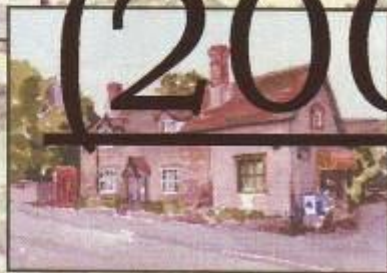
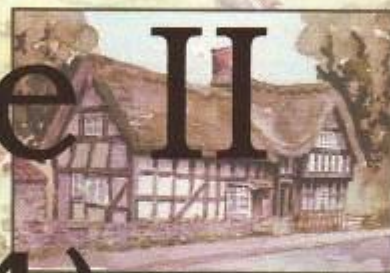


Living History

Yarpole Group Parish
2000



Volume II
(2004)



Living History.

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2004.

Welcome to our Sixth Newsletter; with three Articles:

- (1) Following the clearance of the Bell Tower and the Lecture in May, you will recall, we put up an illustrated display at the Fete which is now housed in the church, and produced a descriptive pamphlet which is now reproduced here in A4 format.
- (2) And as a suitable accompaniment, the history of the Bells.
- (3) A fascinating 'eye-witness' account of the history of the school at Cock Gate.

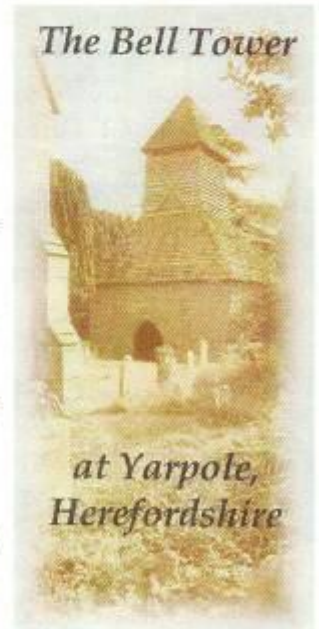
The recent application to extract water from the Brook into a winter storage pond for irrigation during the growing period, triggered an interest in the industrial history of the Brook; from the Fish Pools at Croft, through the sawmill at



Plainsbrook, via the day pond serving the 'Saxon Mill' at Church House Farm, to this substantial stone structure across the Brook, by the footpath – halfway between Yarpole and Ladymeadow Farm – which is probably the remains of a dam to create a 'water meadow'; This technique was first developed by Rowland Vaughan, in the 17th century, in the Golden Valley and described in **his booke**, first

published in 1610 "*The most approved and long experienced water workes. Containing the manner of winter and summer-drowning of medow and pasture, by the advantage of the least river, brooke, fount, or water-prill adjacent; there-by to make those grounds (especially if they be dreye) more fertile ten for one*".

You will have noticed, over the past few months, the young lads (doing their Community Service), rebuilding the west wall of the churchyard. They took it down to its foundations, lessened the pressure from behind, and, using the original bricks and lime mortar, have done a superb job.



Chairman's Report:

(1) The Yarpole, Croft and Bircher War Memorial; the Hereford Record Office was sent a list of the names on the War Memorial when it was found to be missing from the sequence of transcripts of the County's War Memorials.

(2) From Barbara Jackson, of Cheshire, after the last newsletter: "I do find them most informative and always find something of personal interest in each one. I think the stonemason J. Price of Orleton was almost certainly a relative although it depends a bit on the date of the gravestone. The map in the previous issue showed me the close proximity of Lady Meadow Farm with Eye and Orleton which I feel sure must have been where my ancestors lived and where they had connections. The old footpath through the farm also seemed significant. Keep up the good work!"

(3) The Old Wesleyan Chapel; Herefordshire 'Sites & Monuments Record', which has recently taken an interest in old chapels, was sent a copy of our photo of the laying of the floor of the chapel to be included in their records and is now on their web-site.

(4) Monumental Inscriptions; a copy of the Gravestone Inscriptions, the index, the article with photos, and a churchyard diagram has been lodged with Herefordshire Family History Society. A presentation copy will be offered to St. Leonard's Church.

Two explanations for the whereabouts of places from gravestones:

(a) KNOAKES COURT is actually near the bottom of Dinmore Hill, and would seem to be related to the issue of the hamlet of Newton, which was once part of this parish.

(b) STOCKEN - if you go on the lane from Lucton School towards Basket's Gate, there is still a farm called Stocken Farm.

Research Snippet: A Richard Beavan, carpenter and wheelwright, of Yarpole, left in his will – "one pew on the south side of the church (No.8)" – 1839.

Nature Jotting:

A gold crest has been seen in several gardens.



SUBSCRIPTIONS:

At long last our funds, left over from the Millennium Map grant, have run out. We wish to keep providing you all with a newsletter to the same high standard. Consequently the committee has decided that we need to charge an annual fee to all Members and Friends of Living History.

The subscription will be £5 per year for local members (plus any donation you wish to make), or £12 per year for country members. The subscription falls due on 1st January 2005, and should be sent or given to John Gunson, Victoria Meadow, Green Lane, Yarpole. Cheques should be made payable to "LIVING HISTORY GROUP".

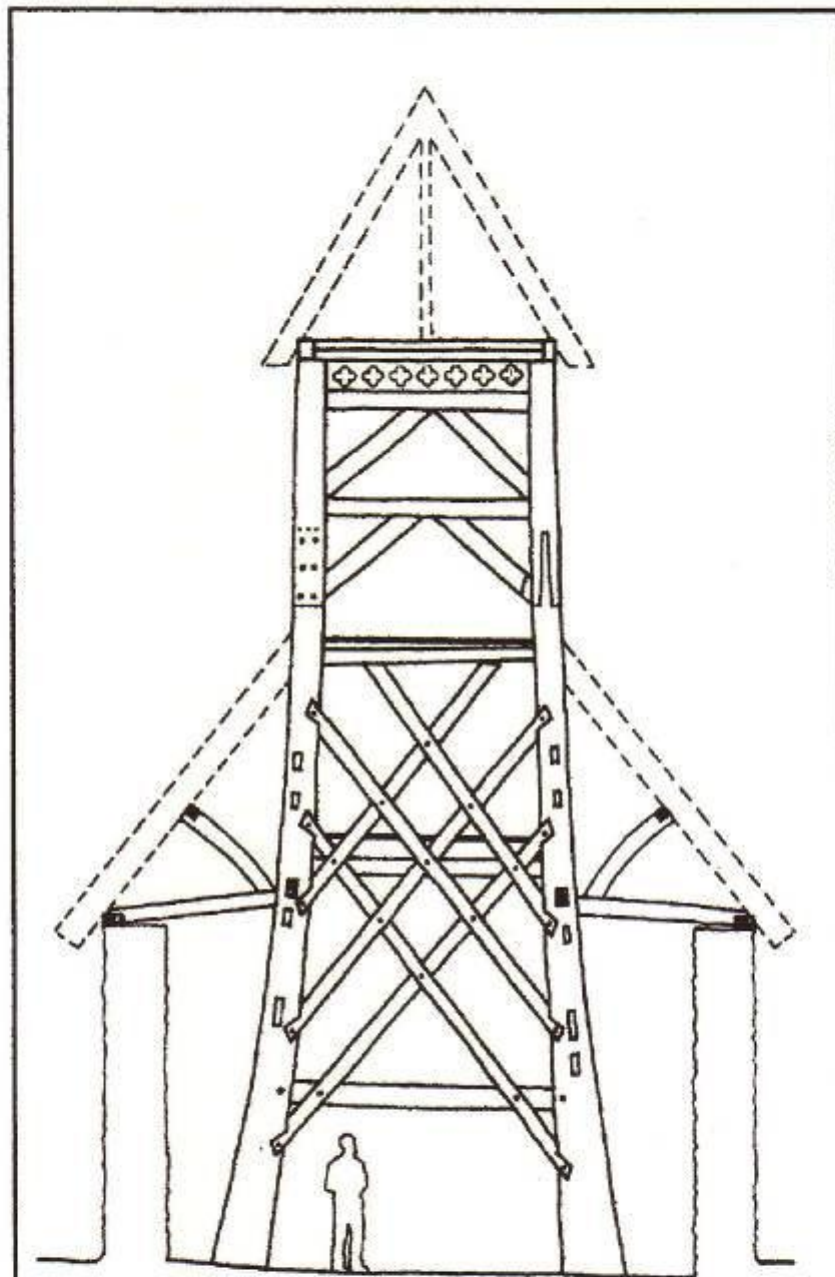
We hope you wish to carry on receiving our newsletters, and thank you for your interest and support.

Hoping you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,
we leave you with the Date of the Next Meeting:-
Tuesday 25th January 2005.

The Church of St. Leonard, Yarpole.

The Bell Tower

Living History



West Face

scale
0 3m

The original 12th century structure was 9.2m (30ft) high to the top of the main posts, but was extended in the mid-14th century by 2.1m (7ft) and a new bell frame constructed. The present bell frame, originally for four bells, is probably of late 16th century date.

Measured and drawn September 2001. N and M Baines

The Yarpole Bell Tower is one of the oldest surviving timber structures in Britain. It is one of a group of four timber bell towers in this area, in Pembridge, Mable and Knighton-on-Teme. Yarpole is the most complete of these and is thought to be the oldest, having just recently been dated by dendrochronology to a precise date: the winter of 1195/96.

The tower itself is made of four massive oak posts framed together, each formed from a single slightly curved tree, squared into shape by axes, the marks of which can still be seen. The timbers are about 9.3m (30'6") long and 0.75m (2'4") at the base; the dendrochronology samples showed that they came from trees which were more than 200 years old when they were felled.

It is interesting to speculate how the tower might have been erected. We don't know how this was done, but any theories have to take into account the difficulty of raising the huge timbers and stabilising them in a sufficiently controlled manner for the joints to be fitted together.

There are three further phases to the tower: the tops of the main timbers have been extended by scarf jointing with timbers with felling dates from 1322-1366, which form the upper stage of the tower. These are framed together and would probably have supported a medieval bell frame, with the bells hung for chiming. The horizontal boards, with the quatrefoil decoration visible at the top of the tower, belong to this phase.

In the next phase the upper rails in each side wall were inserted; the tree ring data identified this as a separate phase. There is an upper rail with a felling date between 1470 and 1506.

The bell frame, designed for full circle ringing, which now stands at the top of the tower, dates from the late 16th or early 17th century, and today carries three bells. The first bell is a mid fifteenth century treble, cast in the Gloucester foundry; the second was cast in 1605. The third, tenor, bell is dated 1652. Today the bells are 'dead hung' and are chimed regularly for church services, thus carrying on an 800 year tradition.

The age of the skirt wall which forms a square enclosure is not precisely known, but may be contemporary with the early tower. It seems to have been raised in height. The six-planked door with its diagonal bracing on the inside may well be the same date as the original tower. It has not been possible to date it by dendrochronology. Facing the back of the door is a remnant of the Victorian matchboard panelling which was fixed between the main timbers to provide storage space between it and the walls for, among other items, the coke for the church furnace. The floor tiles are Victorian encaustic tiles which were removed from the church when the chancel was retiled towards the end of the 19th century.

We think the tower was always intended to carry bells; there are many examples of detached bell towers, including the six in Herefordshire. Salisbury and Worcester Cathedrals both used to have separate bell towers. However the building may have served other additional purposes in different periods including its recent function as a store. The panelling which hid the storage area was removed in the spring of 2004. Now the splendid timber structure is freestanding again, within the protective stone wall, and can be seen and admired more adequately than has been possible for many years.

Yarpole Bell Tower in Context:

This bell tower is one of the oldest precisely dated timber structures in Britain. At the moment there is much work going on in the field of dendrochronology (tree ring dating), so it is possible that further discoveries of earlier buildings could come to light at any time, but Yarpole will always be important because so much of the original structure remains.

The other early *timber* structures which have been dated by dendrochronology are:

- 1 1063-1100 Greensted Church, Ongar**
Log church
- 2 1105-1140 Ely Cathedral, Cambridge**
Reused beam
- 3 1124-1160 St. Mary's Church, Kempley, Glos.**
Nave roof
- 4 1152-1187 Thame Park House, Thame, Oxon.**
Remodelled cistercian buildings with C12th roof
un-dated cloister arcades
- 5 1160-1195 Handsacre Hall, Armitage, Staffs.**
Re-used brace
- 6 1161-1196 Chepstow Castle, Chepstow, Mon.**
Outer bailey main gates.
- 7 1166-1201 Monastic Buildings, SE wing, Ely, Cambs.**
Re-used timbers from roof of uncertain form.
- 8 1167-1185 Fyfield Hall, Essex**
Aisled hall, Passing braces, notched laps.
- 9 1176-1221 Knights Templars Hall Temple Balsall W. Mid.**
Aisled hall, passing braces, notched laps.
- 10 1179 The Bishops Palace, Hereford**
Aisled hall, no passing braces or notched laps.
- 11 1184-1219 Westwick Cottage, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts.**
Aisled, passing braces, notched laps.
- 12 1186-1221 St. Hugh's Choir, Lincoln Cathedral, Lincs.**
Roof, notched lap soulaces.
- 13 1187-1227 Newbury Farmhouse, Tonge, Kent**
Aisled hall, passing braces.

John Walker, *'Late- twelfth and early thirteenth-century aisled buildings: a comparison'*.
Vernacular Architecture 30 (1999).

Yarpole Bell Tower is dated to the winter of 1195/6

- 1190** - Richard I leaves for Third Crusade
- 1191** - Richard marries Berengaria of Navarre: Acre is captured by the Crusaders
- 1192** - Third crusade ends without capturing Jerusalem; Richard I seized and held to ransom in Austria on his return journey.
- 1194** - Richard I ransomed for 100,000 marks; returns to England but soon leaves for France to try to regain territory lost by John.
- 1196** (January) - Richard signs treaty with French king.

Dendrochronology or tree ring dating is a method of dating which makes use of the annual nature of tree growth. Each year trees such as oak, put on a layer of new wood under the bark. The thickness of that layer -- the tree ring -- depends on various factors, particularly climate. Conditions favourable to growth will result in a wide ring; unfavourable ones will produce a narrow one. Trees growing at the same time will show similar patterns of tree-rings. This can be seen best by measuring the widths of the tree-rings and plotting them as graphs. There will be some similarity between graphs from contemporary timbers.

In order to make use of the information contained in the tree-rings, long ring patterns, known as tree-ring chronologies, have to be constructed for use as reference data. These are produced by overlapping ring patterns from successively older timbers, starting with living trees, then buildings, and finally samples from archaeological sites and peat bogs. The Sheffield Laboratory now has a continuous master sequence for England going back to about 5000 BC. This is made up of numerous regional tree-ring chronologies, particularly in the medieval and post-medieval periods, for which the laboratory now has more than 200 reference chronologies from many areas.

To date a timber sample of unknown date, its rings are measured and its ring-pattern matched against the reference chronology rather like finger-printing. Each ring on the test sample can then be given a calendar date. The precision of the tree-ring date with relation to the felling of the tree will depend upon the completeness of the sampled timber. If bark edge is present the date of the outer ring will be the year the tree was felled. If the timber has been trimmed, the felling date will be less precise but it will be more accurate than any other dating method.

Dendrochronology and Standing Buildings: In practice, it is usually necessary to sample eight to twelve timbers in order to date a building reliably or, where there is more than one major construction phase, eight to twelve timbers per phase.

If a building is undergoing restoration and timbers are being replaced, it may be possible to remove slices of about 5 cm thickness and send them to the laboratory. Otherwise samples are taken by drilling into the timber with a hollow corer in a discrete position. This causes a little sawdust and leaves a hole 15mm in diameter. We believe that it is more in keeping with a historic building to leave the holes unplugged but they can be filled with plugs if preferred.

Once the building has been sampled, we try to produce a report of the results within eight weeks. We cannot guarantee that our work will result in the production of a date.

Dendrochronology and Archaeological Timber: In practice it is preferable to sample as many timbers as are available in a structure in order to date it. This increases the chances of obtaining a date although, as with any scientific method, we cannot guarantee that our analysis will result in the production of a date.

Samples should be about 5 cm thick and taken from the widest part of the timber or, if present, through the part which contains sapwood. They should be labelled, sealed in clear polythene and sent to the laboratory for assessment. If assessment is to be carried out on site please consult the laboratory for advice.

From the web-site of Sheffield University Dendrochronology Laboratory
www.shef.ac.uk/archaeology/dendro/

Collated by Ian Mortimer

(DECEMBER 2004)

The Church of St. Leonard, Yarpole.

The Bells:

Living History

“three belles whereof the least is xxviii ynches, the second xxix ynches di the third xxxi ynches di brode over in the mowthes”.

So the bells were described in an inventory of 23 May 1553.

The ‘second’ bell mentioned in the inventory is probably our present ‘treble’ bell; inscribed – “**sancta margareta**” and weighing approximately 5cwt. It was cast about the middle of the 15th century, at the Gloucester Foundry. As part of the restoration work in 1996, a crack in the sound-bow was welded; it has a strike-note of approx. C natural. This bell is listed for preservation. It is probable that in 1553 the other two bells were also inscribed with the names of Saints, - even possibly with “St. Leonard”.

The present second bell has a diameter approx 32 inches, weighs about 6cwt., and its strike-note is approx. B flat. It was probably cast by John Green, in Worcester, in 1605.

Our present third bell, the ‘tenor’ bell, inscribed – “**solī deo gloria - - - pax hominibus**”, has a diameter of 35 inches, weighs approx. 8cwt., and has a strike-note of A flat. It was cast by John Martin in 1652, also at Worcester.

All three bells are therefore in the ‘scale of A flat’.

The bells had been hung ‘for full circle ringing’, in a 17th century oak bell-frame, with wheels of an unusual pattern, possibly having been made by a local carpenter. However, it fell into disrepair, and an inspection in 1968 confirmed the dilapidated state of the whole installation.

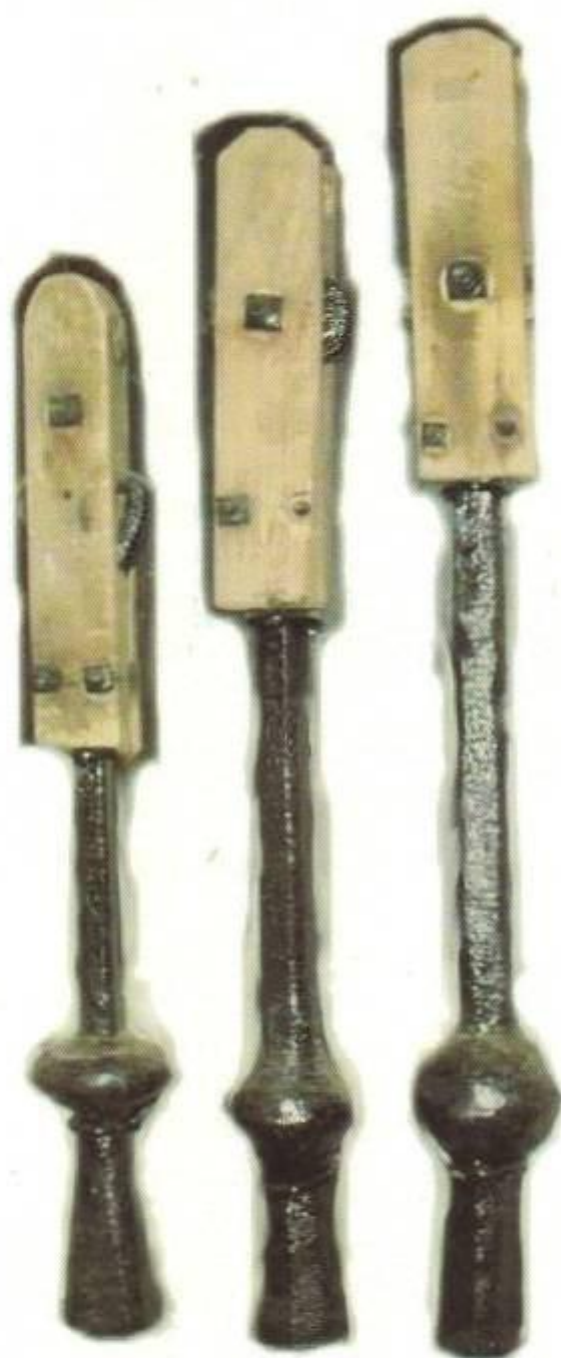
In 1993, a restoration project was initiated and an authoritative survey recommended that the bells could be ‘dead hung’, which, whilst not allowing the full swing of the bells, would allow them to be struck. The original fittings were to be retained, especially the wheels which are particularly fine and early examples of a full wheel.

An appeal was launched with a target figure of £10,000.

The restoration work was carried by Mr. Arthur Berry of Malvern, and in September 1996, the Bishop of Hereford dedicated the restored bells.

“Red fire and charcoal,
Say (again) the bells of Yarpole”.

The Original Clappers:



Bell No 1

(15th century)
(treble)
smallest bell

Bell No 2

(1605)

Bell No 3

(1652)
(tenor)
largest bell

The School at Cock Gate:

Extracts from the Minute Book of the Managers of the Yarpole, Croft and Lucton County Council School.

According to a note in the front of the minute book, signed G.W. Thomas:

"The school was built in 1851 at a cost of £1,200 by the Rev. W.J. Kevill-Davies of Croft Castle on part of the Croft Castle park. It was a Church of England school until 1920, when the County Council took it over as a council school, until its closure in 1968. The school house was built in 1873 on land given by the Rev. Kevill-Davies, but paid for by public subscription. The school was built to house 110 pupils and this figure was probably reached during the early part of this (20th.) century. It served the parishes of Yarpole, Croft and Lucton."

Mr. Thomas was Chairman of the Managers at the time of the closure of the school and wrote a fascinating summary of the school on the last pages of the minute book. The following are extracts from this account.

"The school was ... governed by the Rector of Croft with Yarpole and the churchwardens. Previous to the erection of this school, classes for teaching were held at various houses in the parish by persons appointed by the Church Vestry.

For instance, John Browne (Gent) by indenture dated 16th March 1714 charged certain fields with the payment of 40/- annually towards the establishing of an English School for the benefit and education of poor children in the parish.

George Lloyd (Gent) by indenture dated 17th December 1724 charged certain lands in the parish with an annual payment of 20/- for the same purpose. A widow named Ann Berry received this money at one time for annually educating at her house two to six poor children.

There are various school masters mentioned in the Church Registers but not the actual houses where they carried on their work. In 1837 there was a school on the plans for the parish by the National Society"

The writer then records that the log books have been deposited at the education office in Hereford and that children were often away from school helping with the harvest, fern cutting and gathering, and other seasonal work *"which accounts for the large number of illiterates."*

He then recounts his own memories of the school between 1910 and 1920:

"The headmaster in 1910 was M.J. Lancaster. (Jackie Lancaster out of hearing) He was a short dapper sort of chap, intellectual, and on the whole a very able master. I am afraid that the material on the whole was a bit thick headed at that time and one of his favourite sayings was "You are enough to worry the Saints out of their graves." He was very active in the village life, promoted a very active Rifle Club, which had a practice range in the Quarry on Bircher Common, and was also a very able amateur Photographer. He left the school early in 1914, being asked to resign over partaking in strike action!!! He lived in the School house and had one son - (Edwin).

The man who followed Lancaster was called Saltmarsh and was an entirely different man altogether. He came I believe from the Midlands, and was no doubt an urban product; unused to country life and ways. Whereas Lancaster ruled with the stick (cane), Saltmarsh introduced the pen method. The penalty for talking was 500 lines "I must not talk". I think he found the material a bit beyond his redemption and gave up after about 12 months.



The Senior Class of 1910-12 with Mr Lancaster, the Headmaster.



The Infant Class of 1910-12 with their Teacher, Miss Franks.

Saltmarsh was followed by R.W. Evans a Welshman (from Wales) and a different man entirely. Evans was out and out a very good schoolmaster, who combined discipline with encouragement for effort. He was a sportsman being very keen on football etc. and this I think gave him the edge over the two preceding masters. He took a very active interest in the village, Church, etc. and was successful in promoting the social life of the parish i.e. Concerts, Dances etc. He joined the army during the 1914-1918 war and served overseas. He returned to the school after demobilisation.

His wife Mrs. Evans also taught at the school and, during Mr. Evans' absence, carried on as Head Teacher. Mr. Evans finished his duties Christmas 1919.

Miss Franks the Infants teacher was at the school when the writer commenced and was there for a number of years afterwards. She combined the duties of Infants teacher with that of Church organist for quite a time and used to have weekly Choir practice at the school after lessons had finished. There were about 12-14 or more boys in the Church Choir during the writer's time.

The Rector, in this case, the Rev. T. Ward, paid periodic visits to the school, and was responsible for any corporal punishment necessary during the absence of the Headmaster on active service. (This might include if the crime was severe enough six of the best on the 'latter end' while lying full length across the desk.) I don't know whether this treatment was a good deterrent or not, but it certainly reminded the recipient that these things were not just done, (sic) and it certainly educated one in the art of endurance of pain!

The Roll of the school was 110-120, the children coming from Lucton, Croft and Yarpole parishes. All walked to school, despite the weather, the farthest being The Lodge Farm, Bircher Common, The Go(r)bett, Bircher and Lucton. Snow was not considered a hazard, and even in the deepest snow a fair number would be there. In contrast to the present day those who took their midday meal with them had to eat this out of school. Two stoves supplied the heating during winter time. There were times when the thermometer fell below freezing inside and we were allowed 5 mins. 'play' outside to warm us up.

A variety of games were played during play hours. They varied according to season. Football was usually played in Croft Park as was also Rounders, (a game which the Yankees pinched and called it baseball.) Fox and Hounds was a popular game during the meal brake (sic) 12-1.30 and this entailed one boy (the fox) going off some five minutes or so before the rest of the boys (hounds) and usually taking a course through the Park via the Fish Pools and Bircher Common, (at that time completely covered in Gorse and Bracken), then making his way back to the school, by various routes, to arrive back sometimes just before 1.30 without being caught by the Hounds! The hunt was usually complete with Huntsmen, (who carried a horn of sorts), Whipper-in, Leading Hounds, Tellers? etc. and certain rules were observed. (The fox was hunted by sound or sight, and if 'scent' was lost, the fox, if he was a safe distance away, would give indication of his direction by a loud 'Hallo') Everybody usually arrived back at school bespattered with mud, (like all good huntsmen); a great game. Another communal game which was played in the school playground at all times was called 'Last in the Den Tincker?' It was a version of the game 'Sheep, sheep come home' but was slightly rougher. Games such as Marbles, Conkers, Hoops (boys), Hopscotch, Skipping (girls), as well as Tops were played in their season.

Trees A very large spreading Oak grew on the roadside opposite the school. This was called 'The Gospel Oak' and was reputed to have been associated with John Wesley's revival, he having preached at this tree. It was a very fine specimen of a pollard(ed) Oak, and was hundreds (of) years old. It was unfortunately blown down about 1965. This tree had the honour of being marked on the Ordinance (sic) Survey maps and there is no doubt that this tree was there at least a hundred years before the school was built. Since these notes a replacement tree (oak) was planted in the 1970s near to the old tree's position. See P.C. minutes."

There this fascinating account ends. Many of the events mentioned are backed up by the Minutes Book's evidence, especially the teachers' strike.

Compiled by Rhianon Turrell.

(DECEMBER 2004)

**1921 - The first managers of the newly constituted
Yarpole, Croft and Lucton County Council school.**

Mrs. Kevill-Davies The Highwood and Croft Castle
M.C.Connelly The Knoll, Bircher (Estate Agent)
Charles Clee, Court House, Bircher (Farmer)
Rev. E.W.Easton Vicar, Lucton Vicarage
Chairman Rev. T.W. Ward Rector Croft Rectory
George Webb Home Farm Croft (Farmer)

Later managers between 1921 and 1968

Mr. W.J.Brookes, Brook House, Bircher (Farmer)
Rev. H.L.Ingham Vicar of Lucton
Chairman Rev.E.Charles Vicar of Lucton
Geo. Humphries Vicarage Farm (Farmer)
Rev.G.B. Redman Vicar of Yarpole
Sir James Croft Croft Castle
Rev. Whitehead Vicar Yarpole
Chas. Phillips Upper House, Yarpole (Farmer)
W.J. Rees New House Farm, Lucton (Farmer)
M.W. Richards, Yew Tree Farm, Bircher Common (Farmer)
Rev. Sherlock Vicar, Yarpole
Chairman G.W. Thomas Upper House, Yarpole (Farmer)
W. Pritchard Home Farm, Croft (Farmer)
H.R.Connop Pound House, Yarpole (Farmer)
E. Watkins James Close, Yarpole (Engineer)
W.Barker, Highwood farm, Bircher Common (Farmer)
Miss G. Dunne, The Knoll, Bircher
R.Amos Sunny Bank, Yarpole (Farmer)
T.Godding Manor House, Yarpole (Baker) ?Banker
R.Worthing Orleton County Council Rep.