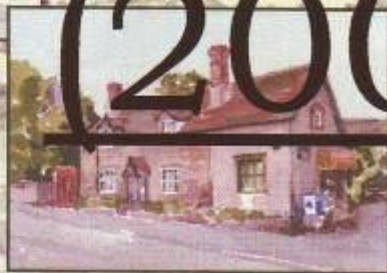
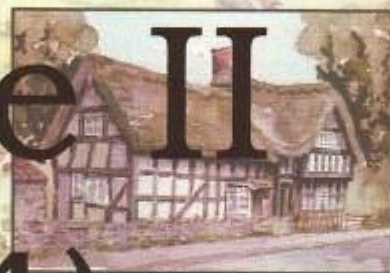


Living History

Yarpole Group Parish
2000



Volume II
(2004)



Living History.

NEWSLETTER AUGUST 2004.

Welcome to our Fifth Newsletter: attached are three Articles:

- (1) The report on the Monumental Inscriptions in the Churchyard.
- (2) A look at the Parish during the Roman Era.
- (3) The first of an occasional series on those from the Parish who gave their lives in the two World Wars;



There are twenty-five names on the Yarpole/Bircher War Memorial and nine on the Lucton Memorial.

We hope to publish their stories in the future.

Oral History: As a group, we want to collect an oral record from residents of the Parish. We have started - we have purchased a digital recorder (which means we can download interviews onto CD), & we have created a list of names of people who would seem suitable for interview. We have tried out our technique on the first 'guinea pigs', and we are going back to one of them for a second helping.

If you would like to participate in this project as an interviewer (full training & support provided), or if you have suggestions of people who you think would make interesting subjects, please let us know via our Oral History Coordinator, Rhianon Turrell (780677).



Are there any milestones in the Parish ?

There were eight ! During the Second World War, most of the roadside milestones in the Country were destroyed or removed (as a precaution in case of invasion). Were they re-instated? There is this very old one at Mortimers Cross.

From old maps it should be possible to pin-point exactly where each of these eight milestones were located and what was written on them.

Nature Jottings: The activity of the green woodpeckers appears to be more obvious this year, but martins and swallows are not as numerous as in previous years.



Update on the Bell Tower:- At the public meeting on the 7th May, Nick Molyneux, from English Heritage, was able to bring together all that was known about the Bell Tower and all of that is now embodied in the published leaflet, available in the church. Many questions were raised at the meeting, discussed and left for another day. So rather than produce a single definitive article on the Bell Tower, it is proposed that we should issue a series of Articles beginning, in the next issue, with an A4 transcript of the published pamphlet.

MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS – PRELIMINARY REPORT: The Living History Group spent a number of days earlier this year, recording the monumental inscriptions from all the legible gravestones in St. Leonard's Churchyard. We fought against the depredations of ivy, moss & even lichen (although we were very careful with this), the weather (we were rained off one day), & the softness of the local sandstone used for so many headstones.



Several Living History Friends helped (Nancy Morgan, Sue & Christopher Brookes, Tony Blythe and Sue Child, who has also spent many a happy hour checking my typing). We found that we needed to play detective, as well as scrubber/cleaner, & be careless of the effects of nettle, bramble & thistle. We

employed many devices in our detective work – scrubbing brushes & water, talcum powder, lolly sticks, a piece of plastic drainpipe, angled at 45° at one end (it is amazing what it enables you to read of a headstone), & a pair of secateurs.

We have so far completed the transcription of 165 gravestones & plaques (as we have also recorded those inside the church – on the rainy day). There are a few left to do that are: – upside down, half buried by a heap of earth, or covered in lichen.

Notice of Annual General Meeting:-

Tuesday 21st Sept. 8pm at The Bell.

- (1) Chairman's report;
- (2) Adoption of Accounts;
- (3) Election of Officers; Chairman
 Vice-chairman (honorary)
 Secretary
 Treasurer

(4) To consider the proposal that, to cover the costs of printing the Newsletter and Articles, there should be a small annual subscription.

- (5) Any other business.

A regular meeting of the Group will follow the closure of the AGM.

Our Parish:

A Living History:

The Roman Era.

Julius Caesar first visited the British Isles in 55 B.C., but no successful effort was made to subdue the Britons for another 100 years; during this interval, Romans and Romanised Gauls had been immigrating into South East England, and trade links with the continent had been extended considerably: Nevertheless, when, in A.D.43, Emperor Claudius decided to invade, he sent a massive force of 40,000 well trained men under commanders such as Aulus Plautius.

What initial resistance there was, mainly from the Trinovantes led by Caratacus, was quickly overcome, allowing the Roman occupation to extend across to the river Severn, and a Roman fort was established at Worcester, in preparation for a further advance westwards.

There was then a period during which other insurrections occurred in other parts of the country, notably, in East Anglia, led by Boudicca (Boadicea), Queen of the Iceni, whom the Romans had treated shamefully.

Caratacus, in the meantime, had united the major tribes of the Silures, Ordovices and the Deceangli (of North Wales), and confronted the Roman army under Ostorius Scapula, who, in the words of Tacitus, "led the (Roman) army against the Decangi. Their lands (i.e. Herefordshire), were ravaged and booty was extensively taken, with the enemy not daring to offer a pitched battle"; for, being inferior in numbers and weaponry, Caratacus chose to carry out a tactical retreat, as Tacitus puts it, "He (Caratacus) though inferior in strength, was superior in stratagem because of his knowledge of the country"; putting up delaying defence at each hill-fort along the way, relentlessly leading the Roman army deeper into inhospitable country and the route of this retreat would have passed close to, if not through, our Parish.

Finally, Caratacus in A.D.51, chose to stand and fight; the site of this last battle has not yet been definitively identified, but one suggested site is the hill now known as Caer Caradoc, just to the west of Leintwardine.

Caratacus was defeated and fled to northern Britain, only to be betrayed by Queen Cartimandua of the Brigantes, and he ended his days, in Rome, as a romantically defiant and honoured 'guest' of the Emperor Claudius.

Over the next twenty years, various tactics were employed by the Romans to subdue the Silures, recognised by the Romans as "a naturally fierce

people", until Julius Frontinus, having finally defeated them in A.D.71, built for them a new capital, 'Venta Silurium', at Caerwent, (just east of Newport), in an attempt to contain them in South Wales.

However the Silures were not restrained by savagery or leniency from carrying on the fight and to keep them in check the Romans established a line of legionary camps; at Brandon Camp, then to be developed as the Roman Fort of "Branogenium", (now Leintwardine), and at Credenhill, to be developed as "Magna Castra", at Kenchester, (just north of Hereford).

The Romans built a road between these two major camps, their Iter XII, as part of their national network, and still called Watling Street, (from Gwaith-y-Lleng meaning "the Work of the Legion"), passing down through the Aymestrey Gap to Mortimer's Cross and then southwards, following the line of the A4110. Since the Romans usually built their roads along old Celtic tracts — one can assume that this route would have been one used by the inhabitants of Croft Ambrey.

The Romans also chose to occupy the old hill fort of Risbury Camp, (south-east of Leominster, off the A44), and, close by, developed their fort of Blackwardine; linked by road to Magna Castra, at a distance of 14 miles, being a day's march for a Roman soldier. From Risbury a road ran northwards through Stretford to Ashton and probably onwards to the Roman camp at Bromfield in Shropshire; but there has been a suggestion that a 'Roman road' may have crossed the flood plain, from Ashton through Eye, (meaning — "Island"), to Mortimer's Cross and then onto Branogenium (Leintwardine), again a distance of 14 miles; {the line of such a road would have run close to, if not through, our Parish}.

There was also a road leading westwards from just south of Mortimer's Cross to the Roman fort at Clyro. It is evident that 'Mortimer's Cross' would have been a major junction, and indeed, aerial photography has revealed crop marks in a neighbouring field, suggestive of a Roman fort; and a recent finding of Roman 'tiles', in the immediate vicinity, would support this.

So there would have been a continuous Roman presence at this point, which, although small, would have provided protection and offered opportunities for trade and employment.

Tacitus had asserted that the lands of the Silures had been rich in "booty", which confirms that the pre-Roman Celtic economy had been very successful; and we can presume that, after their defeat, the previous inhabitants would have been encouraged to return; but then, under the 'protection' of the Romans, would see no need to re-inhabit the fortified settlement their ancestors had created at Croft Ambrey, but rather to establish new smaller settlements.

A settlement at the site of Croft Castle is more than likely, ("Croft" has a Celtic origin - meaning "farm stading"); there is to be further archaeological investigation of sites of probable habitation at Croft and across Bircher Common, probably dating from this time.

There is also archaeological evidence that the Mound in the outer enclosure of Croft Ambrey was re-visited and used for religious rituals after the hillfort itself was abandoned; which would confirm that the Celtic population had returned to the area.

Since the Roman army was an occupying force, one can understand that the native Celts would have been encouraged to re-establish a stable social structure based on their tribal tradition: under Emperor Theodosius, (379-95), the Romans appointed, presumably from the local ruling class, District Officers, known as 'Praefecti', with hereditary rights of ownership of land.

'Herefordshire' was under Roman control for about 400 years, during which time they imposed a military administration, together with a system of taxation based, we believe, on acreage of land, calculated by grid reference to their road network. They extended the use of coinage to the wider population and introduced the sciences of engineering and architecture, as well as improved methods of farming and the drainage of some marsh-lands; thus expanding the land available for agriculture.

Locally, with the presence of the Roman garrison at Mortimer's Cross, there would have been a ready market and an encouragement to intensify and extensify agricultural production. This was facilitated by the introduction of the Roman plough, which, as a marked improvement on the Celtic crook-ard, had an iron blade and lifted and turned the soil over; it could work heavy clay and obviated the need to cross-plough, so that 2 or 3 small fields could be combined to obtain a longer more efficient furrow, - this was the Roman 'long field' system.

The Romans also introduced the cultivation of herbs and a wider range of vegetables, including peas, beans and turnips, which allowed more options for crop rotation, and an improvement in the diet of the population.

With this expansion in land use, new farm steadings would have been established in groups at a distance from Croft, which may have become the future villages of Yarpole and Bircher; for whereas 'Lucton' is certainly Saxon and therefore later in origin, Yarpole' and 'Bircher' could date from this period of expansion.

Under the Roman tax system, there was an individual poll tax and a land tax which would have been a further incentive to increase the efficiency of production, which in turn would increase the wealth of the landowners, who now charged rents for the land occupied by the peasant-farmers. The peasant-farmers were then able to sell directly to the 'market': and so the social structure underwent a significant change, from the 'self-sufficient' society of the Celts to a market driven economy where individual enterprise was rewarded.

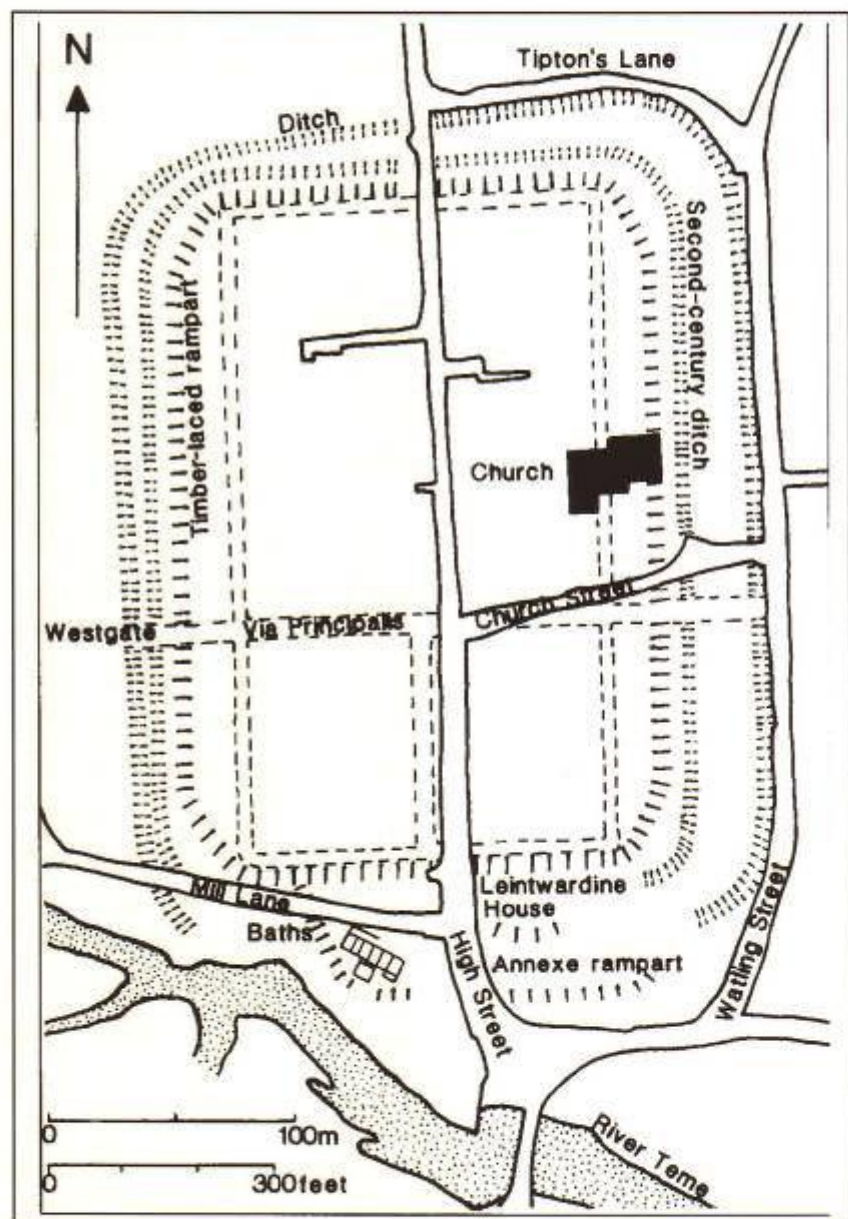
However, when the Romans did withdraw the Celts rebelled against the 'Roman System', and much of the Roman civilising culture was rejected; even their vacated buildings were abhorred because of superstition.

An interesting addendum:

Leintwardine, only nine miles from Yarpole, was a Roman auxiliary fort on the West Watling Street, (our A 4110), running from Caerleon-on-Usk, near Newport, in the south, to Chester in the north.

This is a plan of Leintwardine showing the relationship of the Roman fort to the modern layout of the town.

Taken from *The Welsh Border* by Trevor Rowley, 2001.



To find out more about Herefordshire during the Roman Era visit 'Historic Herefordshire On Line' at www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk

Compiled by Ian Mortimer.
(August 2004)

J. Tomlinson Private 25010.

1st Battalion. King's Shropshire Light Infantry



Jack was born at Luston in 1883, the son of **William Tomlinson and Margarita nee Jones**. Jack's parents came to the Common in 1908 to live in Rowan Cottage. His father was a builder who built a number of houses in the area. William was also to build the Bircher war memorial using stone for the plinth from Stancliffe Quarry in Derbyshire and for the steps from the quarry at Luston.

Jack went to Eye School and got a scholarship to Lucton School. He joined his father in the building trade and worked on, amongst other things, the building of Leominster Grammar School. Jack married Annie Powell (daughter of Kate and Billie Powell) of Welshman's Lane, Bircher Common. He joined the army during the war, as did his brother Jim. They met at some stage in France and Jack was in a 'pretty rough

spot'. Jim apparently having a little influence offered to get Jack moved to his unit. (They said he could have 'claimed' his brother.) Jack refused, as he did not want to leave his mates.

Jack died on Tuesday, 20th November 1917, age 34.

Jack and Annie had two children **Kitty and Alice**. Kitty married Jim Cook of Bircher Common and they had three children Bert, Jean and Amy. Bert Cook married Molly and lived on Stanley Bank (Carpenters) on the Common with two children. Jean married to become a Honeybun. Alice had two children Pat and John.

Jack had 1 brother and 3 sisters - Jim, Ethel, Charlotte and Caroline.

Jim became a blacksmith at Ashton and installed the original railings at Berrington Hall. He went to work in Youlgreave in Derbyshire and married Hilda Toft. They had two sons Albert and Bill. He joined his wife's brothers in setting up a haulage business at Unity Garage in Darley Dale, Derbyshire.

Ethel who was a teacher (including at Cockgate School during the war) did not marry and was fondly known as Miss Tom.

Charlotte had one daughter who died in Australia with no children.

Caroline Tomlinson married John (Jack) McLean and had three children - Don, Bert (who was killed in WW2) married with two girls, and Mabel (married in Derbyshire with one boy). Don (born at Rowan Cottage) married Ruth Neville, and had six children - Jack, Bill, Mary, Jane, Joan and Sara. Don returned to his birthplace, Rowan Cottage on the Common with Ruth to live in 1968 until his death in 1993. Ruth remained until 2000 when her daughter Jane moved there with her children - Moya and Sara who have become the 5th generation to live at the address.

Synopsis of the history of the 6th division (including King's Shropshire light infantry) and the battle in which Jack died.

This peacetime Division of the army was quartered in Ireland and England and at the outbreak of war was ordered to concentrate near Cambridge. By early September it was fully equipped and trained. On the 10th September 1914, it landed at St Nazaire and proceeded to the Western Front, where it remained throughout the war. The Division arrived in time to reinforce the hard-pressed BEF on the Aisne, before the whole army was moved north into Flanders.

The Battle of Cambrai – 20th November – 3rd December 1917. The plan outlined a tactically sophisticated sweep that would encircle and capture Cambrai. It required breaking through the Hindenburg Line, capturing the dominating heights of Bourlon Wood on the left, and exploitation of the breakthrough by sending three cavalry Divisions across the St Quentin canal and to the rear of the town. The cavalry would encircle the town, joining the other troops north of Bourlon. Key elements of the plan included recently developed tactics, including airborne interdiction bombing to stop German reinforcement by rail; the maintenance of surprise by the use of predicted artillery fire; and the use of massed tanks with infantry groups in support. This latter tactic was not wholly welcomed, for the tanks had yet to prove themselves, having hardly excelled in the 1917 fighting at Arras, Bullecourt and Ypres.

The assault was planned and carried out by the Third Army, commanded by Julian Byng. The Tank Attack, 20-21st November

The attack was launched at 6.20am on the 20th November. The British Divisions in the front line were, from right to left, the 12th, 20th, 6th, 51st (Highland), 62nd (West Riding) and 36th(Ulster). In immediate support were the 29th, and ready to exploit the anticipated breakthrough and sweep round Cambrai were the 1st, 2nd and 5th Cavalry Divisions. The Tank Corps deployed its entire strength of 476 machines, of which more than 350 were armed fighting tanks. They were led by the Tank Corps GOC, Hugh Elles, in a Mk IV tank called 'Hilda'. The attack opened with an intensive predicted-fire barrage on the Hindenburg Line and key points to the rear, which caught the Germans by surprise. Initially, this was followed by the curtain of a creeping barrage behind which the tanks and infantry followed.

The 6th Division, once it had crossed the Hindenburg Line, moved forward and captured Ribecourt and fought as far as and through Marcoing. The 6th Division took Ribecourt on the 20th November 1917, but at the conclusion of the Battle of Cambrai it remained practically on the British front line. It was lost in March 1918 and recaptured by the 3rd and 42nd (East Lancashire) Divisions on the 27th September 1918.



**Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves
Commission at the
BRITISH CEMETERY
RIBECOURT**

Further information about war graves can be
found at

<http://www.cwgc.org/cwgcinternet/search.aspx>

Compiled by Greg Clare with thanks to Ruth McLean who provided the family history.

(August 2004)

The Church of St. Leonard:

Living History

Monumental Inscriptions in the Churchyard:

This project has been stimulated by Edward Ormshaw's diagram of the Churchyard, currently framed & hung on the rear south wall in the church. We wish to supplement the information available for future family historians (the transcripts will be available from Herefordshire Family History Society (H.F.H.S.) and at Hereford Record Office), and as part of a larger project to help us trace the history of the Parish and its inhabitants.

A synopsis of the findings:

We have so far found 105 different surnames. The most numerous are **KEVILL-DAVIES** with nine memorials, including the beautifully decorated windows in the church.

There are three graves, near each other, recording the EDWARDS family. The **Reverend Joseph Edwards** was Rector of Croft with Yarpole, and a Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral.

He died in 1886. He is buried with his wife, Amelia Hamilton Edwards (died 1890). Nearby are two graves recording his daughters – Amelia Wall Edwards (died 1921) & Harriette St. John Edwards (died 1868).



The two graves in the foreground and the cross belong to the Edwards family.

The Honourable **Humphrey De Bohun Devereux**, who lived at Highwood, is actually buried at Cheam, Surrey, but has, as his memorial in this churchyard, a large Celtic cross, which is inscribed with four biblical quotations.

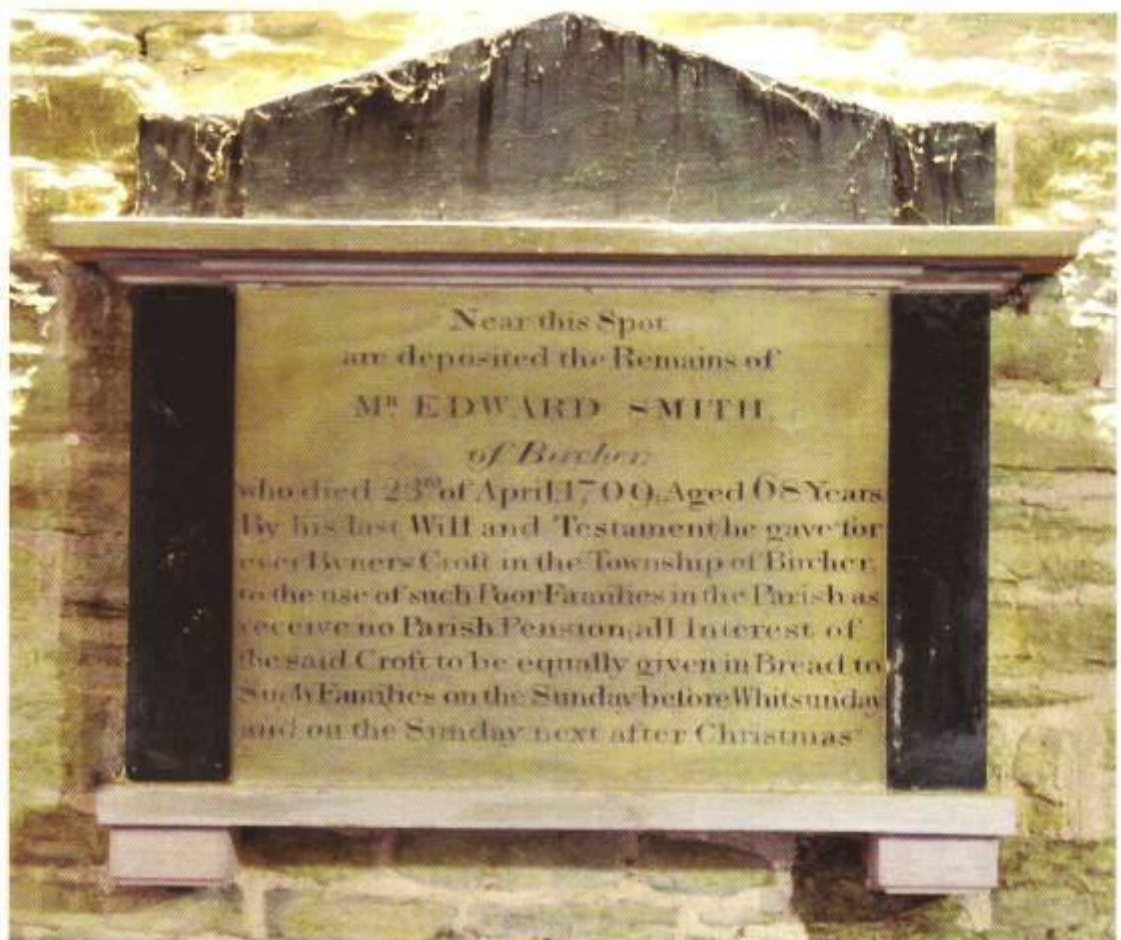
The earliest gravestone found so far is **Elizabeth Walker**, who died in February 1729. Her stone was in the Bell Tower for many years, acting as a prop. Consequently the inscription has been protected from the weather, and is still legible. Also buried in the 18th century are: Mary Tayler (1795), Thomas & Elizabeth Laurence (1788), William Evans (1783) & Elizabeth Evans (1789).

How many times have you walked into the church? Whatever the answer, each time you will have walked on **Thomas Higgins'** gravestone in the doorway. Due to the effects of all our feet over many years, the inscription is no longer easy to read. His wife was called Mary, as was his daughter. Where the stone was originally, we don't know. Has it always been in the doorway? Or was it moved there to replace a broken stone?

Sarah Haines is not buried here, but in Blackheath. A stone was erected in her memory, probably by her employer or friend – Mrs. Herbert in 1895, to thank her for her “labour of love”. I wonder what it was.

Then there is the story of the BYNERS CROFT Bread Charity, established by **Edward Smith** of Bircher in April 1709. His memorial plaque on the south wall of the church states the conditions for its provision, & when it will be distributed –

“the
Sunday
before
Whitsun
and the
Sunday
next after
Christmas”



PLACES:

People have been buried from all over the parish – BIRCHER HALL; BRICK HOUSE FARM; BROOK HOUSE; BYECROFT; HIGHWOOD; LUCTON; CHURCH HOUSE; PLAINSBROOK; CROFT RECTORY; CROFT CASTLE; HOME FARM, BIRCHER; LADY MEADOW.

Some places are a question:- Where is The Coppice House?
Where is Stocken?
Where is Knoakes Court?
Where is Lowmoor Hall?

Others have been buried here from local farms – SHORTGROVE FARM, BRIMFIELD; EYE COURT; COVENHOPE FARM, and villages - ORLETON, LUSTON, KINGSLAND. There are people buried here from LEOMINSTER and HEREFORD. There are gravestones, where the people are buried elsewhere e.g. BLACKHEATH & BILSTON, – but memorials have been placed in the churchyard.

INSCRIPTIONS:

Not surprisingly many of the inscriptions are biblical quotations – from Acts, Corinthians, Jeremiah, Prophets, & Psalms. Some are much more personal – e.g. grieving widow & seven children, etc.

Some are poetic – e.g.

Some are painful – e.g.

*“How short is life, how sure is death
Our days alas, how few
This immortal life is but a breath
Tis like the Morning Dew”*

*“Affliction sore long time I bore
Physicians were in vain
Till God did please my soul to ease
And free me from my pain”*

Others are descriptive – e.g.

*“In Memory of EDWARD SPENCER.
At ORLETON in Jan. 1776, He first breathed and cried
At BIRCHER in June 1847, He last lived and died.
And here the Body they have laid
All is settled when the debt is paid”*

STONEMASONS:

We have found more than a dozen different stonemasons whose mark is still visible, including the PRICE family business from Orleton; HOWELLS of Tenbury; GOUGH of Ludlow; JAY, WATKINS & PUGH from Leominster.

Most stones are made of local stone, but there are a number made of marble or Scottish granite. (I am indebted to the mason from the Hereford firm of Arthur Virgo, who kindly allowed himself to be lured by me into walking round the churchyard.)

Many stones are beautifully carved with intricate patterns & designs – birds, grapevines intertwined with a cross, Egyptian friezes, vases of flowers, etc.



Here are two examples:



This stone shows some interesting carving – please note the “creature’s” feet around the name of the mason – J. Price (probably from Orleton)

Any comments should be directed to John Gunson who is in the process of producing further reports.

(AUGUST 2004)