

Living History

Yarpole Group Parish
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Living History.

NEWSLETTER EASTER 2005.

This is our seventh Newsletter and we would like to thank you for your continued support.

The three articles attached are all personal histories of the Parish;

- (1) Thomas Hammond: A story from the Lucton war memorial;
- (2) "Charlie": An enigmatic figure;
- (3) Emily Bayliss: Life as it was on Bircher Common.

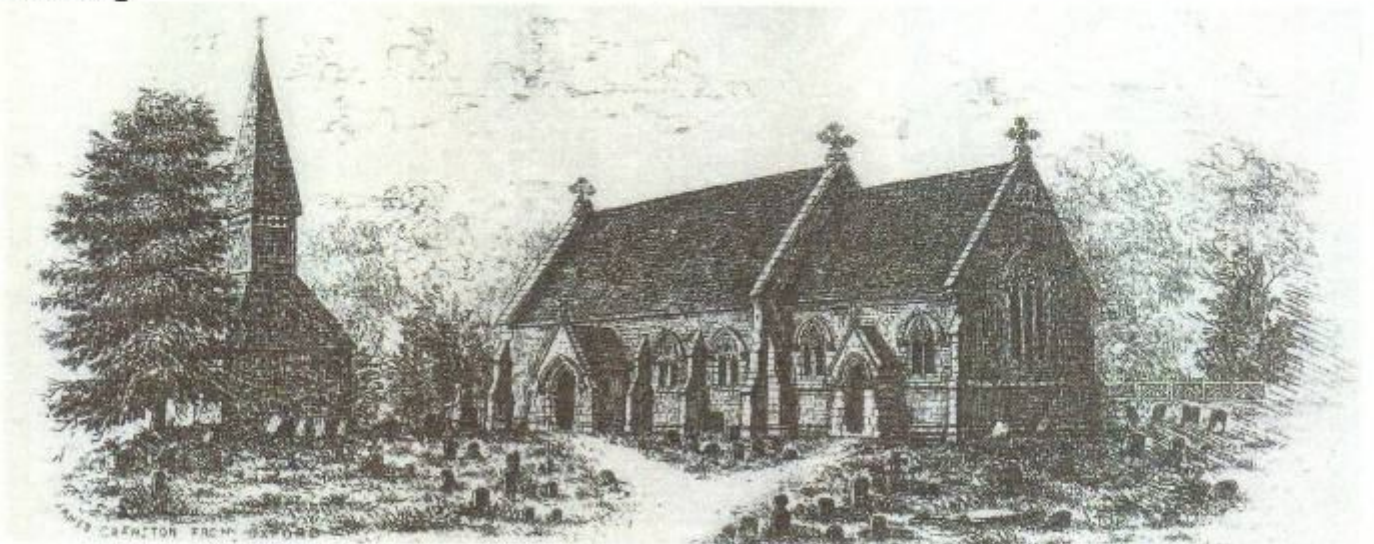
Have you noticed that the stile at the Yarpole end of the footpath to Eye, has been repaired? This has been done, as part of the Parish Path Scheme, by local farmer and contractor, Clive Barker; all part of the ongoing programme of maintenance on the Footpath Network across the Parish.

Norman Taylor's booklet *Walks Around the Parish* (available at the Bell - £2.00), is an excellent guide to walks on our Footpath Network.



This drawing which dates from before 1790 (when the spire of the Bell Tower was lowered), was used as 'evidence' when the responsibility for the repair of the steps to the path that runs from Green Lane round the rear of Stoneybrook to Turnpike Lane, was being investigated.

It seems that the present church path, from the porch passing the eastern face of the Bell Tower to the gate opening onto Green Lane, was cut at the time of the major redevelopment in 1864, and that prior to that time the entrance to the church was by way of a gateway near the south-eastern corner of the church; as shown on the drawing.



CHAPEL OPENINGS AND IMPROVEMENTS IN LUDLOW CIRCUIT:-- 1841.

Birchers Common

The cause in this place was for some years low, and it was frequently in contemplation to put it off the plan. But God has turned his hand upon it, and converted many precious souls.

In August 1840, we held a Camp meeting about four miles distant, when several young men from the neighborhood of Birchers Common attended. The word of God was rendered quick and powerful; sinners were pricked in their hearts, some of whom found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and joined the society at Birchers Common. From that time the work began to move; many were soon brought to know God, and the preaching house became crowded to excess. Mr. Thomas Meredith then offered us a barn**, which we have converted into a chapel, and which was opened for divine worship on Sunday, August 8th, 1841, when Brother Woodhouse preached to crowded congregations, and a blessed influence attended the services. The work has been done gratis, and the opening collections paid for the materials within a few shillings: so we have a comfortable place of worship, computed to hold about one hundred and fifty, and no doubt, a large congregation, and a powerful society of twenty-six members. The good work is still progressing. We desire to record our gratitude to all the friends who have assisted in this labour of love; especially to Mr. Thomas Meredith, who has laboured much, and who with his family, are substantial friends to the cause.

taken from THE PRIMITIVE METHODIST MAGAZINE for The Year of Our Lord 1842 Second Series Volume XII

** The chapel as it is today, having ceased to function as a chapel in the 1960s, was converted into residential accommodation in the 1990s.



And finally, for the FETE on the 25th June, we are hoping to put on a presentation on the History of the Turnpikes and Milestones in the Parish: So if you have any knowledge, records or clues as to where we should be looking, can you contact Ian on 780788:

Date of next meeting is Tuesday 3rd May 2005 at 8pm at the Bell.

A Story from the Lucton War Memorial.

This is the sad and mysterious tale of Thomas Hammond, who died 10 days after Armistice Day in 1918, not from wounds or in battle but from disease.

In Memory of Private THOMAS HAMMOND

**53884, 2nd/7th Bn., Manchester Regiment
who died age 26
on 21 November 1918**

**Son of George and Sarah Hammond, of Lucton; husband of Lilian
Martha Hammond, of The Bungalow, Lucton, Kingsland,
Herefordshire.**

Remembered with honour

There was a Thomas Hammond born to George & Mary (nee Thomas) Hammond and christened at St. Paul's Lucton on 18th November 1891. He was the 5th of six children born in Lucton. However the Thomas on the war memorial was born to George & Sarah Hammond.

Thomas (on the war memorial) married Lilian Martha ? The other Thomas married Edith Annie ?, and had 3 children – Elsie Annie, Gertrude Ellen, and Thomas William, christened in 1915, 1917 and 1919 at Lucton.

The Thomas on the war memorial is recorded in Soldiers Died in the Great War as dying of sickness or disease, not as a result of wounds received in battle. It is possible he was a victim of the influenza outbreak that swept across Europe at the end of the war.

Unless his individual service record survives (about 75% were destroyed in the blitz in 1940), then it is unlikely to be recorded more precisely anywhere exactly how he died. This would mean travelling to the Public Record Office at Kew to search the Burnt Fragments Records (as they are called).

(These last two comments were received from an enquiry to the Museum of the Manchester Regiment.)

One of the Thomas's is related to Chris Gunson through his grandfather, Joseph Hammond. Joseph was Chris' great great great grandfather. He was born at Lingen, and christened there on 6th July 1800, and died at Lucton, where he was buried in the churchyard on 26th February 1888. Joseph had two wives – Ann West of Eardisley, Chris' great great great grandmother. After she died in 1836, and was buried in Lucton churchyard, Joseph re-married Elizabeth Knill. They had 3 children born at Lucton. The middle one was George Hammond, one of the Thomas's fathers.

Historical Note: Charleroi was the scene of fighting between 21 and 24 August 1914 and for the rest of the First World War it was a German military and administrative centre. The 270 Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried in the communal cemetery either died as prisoners of war, or after the Armistice. The cemetery also contains 38 Second World War burials, most of them airmen, and 23 war graves of other nationalities.

CHARLEROI COMMUNAL CEMETERY



**Commemorated in perpetuity by
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

Compiled by John Gunson.
(MARCH 2005)

Charlie:

The caption on the reverse of this photograph reads –

“Taken at The Beehive, Bircher Common when snow was on the ground. He carried water for the Richards family; two buckets at a time on a yoke. Just wore sacks”. The photograph was taken by Doreen Davis.

So just who was this enigmatic figure? There are several people who remember him and from their reminiscences a rather sad tale emerges.

He was usually called Charlie Leek although it is thought that his real surname might have been Howells. Sometime in the

1920s he was taken out of a home by Mrs Leek (nee Hughes) who kept a small shop at The Beehive on the southern edge of the Common. Interestingly Mrs Leek was friendly with a Joe Howells who lived in a cottage, now demolished, on the northern edge of the common. There may have been some relationship between Joe and Charlie but at some point Charlie adopted the surname Leek.

Charlie was rather short, bow-legged and had a speech defect which, judging from descriptions, may have been the result of a cleft palate. This in turn may have been the reason he spent his earlier years in a home of some kind. The photograph shows him in typical garb – usually a sacking apron with a sack tied over his shoulders and sacking leggings and a strange shapeless felt hat pulled down over his ears. The sacks were no ordinary sacks but the best quality ‘Gospell Brown’ sacks and sometimes the one worn as an apron had ‘Bibby’s’ written across the front. The place where the photograph was taken remains unidentified but the time was possibly just pre-war when Charlie may have been in his 50’s.

He was employed as a general odd job man looking after animals, tending the garden, fetching water and much else. This was in the days before the households on the Common had a mains water supply.



Although nominally he lived at The Beehive he ate his meals in the back kitchen and slept rough in a shed nearby. Charlie was allowed an outing to Pembridge Fair each year on the 13th of May when he was also given a shilling and an ounce of 'baccy'. He also went on a trip to Aberystwyth on one occasion. His succinct description of his first and probably only view of the sea was that it was a 'bloody big pool'!

Mrs Leek had a daughter called Annie who married Bill Richards whose family ran the Post Office in Yarpole. In the fullness of time Annie and Bill came to live at Yew Tree Farm close to The Beehive. When Mrs Leek died the Richards took over Charlie's employment but the relationship was not satisfactory and at some time before the Second World War Charlie found shelter in The Old Priory in Leominster, formerly the Workhouse. However he came back to the Common each Saturday to carry water for the Richards family. He walked from Leominster and carried water all day long, two buckets at a time on a yoke, from Gents Well Garden, which is down beyond Beechall Cottage, to Yew Tree Farm. At this he laboured until the holding tank contained sufficient to last the family and their livestock for a week. During the early 1940's Emily Bayliss remembers returning from night shifts at the munitions factory at Rotherwas when the passengers requested the driver to stop on the Broad to pick up 'poor old Charlie' and give him a lift up to the Common.

It is thought that Charlie survived until the early 1950's

Compiled by Norman Taylor with acknowledgements to Margaret Lewis and Audrey Brooks for the loan of the photograph and to Emily Bayliss, Cyril Griffiths and Bert Cook for their recollections. (MAREN 2005)

Our Parish:

Living History:

Interview with Emily Bayliss

Emily has lived on Bircher Common all her life, but in four different houses. Her story is one of everyday life on the common during her lifetime but she tells of a way of life, which has to a large extent disappeared.

There was no electricity or mains water on the common until electricity came in the 1950s and water in the 1960s. Before that it was a daily job to fetch water from the well. Several families shared the same well. As Emily recounts,

"Everyone fetched water from the same well. You carried it in the bucket. There were sheep on the common....when you wanted a rest you had to put the bucket down.... so unless you were tidy and wiped the bucket, it (the sheep muck) went back in the well. We all had our peck of dirt!"

If you wanted the doctor, Mr. Vaughan, he had a surgery at Kingsland, but he would come twice a week to the Post Office. If you needed him to visit you had to send someone to walk to fetch him, or someone would get on a bike. There were no telephones. It was the same with the midwife. The father would get on his bike to fetch her as all the babies were born at home.

There were various shops on the common at different times. They mostly sold basics like tobacco, matches, paraffin, vinegar, flour and other dry food. Bread was baked by the Hydes and was brought up from Yarpole to the Leeks. Some of the people who kept these shops included Mrs. Saunders, Mrs Owens, Mrs. Leek and Mrs. Breakwell.

The blacksmith for the village was in Leys Lane, Mr. Bennett. Emily could remember watching the horses go by as a child (*past the chestnut trees in the bottom*) to the blacksmith.

The first car on the Common was owned by Mr. Harman. He was a bank manager from London. He built Pinewood house on the same lines as his house in London. He had to leave his car "*where Cyril has his garage because there was no road*" and everything had to be carried from there.

Other shopping was done in Leominster. Mr. Leek, who lived at The Beehive, would take the women in a pony and trap.

"My mother said when she was at school she thought go to meet them so she walked down to Yarpole, but it was so laden with women and stuff Mr. Leake wouldn't give her a lift, so she picked up some stones and she said I stoned them. She had to walk back."

Emily is still in contact with some of the people she was at school with. One of her friends eventually married one of the teachers (Mr. Griffiths) and they lived in the school house from where they could walk across the fields to the school. They later lived on the common. He died when he was 94 and his wife still lives in the Bargates. Emily recalls taking part in the egg and spoon and the sack races at fetes which took place either at the school or on other flat areas.

Farming was (as it still is) a hard life, particularly with a milking herd. At one time they had to drive cattle up and down the road and across the Common for milking which was not very popular with the few people with cars. They delivered the milk by hand round the common using "*buckets with a measure on the side*."

It was very time consuming because everyone wanted to stop and have a little chat. It was desperate hard work carting..... they were made of block tin so they were heavy to start off with. They held two and a half gallons each, that's five gallons of milk and someone was working at it every day," Emily remembers. It was especially hard in bad winters such 1947, but by the bad

winter of 1981 they had started using machines and having milk collected by Cadbury's. They gave up the milk round then and Mr. Nicholls took it over, then Mr. Woodfield.

They also kept chickens and pigs and raised their own calves using A.I. They chose a bull from a catalogue. If the cow was a good milker they would choose a Friesian if not a Hereford or other beef breed. *"You looked forward to a little heifer and were disappointed if it came out as a bull"*

The chickens were kept in deep litter, which was straw or chaff which had to be turned once a week. They had perches and lights with different bulbs for different times of day *"You put on the 25 when it was reasonably dark....you were backwards and forwards with them"* At the peak of their egg production she collected 128 dozen in one week.

Emily came from a farming family and continued to work on the farm after her marriage but her first paid job when she left school was looking after an old lady of 86, Miss Preece, in Bargates.

"I left school on the Friday and started work on the Monday."

She didn't stay long as she was not allowed to go home or write letters home. she wanted her to stay in all the time.

During the war Emily went to work at the Munitions factory in Hereford.

"I was in the powder for a time. They found out about my throat. I had a goitre and the powder reacted on my throat. Then I went into painting boxes the shell went in and stencilling trace mortars."

The bus went from the Monument (War Memorial). We did three shifts. The night shift you went at 8 o'clock and got back about 8.30 the next morning, the afternoon shift you went at 12 and got back at 12 at night, the morning shift you went at 5 o'clock and got back sometime about 3 in the afternoon"

She was living with her parents at the time although she was married, but once she moved into the farmhouse she didn't have to go to the factory. A lot of other people from the area went as well.

During the war the top of the Common was fenced and ploughed to grow potatoes and corn. Land Girls were brought in to pick up the crop and they lived at Bircher Hall. The man in charge of the scheme came from Birmingham and lodged with Emily's parents. Her father helped to burn the gorse and a second cousin ploughed it up, There were a lot of roots and they broke a lot of machinery doing it. After the war the land was eventually handed back to the commoners in 1954. It was re-seeded but they had to pay £300 for the grass seed, which was why the Grazing Committee was set up. Several paid in to find the money. Then they paid in money to improve the Common, to pay for lime and cutting the gorse. Mr. Thomas from Upper House, Yarpole was the original treasurer, then her husband Tom was treasurer for a long time.

An interesting project, which Emily watched, was when a Mr. Herne came to live at Byecroft. He had invented a particular kind of brick, called the Inca brick. He thought it would be useful for building houses abroad so he built a house on the green patch in front of Byecroft stables. *"Bus loads came to see it. He was going to set it up in Ireland and tried it there but in the end he went bankrupt"*

She can remember 11 different people living at Byecroft, including the Wilcox family who had three people working for them in the house and two in the garden. There was also a Mr. McElvin who was a draper in Leominster. She recalls how Byecroft Stables was originally built as a chicken house, then used as stables. At one time it was also used as the Village Hall where the Birchpole singers originally met. It was later converted to the house it is today.

This account has been put together by Rhianon Tyrrel from a recorded interview with Emily. The full recording contains more information than can be included here, but will form part of the Living History Group's archive. (MAREN 2005)