

Living History.

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2008

Nature Jottings

Whereas in previous years the call of the cuckoo was heard across the parish in the early days of May, this year it has been much less vocal though it has been heard as early as 4.30 am by a few 'early birds'.

Tawny owls were known to be nesting in the bell tower. Evidence of this came in the form of a tawny owl chick found on the floor of the tower. It was put back into the nest at the very top of the tower - above the bells. Another chick was seen to be in the nest at that time. Unfortunately, two days later, it was back on the floor and the advice received was to leave it where it was and let nature take its course. The next day it was found dead. However, it did prove that tawny owls are still in residence.



Weather damage

It is thought that during a recent rainstorm there must have been a 'localised disturbance in the weather pattern' (we are not saying tornado) which caused damage to one of David Niblett's barns.



Happy Birthday to the Village Shop



In April, the Community Shop, which was established by villager shareholders in 2005, reached its third birthday and celebrated with a cake (pictured above).

Monumental Inscriptions in Yarpole Burial Ground

The complete list of the inscriptions recorded in April 2007 has now been typed up in two formats – one for the Church with index of names and a map, one for the Herefordshire Family History Society and the Record Office. All inscriptions up to 1957 have been recorded including a few which have later events recorded on earlier stones, or are in groups of earlier stones, as this is the advice from Herefordshire Family History Society. The complete set of inscriptions will be available (Burial Ground and Churchyard) at the Fete. Many thanks once again to everyone who helped on the day and to John Turrell for checking my typing.

Many interesting trends emerge as you look at these records. Firstly, there are a lot more names in the Burial ground than in the Churchyard and some such as Connop (incidentally, probably originally derived from Covenhope) which were frequent in the Churchyard do not occur at all in the Burial ground. The most popular inscription other than names and “In loving memory of...” is “Peace Perfect Peace” which occurs nineteen times in the Burial ground.

It is also interesting that although there are some tragically early deaths a lot of the stones commemorate people in their 80s. One such is William Cope Maund who when he died in 1927 aged 86 had been “25 years churchwarden of this parish”. His wife was 87 when she died 4 years later. On the 1901 census a William Maund is recorded as Master Grocer with a wife Mary Ann whose ages tally with the ones on the gravestone. He was born at Pencombe and his wife at Monkland, while their son, recorded as Assistant Grocer, was born at Cholstrey.

Does anyone know the story behind Amelia Penny who died aged 82? Her daughter erected the stone in 1933 just recording herself as F.E.P. There is an Amelia Penny, widow living on her own means in Humber in 1891 with her daughter Florence E. Penny and the same two are living in Luston at the Folly in 1901 when Amelia is described as retired. What happened to Florence?

A surprising number of burials were not from Yarpole and the closest villages. These include Edward Armitstead, former rector of Barthomley in Cheshire and his wife Cecilia, who lived at Bircher Hall and Mary Henrietta Gertrude Crigan of Bromley in Kent, widow of W.D. Crigan of Shipham in Norfolk who died in 1942.

Living History Binders

As we completed five years of the 'Living History Newsletter' at the end of 2007 many of you may be finding that your original binder is now full. You may like to know that binders of the same pattern can be obtained from *Roundabout Stationery* in Leominster for £1.99. The stock code is KF 01325.

To help you keep track of your '*Newsletter*' we have included with this edition a set of spine/cover labels for your completed first binder and a set for your second binder to take material from 2008 onwards.

Articles

Attached to this edition of the *Newsletter* are two articles:

The History of Croft 1800-1923 by Ian Mortimer

The Yarpole Weathercock by Ian Mortimer

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Subscriptions for 2008

This year's membership subscription was due on 1st January 2008 but there are still subscriptions outstanding! If you are one of those who has not yet paid please send your subscription to the Hon. Secretary - Ron Shaw at 3, Green Lane Crescent, Yarpole, Leominster HR6 0BQ or leave it at Yarpole Village Shop for his attention. £5 per year for local members (plus any donation you wish to make) or £12 per year for country members. Cheques should be made payable to 'Living History Group'. We have no outside funding so rely on subscriptions to cover the cost of publication of the *Newsletter* and articles.

Parish History:

Living

History

The History of Croft – 1800-1923.

The Croft family had held Croft from the 11th century until the mid-18th century; however the family suffered financially from their involvement in the Civil War (1642 – 1651) and, in 1746, the already mortgaged property was surrendered by Sir Archer Croft (having lost money in the ‘South Sea Bubble’ of 1720), to Richard Knight, of Downton, whose family were iron-masters. Richard Knight’s only daughter and sole heiress, Elisabeth, married Thomas Johnes, a Welsh landowner, and in 1748 their first son, Thomas Johnes II, was born.

In 1780, on the death of his father, Thomas Johnes II decided to return to the family estates in Wales, in particular to Hafod which he was to redevelop in the ‘Picturesque’ style.

Elisabeth, his mother, remained in possession of the Croft Estate but rather than live at the Castle, decided to move to London and to ‘let-out’ the Castle.

As far as we know, the only tenant was Somerset Davies of Wigmore Hall, who subsequently bought the estate in 1800.

Somerset Davies was born in 1754 into a wealthy Ludlow family; his father, also named Somerset* Davies, was a prosperous mercer of Ludlow; not only was he a successful draper but also an apothecary and attorney; he served on Ludlow Corporation for 43 years (1738-1781).

Interestingly, Somerset Davies Junior - having joined the family business at an early age - also served on Ludlow Corporation for 43 years (from 1774, when aged 20 years, till his death in 1817); he was Member of Parliament for Ludlow from 1783 till 1784.

It would appear that the young Somerset Davies was a man of considerable ability and ambition and, having acquired Croft Castle, was well received into the county establishment, for in 1804 he was appointed Sheriff of Herefordshire, a post he held for two years.

He is credited with the development of the Fishpool Valley in the Picturesque Style, although probably this had been initiated by the previous owner, Thomas Johnes who was a protagonist of the Picturesque Style (see ‘History of Croft - 1746-1800’).

He married an Anne Hammond of Pampisford Hall, near Cambridge, and in 1791 they had a daughter, Anne Isabella, who was to be his sole heiress; Anne Isabella married the Rev. James Kevill who came from a Cornish mining family; they had two sons, Edward, born probably in 1824 or earlier, and William Trevelyan, born 1826 (the year of his mother’s death) and one daughter, Isabella (date of birth unknown).

On his death in 1817 at the age of 63 years the Estate would, under normal circumstances, have passed to his daughter and son-in-law, James Kevill.

*Probably so named after Henry Somerset, Duke of Beaufort, who became President of the Council of the Marches in 1672.

However, Somerset Davies must have stipulated, within the terms of inheritance, that the surname 'Davies' should be incorporated as 'Kevill-Davies'; so that when Anne died in 1826, at the age of 35 years, the Estate passed to her elder son, Edward, (now to be known as Edward Kevill-Davies), but because Edward was a minor the Estate was managed by Trustees. This is confirmed by the 'apportionments' associated with the Tithe Map of 1839 which record the ownership of the plots comprising the Croft Estate as 'The Trustees of Edward Kevill-Davies'.

Edward did not enjoy robust health and died, without issue, in 1844, at the age of approximately 20 years.

And so, in 1844, the Croft Estate passed to his younger brother, William Trevelyan Kevill-Davies who was to hold the Estate for the next 62 years till his death in 1906.

During the period of 27 years between 1817, the death of Somerset Davies, and 1844, the death of Edward Kevill-Davies, the proprietorship of the Croft Estate was lacking in positive activity and consequently the influence of the 'Lordship of the Manor' was diminished; it was during this time that Lucton church fell into disrepair and when plans for its rebuilding and funding were being prepared there was no input by the Kevill-Davies family.

However, within seven years of inheriting the estate, William T. Kevill-Davies built the school at Cock Gate to house 110 pupils to serve the whole parish, at a personal expense of £1,200; 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; in 1873 he provided the plot for the Schoolmaster's House*.



Furthermore he built the Gothick pump-house which is seen as part of the continuing development of the Fishpool Valley in the Picturesque Style but with an up-to-the-minute cast iron wheel and a sophisticated pumping mechanism**.

In 1852, he was appointed Sheriff of Herefordshire in recognition of his status in the County.

* The capital cost of building the Schoolmaster's House was raised by public subscription into an old Yarpole Poor Law Charity, known as the 'Ivy Hall Patch Charity' and in 1979, after the house was sold, the capital was returned to the Charity and converted into, today's, Yarpole Educational Trust.

** The iron water-wheel has cast iron buckets and shrouds (rather than wooden) - a design which was only developed in the mid 19th century; the pumping system includes a 'damper' which evens out the pulses from the Hump, thus providing a constant flow of water up to 6 reservoir close to the castle.

The Weathercock:



This undated etching must have been drawn sometime before 1790, for in 1790 the steeple of the bell tower was reduced in height, but you can just make out the weather-vane which is probably the same one as the one we see today.

Weather-vanes have a simple design, but in order to function, they need to be perfectly balanced on their rotating axis. They also need an unequal area on each side so that they 'catch' the wind. As the weather-vane spins to reduce the force of the wind on its surface, the end with the least surface area turns into the wind and thus indicates the wind direction.

The most common pivot system was an external pipe or sleeve with a plugged end which had a countersink; the pivot shaft (attached to the building) had a sharpened end which located in the countersink allowing the vane to swivel. In later designs the pivot and plug were flat and a ball bearing or marble was placed between the two. Because the pipe part is on the outside and facing downwards it doesn't fill with water or dirt (in fact the worst thing you can do to them is to add grease or oil which would attract dust and grit (turning it into a grinding paste thus increasing wear) or the grease goes stiff and causes the pivot to seize.



But our weathercock is of an earlier design, dating back to the early 18th century.

In ours, the 'sleeve' is contained within the body of the cock and that little hump on its back is the countersunk plug; the bulge just below the cock is a welded collar which joins the upper hardened, sharpened pivot rod to the main stem; and halfway down the stem are the stubby N & S pointers.



The weathercock on the church of St. Cosmas and St. Damian at Stretford is of the same design and is dated 1709.

Traditionally these old weathercocks were seen as tempting targets and on the enlarged photograph you will see what good shots the local boys must have been.

The weather-vane, or more correctly the wind vane, from the Old English 'fane' meaning flag or banner, must be one of earliest meteorological instruments

Weather-vanes are mentioned in the ancient writings of Mesopotamia, from over 3,500 years ago. The Chinese also talk about strings or flags being used to read wind direction in writings dated to the 2nd century B.C.

The first "true weather-vane" is thought to be a bronze structure that was erected atop the Tower of the Winds in Athens in 48 B.C. by the Greek astronomer, Andronicus. This weather-vane took the shape of the Greek god Triton, who has the body of a man and the tail of a fish, and was between four and eight feet long. The tower was octagonal, with a different wind deity on each of the eight faces*; as the wind changed direction, 'Triton' indicated which god would be in control of the weather for that day.

In the ninth century A.D., the Pope reportedly decreed that every church in Christendom must be adorned by a cockerel, a symbol to remind Christians of Peter's betrayal of Christ: "I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me." (Luke 22:34)

*Boreas = north wind; Notus = south wind; Zephyrus = west wind; Eurus = east wind; Skeiron = northwest wind; Livos = southwest wind; Apeliotes = southeast wind; Kaikias = northwest wind.(with thanks to Wikipedia.com)

Compiled by Ian Mortimer with the help of Adrian Legge, Lecturer in Farriery, Herefordshire College of Technology (2008).