary. This is probably where the term "horsepower" came from.

The next building along housed the cider press and associated machinery. Apples were loaded into the loft upstairs then put through the choppers before going into the press. I personally have never seen the press working and think this must have been stopped before I came along in 1942. In the middle of the 50's the redundant press was removed and a grain dryer installed. This operated for many years drying grain for Woodbury Mills, Tipton Mills and many local farmers including our own. On many occasions 20 tons or more of grain was stored above and the beams had to be shored up. The last building along was just a general store/wagon shed with another small granary over.

In the centre of the courtyard stands what used to be the original pigsties. These are now garages. There were four sties in total, and many pigs have

lived and died here! Back in the 30's and 40's self sufficiency was part of a farmers lifestyle as he had little money. If you got hungry you killed the fatted pig, and I well remember seeing many a pig have it's throat cut in this building. It might seem a bit harsh now, but that was the norm at the time. Jack Sellick, the father of Ken was chief executioner to the area, as he had the sharpest knife. Hence the term "Jack the Knife!"

As farming was expanding my father built a Dutch Barn and lean to in part of the orchard behind the buildings. This was in 1932. This was taken down in 1984 and moved to the new site of Webbers in Castle Lane where it still stands.

Subsequent to this a series of cheap corrugated iron clad buildings were erected to accommodate the increasing cow herd. In 1964 the herd had outgrown the premises as it had risen to around 100 cows. The Clinton Estates built a new dairy unit in Castle Lane and the cows were transferred there. The existing buildings and the Dutch barn were converted to house 500 fattening pigs and this continued until 1972 when they were moved to new premises in Toby Lane. After that and until 1983 yet another conversion took place and at one time up to 800 sheep were housed there and in another tin shed behind. All the ewes were lambed there during the winter period, so the site has seen many changes in a fifty year period.

The orchard behind was originally a cider orchard where I can remember bagging up apples in the late 40's early 50's. This eventually got depleted as the trees grew old and fell over one by one. Cider orchards generally went through a bad spell for several years as the demand for cider (the staple drink for farm workers in particular) waned, so at the time trees were not replaced and orchards were turned back into fields.

In 1983 the whole premises of Webbers Farm was sold by the Clinton Estates for development and we moved up to Castle Lane and built a new house, the buildings already being there. The premises had outgrown their usefulness as an agricultural workplace, due to the old design of the buildings which could not be adapted for modern farming methods, and it's only access to fields being via roads which were getting more congested by the year. The main house was split into two and the buildings recycled into dwellings and the orchard developed into Culvery Close. In my opinion it

was a sensible decision, and with hindsight it certainly could not have survived as a working farm up to today.

And finally,

To those who aren't aware, the complex of the old Webbers is subject of a "presence". This presence has been seen by both myself and my son at different times many years apart. I understand that at least one current residents dog has also become aware of something unusual. Basicly it shows itself in the form of a hand closing a door. What we both saw was a hand closing the door from the dairy to the road, which I mentioned earlier. I was walking down Bonfire Lane sometime during the 60's when I saw it's finger through the hole in the door letting the latch down so that the door would stay closed. Interested to see who had gone in I opened the door but there was no-one there. They could not have escaped as the inner door was padlocked. We have never quite got to the bottom of this, but there might have been a suicide at some time, or maybe when the pig jumped a previous "Jack the Knife" mis-aimed and severed his hand. Who knows? I know of other apparitions that have been seen not too far away but I would be interested to know of anyone else who has seen this one.

Roger Stokes.

~ **The Downs family and "ITSA" Engineering** ~

The Downs family came to Woodbury Salterton via Rearsby (Leicestershire), Rockeare village, Hand-in-Pen, Rockbeare Quarry, (father having built his own bungalow), Chardstock, Newton Poppelford, to then rent Melford Rise, in Toby Lane. Settling in and being accepted took some time, after all we could hardly speak the language let alone understand the local dialect! Normal people just did not move around the country in those days, and our lot's speech was a confusing mixture, father quite broad blunt and working class Yorkshire. Mother whose parents were respected landowners in the village, her father running a business with offices in both Leicestershire and London, was in the distinct upper class dialect of Melton

Mowbray, and influenced by the Fox hunting fraternity of the favourite venue of the Duke of Wales. As children, we had a mixture of Devon and Somerset all influenced by our parents.

Attending school of course made the first contact, and mother's church interests helped. I was to go on to join the Cubs, with the Vicar Lewellen's daughter the Cub Master. Mother became one of the founding members, together with my wife, (more language problems, a broad Lancashire dialogue from Blackpool), and Doris Eveleigh.

With no electricity in the area father's first task was providing our own generator, and I suppose that was the start of the business later named "ITSA". Neighbours asked if we could charge their accumulators, which were a necessity in those days. Apart from the newspaper, the only media was a wireless, and they require first a high tension battery, a grid bias battery, and an accumulator. While the first two had to be purchased and when spent dumped, the accumulator was recharged, after charging batteries. It made sense, as having one of only half a dozen cars in the area we could collect from the nearest town, while every one else had a walk of many miles across the fields. Torch batteries followed, then cigarettes. Father had reservations being a non smoker, but demand was there and so the business grew.

I am not sure of the date but we arrived in about 1935, and when the war started, father, unable to pass a medical, he having broken his neck riding a Scott motor cycle as a young man, decided to do something he had always been interested in. He changed the garden work shop from a hobbies machine shop to a munitions factory, all powered by our own generator. While subject to the secrecy act, security was not a word that applied, and any villager collecting his accumulator would just walk in. It was this that led to the name ITSA. Curious visitors would ask "What's that you are making?" Fathers reply would start, "It's a ...", and continue with some quite ridiculous answer. After a while the customer having asked the question would answer, "I know Its a ...", and the name was born.

Every one in the family including mother would be trained as a machine operator. Even my 12th birthday present was a Round-bed Exe Lathe, that was used to make firing pins for the Howitzers supplied for the Egyptian

battles. It paid for a visit to the local chippy in the lunch hour at the Exmouth Secondary Modern School.

With the war over, the production was confined to such things as curtain rail rollers, but having to maintain our own cars, we had the facility to meet the demand for car spares. There being few or no new cars available, every possible vehicle stored in barns or just left in the open for years became a solution. We resurrected cars that even then were antiques, a model T Ford for farmer Stubs, a Star limousine a really magnificent car we had never before seen, and a Citroen for another farmer off Oil Mill Lane. We were soon making axle shafts, reshaping road springs, gears, even rebuilding the Wilson gear boxes, being the only firm in the west country that would even look at this complex machine. This brought more work than the workshop could cope with.

It was then that father disappeared for half a day, to come home and announce he had agreed a deal with Farmer Sage, to buy a bit of Orchard, better described as a bog, in the middle of the village. This was the start of a real DIY project. First the area had to be stabilized, a lorry purchased and hardcore sourced. As a family we had often visited the derelict Royal Marine Camp at Dalditch, and negotiations with the authority responsible led to an agreement to help ourselves with what we wanted. Some 100 tons was collected, and a road roller acquired with no engine! A trip followed to a field on the road from the common down into Exmouth to obtain an old derelict Clino car, that had been seen some time earlier. The engine was repaired and fitted to the roller, and the site changed in appearance. Planning approval was given, and work started in earnest.

Buying concrete blocks was one of the first priorities, but father had different ideas. He knew a friend who had a manual machine for casting single blocks, and another friend who had a broken concrete mixer. Block production was limited to two mixes a day, with mother in charge of the mixer and me or my sister operating the block maker. The wife kept us supplied with refreshments, and father supervised.

As work started, the reception from villagers was mixed. Even in those days the NIMBY culture existed, but to our surprise visitors first came to see just what this family of idiots were doing, but then picked up the odd shovel to

help. One, who soon became a regular, never asking for payment, (but we always found away to show our appreciation), was Fred Eveleigh, who with his wife became long time friends.

When the day came to cast the roof slab, father finally conceded the mixer would not cope, and ready mix was hired. How were we going to get the concrete up to the roof? "We can do that", we said, and a ramp was built, wheel barrows found, all the family threatened, and recruits from as far as Kent arrived. As we started the villagers arrived, and just before dark it was judged a success.

The building you see in the photo became a reality, it housed a shop, showroom for our Calor Gas Enterprise, an office, and at the end a Garage. This extended back to the stream at the rear, while behind the shop and showroom was a large machine shop. Of course the shop fitting was DIY, and the first requirement was a hygienic floor. Back to Dalditch, and after yours truly experimenting, it was found the floor of the officers mess which was a nice red tarmacadam, could be recycled. After several loads, and a boiler constructed, the floor was a success.



I cannot with any certainty say just when the Daimler picture was taken as we had several over the years and all very similar but it has to be after 1953. These cars were used as private hire vehicles, and not licensed taxi's that required a license to operate. The business started in

about 1944 ran until father retired.

Involvement with the villagers was to be further enhanced by the services we offered. For a delivery service for Aladdin Pink Paraffin, a van was purchased, painted bright pink with financial help from Shell, and sign written by another friend, Cyril Evans. It covered an area from Aylesbeare to Topsham to Exmouth, delivering Paraffin and Calor Gas. The Calor business, built from scratch, involved displays at the county show, and we even staged cookery demonstrations for the village WI, with the help of a colleague from the days of my time at the Exeter Gaslight & Coke Co.

The Police and Fire Service called for our help when the newly built road at Telegraph Hill became endangered when a log jam caused a lake to form on the side embankment. We spent several nights providing Calor floodlighting. Back then, we were the only trader with the right equipment.

The shop sold all the necessary for any villager, and became so busy that at times two assistants were required. That of course was in the days before supermarkets, and one relied on the likes of Hill Palmer & Edwards to deliver fresh bread three days a week. Our favourite was Hoopers of Aylesbeare, the best maker of dough cakes ever, or Lipton's and the likes of Trumps Stores delivering weekly from Sidmouth. Before delivery they would visit, sit down to take your order, and even offer a taste of products such as cheese, paté etc., with delivery later in the week.

Other features of Woodbury Salterton common to the area, was the visit of a cycle loaded so high that it was too full to be ridden. It was pushed by an Indian in a turban who came offering almost any garment you wanted, and he called about four times a year. Another similar character came offering any haberdashery you could ever want. Fishy Baker came from Topsham once a week. We even had two butchers, Stamp and Hayman, competing for our custom. Another Woodbury trader was Mills the baker. He delivered the bread he made that morning on a carrier bicycle. Later the bicycle became a very peculiar looking vehicle with a large box with double doors at the front, and a bar across the rear, with some hand controls. The driver sat on the rear end of a motor cycle, looking over the box and steering by pulling the bar one way or the other. His bread was the choice every time, and it was us he came to, to keep his wheels turning. It was a loss when Sowersby bought the business and enlarged it, although the bread was still preferred to that of HP&E.



This photo is of my mother, and Isabel Dean (nee Mitchell), who at that time was employed by Father as driver for our Private Hire service. The picture shows the drawing of the first water from the recently installed water mains to the village.

The natural water could be accessed either by going down steps behind the wall shown in the picture, where constant flow from a natural spring emptied into a stone trough, from which you could ladle water into your bucket, or if you were in need of a drink simply scoop it out by the handful. The alternative was where mother is stood, the usual cast iron pump was situated and you could pump away to fill your bucket. This was the only clean water for quite a large area and everyone had to collect and carry, there was no water rate to pay!

Kenneth Downs

~The Nurseries, Exton ~

During the 1990's in Station Road, Exton, a number of new properties were erected on the site that had been Pratt's Nurseries. This horticultural business was developed by Mr & Mrs George Pratt, who had moved from London in 1908 and purchased a shop in Exmouth which sold greengrocery and fruit and dairy produce. In 1918, George Pratt bought the Nurseries, then called "The Gardens", Exton, from a Mr R. Symes, whose son Reginald, was tragically killed in the First World War at Paschendale. It was the sad loss of this son that prompted the sale of "The Gardens", and from then on a thriving horticultural business was developed by the Pratt family, with George Pratt's son Albert taking over in 1930.



George Pratt with his
Grandson Bill

Being a family business, everyone had to do their share, and this included the children, Bill, Eileen, Phyllis and their mother Mrs Ida Pratt. Ida ran the Exmouth shop. She had been a Woodbury girl whose father James Hall, owned and ran the bakery from the property now called “Living” on the Arch, (the old Post Office). In Mr Symes’s day the property had about six small greenhouses, but when the Nurseries were sold in 1989 at least eighteen glasshouses, some single, some with double span, along with a boiler house, had to be

demolished to make way for the new houses.

Whilst at first vegetables, fruit, flowers, and bedding plants were grown, the nursery gradually started to specialise in the growing of high quality flowers, especially carnations and chrysanthemums for the cut flower trade. Indoors, pot cyclamens and beautifully scented freesias were also a speciality. Daffodils in spring came from a bulb field at Ebford, and this ground still gives forth beautiful blooms that are regularly used to decorate St. Andrews Church, Exton, at Easter.

A small herd of cows, Friesians, Jerseys and a Guernsey cow were kept on the marshy fields opposite the Nurseries, which provided rich grazing. Every cow had a name, and they were tended by a professional cowman. Milk was produced and sold around Exton, or sent in churns to Exmouth by rail. A milk round was worked by Bill and Eileen as youngsters, delivering milk before school. It was sold in bottles stamped with the Pratt name, which had cardboard lids. Bill even remembers taking milk in a can on his bike, the milk being ladled in to customers own jugs. Cream was also made and sold in the Exmouth shop.

During the Second World War the dairy side of the business had the responsibility of preparing individual butter, lard and margarine rations, and marking up ration books.

The horticultural part of the business was required to produce food and tomatoes, lettuces, potatoes, spinach, rhubarb and strawberries were grown. Tomato growing was very successful in the greenhouses, and Bill Pratt remembers conveying crates of tomatoes to the Exmouth shop in a vehicle

with its springs so depressed that the wheels were almost touching and rubbing the underside of the wheel arch!

War time also brought a temporary set back when a daylight bombing raid saw the Exmouth shop on the corner of Manchester Street, opposite the Strand Gardens, severely damaged. Mrs Pratt, working in the shop at the time, and realising that a raid was imminent, marshalled her staff into the rear of the building, which escaped the destruction suffered by the front of the premises. No one from this shop was hurt, but others in other shops were killed. Once out of danger, Mrs Pratt's primary concern was where to carry on trading, and by the next morning she opened up a shop in Miller's Garage showrooms, there being no cars there at the time. Very soon afterwards a new shop was found at 16, Rolle Street, and this shop continued under her management and that of her daughter Eileen, principally as a florist's until Eileen's retirement. It is still a florist's shop today.



Our photo shows Mr Albert Pratt standing in a greenhouse amongst a splendid display of the chrysanthemum "American Beauty". Heat for the greenhouses was produced from anthracite cobble fuelled boilers, which also provided steam for soil sterilisation. The coal was collected

by horse and cart from the nearby Woodbury Road Station, now called Exton Station.

Horses were shod at a farriers just past the George & Dragon Inn at Clyst St. George. Bill remembers riding a brown gelding of theirs along the main road bare back, for shoeing at the farriers. This would be extremely hazardous today in modern traffic conditions!

Compost for cultivations in the greenhouses was made by hand. Straw bedding and manure from the family's milking herd, and top soil from fields the family owned, was mixed together and allowed to mature. Hay and silage from grass cutting was made for the cows, and molasses was sometimes used to sweeten and pickle the silage grass.

Once flowers were ready for picking they were packed in wooden boxes alternately top to tail, and each box was stamped with the Pratt name. Carnations, which became the Nurseries main crop went to Manchester for auction, where they were always much in demand and made high prices. They also went to local shops in Sidmouth and Barnstaple by train until Mr Beeching closed these branch lines. Then they went by bus! The Nurseries flowers also went to the Exmouth shop.

An area at the Nurseries House, which was especially cool, was used for assembling the flowers for despatch, and for making funeral wreaths. This packing shed had a puddle clay floor from an ancient Devon longhouse, which had once stood on the site. A section of wall of this old building still remains at the current Nurseries House.

Sadly, after three generations, with no one to continue, the business of the Pratt's Nurseries was closed at Christmas 1989.

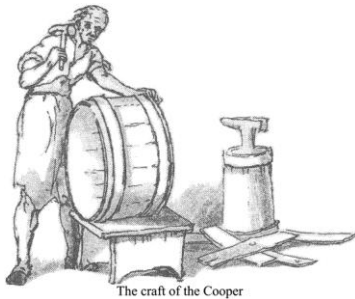
Thank you to Bill Pratt, Eileen Pratt and Mary Wheaton for recording this story.

~ Apprenticeship in the Parish of Woodbury ~

Apprenticeship was the normal way of setting a young person on the path to earning his living, unless he came from a wealthy family. The term of an apprenticeship was for up to seven years and until this had been completed a man was unable to call himself a master of that trade. These apprenticeships were legal arrangements between the father of the prospective apprentice and the master craftsman for which an agreed price was paid. No person was allowed to practice a craft or trade without having undergone an apprenticeship in it, and if discovered to have done so would

be taken before the magistrates. In 1656 Alexander Mable, a butcher of Woodbury, was charged with practicing the ‘trade, art or mystery’ of tallow-chandling without having undergone a seven-year apprenticeship. Only a few records of these privately arranged Woodbury apprenticeships have survived, the following being a sample:

In 1716 William Babb, who was the son of a yeoman from Ebford, was bound by his father for a five year term to a wig-maker of Topsham.



The craft of the Cooper

An orphan called James Wyatt was apprenticed by his sister, in 1721, as a woolcomber and dyer at Wembury near Plymouth. Due to his sister’s foresight James was able to use his craft as a dyer when he was imprisoned by the Spanish, whilst living the life of an adventurer, to earn his living and free himself from capture (this is another fascinating story!).

The following year the Revd. Gilbert Langdon, the minister for Woodbury, paid £21 to John Caunter, a cheirosurgeon of Bovey Tracey, to bind his son Gilbert to a seven year apprenticeship. On completion of his term Gilbert Langdon became Woodbury’s doctor and practiced in the parish until his death in 1791.

In 1766 Worthington Brice, the shipwright who lived at Nutwell, certified that ‘Joseph Westcott served seven years to the art or mystery of a shipwright and he behaved as an honest and faithful apprentice during the said term and is a good workman’. Another document has survived in which Westcott petitioned the Commissioners of the Navy to enter ‘His Majesty’s Dockyard at Plymouth’ as a shipwright, to which document he appended his certificate from Worthington Brice.

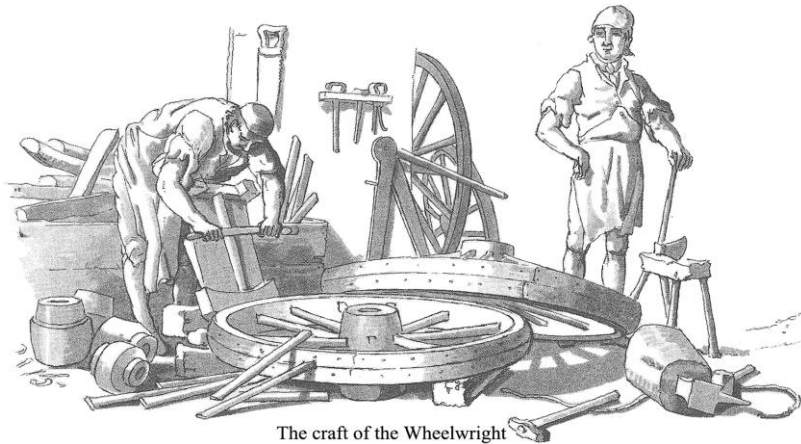
The most usual apprenticeships to be found are those in which the overseers of the poor bound a boy or girl, for a set amount of money, to a farmer to instruct him or her in ‘husbandry’ or ‘housewifery’. The document of apprenticeship was a legal record drawn up before the magistrates showing that the relevant parish overseers had bound the young person to a particular

master for a set term of years, and the employment to which they were to be apprenticed. It was customary to try to place the children within in the parish, but there are several instances of them being bound in neighbouring parishes. These children became unpaid labour for the farmer and could result, in some cases, in ill treatment. The earliest parish apprenticeship is recorded in 1685 when the farmer was released of his apprentice for the sum of £2. The length of the apprenticeship served would determine how much money was repaid to the overseers if the term was unfulfilled. This apprentice would then be assigned to a different master to complete his term. There were a variety of reasons for giving up an apprentice including death of the master, lack of money or work to support him, or the master or apprentice having been convicted of a crime.

Some children were fortunate in that the parish was able to find apprenticeships in a particular craft as in the case of Thomas Pridham who, in 1700, was apprenticed to a rope maker in Paignton. In 1811 Israel Marks was bound to Philip Moore to learn the trade of a shoemaker, and in 1835 an arrangement was made for John Daley to learn the same trade with Joseph Davey at the expense of the parish.



The records of the overseers of Woodbury are incomplete for the earlier period, but by the beginning of the 19th century there is much more evidence available. Anyone receiving parish assistance was obliged to have his child apprenticed. There are instances of parents refusing to let their children go which make sad reading. It must have been heartbreaking for a mother to have her seven year old child sent to work on a farm or as a servant. Not only would the wrench of losing the child be upsetting but all children were important within the family to help with younger siblings and to add a few pennies to its income with odd casual jobs. The overseers' accounts for Woodbury show several cases where parents, who would not release their children who had been legally bound as apprentices by the parish, were threatened with having their parish assistance stopped.



The craft of the Wheelwright

The apprenticeship system meant that young people became skilled, not only in a particular craft or trade, but also in the skills needed to run a household and work on the land – the basics of living were taught and handed down to the next generation.

Gillian Selley

~ **The Ashford's of Venmore** ~



My Grandfather, William (18 December 1871 – 1 January 1954), was the last Ashford to be born at Venmore. He was the youngest of the seven children of William Ashford (1832-1901) and Elizabeth nee Lee (1837-1915) and his parents moved to Aylwood, Heavitree after the sale of the farm on Lady Day 1892.

It will probably help to retrace history to 20 October 1789 when Jacob Butter (my Great-Great-Great Grandfather), a Surgeon and Apothecary living at Cooks Venmore (later to be known as Higher Venmore), married Catherine Farr in East Budleigh. They had six children, but only the first three lived beyond the age of 2 years. The eldest of these was John, who followed in his father's footsteps to become a Surgeon. John wrote extensive diaries,

which I still possess and in which he recounts his life in the South Devon Militia, his marriage in 1826 to Elizabeth White Veale of Ugborough, his many and varied operations (including pioneering cataract surgery) and his founding of the Plymouth Eye Infirmary where his portrait still hangs. Elizabeth inherited land in Ugborough from her father and John bought a great deal in South Brent, so by the time of the 1839 Tithe Map he owned 898 acres in that area, much of which on his death passed to his Nephews and Great-Nephews, some of whom were still living in Woodbury.

Although John travelled far-and-wide, his younger brother Jacobus remained in Woodbury and never married, dying on 20 May 1846 of Dropsy.

The third child of Jacob and Catherine Butter was Catherine Mary who was born in 1794 and married James Ashford of Cadhayes Venmore on 20 October 1819. According to the 1839 Tithe Map, all the land which James farmed belonged to Lord Rolle with Venmore itself consisting of 69.28 acres of arable, pasture, meadow and orchard. Other lands farmed by James were Bridge Pit (18.29 acres), Plymptons (30.16 acres), Spears Tenement (14.57 acres) and Greens Ground (6.46 acres) all in the parish of Woodbury. James must have increased his land as by the time of the 1851 census it is stated that he farmed 188 acres and employed six Labourers.

To my knowledge, James and Catherine had eight children but, slightly surprisingly, it was the third son, William, who took over the farming of Venmore. This may in part be due to the fact that the eldest son, John Butter, had decided to go into the medical profession qualifying in Aberdeen and then working in Wolverhampton, Torquay and Plymouth where he died in a house previously owned by his eminent uncle – whose name he bore.

At the time of the 1861 Census James had retired, although still living in Venmore with his wife, one daughter and a grandson. His son William (who was living in Rose Cottage with his mother-in-law, wife and one son) had taken over and was farming 200 acres and employing seven Labourers and a Boy. This increased still further until at the time of the 1871 census William was farming 250 acres and employing eight Labourers.

As stated in the opening paragraph, William married Elizabeth Lee, who was the daughter of Thomas Lee (1744-1841) of Sparkhays, Woodbury.

Thomas was already 62 years of age when he married Anna Tilke of Colaton Raleigh and he died 5 years later. The young Elizabeth was therefore brought up by her distant relatives (3C1R) Brice Wakeford Lee and Ann Greir Lee who lived in Ebford Barton. In 1839 Brice owned 106.89 acres in Ebford as well as owning or leasing further land in the parish. Neither he nor Ann married, so when they died Elizabeth and her children were amongst their principal heirs, thus strengthening the ties between the Ashford and Lee families.

William and Elizabeth's first two sons were named after their prosperous relatives being called John Butter and Brice Wakeford Lee. Their third son James Edwin was named after his grandfather, and their last son William after his father. Their daughters were Emily Elizabeth, Anna Catherine (aka Kate) and Julia Mary (aka Jude). John, Brice and William were all keen sportsmen excelling on both the rugby and cricket fields where all played for their county with William also rugby for St Thomas' Hospital and England. James emigrated to Canada while John and Brice moved to Exeter and Bristol respectively. William carried on the family medical tradition and became a Surgeon. He served in the Boer War where he met his future wife, a Red Cross Nurse, and together they returned to Topsham and set up a medical practice, based at Riversmeet Terrace and with some of William's patients living in Woodbury.

Many of the Ashfords are buried in the graveyard at St Swithun's Church, whereas the Lees were laid to rest in Gulliford Graveyard, Lymptone. Jacob and Catherine Butter (nee Farr), together with their son Jacobus, are remembered on a plaque in St Swithun's; however, their other son John, having been one of the original shareholders of the Plymouth and Stonehouse Cemetery Company, not surprisingly, is buried there.



Standing (left to right) - Brice Wakeford Lee (1863-1923), James Edwin (1867-1952), Emily Elizabeth (1862-1907), John Butter (1860-1934) Front (left to right) - Anna Catherine (aka Kate) (1865-1956), William (1871-1954), Julia Mary (aka Jude) (1870-1961) William (1832-1901) and Elizabeth (nee Lee) (1837-1915) seated

Woodbury Local History Society Programme 2012 Feb.

2nd Annual General Meeting & Social Party.

March 1st *Rydon Farm: Memories of a Woodbury farming family*
John Glanvill and June Hallett

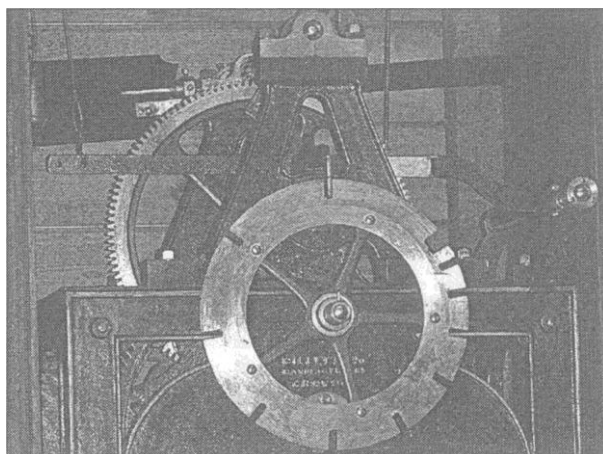
May 3rd *History of the Archaeology and Ecology of Woodbury Common*
Bungay Williams (Chief Warden of the Commons)

June/July *Outing to Sidmouth or Topsham Museum.*

Sept. 6th *Woodbury Lace Tells a Story: A Social History of Lacemakers*
Carol McFadzean

Nov. 1st *'Lest They Forget': The War Memorials of East Devon.*
Todd Gray

Feb. 7th 2013 Annual General Meeting & Society Party



The clock mechanism at Exeter Cathedral, visited by members during 2011, where the "Mist's of Time" roll on at the same pace as in Woodbury - 8760 revolutions per year!

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