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A
HISTORY
OF
EASTINGTON

Near STONEHOUSE in GLOUCESTERSHIRE

By A. E. KEYS

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INTRODUCTION TO SECOND EDITION

This history was first printed in 1953, the issue being limited to 220 copies. The purpose of a second edition is to enable a further number of friends and neighbours to have it on their shelves. Some alterations in the text spring from changes over the years, others are corrections for which I am indebted to several friends, but especially once again to Mr. Irvine Gray, the County Records Officer.

A.E.K. 1964

This digital version was created so that more people of Eastington could access it freely as the number of printed copies seems to dwindle.
In creating this version, I have the blessing of Alf Keys, nephew of the author, who believes that his late uncle would have approved.

J.L. 2016

REVISED FOREWORD TO FIRST EDITION

"AND even I can remember a day when the historians left blanks in their writings, I mean for things they didn't know."
Thus a modern poet, but blank pages would number ten to one in our Eastington story if any such rule were observed.

Of the many questions I have asked or wished to ask, a mere handful have as yet been answered, though answers are still coming to hand, some of them from unexpected quarters.

I have used and relied upon the church registers; on the accounts of churchwardens, overseers and surveyors; on vestry minutes, parish magazines, school log books, and a variety of old deeds and documents. Monuments in church and churchyard have yielded up their secrets. Tradition has been used with caution. Personal knowledge and examination of sites and structures over many years have played an important part. Here and there, especially in the history of the school, I have been actor as well as spectator. This is no dogmatic history. I am prepared to welcome new facts as they come to hand and to modify any theory in conflict with new evidence.

I am indebted to the Rector and Churchwardens, to the Parish Council, and to the Headmaster and Managers of the School for the loan of documents; to the County Records Officer and staff for saving me from a number of pitfalls; and to my friend and neighbour Mr. C. Shill for details, corrections, and helpful advice throughout.

On revision I am conscious of a certain amount of repetition. This is primarily due to sections being written originally as separate papers. I have, however, intentionally fallen back again and again on the course of national history (and not only in "The Impact of History" chapter) as part of a deliberate attempt to avoid the unreality, the "Alice in Wonderland" atmosphere, that envelops some purely local histories.

"*After me cometh a builder*" and I am content if my notes arouse sufficient interest to stimulate a reader here and there to explore the history of some other parish or to make further and more accurate research into the annals of our own.

CHAPTER 1 - THE LIE OF THE LAND

EASTINGTON covers 2,040 acres — a little over three square miles. The surface of our fields is what the vegetative forces of nature over millions of years and the work of men's hands over thousands of years have made it. The soil is fertile, but heavy and difficult to cultivate except where gravel or silt occurs. The underlying subsoil is a clay, yellow and blue, known to geologists as the Lower Lias. This was formed at the bottom of a shallow muddy sea in the age of enormous fish-lizards and of small bat-like flying reptiles. Fossilized bones, scales and other remains have been used by the learned to reconstruct the liassic scene. Cotswold limestone is newer and the chalk of the Chilterns and the Downs and indeed all the South-eastern rocks, clays and sands are much newer. On the other hand the rocks of the North and West of Britain are much older. In liassic times the first bird had not yet been evolved (or created), though it soon would be, and man was still in the far distant future.

Here and there our clay is overlain with gravel, which is, or was before it was mined for early road-making, of a depth, in places of several feet. Counting now in thousands of years instead of in millions we can say that this was laid down in comparatively recent times by water flowing in torrents from Cotswolds with the height and steepness of mountains towards the Severn estuary. In this gravel and the alluvial soils associated with it we find abundant traces of prehistoric man, mostly alongside the River Frome or on the slopes leading down to it. A scanty and primitive population probably left the clay soils in possession of their native thorn, thicket and marsh, and the wild creatures they sheltered.

For a long time after the gravel was laid down the Stroud valley continued to be an arm of the Severn estuary and men of the stone age made this sheltered waterway a fishing ground and a means of travel and communication. The flints found near the left bank of the Frome between Millend and the Leonard Stanley boundary may have been associated with a group of dwellings built on piles in the water of the estuary, where the occupants might sleep safe from the intrusions of wolves, bears, hyaenas, buffalo-like wild cattle and other unwelcome visitors. On the other hand it may have been no more than a primitive harbour or wharf. Certainly it was something of a settlement and scene of human activity.

Associated with these flints we find lumps of what appears to be dross or slag from the smelting of iron, varying in size between a cricket and a golf ball, as if raked or skimmed off molten metal to fall and solidify on rough earth. Even if the smelting was prehistoric the association with the flints is probably mere chance. The iron age followed hundreds of years after the stone age with the bronze age between. These ferrous lumps are even more abundant in a narrow belt stretched across another field more than two hundred yards to the South-east and crossing the boundary into Leonard Stanley. The smelting is unlikely to be modern since around twenty per cent of iron is left in the slag. We may hope some day to discover whether it is Mediaeval, Roman or prehistoric, as well as to get some clue as to the source of the ore.

The thicker seams of gravel with sand extending from Frampton into Eastington abound in evidence of early man, but this was a settlement of pit dwellers in the gravel after it had been raised high enough above the water for drainage. These pits would have been roofed with the skins of wild animals. When gravel was mined at Netherhills Farm between the two world wars pits and communicating trenches were uncovered. Flint implements and fragments of utensils discovered there are in the Stroud and Gloucester museums, including cinerary urns for the ashes of the departed. A small hole in the bottom of these permitted the spirit to pass on (we are told) to the ‘happy hunting-grounds’.

Why couldn't the spirit come out through the mouth where the ashes were put in? Almost certainly the answer is that the custom was a symbolic recognition that through death one goes forward — there is no coming back. These folk lacked our long heritage of accumulated knowledge—science and the machine were thousands of years in the future, but this use of symbolism should not be mistaken for a low level of intelligence, unless we are to condemn ourselves, with our church windows deliberately set out of centre, our sanctuary gates that cannot be shut, and our dead carried feet foremost and buried "with feet towards the morn". The backbadge of the Gloucesters is typical modern symbolism.

We may note in passing that whereas the old-fashioned pick-and shovel navvy had no eye for flints nor any use for the old bones and potsherds he beat and trampled into dust, yet he could be relied on to report to his employer any unusual feature encountered in excavation, if only because it affected conditions of working and rates of pay. The monstrous mechanical digger mumbles its way blindly through soil and sub-soil, destroys or re-buries history and leaves no trace.

Between the men of the stone age and the coming of the Romans a period of nearly two thousand years has left no trace unless those lumps of slag date from the iron age. Some parishes are more fortunate. At Hardwicke an Ancient British gold coin was recently found in a plough field.

The Romans have left but little. The site of a villa at Westend, a milestone that stood at Alkerton Cross until around 1890, and an odd copper coin or two.

Physically the Saxons have left even less, but they have bequeathed us the names Eastington and Alkerton. From the Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names we gather that in A.D. 1220 Eastington was Eadstan's tun, that is the farm or family settlement of a Saxon named Eadstan ; and Alkerton was Ealkhere's tun.

Coming to Domesday Book, ordered by the King's Council of William the Conqueror at a meeting in the Chapter House of the Abbey of Gloucester in the year 1085, we are disappointed to learn that Eastington is not mentioned. We appear, however, under the name Alkerton (written ‘Alcrintone’). From Taylor's Analysis of the Domesday Survey of Gloucestershire it appears that Eastington was the area North of the Frome and at that date included in Fretherne; whereas Alkerton was a subsidiary to Frocester with its centre a Saxon Church, built upon the site of a Roman Villa and itself built over at a later date by St. Peter's Church, now in ruins. Coaley too may well have shared this centre.

We have no knowledge as to how these two each broke away to become united in the Manor of Eastington, but it appears to have taken place soon after Domesday.

Domesday was essentially an assessment of the resources of the country manor, in respect of taxation and of military strength, but interesting details come to hand. Thus we learn than Alcrintone had one mill and a wood a mile in length. The mill we can place somewhere on the Frome and the wood may have stretched along the Frocester boundary from Thicket Patch, which touches Leonard Stanley, to near New Cover. The industrial life not only of Eastington but of the whole of the Stroud valley has from the earliest times depended on the stream that flows throughout its length. The word Frome means river.

In the many well-known histories of Gloucestershire; Taylor, Atkyns, Bigland, Fosbroke, Rudge and others we meet scattered details of our lords of the manor where students may wrestle with their contradictions. We shall not attempt to trace the dim succession of Rolfs, Baladuns, Rogers, Audleys and Staffords. They will appear here and there in the background of our story until the Stephens family, a local squirarchy, gave to the manor (now the parish) of Eastington two centuries of a stability that was denied both to their feudal predecessors and to the captains of industry and commerce, the knights, so to speak, of the loom and the warehouse, who succeeded them.

From an early date and until mid-Victorian times some part of Framilode belonged to the manor and parish of Eastington. In 1841 the 'Terrier', that is, the official schedule of land and houses, lists an area of thirty-five acres, including the canal basin and wharf up stream, and reaching just past the present Darell Arms Hotel a third of a mile down-stream. Fourteen small parcels of agricultural land are set out and ten houses, including a shop, a beer-house, and part of an iron-works. It is seventy or eighty years since they ceased to be part of our parish, but for purposes of tithe redemption they are still Eastington.

The shop and beer-house were on the canal. Their trade depended on the hold-up of barges that could enter and leave the canal only when the tide was favourable. The iron works was on the Frome, probably on the site of the mill that was part of the Framilode property in the earliest references to it. Corn mill and iron works alike would have depended for power largely on tidal water.

A triangular iron boundary mark, bearing on one side ‘Eastington’ and on the other ‘Framilode’, was removed from the opposite verge a little below the Darell Arms as recently as 1940 when all place names were hustled out of sight in view of the menace of foreign invasion. The enemy would however have been puzzled rather than enlightened by reading the name of our parish on the banks of Severn. A second identical mark near the bridge at the Eastern end of the foreshore highway survived the Second World War, but has since disappeared. Local boundaries were almost always marked by stones ; which tempts us to believe that this iron came from the local works. A monument to an Ironmaster named Taylor, stands near the South door of our church, but we have been unable to trace any connection with Framilode. The word ‘Fram’ comes from the River Frome as it does also in ‘Frampton’, and ‘lod’ is Anglo-Saxon for a reach of water. Other examples on Severnside are St. Mary de Lode, Wainlode, Saxon's Lode and Clevelode. In the Middle Ages manors often owned river frontages outside their main territory, and this one survived it seems as an island addition to our Parish. A parallel case is Bam wood where in 1786 Bigland records a hundred acres of Severn meadow two miles outside the boundary. The river wharf served for shipment of wood, corn, cloth and other exportable commodities.

An even greater value lay in the provision of fresh fish (salmon, lamprey, eels, etc.) for the great man's table and in a landing place for Forest of Dean, timber for bridges and houses, as well as iron for ploughshares, for horse and ox shoes, spades, scythes and pitchforks, and coal for the smith's forge where it was used centuries before it came into domestic use. For their homes our ancestors preferred wood, declaring ‘sea-coal’ (as they called it because it was carried mostly by ship) to be vile smelling and injurious to health, and so no doubt it was while the chimney was no more than a hole in the roof.

When the Tithe Act of 1836 commuted the ‘tenths’ to money payments an early sequel was the preparation in every parish of a tithe map on which every parcel of land and every house is shown and numbered. An accompanying Terrier sets out, like a new Domesday, the acreage, the names of owner and occupier and the tithe assessment, which was used also by the overseers in fixing the poor rate, instead of making their own Terriers with their own assessments as hitherto.

We have already made use of the Terrier in connection with Framilode, but it was with a view to learning something of earlier Eastington history that we first unrolled the venerable tithe map. Much unwritten history comes to light as a result of careful examination of the lay out of our fields and the siting of our houses. Really old buildings are few. We have no native stone and only the wealthy could afford to transport this material from the hills. Brick did not come into general use much before 1800 and the wattle-and-daub houses and shacks in which the majority lived have long since perished.

To describe the houses of the working class as of timber and thatch is to give an entirely wrong impression. The writer has before him an indenture of the leasehold sale of a cottage in Arlingham by Giles Hodges, yeoman, to John Fryer, broadweaver, in which the terms and description leave no doubt that it was built of unsawn timber, for the most part brushwood plastered with clay. The date is 1664 and such dwellings were the commonest type in Eastington as well as in Arlingham and elsewhere any time before about 1700. Rushes or straw served for thatch, for bedding and for carpets. Thus furnished they must have swarmed with insect life especially where the occupiers were dirty or lazy and there seems no doubt that it was under such circumstances that the earwig found the ear of sleeping humanity an attractive hide-out and so earned its name and reputation.

First in age comes the church. Next after that a few buildings somewhat resembling the church in their massive structure, in the material of walls and roofs and in original design. The row nearest the church on the West is the best example, partly because it has suffered least from re-building. Its long and narrow ground plan and its gable ends suggest an ancient tithe barn or the nave and chancel of a church. The pitch of the roof is high so that the original covering may have been thatch, but the existing stone tiles have been in place for centuries. A feature of this building is the row of beam-ends that pierce the North wall so as to be visible from outside. A close connection with the Stafford and Buckingham South aisle is almost certain.

Alkerton House is probably equally old in main structure, but has been subject to much alteration and re-building. It appears to have been a Tudor house facing North and has now become a Georgian mansion facing South.

Another old house is Nastend Court. Substitution of double pantiles for Cotswold stone spoiled the appearance some years ago and more recent changes have improved the amenities but not the architectural harmony. In days when spinning and weaving were cottage, not factory industries, Nastend Court was the home of a branch of the wealthy clothier family of Clutterbuck.

The use of old building stone here and there in walls of cottages and outbuildings suggest that there were other houses of stone now demolished and we learn from the surveyors' accounts that stone from old houses was a source of road metal. One old stone-built cottage survives at Nupend, and in this hamlet stands our only surviving pair of thatched cottages.

Half-timbered houses, of oak frames soundly mortised and filled with a single thickness of brick, formed the next phase; anticipating the steel-framed constructions of our own day. A typical example is the farm-house of Alkerton Farm. The pitch of the roof shows that it was originally thatched as also was the barn.

The farmhouse of Green Farm is similar though the timber has lately been covered. Some future owner will some day be proud to uncover again the old oak. Other examples are the farmhouse and cottages at Churchend, a cottage at Alkerton behind the Co-operative Stores, and old cottage property at Nastend. In each case the original thatch has been replaced by tiles. Our half-timbered houses belong to the seventeenth century, and the bricks came from Frampton. Roman bricks are still occasionally dug up in Gloucester but the art of brick-making as practised locally by the Romans died out for long centuries. In Elizabethan times the industry sprang up again to supplement cargoes that were being imported from the Netherlands.

With the Industrial Revolution and consequent application of power to cloth manufacture our population more than trebled itself in half a century and houses sprang up in an attempt to meet the demand. Those of mill-owners and other well-to-do citizens were of Cotswold stone or Frampton brick. The mills and mill-dams were re-built at the same time of the same materials and the mills roofed, like the houses of the owners, with slate from the distant quarries of Wales.

Of our three mills, Millend, Meadow, and Churchend (now demolished), one must have been the corn-mill mentioned in Domesday and the other two were almost certainly set up as fulling mills in the fourteenth or fifteenth century when the export trade in cloth demanded a more finished and a more uniform product, such as required space, power, and group labour. Spinning and weaving were still cottage industries in the parish until around 1800 but the fulling mills became more and more important in

days before invention enabled the same water-power, and afterwards steam, to be applied to the spinning wheel and the loom. Slate, timber and other materials were brought by the new Stroudwater Canal that carried coal for the new steam engines of the rebuilt mills.

In this era came The Leaze (Eastington Park), Eastington House, Eastington Lodge (The Rectory), The Grange, Orchard Leigh, Oldbury House and Alkerton Court, where an iron fire-back bearing the letters T.H. and the date 1735 is older the the house, being from the works of Ironmaster Thomas Hardwicke who specialised in these period fittings. The King's Head was built (as a private house) in 1818. No doubt some of these buildings were the fruit of profits inflated by the Napoleonic wars . Cottages sprang up everywhere.
The Workhouse (now the Willllows Hostel) was built in 1785.
Typical of this period was the setting of the chimneys in an outside wall instead of within the body of the house.

Frampton bricks continued to be used until Early Victorian times when Stonehouse bricks, machine made from lias clay, displaced the hand moulded product of Severn mud. Around the same date Eastington had a small brick-works near the Frocester boundary, complete with horse-pug (kneading mill driven by. horse power), hand-moulds and kilns.

None of these new houses or cottages were thatched. Where a thatched roof has survived or where the pitch shows that it was once thatched the date is certainly earlier and usually a good deal earlier than 1800.

Much of the brick-work is of poor quality, especially that of the cottages. If our bricklayers knew the 'Old English' or the 'Flemish' bonds they conveniently forgot them, and the tie-bar plates staring from every other wall are a harvest of their sowing. The clay sub-soil is partly, but only partly, responsible for the cracks and bulges that have made this expedient necessary. Poring over the tithe map we first note how little most of the fields have altered in a hundred and fifteen years. Studying the terrier we note how little their use has changed in the same period. True, the last osier bed was grubbed twenty years ago, but arable, grass, orchard and coppice are little changed. Much of the wide margins of verge and waste alongside our roads had already (in 1841) been enclosed and built upon.

Searching for clues to agricultural history we remember that an area of farmland stretching from behind Alkerton Court to Perryway and known as Eastington Fields is, or was recently, a single unit of land though divided among several owners and occupiers. Turning to the tithe map we find that about a hundred acres of this land is marked out with parallel dotted lines in strips running roughly North-South which is up and down the slope of the land. The length of the strips is about 10 chains (220 yards) and in area the smallest measures a quarter-acre and the largest four acres. Single acres and half acres are most common. Each strip is separately numbered and assessed.

This is plainly a hang-over from the open field system of cultivation which was the normal practice throughout the Middle Ages and which did not entirely disappear in favour of enclosure until modern times though the change over began several centuries earlier.

Under open field conditions the strips were not individually fenced, but marked out by boundary stones or posts at the ends, and along their length by the double furrows made by the plough. These so called water-furrows running with the slope provided drainage. As we have seen, the length was approximately 220 yards, that is one furlong — literally a furrow long or the length of a furrow, being the distance a team could draw a plough with the greatest effect between relaxations of effort during turning on the headlands.

Checking the map by actual observation we notice a large proportion of our fields are roughly rectangular and with a diameter up and down the slope of about a furlong. In most cases the distance is rather less, probably because the heavy clay soil tired the oxen more and the plough moved more slowly than in a lighter soil.

The open field was farmed on a rotation of Autumn-planted corn, Spring-planted corn, and fallow, the cultivated two-thirds being protected^ by a temporary fence of hurdles against the cattle and sheep that roamed and grazed over the one-third that was fallow. An acre was, in theory, the amount an ox team could plough in a day of twelve hours. This unit must have been established on soils where ploughing was easier and quicker than in Eastington, though we have occasionally known an acre to be ploughed in a day by a pair of horses, but not on the heaviest land. Whatever the speed and whatever the custom elsewhere the good earth of our parish was in the past ploughed in strips a furlong in length and five and a half yards wide so that it measured a quarter of an acre, and a guess is that the ox team would be likely to plough two of them in a day.

The last vestiges of these individual lands, ridges or rudges, as we now call the strips, are fast disappearing before the onset of the tractor plough, the bulldozer and disc harrows; and if, having studied the map, we examine the surface of Eastington Fields hoping to identify the strips, we are disappointed. Only here and there is a water furrow defined where a modern hedge has followed its course.

On almost every farm, fields that had been under grass for generations, because high ox-ridges had made horse-ploughing difficult, were broken up and levelled by tractor during the second world war. Not only were the ridges high and the furrows deep, but they were no longer straight. The turning of the plough-team on the headlands during innumerable ploughings had given them the shape of the letter ‘S’. The field called ‘Rudgey Tyning’ on Alkerton Court Farm is a spectacular surviving example of high ridges, though the ‘S’ is less marked than in some fields where the furrows are shallower. This field lies West of Springhill immediately across ‘The Devil's Ditch’ so called presumably because it is much deeper and wider than any local ditch made by the hand of man. So much water passes down this steep ditch during the winter months that the original water-furrow has now become a natural water-course. Some ox-ridged fields had already been levelled by the steam cable-plough at the end of the nineteenth century.

Having grasped the significance of the tithed strips we are not surprised to discover them on a smaller scale in other parts of the parish, notably at Nupend in Budloe Field and at Dotloe (or Dudloe) and at Westend in Westfield below Meadow Mill, and near Wobow Lane on the Whitminster boundary. Parcels of land are described as in Mead Field (Eastington Fields), in Budloe Field, or in Westfield, which removes any doubt as to the soundness of the foregoing argument.

Furthermore where a rectangular field measures a furlong up and down the slope, whether it measures four, five or six or any number of acres we realise that it has been made up of four times as many quarter-acre lands. Sometimes the top and bottom hedges run parallel for half a mile or more with parallel hedges at right-angles marking out the fields.

Not all land however, came into the open field system. There are scattered about the parish parcels of land of irregular shape that were woodland, garden, orchard, or enclosed grazing or arable land in private ownership even in the hey-day of the open field system.

The extent to which the open field was communally owned or rented, the extent to which it was communally ploughed, planted or reaped; the method of allocation of the strips and the period elapsing before re-allocation, all these are matters of controversy. The writer believes that custom varied widely from place to place and from time to time. This much is certain, however, that the ploughing, sowing, reaping, general management and husbandry were along rigid traditional lines having the force of law and that experiment and therefore progress was confined to the privately enclosed acres outside the system. At all events by 1841 the strips had long ceased to have any bearing on the actual cultivation of the land and existed only on paper and for tithe and rate assessment purposes only.

Some land unsuitable for cultivation was grazed in common. The most obvious area is suggested by the name. Just as Eastington Fields was part of the common arable land, so Alkerton Meadows alongside the Frome was part of the common grazing land. Doubtless there were many other pieces.

Little, if any, hay was made. Cattle and sheep that were fat after summer grazing and pigs that were fat after autumn acorns and beachmast were killed and salted, the others lived as they could until Spring brought back the grass. Some died, others shrank to skin and bone. The emphasis should perhaps be on the sheep rather than on the cattle in a wool producing area. Beef and veal made a welcome change of meat for the well to do, but the main use of cattle was to provide plough oxen, though cheese and butter were important products. Even the milk for cheese-making was however, obtained in part from the ewes of the flock.

This was the general position in the county. The clay soil of Eastington easily becomes wet and foundrous in an average winter and is not now suitable for continuous sheep rearing. The proportion therefore of cattle to sheep may have been higher than elsewhere.
On the other hand it is probable that the native breed of sheep (Cotswold-type and especially wool-bearing) was more resistant than improved modern mutton-and-Easter-lamb breeds to exposure, liver-fluke and foot-rot.

But if so much of the land was farmed as shown by the 1841 map and terrier, what became of the mile-long wood in Domesday ? The answer is that much can happen in seven and a half centuries.

CHAPTER 2 - GROWING PAINS

RESIDENTS North of the Church, particularly if their home is Nupend, sometimes complain that they are forgotten, and left out of parish events. There is even, now and again, a demand to be a separate parish or a separate ward. This is far from being a new idea. Ever since parishes began Eastington has been one parish far-flung around a central church; but there was at one time something very like a division into two wards. Modern advocates of separation would make the canal the dividing line, but for more than a century, beginning long before the cutting of the canal, the Frome (churchyard loop) separated 'Alkerton Tything' from 'Eastington Side'

Essential unity throughout is proved by the registers (Baptisms, Mariages, Burials) that give no hint of division. Yet somehow a carry-over of its origin from two distinct manors has persisted to this day; an undercurrent of disunity that has from time to time come to the surface. In the Churchwardens Accounts evidence of a rift is seen in 1660, when the foot-bridge into the churchyard is repaired. Purchase of a 'loan' (a beam) for 1/6d. is duly recorded and an entry is later interpolated below to say that "*Eastington side paid nothing for the loan*". Since the church stood in Eastington Side, only Alkerton folk would use the bridge to get to and from services. Then let Alkerton Tything pay.

The rift widens and by 1719 we find two wardens with individual accounts — each half has appointed its own, and though sometimes one and sometimes two appear for a few years, by 1740 the division seems complete. Separate wardens, separate accounts.

A hundred years pass . . . .
Long enough one would suppose to make the fission permanent; but no, in 1840 the distinctive names disappear from the churchwardens accounts, though the Tithe Commissioners are at work assessing the parish as ‘Alkerton Tything’ and ‘Nupend Tything’. By 1848 reunion appears to be complete and hence forward our two church officers, now ‘Rector's Warden’ and ‘People's Warden’, present a single annual account. While the rift endured each half-parish had not only appointed its own warden, but had recommended to the justices its own list of overseers, surveyors and constables. Each half had its own pound. Throughout the period covered by our surviving overseers accounts opening 1724 we find the two halves each with its own overseer, its own list of ratepayers and assessments, and its own list of disbursements to its own poor, but when this began and whether it ended before or after the setting up of the Wheatenhurst Union in 1837 we do no know.

When our surviving surveyor's accounts open in 1739 there was a surveyor to each half-parish responsible for its own roads and bridges, for the breaking and hauling of stone, for the employment of labour and for the purchase of the tools and materials necessary for their repair. Here again we have not been able to determine exactly the period covered by this set up.

The allocation of church expenses so far as they fell on the rates is not easy to understand. Some items were shared equally, e.g. setting up the king's arms, some unequally, e.g. casting of the bell; but the clock that faced towards Alkerton seems always to have been wound at the expense of the ratepayers of that half, though repaired by Eastington Side in whose territory it stood.

Throughout the rates were maintained at the same level in both parts - the justices had no power to levy a rate in any other terms - and in each of our accounts there seems to have been a gentleman's agreement to share any surplus or deficit. Altogether the division seems to have been a matter of principle rather than of policy and the advantages sentimental rather than material. To-day Alkerton Tything, if re-instated, would comprise half the acreage, but two-thirds of the houses, the population, and the rateable value. During the years of division the acreage and the rateable value of the two parts were approximately equal and Alkerton had only a slight advantage in houses and population.

When we speak of each side having a constable we may perhaps visualise a familiar figure in blue, on patrol from the local police station. Such a picture is entirely wrong. Before the advent of Sir Robert Peel's police (1839 in Gloucestershire), the parish constable was not a trained, full time, paid unit under orders, but an untrained, unpaid civilian, often with his living to earn. In office however, so far as the parish was concerned, he was the man who gave orders, the head of his department, subject only to the control of the High Constable of the Hundred.

Eastington is described, even in comparatively modern documents, as in the Hundred of Whitstone. This division of counties into hundreds dates from Saxon times. According to some authorities it referred to a unit of a hundred families, or as others say, to a unit providing a hundred fighting men, or again to a unit furnishing a hundred sureties to keep the peace; which seems most probable, for whatever its origin the hundred was in fact a unit responsible for the maintenance of law and order within its bounds. From John Speede's map of Gloucestershire published in 1610 we learn that the county was divided into thirty hundreds. What is even more interesting is that Whitstone at that date was made up of exactly the same parishes as the present Whitminster Petty Sessional Division; and this is as it should be, since as we have seen, the hundred was essentially a police unit.

For centuries the constable was responsible for law and order, for the conduct of the ale and beer houses and the gravity of the beer, for the archery butts, the militia, the pound, the lock-up, the pillory and the whipping post wherever they existed. He controlled the rounding up of straying animals, the imprisonment of unlicenced vagrants and the movement of travellers with passes towards their destinations. (Repeated references to ‘passes’ invites comparison with modern travel restrictions, but at least a workman no longer needs a passport to seek a job in the next parish or the next county).

The constable also arranged prosecution of wrongdoers of every sort and description. He derived his authority from the local justices, and he in his turn gave legal backing to the decisions of churchwardens, overseers and surveyors. Though we find no reference to a property qualification in Eastington before 1840 when a constable had to be an occupier at not less than £4 per annum, it is evident that he must always have been a fairly substantial man, one who would be obeyed in office, if only because there was no paid staff, and it was the duty of every citizen to assist the constable in his duties and under his orders.

The responsibility of citizens generally for the maintenance of law and order is as old as English history and has never lapsed in theory though little remains in practice except the duty, well known but not always accepted, of assisting the police on demand when they are in difficulty with law-breakers.

In populous cities, it is true, the constable had a paid staff of 13 watchmen who were in a sense the paid police. Not indeed the upstanding young athletes who bestride our streets to-day, but aged, decrepit or crippled specimens of humanity, past doing a day's work and correspondingly ill-paid. They tottered and stumbled up and down the dark ill-paved thoroughfares with staff and lanthorn, pausing at every street corner to intone the time (by the nearest church clock), and the weather. Thus the ratepayers, snug in bed, knew that " the watch " were about the business for which they were paid and not asleep beneath some ale-house bench; and " the watch " for their part took courage from the belief that honest folk were awake within ear-shot if their help should be needed. The City of Gloucester had watchmen from very early times. At Stroud, whose population had lately increased with the Industrial Revolution, a night patrol of two watchmen during the winter was set up in 1815, but was intermittent, sometimes for want of watchmen, sometimes for want of subscribers to the fund. In 1825 the town obtained an Act of Parliament for paving, lighting and watching its streets and in consequence two able-bodied watchmen were appointed. A big step forward if we emphasise the "able-bodied."

An agreement in the possession of Eastington Parish Council, relating to the formation in 1834 of an association for the protection of property illustrates what was probably the normal method of keeping the peace and of bringing criminals to justice.

The association proposed to use the funds subscribed by its members in paying common informers. Payment was to be made only on conviction, the amount depending on the severity of the sentence. Death or transportation earned a reward not exceeding £5. Crimes carrying lesser penalties and detection of offences by "*persons retailing beer contrary to the provisions of any Act*" earned not more than £1.

The rewards were not excessive, but the subscribers were but twenty-six and the initial amount subscribed £14 15s., in amounts from £1 to 5s. We do not know what the solicitors charged for drawing up this imposing agreement, but the fifteen-shilling stamp adorning the parchment seems a heavy first charge. Neither do we know how long the association carried on nor with what results. Incidentally the twenty-six names tell us which families had property to protect in 1834.

Associations on these lines were widespread in the twenty or thirty years before the appearance of modern police. For many years after this date parish constables were still appointed, though later called waywardens to avoid confusion; and the two systems, the old and the new, the unpaid and the paid minions of the law, functioned side by side until almost the end of the nineteenth century.

Although Eastington has changed little in broad outline since the tithe map was made in 1841, in detail changes are considerable; but before making an attempt to summarise some of the most interesting, we may mention that the Tithe Act of 1836 only made compulsory what was already being done by consent in many parishes including our own. The Act did not operate until after the production of the tithe map five years later. But in 1836 a vestry minute records that the Rector gave notice to have tithes set out in kind. Evidently he felt the voluntary commutation offered was inadequate. As a result the Vestry offered to settle for the sum of £70 to be added, and this offer was accepted. In 1843 the Rector's income from tithe was £525.

Returning to the tithe map and terrier we learn that in 1841 the Commissioners of Turnpikes owned two houses, one at the Pike Bridge and one just below Claypits Farm. Both have disappeared. They owned

also some roadside waste now orchard at the corner where Claypits meets the main road above The Britannia. At the same date Nupend had two beer-houses. One stood almost opposite the present off-licence house. The other at Nupend Green was demolished only towards the end of last century. A thatched hovel with dirt floors it was last kept by ‘old Mother Clarke’, who, when she became feeble of limb and her sight dim, allowed her customers to help themselves from the tap, with results disastrous to their stability and to her finances.
There was an inn ‘The Bell Public House’ on Westend corner facing the Baptist Chapel. ‘The King's Head’ at Alkerton, ‘The New Inn’ at Newtown and ‘The Brittania’ at Claypits, were all in business and the present off-licence premises in Bath Road was a beer house called ’The Boot’. There was a beer house at Millend. Not ‘The Castle’, which all except the rising generation remember, but an old building, now demolished, further up the lane. We miss ‘The Fox’ from Bath Road, next above the garage, which disappeared about the same date as ‘The Castle’. We miss ‘The Victoria’ which survives and flourishes. These two came around 1850 together with ‘The Royal Oak’ at Middlestreet (the house immediately below Bath Terrace) whose stay did not much exceed twenty years.

We cannot find that Churchend ever had an ale or beer house, but in 1841 a James Warner tenanted a house and brewery which was probably part of the historic house west of the church already described, though it is possible that the site of the present red-brick pair on the corner of the same plot is indicated. The terrier here gives four tenancies under one number and we can only guess which is which. At all events a brewery there was within sight and smell of church, school and old rectory.

Below Meadow Mill half an acre of Westfield (roughly square) is designated ‘Garden and Buck Pit’. The name reminds us of Shakespeare's Falstaff who was carried in the ‘buck-basket’ under dirty linen and tipped into the water at Datchet Mead; and this buck -pit was indeed a place of washing, not domestic linen, but new woven woollen cloth from the mills. The garden was a drying ground. When floods are out the outline of this half acre with the pit in the centre can be plainly seen though it has been levelled and thrown into the surrounding pasture more than sixty years. In the days when the whole population took a lively interest in agriculture, even if their daily work lay in the factory, and when the majority scarcely left their native place for years on end the name of every field was known to every inhabitant. To-day the names do not matter it seems. Even the farmer sometimes knows his own fields only as number so and so on the Ordnance Survey. Yet how attractive some of the names are.

Budloe, Westloe, and Dudloe (Dotloe), are all at Nupend. ‘Loe’ is said to mean ‘burial ground’ and by analogy a mound or lump, and Nupend itself means something of the same sort. ‘Nup,’, ‘nop’ and ‘knop’ all indicate a bump or a lump in the land."

At Westend is the field called Graftworm of which the overseers took a tenancy in 1835 to find digging work for able-bodied paupers, and Ryman's Mead, Murrel's Mead and Sauls Patch in which three it was proposed to invest charity money, as the wall tablet under the tower tells us, in letters outlined but never filled, because the plan came to nothing.

We have fields called Mangerstone, Wobow, Aspla, Bodman's, Sparrow Croft, Gilly Croft, Pancake Meadow, Kittage, Conygre Orchard, Heron Grove, Honeyhills, Pies, Gastons, Hums, Green Cheese Mead, Flax

Orchard and Knockholt; most of them forgotten except by such of the owners as have taken the trouble to read their old deeds.

Eastington does not appear to have had anything in the nature of a Common in modern times. Alkerton Green is no more than a rather wide strip of roadside waste that has chanced to remain unenclosed. Formerly controlled by the Lord of the Manor it is now in the hands of the Parish Council. Even smaller greens survive at Nastend, Nupend, Westend and Cress Green.

The Manorial Rights, having passed from the Baluns, Audleys and Staffords to Edward Stephens and from his heirs to Henry Hicks became vested, towards the end of the Victorian era in the family of Ricketts, but we have had no effective Lord of the Manor for a hundred years.

Our ancient Lords of the Manor owned the whole parish as part of their estate, but the position changed after Stafford gave place to Stephens, who owned, however, a considerable part of the parish. By 1841 there were nearly 150 owners and about twice that number of occupiers. The Hicks family owned less than a fifth of the acreage, and the Ricketts family much less.

We know little of the history of Nonconformity in Eastington. The Baptist Chapel at Nupend bears the date 1871 and the Methodist Chapel at Alkerton 1870, but these are structures of modern re-building. The tithe-map show the Baptist Chapel on the original site at the corner of its little burial ground and the Methodist Chapel on or against the garden of the manse fifty yards nearer Alkerton Cross than the present building. The vestry of the old chapel, probably a new addition, still exists as a useful garden shed and garage. This chapel also had its little churchyard before the 1872 re-building. Aged inhabitants remember the burial there of a black maid-servant of a missionary minister, but no one seems to know what happened to the interments when the burial ground was closed.

John Wesley died a member of the Church of England in 1791 so that the original Wesleyan Chapel could hardly have been built much before 1800 and perhaps not until sometime after.

Of the Baptist Chapel a well-bound minute book has survived. It dates from 1835 and includes a register of baptisms. From it we learn that the original chapel was built in 1824 by Primitive Methodists and purchased by the Baptists in 1831. Entries suggest a sincere and unselfish body, narrow and intolerant perhaps by modern standards, and much troubled by backsliding of ‘weaker brothers’. During the building of the new chapel in 1871 services were held in the dry-dock of the Stroudwater Canal, where on one occasion three hundred sat down to tea. The new building cost £624, of which £502 was subscribed by members, almost all working-class, within a few months,

In the Terrier, Alkerton Chapel was coupled with the manse for payment of poor rate. Nupend Chapel having no manse was not rated.

The preaching of George Whitefield in Eastington churchyard around 1740 was an event in the history of nonconformity though he himself was at that date a member of the Church of England. It seems hard to believe that only a little more than sixty years ago Eastington had no piped water supply, and was dependant on wells, streams and ponds. The ever present risk of disease, particularly typhoid, was averted by a widespread use of fermented drinks of low alcoholic content (beer, cider, and wine from home-grown grapes), until a fall in the price of tea, together with a growing taste for it, brought about a change of habits.

There were parishes here and there with safe water, but our well water was mostly brackish and discoloured even if not contaminated. The few wells of really good water were greatly prized. In some parts wells were close together on adjoining properties and there are stories of the deeper wells draining the others dry. At Vernal House (demolished in 1916) the well-head was at the bottom of a deep cellar. The owner had previously taken well water from a neighbour, and sunk his own in consequence of a quarrel. The work, says tradition, was done in secret, and the first the neighbour knew of it was through his old well going dry. The wells were not more than ten yards apart though on opposite sides of the lane from Millend to Cress Green.

Before oil lamps came in 1880 or thereabouts, the parish depended for light on candles. Wax candles for the well-to-do, tallow dips and rush-lights for those who could afford them. The very poor had to make do with firelight as primitive man had done. Though lacking the help of modern closed grates or stoves with regulated draught it was necessary somehow to keep a permanent fire before matches came around 1820. To make one with flint and tinder was a skilled job and to borrow fire from a neighbour might be inconvenient and hazardous.

Brooding over all those centuries of privation one may be excused for wondering if we sufficiently value our amenities and luxuries so recently and hardly won.

The worst times were not those in which our people were engaged in agriculture or in producing textiles on cottage hand looms. So long as the first call on their toil was to fill their own mouths and cover their own backs life was hard without being squalid or even entirely lacking in dignity. When , however, science and the machine came with the key of which philosophers of every age had dreamed, that was to throw wide the gates of plenty, it seemed to have opened instead a Pandora's box and loosed a legion of new evils. Moreover as the first waves of the Industrial Revolution submerged practical religion and humanitarian impulse, a satisfying economic theory arose to explain away any ugly feature shocking to old-fashioned social conscience.

Overcrowding in the factory, in the hovel, in The beer house, and in the brothel; overcrowding without the provision of modern sanitation to replace the natural decencies that overcrowding destroys, led to moral laxity, and to reckless and promiscuous reproduction. The age became marked by callousness towards suffering, sorrow and death; towards child-life crippled and blighted in the factory and the mine; towards old age perishing for want of bread, and towards humanity of all ages perishing for want of skilled medical attention.   Callousness showed itself openly in a harsh administration of poor law and an excessively severe penal code. Social conscience was indeed benumbed though not quite dead. In a later chapter we shall see how our overseers and guardians of the poor grappled with the destitution arising from industrialism before factory acts, education and modern police, sprang from the revival of a more lively and intelligent humanitarianism,   Elsewhere child labour will call for a few words, but here perhaps is the place to speak plainly about the penal code.

Much has been written of the severity of the penal code in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and The cloud of moral indignation, of horror and detestation, stirred up by the conscience-stricken Victorians still makes a true perspective difficult "to have and to hold".

“*These be but bugges to frighten babes withall*”, says the Elizabethan poet, and the purpose of a severe penal code was, and still is, to frighten the morally weak into honest living by the threat of what could befall wrongdoers. In the year 1803 a man could be hanged for sheep stealing. In 1953 for the same offence he could be imprisoned for fourteen years, but the usual penalty is a fine of three or four pounds. It is not uncommon in our Magistrates Courts to-day for defendants found guilty of other crimes carrying the same maximum penalty to be merely put on probation without other punishment. Similarly our ancestors made the practice much less severe than the theory, though to do so they had to use more devious and irregular ways such as pricing down the value of goods stolen or even sometimes reducing a charge of sheep-stealing to one of stealing the sheep's hide. Maximum penalties were indeed imposed, but they were normally reserved for really desperate and hardened criminals.

This is not a shot in the air. We have local figures that should place the matter beyond doubt. In Gloucester in the forty-three years before 1835, when the death penalty was abolished for all offences except murder and treason, eighty-one persons were executed for offences other than these. An average of under two a year, but during a year in Gloucestershire there must have been hundreds of prosecutions and scores of convictions that qualified for the gallows. The penal code was cruel; its administration was both severe and erratic by present day standards, especially when political or sectarian animosities were aroused, but the suggestion that anyone convicted of a trifling offence was automatically ‘worked off’ should be treated as the old wives' tale it is.

We may reflect too, how in the same decades ‘hell-fire’ was a familiar theme from the pulpits of priests and ministers, who nevertheless, discoursed on the virtues of the deceased as a routine part of the burial service, and hastened to approve, on many a monument, tributes to excellencies of character towards which their awful admonitions had contributed. The age being what it was, fear of punishment, temporal and eternal, was a powerful deterrent to potential wrongdoers.

In those years of transition before and after 1800, parishes more quickly and completely industrialised than Eastington had correspondingly greater social problems, whereas a parish like Frocester that remained agricultural for lack of water-power, escaped the more serious evils. To say, as is sometimes done, that Frocester had no destitution and almost no crime is incorrect, but at least it escaped more lightly than we did.

The evils of industrialism are comparatively modern.
More modern still is The Welfare State that stems directly from It — so modern as scarcely to have arrived (1953) . Let it wait the attention of a future historian. We for our part will get back to our oldest man-made structure, St. Michael's Church.

CHAPTER 3 - ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH

CHURCHES dedicated to St. Michael are usually in places making them as conspicuous as ‘the city that is set on an hill’, but Eastington Church centrally placed beside the Frome does not advertise its modest beauty to the world. No distant view of it is possible from any direction.

There was at one time a second church or chapel at Alkerton. In the year 1400 the Pope writing to the Archdeacon of Gloucester exempted John Welle, rector of ‘Estyndon’ from celebrating mass and other divine offices in the ‘Chapel of Alcrynton’, founded and built of old about a stone's throw from the church. (The Latin says "jactum balistae" which is a stone's throw, not by hand, but by a military engine or catapult).

The letter goes on to describe the chapel as "roofless and almost utterly destroyed and by some reputed a profane place”. We think of it as in the same condition as ‘Alloways auld haunted kirk’ where Tam O'Shanter saw the Witches Sabbath. Somewhere near Eastington House, no doubt, which reminds us that nervous folk still imagine things if they have to traverse Springhill alone in the dark.

We read elsewhere of an Alkerton chantry endowed by the priory of Leonard Stanley with the rents of the mill and other properties at Framilode. Tradition says it stood near Alkerton Green. The church was not always St. Michael's. Until about the year 1500 it was the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary. If this had happened at the Reformation or a little later the change of name would have been understandable, but why this should happen forty years before appears to be an insoluble problem. Kelly's Directory of 1870 calls it St. Matthew's and repeats this in 1876, which was obviously a mistake, but which explains why a letter written by the Diocesan Architect in 1883 concerning its restoration is headed ‘St. Matthew's Church’.   Later directories call it ‘St. Michael's’ except that one gives ‘St. Michael or St. Mary’. The more recent use of ‘St. Michael and All Angels’ appears to have originated in the Parish and to have no historical support.

At all events Eastington Church has stood here from very early times. The main structure of the present building came into existence in the thirteenth century and the tower a little later. East and West windows show typical and beautiful examples of the Gothic stone tracery of the period.

The font is older than the church being Norman and of unusual design. It may well have survived from an earlier fabric though we have no proof. The stone appears to have come from Painswick from one of the quarries that from time to time supplied the paving for the floor. (The quality of Painswick stone was highly praised by George III). The encircling scallops are admired by some and thought bad taste by others. Above them is a ledge much worn by the parson's foot, placed upon it now and again through the centuries as he held the child over the font.

The oldest and the only surviving pre-reformation monument stands near the vestry door. Of brass on an upright stone which has been broken at some time. We are tempted to connect this accident with an entry in the churchwarden's accounts for 1681. It says, “*It for setting uppe tomston -o-3-o*", which must refer to some upright monument that had fallen down. This brass, bearing a representation of a lady in an heraldic mantle, is a good example of its kind. Portions of

the inscription are missing, but they can be supplied from a copy made by the historian Bigland around 1770.
It reads: *"Here lyeth Elizabeth Knevet, daughter of Sir Will Knevet Knight which Elizabeth decessed the first day of Novembre in the yere of our Lord God MD and XVIII. On whose soule Jesu have mercy Amen*." We are a little surprised at that date to find the inscription in English and not in Latin.

Bigland tells us only that the Knevets were a Norfolk family, but the researches of R. J. Wyatt, a pupil of the Crypt School, Gloucester, confirm (1962) that they were connected with the Lord of the Manor Stafford and Buckingham who built or restored the South Aisle. Elizabeth's brother Charles was his surveyor and almost certainly responsible for the work. A genealogical table prepared by Wyatt shows how closely related to royalty the Knevets were. Latin continued to be common on tombstones elsewhere for another three hundred years; and half a century later Lord Bacon deliberately wrote his books in Latin rather than in English to make sure that they would endure. Our parish registers were kept in Latin (of sorts) until 1690, and again it surprises us that of the numerous monuments to the Stephens family in our church only one is in Latin and that to Lady Edith Beale who was related by marriage. Plainly our Lords of the Manor were not classical scholars even in the days before the title descended to families who were, or had been, in trade.

The absence of all, or almost all, trace of earlier monuments in so old a church is another surprise, because it must have been built in the first place by a rich and titled family. In 1501 William Blamye, Clerk (probably Rector of Eastington), directed that his body should be buried before the altar. If his heirs raised a monument to his memory it too has perished. An easy assumption is that our church being connected with a monastry had its ancient monuments converted to secular use at the dissolution of religious houses.

Inside the tower where a walled-up doorway gave access to a North arcade (to which we shall return) there are stones that have been re-cut from a larger stone bearing an inscription. The large distinctive letters are too faint from refacing and the words too fragmentary for interpretation. Their presence may point to the use of pre-reformation monuments as a source of building materials when they were sufficiently massive. On the other hand there are reasons (not entirely convincing) for supposing it to have been an inscription relating to the monument of Edward and Joan Stephens that for some reason (perhaps the odd design of the letters) was rejected by the heir. This supposition would confirm an approximate date for the demolition of the arcade without disproving the use of still older monuments as a quarry for building or paving material. We are certainly fortunate that the font has escaped damage.

The oldest glass is in a window in the North wall where St. Matthew is shown with the tax money in his hand. Glass in other windows whose history is known is mostly modern, commemorating notable parishioners of the nineteenth or of the present century. The glass in the West window is to the memory of Thomas Peters, Rector 1838-1884, by his grandsons. All the new windows, of course, replaced older glass and it is arguable whether we have not lost more than we have gained even when the new is ‘better quality glass’, to quote a catchword of the modern vandal.

The glass we see in the East window is to the memory of James Stanton of The Leaze (Eastington Park). Its excellence does not compensate, in the eyes of older people, for the loss of its predecessor which was indeed but painted glass. Painted however by the Rev. Peters himself. But was the glass it replaced around 1850 really of such poor quality? Perhaps it is mere sentiment to look at the window of the Lady Chapel, lately re-glazed with clear glass, and in imagination to see and to regret that future generations will never see Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness depicted in its panes. Perhaps it is mere dreaming to suppose that some glass comparable in age if not in quality with the Crecy window in Gloucester Cathedral has been lost through the enthusiasm of restorers and innovators. We have been assured that the Peters East window in Stonehouse Church has survived to 1963.

Change there must be, especially in the provision of modern amenities, but any new edition of the Book of Common Prayer might well include a prayer that drastic and violent alterations, slipshod work and shoddy materials, change for the sake of change, or because there happens to-be money in hand, may be kept from His house who is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. The South aisle was built or rebuilt by the Duke of Stafford and Buckingham a year or two before his execution in 1521 by Henry VIII. The story of his opposition to Cardinal Wolsey, who brought about his death in spite of the friendship of Queen Katherine, is told in the first two acts of Shakespeare's King Henry VIII. His initials ‘S.B.’ can be seen in the window-glass of the organ chamber. This glass was originally in a window in that part of the North wall now replaced by arches. The same initials are carved in the stone of the spandrills of the South door. A coronet is carved at the centre of the arch. Shakespeare calls him Duke of Buckingham.

The stone tracery of the East window of this aisle (the Lady Chapel window) is regarded as one of the best surviving examples of the worst Gothic. The East window above the high altar, to which we have already referred, shows that style of architecture in its prime, whereas the aisle window shows the style in decline. The stonework of the West window of the aisle is in better taste and appears older in design, which suggests that the aisle was rebuilt and repaired rather than built by the noble lord. The glass is dated 1816. An echo perhaps of Waterloo. Not being centrally placed in their walls these two windows displease the eye. The asymmetry is deliberate and for structural reasons whereas that of the high altar window is equally intentional but symbolic. The five windows in the South wall are without any agreeable harmony, which supports the re-building theory. Four of them are rectangular. The glass in the horizontal rows of tracery piercings in South and North walls alike, appears contemporary with the ‘S.B’ pieces in the organ-chamber. The designs are conventional .and clear. We note the Tudor rose, the fleur-de-lys, and other formal floral patterns; a portcullis, a sun, the Stafford knot (some of these repeated); and crowns above faces (or heads), something that looks like a ladder, another something like a tent, and initials difficult to interpret.

Other Lords of the Manor were responsible, no doubt, for other more ancient parts of the fabric, of which, however, we have no record. In modern times, and in an age whose greatest architectural achievements serve industry and commerce rather than religion our Lords (of lesser social and financial stature) have confined themselves to heading (or supporting) subscription lists for building and repairs. The building of the vestry in 1833 and the restoration of 1885 are notable instances.

The porch was re-built in 1653; so much we learn from our churchwardens accounts. The total cost is not known because the churchwardens only recorded the official disbursements and often a great part of the cost of any restoration or repair was met by private citizens. In many cases the whole cost was privately met so that no public record was ever kept; a prime cause of blanks in our writings.

Looking from outside we see that two earlier porches have marked the wall, each much larger than the present structure. The lower part of the wall too, has been re-built at some time. If, bearing this in mind, we ascend the tower steps we notice just inside on the left the walled-up doorway to which we have referred. These three features seem to be conclusive evidence of the North arcade of which there is an old tradition. Examination of the masonry at the sides of the windows lends further support. It disappeared some time between 1590 and 1653.

A gallery or balcony led through a room over the porch and the verandah beneath was open to the churchyard. It is in accordance with old custom to suppose the porch-loft to have been used as a school-room and the balcony for the performance of Nativity and Morality plays after they were banned from inside the church, One has only to stand in the churchyard, in imagination viewing the vanished balcony, to picture a convenient mediaeval stage. Thee audience would be standing, but that was equally true inside the church. Before the Reformation the only seating for the congregation was of stone benches around the walls, where the aged and infirm might rest, and in consequence, see and hear less of the service or the performance. ‘The weakest went to the wall’.

The focal point in a mediaeval church was the altar. The focal point in time was the elevation of the host marked by the ringing of the sanctus bell whose rope hung near at hand. The stone niche in which the bell hung in our church is still a conspicuous feature outside at the East above the sanctuary roof. The visitor gazing up at it can note at the same time a nearby window that no longer lights the church, but only the roof space, being older than the ceiling.

After the Reformation the focal point moved from the altar to the pulpit, or perhaps we should say to the hour-glass that stood on the pulpit ledge. Strange as it sounds to-day there was a time when congregations really enjoyed long sermons.   “And now brethren seventeenthly and lastly”, was not to them a joke, but an accepted and not unwelcome formula. The emphasis had shifted from a passive flock feeding spiritually on priestly ritual to an introspective congregation with a conscience to be worked upon by inspired exhortation. This too, was an inheritance from the Roman Church, being the aspect of worship emphasised by the friars though frowned upon by the priests, which now for a century or two dominated the Church of England.

Besides the hour-glass (to which we shall return) long sermons demanded seats. At first forms, later box-pews. A faded photograph in the vestry shows the pulpit set against the North wall, beneath the Hatherell memorial, a very large reading desk before and high pews all around. Earlier the desk had stood apart, being moved to its site beneath the pulpit at a cost of twelve shillings in 1684. We were thus well ahead of the fashion when ‘double deckers’ came in, Forms gave place to box-pews soon after this date. They faced, the photograph shows, towards the pulpit from every direction and not towards the altar. The purpose of boxes was, we presume, to discourage movement of the congregation during the service. We shall meet other suggestions of indiscipline in eighteenth century church-goers.

The pre-reformation love of coloured decoration survived the change of allegiance from the Pope to the reigning sovereign and the introduction of The Book of Common Prayer by more than fifty years. Beneath wall-plaster, painted patterns interwoven with sacred writings, dating from the reign of Elizabeth have been uncovered at various times. A pattern can still be faintly discerned on the sanctuary arch, and a trace of red paint remains on one of the South aisle arches. From the accession of James I onwards the pale workings of Puritan dogma permeated the Episcopal church it could not overthrow, and to placate ‘the godly’ our mural decorations were concealed under decent, seemly and frequently applied coats of whitewash.

Mural tablets in sanctuary and south aisle; brasses on the floor near the Lady Chapel; and the recumbent figures beneath the tower relate to members of the Stephens family. Their mansion close westward of the church was built in 1578 and demolished in 1778. The materials, including much beautiful stonework, were sold for use elsewhere. All that remains on the site is the river wall of stone topped with brick on the southern boundary of the churchyard and of adjoining gardens. Two hundred yards away however to the North-west some buildings still survive on the Court Barn Yard site where the manorial fish-pond now filled-in still held eels, roach, perch, tench and chub in the writer's youth; to be fished for by climbing the locked gates and crouching invisible among the rushes.

The Court garden extended almost to the foot-bridge, the boundary running in a straight line from beside the bridge to the road, passing within a few feet of the tower. This was the boundary of the churchyard until 1860. The bridge itself existed before the date of the earliest records The date on the keystone agrees with the churchwarden's account of the last re-building in 1842. The concrete surface is some twenty years old.

Over the bridge is the field called Butt Leaze and here no doubt, archery butts were set up in the Middle Ages. Those curious grooves along the grain of the stone on the tower buttress and the scratches beneath the window may have been used for sharpening the points of arrows. Cotswold stone, though it endures wind and weather century after century, is too soft for sharpening metal, but excellent for fashioning wooden arrow-points to pierce a wicker-and-straw target.

A print taken from Atkyn's History of Gloucestershire, the gift of Mr. H. E. Hawker of Stonehouse, showing Church and Court side by side, hangs in the Village Hall. As stated earlier the cottages beyond the site of the Court were there; at least the stone-built portion, before the first Stephens came to Eastington. The chimney suggests the Court, but the windows and doors suggest the South aisle of the church. It may be that the roof was replaced and the chimney re built when the Court was erected. At all events the stout walls should belong to the Tudor period. The whole building is now divided into three cottages. The Atkyn's print shows five, but in the reign of Henry VIII it would have been a single house for some person of standing and his servants. Elizabeth Knevet may well have lived and died here under the shadow of the church that received her remains.

The most attractive bit of any Stephens monument is on the North sanctuary wall - the parable of ‘The Good Samaritan’, in bas-relief. There is action and vitality in the figures. At the time of the 1952 re-decoration some attempt at cleaning resulted in the disappearance of a Priest, and a Levite from the background, where the sculptor had shown them in faint outline. Fortunately they seem to be re-appearing with the passage of time though they can never regain their importance in the picture. The recumbent figures at the West end of the South aisle were moved there, together with the font on the erection of the ringers' gallery in 1954. They had rested beneath the tower since they were moved from the chancel in 1850. They bear no inscription, but the coat of arms leads us to that recessed

monument in the South wall that reminds us incongruously of an inverted pawnbroker's sign, under which they probably lay in the first place. On the wall a rather clumsily lettered brass identifies them as *"Edward Stephens and his wife Johan, who feared God, hated evile were helpfull to the poore".* Both died in October 1587 aged 64 and 63 respectively. The monument nearest the corner on the South sanctuary wall has the happiest wording. The heads of the family were indeed *"Persons of Greate Worth and usefull in theire times*", - which one finds hard to believe true of those modern descendants who perpetrated the tall marble catalogue on the North wall, fulsome and nauseating throughout its tedious length. A grave disservice to a
distinguished ancestry. "A fly", said Aesop, "sat on the axle of the chariot-wheel and cried, 'What a dust do I raise! '"

In the church are three sanctuary chairs of English oak. Two are Elizabethan or older and beautifully carved with Tudor rose designs. The third is Jacobean of plain design and appearance. It was made in 1619 in the Rectorship of Richard Capel and cost nine shillings.

Mural tablets near the tower record the founding of the Eastington Free School in 1764, and the Charities of Clutterbuck, Blanch and Ricketts. The monies of Clutterbuck's and Blanch's charities are still distributed annually. At one time they were an important and eagerly sought alleviation of poverty. To-day, even apart from their negligible buying power, they are of small account and though recipients can still be found, those benevolent clothiers would not see in them the 'poor householders' who were to benefit from their bequests. Clutterbuck's will is dated 1734 and Blanch's 1756. The more recent Rickett's charity has been absorbed in the diocesan fund for the assistance of church schools as has also a bequest from Rector Thomas Peters. Another educational bequest from Miss Julia Hicks reverted to the family when the school was taken over by the County Council. Neither of the two last has any monumental record.

Viewed from outside the church stands firm and upright. Its essential soundness is due to good design, good materials (especially the fine quality Cotswold stone —from Minchinhampton we suppose), good workmanship, and a, solid gravel subsoil. The glass strips inserted in the South-west buttress of the aisle date from the Victorian era when the custom of checking movement in valuable structures became common. In view of their exposure to the sun the cracks they show may be due to changes of temperature rather than to settlement.

Cannon ball marks to the right of the tower door date from the siege of Gloucester in 1643, about which time the adjoining mansion (the Court), the home of Nathaniel Stephens, Member of the Long Parliament, was used as a garrison. The pattern of the dints suggests a practice target set up against the solid base of the tower and a few rounds fired from what is now the new burial ground. We shall return to those troublous times in a later chapter. The tower was designed to take, if necessary, a peal of at least eight bells. An old and persistent legend says that Eastington once had a peal of six, which Stonehouse churchmen came and stole by night to hang in their own tower. An alternative story, not quite so incredible, is that Edward Stephens, having built his house so near the tower, caused the bells to be sold to Stonehouse because change-ringing soured the wine in his cellar.

These legends cannot be disproved, and though they are unsupported by any evidence, we may think it likely there was an ancient peal, while dismissing the frills that make a pretty story. This, however, is certain. From the date of our earliest churchwardens' entry in 1616, until 1953 when the Frocester bells were installed, there was one bell only.

We have accounts of three castings or re-castings in the handwriting of our churchwardens, and quotations from these shall tell the story.

In 1653, when Oliver Cromwell ruled the land, we read: —

> *"Itm unto James Wetmore for casting our bell vii. i xs. vi d (£7. 9s. 6d.)*
> *Itm for Bricke to do his worke xs. (10/-)*
> *Itm pd for fetching the bell from ffrostre*
> *and the use of roapes to draw it up in the tower ivs. xd. (4/10)"*

Secondly in 1699 (William III on the throne): —

"Paid to Abram Rudhall thirty-three pounds sixteen shillings: viz: for Casting ye Bell £20. The weight wherof is 21c. 3 qrs. and 2olbs. Addision of mettle 1 c. 3qrs. 12lbs.: allowed for waste at 4 lbs. in the hundred 2qrs. 24lbs. In all 2c. 3 qrs. 8lbs at £5 per cwt. £12 18s. Brasses and Clapper 18/-.
Pd Nath:H King ffor Carriage of ye Bell to and from Gloucester £1 10."

Thirdly in 1826 (Reign of George IV): —

"Paid Mr. Rudhall of Glour for re-casting the Bell £40 4 6.
Paid for taking the Old Bell to Glor to be re-cast and fetching it home again £1 10."

In 1953 the Frocester 'Peal o' Six' was purchased and removed from St. Peter's church then in process of demolition, thus saving them from the furnace of the metal-merchants which instead received 'Mournful Minnie', as enthusiasts for the new peal called the old

Eastington bell. The bells were hung by Mr. L. W. Clutterbuck of Eastington.

The inscriptions on the bells were copied by the writer from the bells themselves in January 1953; the notes are as checked by the choirmaster at the same date; the weights are taken from an old Frocester parish magazine.

No. l. Weight 4 cwts. 2 qrs. Note D Sharp.
Inscription : *HORA FUGITORA 1794 I.R.*
Recast by Mears & Stainbank 1892 Whitechapel Foundry London.
(The Latin means ‘The hour flies. Pray’ and I.R. stands for John Rudhall.)

No. 2. Weight 5 cwts. 3 lbs. Note C Sharp.
Inscription: *S.H. G.P. I.W. I.P. T.F. R.S. S.S. T.W.W.H. T.B. 1639.*

No. 3. Weight 6 cwts. 2 qrs. Note B.
Inscription: *DA GLORIA DEI ANNO DOMI 1639 W:W. T.W*
DA GLORIA DEI may be intended to mean ‘Give Glory to God’, but if so the spelling is wrong and bell founders did not usually make such mistakes. If the Latin is correct translation is difficult, but it may mean ‘Ring out with the Glory of God’.

No. 4. Weight 7 cwt. 18 lbs. Note A Sharp.
Inscription: *W.W. GLORIA SIT DOMINO LAUS CHRISTO MUSICA NOBIS 1639.*
Recast by Mears 8c Stainbank 1892 Whitechapel Foundry London.
= ‘Glory be to the Lord, Praise to Christ, Music for Us.’

No. 5. Weight 9 cwts.   Note G Sharp.
Inscription : *T.W. T.W. I.W. W.WETTMORE NOS FECIT ANNO DO 1639.*

No. 6. Weight 12 cwt. 2 qrs.   Note F Sharp.
Inscription: *JNO. WETTMORE & WM. WILKINS CH-WARDENS A.R. 1743*

A clue to the history of these bells is given by the inscription on No. 5. It says plainly " William Wettmore made us in the year 1639." This refers to the four middle bells which were cast for the ancient church where St. Andrew's now stands. These four have Wettmore's emblem or trade mark, the fleur-de-lys, embossed upon them. The other initials on Nos. 2 , 3 and 5 would be subscribers, churchwardens, and perhaps some of the family of the bell-founders.

Wettmore (Wetmore, Wetmor and Wetmorh are other spellings) was a common name in Frocester in the seventeenth century. Many of them were important and well-to-do as we know from the monumental inscriptions listed by Bigland.

When the old church fell into disuse the four bells were removed to the steeple of St. Peter's. A heavier bell was added in 1748 and a lighter one in 1794. The 1753 bell was cast by Abraham Rudhall of Gloucester. Between the initials ‘A R’ is embossed a bell reminiscent of the bell carved on his monument in Gloucester Cathedral - his emblem as the fleur-de-lys was Wettmore's. The 1794 bells was cast by John Rudhall, the last member of this widely known firm to carry on the Gloucester foundry, whose site was in New Inn Lane and is now covered by the Post Office. Re-casting inscriptions remind us that in 1829 a daughter of John Rudhall sold the business to Mears of Whitechapel who almost immediately closed it down.

Shortly after 1639 William Wettmore left Frocester and carried on his trade in Essex and Hertfordshire. James Wetmore who cast the old Eastington bell in 1653 was almost certainly a son or a nephew who worked in the foundry. The “I.W.” on bells Nos. 2 and 5 may be his initials.

With the departure of William Wettmore the business at Frocester consisted mainly of repairs to bell-wheels, clappers, bearings and fittings. Thus in 1642 our churchwardens' accounts record:

> *“Itm Laid out for a newe bell wheel to James Wetmore 11/-”.*
> In 1644: *“Itm for a new wheele and one dayes worke to James Wetmore 12/-. ”*
> And in 1645 : *“Itm Imprimis to James Wetmore for settnige u p the bell benige fallen downe and for maknige the wheele etc., £1.5.O.”*
> (This item reads more easily if we put " ing " where our churchwarden has written " nige ").

We assume therefore, that the casting (or re-casting) of our bell in 1653 was a special effort and not in the usual course of business. To begin with the churchwardens had to supply brick for the repair of the furnaces. In the second place the price (£7- 9- 6. for a 22 c w t bell) was too low to guarantee good workmanship; and indeed, the bell had to be re-cast after only forty-six years. Moreover at that date, early in the Commonwealth, bell-founding was passing through a difficult phase. The ban on bell-ringing (as distinct from tolling) made the future of the industry seem doubtful. Our theory is that James Wetmore was a skilled worker who re-opened the foundry

to oblige his Eastington neighbours and cast the bell with such plant and such assistants as he could muster.
The site of the foundry we can only guess . ‘The Forge’ may have followed-on from it.

In the tower is a ‘priest's chamber’ from which a watch could be kept on the altar, and indeed on the whole church, before the present ceiling came into being. Consisting essentially of a tunnel or passage four and a half feet high and one and three-quarters wide, through the three and a half feet thick tower wall, it led by two downward steps into the very peak of the gable of the nave. A door at the church side concealed the watcher as well as safeguarding him from a forty foot fall to the stone floor of the church. It must have had slots or a grille and could be opened if the priest wished to show himself. There was no room to stand, but to sit was not uncomfortable with the help of a cushion or folded cloth. Unless however, some screen could be drawn at the back of the watcher he must have found his post sometimes intolerably draughty.

The unceasing watch from this crow's nest would safeguard valuable sanctuary furniture and vessels, but this was probably not its primary purpose. Rather we picture the unseen priest - symbol of the all-seeing eye - watching over the devotions of the flock, and are reminded of the habitual use our pre-reformation ancestors made of the church between services. Besides coming to confession they came, especially ‘the weary and heavy laden’, for rest and refreshment of body and soul.

> *"Oft have I seen at some cathedral door*
> *A labourer, pausing in the dust and heat,*
> *Lay down his burden and with reverent feet*
> *Enter, and cross himself, and on the floor*

Kneel, to repeat his paternoster o'er."

The church was not then a place to which you came for Baptisms, Marriages, Burials and a Sunday service, and which was kept safely locked between whiles, as happened so often in Victorian times and occasionally happens even to-day.
One is not very surprised to discover that the priest's chamber is, moreover, a whispering gallery, where even now in spite of the ceiling, conversation on the floor of the church is plainly audible. Its use pre-supposes a link with some religious house that provided relays o£ watchers. The parish priest would (or should) be fully employed at Mass, at the Confessional and about the parish. Standish Priory may well have been the religious house —a short walk in those days. Road and footpath still make a straight line between the two parish churches. The benefit was mutual, vigil being an essential part of the discipline of religious houses. The vestry was built in 1833. The Rector, James Hatherell, subscribed £25. Fifteen pounds was voted from church funds and Lord of the Manor, Henry Hicks, paid the rest of the cost. In the same year was laid the foundation stone of the new rectory (now Oldbury House), and under it were placed two coronation medals (William IV and Adelaide), two reform medals (the first Reform Bill was passed in 1832), and a date-stamped iron bar. The house was built on the glebe land called Little Oldbury. The old rectory, where the school now stands, was being shared by two tenants in 1841, but was demolished before the building of the school in 1859. What happened to the valuable stained-glass in its windows we have been unable to discover. The legend that it somehow went to Stonehouse church may be classed with the legend of the bells.

To return to St. Michael's. A Stephens' coat of arms is carved in a wall cavity rather low down and close to the altar in the South wall of the sanctuary. The conjecture that it occupies the place of a pre-reformation piscina (stone sink or wash basin) is confirmed by examination of the outside of the wall, of which a patch, where the down pipe came, has been renewed. The drain was to lead the water to earth, as in the case of the font, lest it should be taken away to cure a sick child, an ailing cow or a lame horse. In fact to preclude any superstitious use.

The church owns a chalice of historic interest. It was presented, as the inscriptions on bowl and base tell us, in 1684 for the sacred use of the parish by the Rev. Samuel Mews who was rector for forty-one years, from 1665 to 1706. It continued in constant use from his day until 1948 when it was relegated to the ‘iron chest’ in the vestry in favour of a modern chalice, presented, with paten, by the two surviving daughters of Alfred Keys (died 1925) in memory of their father and mother.

In 1760 a vestry gave permission to Richard Clutterbuck of Nastend and to his Cousin Richard Clutterbuck of Frampton, to erect, at their own expense, a gallery beneath the tower for the use of themselves, their families, their tenants, and their employees. Let us hope the church was amply compensated by their financial support for the loss of light from a beautiful window.

How long the gallery was used for this purpose we do not know, but when next it is mentioned it accommodates the choir and a church band consisting of a double-bass and two or three woodwind instruments. It seems the minstrels supplied their own instruments though the church was responsible for strings and repairs to the double bass.

> In 1816 we read : " *Gave for strings for the double bass £1. o. o.*" .
> In 1820: "*Gave towards a string for the Double bass 4/-.*"

In 1821: "*Paid for mending the double bass £1. o. o*" and so on from time to time down to
1828: "*Mending the double Bass £1. 7. O.*"
Shortly after this the owner took it home for good. James Hatherell (Rector 1831-1838) first came as curate in charge in 1828. A young man of progressive views. A new broom come to sweep away the old cobwebs. Out went the musicians, and with them the choir; in came a barrel-organ (three barrels) complete with handle and a score and a half of tunes.

It would be wrong to belittle the enthusiasm of the young parson. Enthusiasm was rarely met and sorely needed among nineteenth century clergymen. His was a dynamic personality. The vestry and the new rectory both sprang from his initiative. At his own expense he built the causeway to lessen the gradient of Springhill which was previously as steep or steeper than Millend Pitch. In this consideration for wain-horses at a date when the railway was still an experiment in a small way in the North of England - an experiment whose issue was doubtful - he was in tune with his age, but his barrel-organ innovation was badly mistimed.

The era of canned music was not yet. There was indeed, no come-back for the old minstrels, but before long a ‘real’ organ replaced the handled abomination and the choir returned. The congregation always win in the end. The old vestry photograph previously referred to, shows the organ in the centre of the gallery, its pipes almost touching the ceiling. Gallery and organ now combined to shut out the light from the West window almost completely for more than half a century.

Since 1954 a ringers' gallery has been erected on the same site, in good taste and not appreciably obscuring the window. A much older gallery occupied the East end of the South aisle. Separated from the chancel by a wall (pierced we suppose by ‘squints’) it had become unsafe and was officially closed shortly before removal in the restoration of 1850. Examination of the aisle leads us to the conclusion that at one time a gallery occupied its whole length. A commodious room (in those days) for school or for parish meeting. The evidence is the slot now filled, at the base of each of the pre-1850 arches.

From the churchyard, near the altar tombstone with the hideous scull and cross-torches, the wall bears traces of a high-up doorway which must have been reached by steps from outside. The inside wall shows nothing of this, being plastered, and at this point occupied by the recessed Edward and Joan Stephens monument; which proves that the opening was walled-up before, say, 1600. It is probable that the central part of the gallery was removed at the same time and that for a period there were East and West galleries, the East being the last to disappear.

In 1850 Charles Hooper, who had succeeded Henry Hicks as owner of the local cloth mills, though not as Lord of the Manor, paid for the restoration of the East end of the church. The chancel arch was removed, giving space and light where the choir stalls now stand and where Sunday school was held until 1824; the old aisle gallery was removed and its inner wall replaced by arches. The Commandments on two tables of stone were replaced by others painted on sheet metal. A tawdry substitute,

The old ‘Commandments’ were stored beneath the Clutterbuck gallery, together with the recumbent figures in stone, to be re-discovered in 1885.

Outside, above the South door with its ‘S.B.’ there was until a year or two ago a stone sundial dated 1737 and bearing the words, now hard to decipher, “*Dum spectas fugit hora*” (While thou art gazing the hour flies). The last of a succession of sundials though only one other comes into our churchwardens' accounts, namely in 1671 when we read: —

“Paid to Mw Stokes and William Farsley for the Diall 9/8.”

Of the present sundial we read
in 1737: *“Pd John Roules for ye Sun Dial 17/-.”*
In 1758: *“Pd for facing the Dial to Mr. Rowles 5/-.”*
In 1792: *“Samuel Rowles for New painting the Dial 12/-.”*

The inscription might yet be preserved by re-painting.

The weather-cock is Elizabethan or older. In 1673 we read:

“Layd out for mending the wether-cocke 00—10—op.”
“Layd out for setting up the wether-cocke and for fiting the barr 00—00—06.”

In 1705: “*Pd for washing ye wether Cocke 10/6.”*
Painting with some preservative we suppose.
In 1803: “*Taking down the Weather Cock Bar and painting the Cock 3/-.”*

This emblem of St. Peter's inconstancy is once more much in need of repair.

In 1803 came the clock. The gift we believe of Henry Hicks, who served as churchwarden about this date. The clock-face was on the South wall of the tower so that it looked neither towards the main road nor the bye road, nor the nearest cottages. For forty years now its site has faced only open fields, but for a hundred and ten years it gave time to Churchend mill that was owned and Operated by the donor. Church time was still mill time in the writer's youth and indeed until demolition of the mill. The mechanism by which the hours were struck on the bell broke down some years ago and eventually the whole machine became difficult of repair and was removed in 1949.

Approaching modern times, but while church attendance was still more or less compulsory, it seems that congregations were inclined to be restive and irreverent. Some members may even have made a habit of closing their eyes during the long sermons. At all events in 1764 a vestry resolved to pay John Clutterbuck a guinea and a half a year "*for preserving good order in the church during divine service"*. Without hesitation we couple with it an item in the churchwardens' accounts for the same year - " *Paid for a white rod 2/6.*" Such a rod would be, we are sure, for use and not a mere symbol of office.

Laxity was common enough, but it may be that Eastington church strove to attain a severely high standard of conduct. The Confessional had been abolished at the Reformation, but in our church penance survived into the nineteenth century. It took the form of standing face to the wall during divine service, clothed in a white sheet only, and was imposed by the parson on those members of the church whose irregularities of living became notorious. In 1724 our churchwardens record: *"Payd for washing the two Sheets after Penance 8d."*

In 1755: "*for finding and washing the Sheet after Penance 1/-."*
In 1783: "*for Sarah Bird and Hester Bendalls Penants 3/7."*
These items concerned poor penitants —so poor indeed as to be unable to provide their own sheets.

We should like to know more about an item in 1784. "*The Excommunication of Eliz'h Clark £1 14 o."*. The seemingly heavy cost was due to the attendance of the Bishop with bell, book, and candle, and customary fees, but our curiosity as to Lizzie Clark's crime is left unsatisfied. Cynics will note that our recorded sinners were all females.

Since 1885 visitors who try to decipher the foot-worn inscriptions on memorial flagstones need no longer speculate (sniffing) on the siting of the old vaults. In that year those gruesome receptacles were filled, the remains being first removed and re-interred in the churchyard near the choir door. The floor was raised a foot or more, to ground level; concreted and faced with wooden blocks. The " Clutterbuck-and-choir" gallery beneath the tower was removed and the organ-chamber built. The oak choir stalls, the screen and pulpit of Bath stone, the brass lectern, the pitch-pine pews were all part of the 1885 restoration. The organ belongs to the same period. Once again the altar became the focal point of worship, towards which all the pews face and to which pulpit, lectern, choir and organ seem to point the way.

The sanctuary was re-decorated and the Lady chapel furnished in 1952, chiefly through the generosity of Miss Benita West, daughter of Rector Leonard West, in memory of her parents who died in 1948. Those in whom affection for the old curtails enthusiasm for the new derive some comfort from the knowledge that the beautiful oak altar rails, now replaced by mass-produced metal, have found a home in Whiteshill church. Further changes are under consideration. This time at the West end.

The church was unheated until 1832 when George Holoway was paid for a stove, the Blacksmith for iron work, and John Griffin for coals. Earlier accounts for fuel were in respect of work and workmen, not for the comfort of worshippers, and the sums were trifling. In 1670, for example, 1/7 was paid *“for Coals for the plumers youce.”* (For soldering leads of tower or gutters). After being without heat for five centuries and more the faithful enjoyed stove heating for a hundred years until central heating was installed with an external boiler house in memory of George de Lisle Bush by his widow and his surviving son. To this family, owning and residing at Eastington Park for 40 years, we are also indebted for a well-designed lych gate, a much needed burial ground, a small but handsome Village Hall and a Cadets' Hut. The link with the Parish was weakened when they ceased to live amongst us, but has since been strengthened again by purchase of additional property; reviving the hope among those who knew them best that their headquarters may be re-established in our midst at an early date.

Artificial lighting did not come until half a century after heating. Candles were first purchased for this purpose in 1884 and paraffin lamps came with the restoration in the following year. Earlier small purchases of candles were for the altar, or for the parson or clerk to read by on dark winter days. Services would normally have been held in daylight and when for any reason the church was used before dawn or after nightfall members of the congregation would have brought their own candles. In the same way well-to-do worshippers in the days before official heating, may, in cold weather have brought their own charcoal warming pans with them to their family pews. Electric light came a year or two before central heating.

The roof of Cotswold stone slates is in perfect harmony with the walls that sustain it. From outside the original roof of the nave looked much as it does to-day. Some of the roof-timber is very old, including the massive tie beams and parts of the principals, but most of it has been renewed little more than a century ago. The present ceiling came with the 1850 restoration. An earlier ceiling against the roof rafters can still be seen in excellent preservation by entering the roof-space over the chancel dome. Here too can be seen the beams, purlins and a king post ornamented simply and stained black. This is the roof-space lighted by the window below the sanctus bell niche. The colours of the glass are bright and clear like the ‘S,B.’ piercings in the organ chamber. The design is formally floral with grapes and vine leaves predominating. It may well date from Tudor times. The sill is very steeply sloped so that light fell to the floor of the chancel which must in any case have been rather dark when the chancel arch was in place. Immediately below, an arch like a second window has been walled up. It led only into the sanctuary gable and may never have carried glass.

Inside the roof a gable-shaped ledge of stone on the face of the tower outlines the nave against which it was built. Almost as tall as the present gable, the pitch is steeper so that the nave roof must have rested on lower North and South walls. Below the ceiling this ledge has been cut back to the face of the wall, but its position can still be seen. It was not an afterthought, being part of the solid masonry. Its depth and width are each three inches and it served to overlap the abutment of the roof. Old nails here and there suggest that it carried lead flashing. Lime mortar still clings in places to the face of the ledge. Replacement of this early roof by the modern span probably took place soon after completion of the tower. A first glance inside the roof reveals none of the foregoing, but rather suggests Stonehenge, where in each of the principals a second tie-beam has been inserted, carried above the main tie-beam on a pair of stout king posts, to correct or prevent roof-sag. The gargoyles (one missing), crosses and other external stone ornaments are few and in good taste.

Where no documentary record survives, successive churchyard extensions can be traced by the age of monuments. Starting as a narrow strip of land around North and East, and a wider rectangle to the

South, it was extended towards the river on that side in 1825 by the gift of what was then part of the old rectory garden. The Rector (Wadham Huntley) stipulated that the walnut tree on it should be preserved, but no one now living can remember it. Thomas Peters added a further portion to the South and South-east in 1846. A larger extension to the West took place around 1860 at the time that the old school (where the War Memorial now stands) was demolished. Walls to the West and alongside the road on the North and East replaced wooden fences at about the same date, or a little later. A final extension westward added a very narrow strip in 1906.

The position as regards interment was becoming desperate when the Parish Council provided a burial ground, with easy access from the church in 1950; the piece of land itself being a gift springing from the generosity and public spirit of Mrs. Dunn, in memory of her late husband Major Claude de Lisle Bush.

We know little about our rectors before Stuart times, though further research may yet reveal a more complete list. ‘Gilbert’ was we know, Vicar of Estaneston around 1230 in the reign of Henry III. But was it our Eastington ?

Then comes a gap to 1305 (reign of Edward I) when we read of the death of Henry of Poppam, Rector of Estynton, and of the appointment of James of Thykenes in his stead. These are mere names, and a ‘certain chaplain’ appointed in 1336 (reign of Edward III) to celebrate daily for the souls of Hugh of Audeleye, Iseult his wife and Walter of Balun (ancestors of Elizabeth Knevet) is not even named.

A petitionfhas survived, made through The Black Prince to the Pope in 1357 in which Audeley, who was, we suppose, son of Hugh, asks to be allowed to found a chantry for five chaplains in the church of Eastington, which is therein described as in the diocese of Hereford. The writer has not seen the original, but it looks as if someone's geography is at fault. We do not know if the petition was granted.

Around 1370 a great to-do is documented about the presentation to the living, for which there were three candidates. It seems that Rector Adam of St. John, died in 1367, whereupon Sir Ralph de Hengham was installed by the Bishop of Worcester (in whose diocese Eastington was until the diocese of Gloucester was created in 1541), whereas the right of presentation was claimed by the Archbishop of Canterbury who appointed Matthew of Harsefield (Haresfield). The parties were summoned to appear before the commissioners of the church of the Arches, London.

Later an inquiry was held by the Archdeacon of Gloucester at Stonehouse church, where a number of local clergy and laymen, including Sir William of Horsleigh, John of Elkeston, Nicholas of Coale, John of Syde and Phillip of Avening, rectors; and John vicar of Tettebury and John vicar of Bremesfelde, testified that Estynton church was indeed occupied by Ralph Hengham who was nominated by the patron the late Sir James Audele and instituted by the Bishop of Worcester in spite of an imposter, one Stephen of Kylsynton, who backed his claim by a forged letter from a bogus patron. Moreover Ralph had paid the ‘first fruits’.

In the foregoing title ‘Sir’ may cause confusion. As applied to Sir James Audele it indicates baronet or knight, but it was also used in reference to an unbeneficed priest, i .e. one not a rector or vicar. Thus we read Sir Ralph and Sir William. In Shakespeare's ‘Twelfth Night’ Sir Topas is the curate, but Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are knights. The expression ‘a poor Sir John’ meant’"a mere curate’.

The matter of the incumbency was not easily settled. In 1370 the Archbishop sitting at Otteford (Otford in Kent) confirmed his earlier decision in favour of Matthew of Harsefield, but appointed a day for a judicial hearing. Whether Ralph or Matthew became our Rector we do not know. At all events we can leave Stephen to the Ecclesiastical Courts, and record that seven years later in 1377 when an adjustment of tithes between Eastington and Frocester took place, the living was held by Henry Derling.

John de Westthorpe, King's clerk, was presented to the living in 1387. He could not have held it more than few months for in the same year was appointed John Welle, of whom we know a little more. In 1397 he was granted by the Pope a dispensation enabling him to hold a pluarality of benefices up to any number, and in 1399 an indulgence to have a portable altar. One feels there should be some connection between these two facts. This was the John Welle aforementioned who was exempted from celebrating mass and other divine offices in the derelict chapel of ‘Alcrynton’. Obviously he was a man of importance and entitled to consideration.

Our next glimpse is in 1427, the year before the siege of Orleans and the launching of Joan of Arc on her brief and splendid career. Maurice Waterden, rector of ‘Estynton’ was granted an indulgence to have a portable altar, and exempted from excessive fasting and severe penance. It is plain this incumbent was in poor health. After another long gap which included the troublous times of the Wars of the Roses we venture to include in our list of rectors William Blamye, on the evidence of his will dated 1501 in which he directs that his body be buried before the altar of our church and in which he bequeaths six and fourpence each to the five churches and chapels nearest to it.

The first Protestant rector of whom we read was Richard Syrrell, appointed in 1571. He is just a name.

Robert Ball succeeded him in 1586. Here at last is a rector of whom we have (in the vestry chest) accessible documentary evidence. His four sons and three daughters were baptised at our Norman font. His wife Alice died in childbirth in 1602. He re-married in 1612, his second wife being Ursula Clutterbuck, who survived him to die in 1642. In his time (July, 1588) our forefathers watched the fires of Haresfield Beacon, Frocester Hill, May Hill and The Malverns flash the news of the approach of the Armada, and waited anxiously until the welcome news arrived from London of the spirited attack of our ships (Dean Forest hearts of oak) and of 'the wind of God' that drove the Spanish galleons to their doom. What part Robert Ball took in the national crisis is conjectural, but his domestic record makes him more real to us than the pre-reformation celebates.

In 1615 came Richard Capel, stern Sabbatarian and beloved physician, friend of Sir Thomas Overbury who was imprisoned in the Tower, where he was poisoned, for his opposition to a scandalous Court divorce, and of William Pemble an eminent theologian in an age when, as James I said, there was "*a great abundance of theologians in England*" Richard Capel was one of the Westminster Assembly of Divines and one of the authors of their Catechism and other productions. To him and to some of his successors we shall return.

In 1635 came William Mews who preached before the House o fCommons in 1643.
n 1665, his son, Samuel Mews, inventor of a glass-panelled hive and donor of the chalice.
In 1706, William Deighton, the first of our rectors to sign the registers in his own hand.

He was followed in 1760 by Robert Stephens, one of the founders of our Free School who later became Lord of the Manor. For the most part he was absent from the parish, but in accordance with the family tradition he was ‘helpful to the poor’ as shown by his letters to his curate.

This curate, William Davies, became rector in 1776. He was responsible for building the Workhouse.

Wadham Huntley, who followed in 1817, was connected by marriage with the Stephens family. He was an enthusiast for the " free school."
In 1831 came James Hatherell of barrel-organ fame, and in 1838 Thomas Peters who is remembered by some still living.
In 1884 came Francis Vine, and in 1897 Richard Rimmer who brought trouble to the school.

In 1903 came George Thomas Altimus Ward, musician, printer, mechanic, and pioneer motorist in his car AD 1. A man of wide, if superficial scholarship, an experienced traveller and man of the world, a brilliant conversationalist and after-dinner speaker, who read the services, and especially the Lessons, like a golden-voiced angel and preached with an eloquence a little too reminiscent of Hyde Park Corner. His name is writ large on the covers of our old registers, accounts and minutes, but he has fully earned this small measure of immortality by his praiseworthy efforts to preserve their valuable pages and by his diligence in collecting local historical data. Since his death in 1932 we have had many changes.

Rectors come and go.
The church remains. A priceless heritage.

CHAPTER 4 - THE IMPACT OF HISTORY

" Now tell us all about the war,
And what they fought each other for."

NATIONAL events and the policies of a nation have effects extending, like the ripples on a pond, to its most remote parts and little skill or diligence is needed to follow the thread of English history through the pages of one or another of our Parish books or documents. In this chapter some of the most outstanding will be touched on.

The very first opening of our early churchwardens' accounts reveals, often repeated, the words "*maymed souldiers*" in connection with a cash payment. Sometimes the spelling is ‘maimed’, less often ‘mained’ or ‘maind. We recall:

" The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by the fire and talked the night away.
Wept o'er his wounds . .”

and we are touched by the unsuspected humanity of our forefathers. All those stories then of veterans discarded pensionless to beg, steal and perish of privation must be pure invention. From 1616 onwards for many years our Eastington churchwardens record payment after payment for "*maymed souldier*s".

A second reading raises a doubt. What war was this whose campaigns had resulted in mutilation of numbers of Eastington servicemen ? ("Some swearing some crying for a surgeon"). Where were the bloody battles fought ? In vain we turn the pages of the history books that served us so well at school. There was no war. Indeed, when King and Parliament marshalled their opposing armies in 1642 those armies were composed of soldiers (our historians agree) who had never seen a field of battle. An entry in 1631 complicates the problem.

"Item. Laid out to the Maind Goaele 3/8." Easy enough to picture a soldier with crutch, arm-sling or eye-patch, but hardly a jail. In 1646 the item is linked with payments for King's Bench and Marshalsey, which means law courts and prison, and so we realise that ‘Maind Goaele’ is ‘maintained gaol’ and the entry refers to payment of a tax for the provision and upkeep of prisons. As regards the ‘souldiers’ "there is confusion between ‘maimed’ and ‘maintained’ not only in the mind of the writer before he discovered that there really was a ‘Maimed Soldiers Tax’ but in those of our churchwardens, whose spelling in some cases leaves no doubt that they thought of "the broken soldier" as maintained (" maind, mayned, or maint"), having in mind the purpose of the tax.

To some of us who were taught in Victorian or Edwardian schools to regard all centuries before our own as callous as well as cruel it comes as a surprise to find that the reign of Queen Elizabeth, that initiated Poor Law, was also responsible for legislation for the relief of sick and disabled soldiers and mariners. From 1601 onwards a rate for this purpose was levied on each parish. The churchwardens handed their quota to the High Constable of the Hundred and he to the County Treasurer.

We are relieved to know that Shakespeare's ‘Ancient Pistol’, disabled in the service, was no longer forced to live by theft or by’ mumping with a sore leg’ up and down the countryside he fought for. Experience of modern tax-raiding however, makes us suspicious and we wonder if the whole of this tax was used (especially in peace time) for the purpose for which it was originally levied and we are tempted to believe that some, perhaps even a major part, was actually used to help maintain the standing army so dear to the hearts of the Stuart kings. Not hospitals in fact, but barracks. Misused or not, however, the ‘Maimed Soldiers Tax’ was a landmark in social history and a pointer toward the Welfare State.

In 1616 our Eastington share was 2/2 a quarter, and so to 1627 when it rose to 3/3, remaining at that level with default at times during the Civil War until 1649 when we paid 5/5. In 1651 it was 6/6; in 1658, 7/8. In 1673 it reached 11/4 and disappeared from our accounts soon after. This refers to the payments themselves; the words ‘maimed soldiers’ were discontinued even earlier, not being found after 1646. From that date to 1673 the entry reads "*Quarter Sessions*".

Historians tell us the tax was not repealed until 1863 (after the Crimean War and Florence Nightingale's mission), and 1739 is the date usually given when it was merged in the general county rate. We can only suppose that payments after 1673 were recorded in accounts other than the churchwardens' and that they have since perished.

Naturally our parish has for the most part slumbered away the centuries in a quiet backwater. There have been times however, when it was carried along in the main stream of national events. The red letter page in Eastington history opens with Richard Capel (Rector 1615-1635). Born in Gloucester of a good family with a record of public service, he was a notable scholar, and as we have seen, a friend of eminent theologians. He leaned to the Puritan persuasion and frowned upon all Sunday games. Accordingly in 1633 we find him refusing to read in our church a leaflet setting out what pastimes were permissible after service on ‘The Lord's Day’. This document, first issued by James I, and commonly called "The King's Book of Sports" made a distinction between such games as “*Archery, Leaping, Vault-*

ing, Morris Dancing and Setting-up of Maypoles" which were lawful, and "*Bull and Bear Baiting and Bowling*" which were unlawful. 'Bowling' probably included such forms of football, cricket and skittles as were in use at that date; in fact anything played with a ball or related missile. As a sequel to refusal he resigned the living and moved to Pitchcombe where he set himself up as a physician. The change of profession without an interim period of training was less surprising than it would be now. Those were days when an educated man 'took all learning for his province' and aimed to assimilate all current knowledge in all the arts and all the sciences. He probably had a natural gift for medicine so that he became successful and popular.

However, rector or physician, he was not suffered to remain long in obscurity. His learning and piety singled him out for appointment to the Westminster Assembly of Divines, a body set up in 1643 at The most critical stage of the Civil War, with Gloucester still besieged and its fate in the balance. This assembly was called for the purpose of drawing up and settling a general creed and form of worship for use throughout Great Britain. First meeting on 1st July of the same year, it sat until February 1649 - roughly from the raising the siege of Gloucester until the execution of Charles I. At the Restoration in 1660 the whole of the proceedings of the Assembly were declared invalid and annulled.

The unity of the churches is a noble ideal and we would have wished to report a better result. When we consider moreover how sects have still further multiplied since the assembly sat and how futile are our own efforts in the direction of unity we feel more than a little sympathy for the learned divine and beloved physician who 'hitched his waggon' to this falling star.

That he and his colleagues laboured in vain we know, but he did not. Returning in 1649 to Pitchcombe, now in his seventieth year, he re-applied his skill to the work of healing the sick and in the words of his biographer: "*He was blest with good success, and had resort, especially towards his latter end, that he had not time to sit at his own meals in comfort”.* He died in 1656 at the age of 75, his party, the Puritans still officially in power. A monument in Pitchcombe churchyard records his work and virtues as minister and physician and quotes "*The memory of the just is blessed*". One does not have to be a Puritan to echo ‘Amen’.

Some authorities say that Richard Capel was invited to serve on the Assembly but refused. The writer prefers to believe that he served though not perhaps for the full term.

Meanwhile Nathaniel Stephens, Lord of the Manor, lived in his mansion (the Court), close to the church. He was a member of the Long Parliament that first met in 1640 and last (what was left of it) in 1660. For eleven years Charles I had ruled without a parliament, because instead of granting money his parliaments one after another concerned themselves mainly with censure and prohibition of such of his acts as they considered oppressive and illegal.

The Long Parliament brought about the execution of Lord Strafford who carried out the King's policy in the state, and the imprisonment of Archbishop Laud who imposed an unpopular policy upon the church with the royal support. This was the parliament to which, in the year 1641, Charles led a company of soldiers to arrest five of its members and that put an army in the field in 1642 to oppose the king.

At first the royal troops carried all before them. The turning point was the siege of Gloucester, whose citizens held their borough stubbornly for parliament until relieved in August 1643. In the following year Oliver Cromwell re-organised his troops on the ‘New Model’ after which parliament was everywhere victorious. Perhaps the most noticeable effect of the siege on the ratepayers of Eastington was the wholesale lapse of payments by the churchwardens, including the visitation fees. Instead of the usual twenty or thirty items their accounts show three entries only, namely: "*Maymed Souldiers 9/9*" (for three sessions), "*for a bottell 1/4*" and the sacramental wine that cost "*6/- more than was collected by reason of the dearness of wine*" - a total expenditure of seventeen shillings and a penny only.

In November 1643, while Gloucester city and country were still headlines in the Civil War after the raising of the siege in August, our Rector, William Mews, accompanied the Member, Nathaniel Stephens, not to the Assembly of Divines where Richard Capel was sitting, but to preach by invitation before the House of Commons at St. Margaret's. His theme was ‘The Robbing and Spoiling of Jacob and Israel’.

We turn to Genesis, Chapter 34, to re-read the story of a terrible and shocking episode in tribal warfare. An unhappy state of affairs indeed that could make such a theme apt for a sermon to an English House of Commons. Was he advocating reprisals - meeting treachery by treachery ?

The ‘House’ ordered the sermon to be printed and directed Mr. Stephens "*to return thanks to Mr. Mewe*". In his reply to the letter of thanks our rector laments that His Majesty is not present to hear, for the benefit of his people, "*their peaceful conflicts and pious debates*" which seems a little malapropos addressed to men jealously guarding with their very lives the doors of their chamber against intrusion by the sovereign.

Though Eastington was a parish of no more than five hundred souls, a hundred miles from Westminster, these two men, whose homes were at Churchend on either side of St. Michael's, have their names enrolled among the makers of history.

When the Civil War ended with the capture of Charles I in 1648 it was the Long Parliament that caused him to be brought to trial, though not until Roundhead troops had removed from the ‘House’ a hundred and twenty members who were unwilling to proceed to extreme measures against their king. A relative of Cromwell and of Ireton, Nathaniel Stephens stood by his colleagues in their stern measures, but with a faint heart. He was all for conciliation. Speaking in the Commons in May 1648 he pleaded for one more attempt to come to an understanding with Charles and to achieve a peaceful settlement with adequate safeguards. (It was about this date that Cromwell himself finally abandoned the same viewpoint). In his speech our member points to the disordered and exhausted state of the realm. He cannot believe the kingdom can be settled and governed without a king, he calls the suggested execution by the axe *"a strange cuer*" and prophesies unpopularity and, moreover, deep and permanent detestation by the people for any who should sanction such a crime.

A story is told that at Christmas 1648 at Chavenage where Nathaniel Stephens now lived, leaving his son Richard at Eastington, his kinsman Ireton arrived to urge him to attend Parliament to support the demand that the king be brought to trial; that he did so under pressure and against his better judgment, and that in consequence bitter regret overshadowed his later years. We may be sure he shared Cromwell's instinctive dislike for ‘the levelling principle’ and clung to ‘the old order of nobility, clergy, gentry and yeomanry’ that was soon after to be threatened by the legislation of Barebones' Parliament. We may be sure that squire and parson both resented the appointment, in 1653, of Morgan Jones as ‘Parish Register’ (Registrar), to do the parson's (or clerk's) job of recording baptisms, marriages and burials, which was one result of the antics of this queer parliament.

Our new officer with the Welsh name was certainly a ‘foreigner’. The registers themselves prove conclusively that neither Jones nor Morgan were Eastington names at the time. We have the certificate of Irv. Birk, Justice of the Peace, that Morgan Jones was elected by the parish, but we may be excused for suspecting that the election anticipated the technique of modern dictatorships and Jones was the only officially approved candidate. His entries ceased when, within two years, further legislation introduced ‘marriage over the counter’ by making it a civil contract before a magistrate until the Restoration of Charles II brought back ‘The Sacrament of Holy Matrimony’. The serious gaps in the burial entries about this time may have some connection with the unpopularity of the office of ‘Parish Register’ though in those troublous times there may have been other causes.

Because it had not been dissolved by the king the Long Parliament was regarded by its members, and by the nation, as still in being at the collapse of the ‘Commonwealth’, and in 1660 it met to arrange its long delayed dissolution in favour of a new parliament that secured the return of Charles II. Nathaniel Stephens was one of ‘The Rump’, as the remnant of this historic parliament was called, but he did not see the return of the monarchy. While negotiations were proceeding he lay sick at Chavenage and died a day or two before the king celebrated his birthday (29th of May) by a triumphal entry into London.

Legend says the old squire's death was hastened by remorse for the part he played in the execution, which may be true; and that the extinction of the male line of his family followed as a curse, which we need not take too seriously, any more than the story of a coach of fire with a headless coachman carrying off his soul. Nathaniel Stephens had little to reproach himself with, unless it be a crime to be "*perplexed in the extreme*" in a conflict of opposed loyalties. A member of the most notable parliament in English history and the most notable of his family.

The mural tablet in the sanctuary to which we have referred earlier with its tribute to the family, was erected to his memory and to that of his son Richard, in or around the year 1680. It says nothing of his political career. Perhaps at that date the family were a little ashamed of their Roundhead sire. They have denied him even his title of Esquire which he obtained in the reign of James I, presumably when he became Justice of Peace, an important office in those days though its prestige suffered, as we shall learn, under the Commonwealth.

That he should have written himself J.P. is what we should expect from his social position, but how came he to stand for parliament ? We believe the answer can be found on a pavement brass in the South aisle and a dark marble tablet on the South wall, inside near the door. From these we learn that our squire married the daughter of Robert Beale of Priors Marston, in the County of Warwick, who was clerk to the council of Queen Elizabeth and secretary to the Northern Counties. A man in close touch with the government of the realm, one who would know the ropes. After Beale's death his widow lived at Eastington with her daughter, and both women would naturally urge the squire's ambitions along the path of their family traditions. The brass in English to the daughter and the marble in Latin to the mother bear proof of the pride their descendants took in the connection.

It was formerly the custom, on the accession of king or queen, to ‘set up’ the new coat-of-arms in the church. This was last done in Eastington for Queen Victoria whose arms still stand in the vestry. Sometimes the arms were carved by a monumental mason (Victoria's are plaster), but in the early days they were painted on the wall. Charles I came to the throne in 1625 and in 1627 the churchwardens paid £1. 6. 8 “*for settinge upp the Kinge armes and dressinge of the Church*”. ‘Dressing’ was lime-washing the inside walls, and the’ Armes’ would be painted in a conspicuous place in the course of this work.

The legend that Roundhead cavalry horses or artillery horses from the guns that pitted the tower wall, were stabled in the church during the Civil War is easy of belief. In emergency either side would have used such a building. In Berkeley church at that time a forge was set up and the hot horse-shoes hung on nails driven into the wall have left outlines still visible. Inside our church no damage can be proved. It is true that in 1644 Michael Parks was paid for carrying stones and rubbish out of the church, and since it is coupled with “*a dayes worke to the tyler for mending the tyles of the Church*” the damage may have been an act of war. On the other hand, it may have been mere wear and tear.

Whatever soldiers or civilians may have entered the sacred place we have proof positive that they spared the royal arms. On the 29th of January 1649 came the execution of Charles and in 1650 we read in a churchwarden's hand:

“*Laid out to Daniell Wilkins for washinge out the late kings armes and Lime to doe it 1/3*”. Not a big job if that was the price. Plainly monarchy is at a low ebb. Crowns going at three a penny. Even the quarterly dues are now paid "*for Superior Court*" instead of for King's Bench.

"*Behold I make all things new*". Nothing, it seems, will ever be the same again. Yet, looking back, how unlikely that a regime so alien to the spirit of the nation, a set-up so completely at variance with the middle-of-the-road commonsense of Eastington should really be permanent. Wait but ten years, in history a mere 'watch in the night'. See Charles II enter London in triumph with banners and bonfires and guns, amid universal rejoicing. The news can hardly reach Eastington for a day or two and meanwhile the coffin of the old squire, brought from Chavenage, lies in state in the chancel. To-morrow his body will be laid to rest. That done, Richard Stephens, the new Lord of the Manor, must hasten to Whitehall to make his peace and save his estate by proclaiming his loyalty to the new sovereign.

We like to believe, on however little evidence, that the young squire put in a word for the old parson. William Mews had been a busy man during the Commonwealth. In 1654 he was appointed one of the 'ministers assistant' for Gloucestershire for ejecting "*scandalous ministers*". We have no details of his activities in this capacity, but may be sure he was not manifestly unjust nor strongly partisan, or else he could hardly have escaped the eviction that was enforced against more than two thousand English rectors and vicars on 24th August (St. Bartholomew's Day) 1662. As will appear later, we believe his escape was narrow.

We turn again to our churchwardens' accounts, and read in the year 1661:
" Item for setting up of the King's arms £2. 10. 0."

Soon the Commonwealth will be no more than a bad dream. We hear no more of Morgan Jones, who has left us, however, an excellent example of disciplined professional writing, in striking contrast to the free-lance scrawls and flourishes of our churchwardens of the period. He was no sooner here than gone - a mere ‘carpetbagger’ whereas Daniel Wilkins, who washed out the arms, had been and was for long years after a good and faithful servant of the church, a prototype of some still among us who make every incident of cleaning, decorating or repairing God's house an essential act of worship.

The golden hopes born of the Restoration gave place to disillusionment. Under the date 1666 we read: “*Item for the beacon 5/4*”. In 1667 the Dutch fleet sailed up the Thames burning English ships and stores. Dutch guns broke in harshly upon the gaiety of Whitehall palace. The threat of this invasion must have recalled the approach of the Armada in 1588. Frocester would have lit its bonfire beacon on ‘The Breezes’, Arlingham on Barrow Hill, Haresfield on Ring Hill and Stonehouse on Doverow, but Eastington having no hill worth the name may well have slung a fire bucket from the tower, and so paid five and fourpence to the smith for ironwork,

The Great Plague of London in 1665 did not extend to rural areas. If Eastington ever suffered from its visitations it was not in that year, so much we know from the registers. In 1666 The Great Fire destroyed St. Paul's cathedral and in 1678 churchwardens Samuel King and John Burdlaie opened a subscription list headed by “*Mr. Mew*” (Rector Samuel Mews) “*toured the building of Pouls' Churche in London*”. The total sum was but 12/1; enough however, in that year to pay a labourer for a fortnight's work. The Civil War was the hey-day of our participation in national events. Henceforward we play a minor role. We subscribed for the relief of Irish Protestants, and for the ‘redding’ (redeeming or ransoming) ‘The slaves of Turkey’. Our churchwardens purchased leaflets on ‘Popish Plots’ - all these in the reign of Charles II. In the same reign and on into the eighteenth century our parsons read briefs (leaflets) from the pulpit on ‘Fasts’ and ‘Thanksgivings’, notably one “*for victory over the Rebels*” in 1745, the year of the Jacobite Rebellion.

We search registers and accounts in vain for any item directly bearing on the Napoleonic Wars. Their repercussions and those of The Industrial Revolution will have their place in the chapter on poor law, but Eastington never again comes near the centre of the stage. Nathaniel Stephens was our first and last M.P., and William Mews the first and last of our rectors to preach before the House of Commons. We must share Richard Capel with Pitchcombe.

In 1694 the clerk received two shillings for tolling the bell at the funeral of Queen Mary, who died of small-pox at a time when its terrors were beginning to displace those of the plague.

In 1702 the proclamation of the accession of Queen Anne, to be read from the pulpit and affixed to the church door, cost our churchwardens one shilling.

In 1823 the arms of George IV were carved in stone by John Hamlet at a cost of £6. John Hamlet did other monumental work in the church, but he does not appear to have been an Eastington man.

Still quoting from our churchwardens' accounts under date 1674 we read:
“Itm for a pag of Direction conserning Hearth money 1/-”.
The Hearth money or Chimney tax was much resented because it involved the intrusion of tax-officers into the home to count the hearths or to levy distress. Says a seventeenth century ballad :

"The good old dames whenever they the chimney-men espied
Into their nooks they haste away, their pots and pipkins hide.
There is not one old dame in ten, and search the nation through,
But, if you talk of chimney-men, will spare a curse or two."

Folk covered their hearths to lead the officers to believe they were not in use, and hid their utensils to avoid seizure. The reading of that page from the pulpit to tell the congregation of the abolition of the tax must have fallen on thankful ears.

In 1696 when a parliament of William III decided to restore the currency debased by clipping under the Stuarts, the great mathematician, Isaac Newton, was put in charge of the work. A revival of the Hearth Tax was planned in order to meet the deficit. In the end however, a Window Tax was substituted. Windows could be seen and counted without entering the house, but the tax must have been responsible for a serious lack of light and ventilation, followed by disease, amongst the poor.

Proposed as a temporary measure, the Window Tax was removed only in time for the building of the Crystal Palace in 1851. It is said that the 'blind' windows of Alkerton Grange were so built while the tax was in force with a view to replacement of brick by glass when it should be removed. If so the plan was never carried out, and the windows, though glazed, continue blind to this day. In 1795 our churchwardens had to make a 'return of corn' at Cainscross. We cannot help connecting this with the famous (or notorious) decision of the Speenhamland justices made in the same year. We shall see later how these justices devised what was then a new plan to link the income (from all sources) rather than the wages of the labouring classes with the price of corn.

Other national events will be duly mirrored in later chapters as we deal with one aspect after another of parish history, but always there will be unanswered questions springing from tattered and faded pages as we thumb and re-thumb them. What, for example, was the "*puter gunn*" purchased in 1713 for 7/6 and repaired in 1715 for 6d.? 'Pewter' need not worry us. Any brass alloy was called pewter and as ratepayers ourselves we know who paid for it. But who fired it and what did they shoot?

Again, what happened in 1641 that we should pay the princely sum of 4d. To "*a man that brought the order for the thanksgiving*" ? True enough, in that year Thomas Wentvorth, Lord Strafford, was executed amid public rejoicing, and horsemen, who had visited London to see the show, spurred their steeds over mile after mile of muddy road to their home towns and villages, shouting: *"His head is of! His head is off!"*
Was it for his death that our ancestors thanked God in St. Michael's Church by official order? Remembering that our squire sat in the parliament elected to bring down the noble, lord, whose ill advice, folk said, was ruining the nation; remembering too, how squire and parson were in agreement, we think the explanation a reasonable one.

CHAPTER 5 - BURIED TREASURE

EARLIER quotations from our churchwardens' accounts sufficiently prove their value as a source of local history, but can give no adequate idea of the thrill of excited anticipation that sweeps over the local historian upon their discovery; a thrill comparable to that of the searcher after hidden loot when the treasure chest at last lies open before him. They may or may not have a recognised market price, but a thing can be very valuable without having a cash ticket pinned on it - without being measured in shillings and pence against a given amount of eggs, bacon, tobacco or petrol.

Such is the nature of the value of these old books in the vestry chest that look like old junk ripe for the stoke-hole. They have survived more than three centuries. A battered rounding of the corners has made guesswork of many a word. The paper has mellowed to a yellowish-grey, but the ink for the most part is black and clear as when it flowed from the quill. Good ink, and perhaps being ahead of the invention of blotting paper, has helped to preserve the lettering.

The parchment covers have helped to preserve the books themselves from destruction. Mankind - even illiterate mankind - has an instinctive respect for parchment. Yet one wonders what happened to earlier volumes and to the missing pages of those that have survived. Enough remains however, to enable us to reconstruct much of the history of both church and parish.

Some other parishes have been less fortunate. The local historian who would study the Frocester churchwardens' accounts learns with dismay that they perished in a vestry fire a few years ago. Elsewhere we hear of havoc wrought by ‘mildew, moth and rodent’, which indeed our own books have not entirely escaped. We read of churchwarden undertakers who have used venerable pages of writing they could not read to line coffins; and of churchwarden dog-lovers who have found in the vestry chest bedding for their kennels. The church cleaner or sexton who forgets to bring last week's newspaper to light the fire, is and always will be a potential danger. A more modern danger has arisen in the person of the energetic and up-to-date church officer who believes in the new age and applauds new features of every sort, but to whom old records are no more than a lot of rubbish that “ought to be burned out of the road”. The quotation is not imaginary, and there are such people on many church councils.

Grateful that our accounts have for the most part survived, we shall try to convey something of the atmosphere - the flavour, so to speak - of the earlier ones, digressing here and there as they throw light on the lives of those who toiled and worshipped, who rejoiced and sorrowed, who paid their rates and taxes (with many a grumble to prove their kinship with us) two or three hundred years ago. Our oldest account opens in 1616 in the reign of James I, eleven years after Gunpowder Plot, five years after the printing of the Authorised Version, and the year of Shakespeare's death. The entries are difficult to decipher as first. Most of the letters of the alphabet are unlike modern symbols and some have more than one form. Our seventeenth century churchwardens were rarely or never illiterate, but private enterprise allowed each to spell as seemed best in his own eyes so that some familiar words take on an odd appearance. Professional writers of the same era (like registrar Morgan Jones) used modern lettering and almost modern spelling. We get references in Shakespeare to the two styles of writing. In ‘Twelfth Night’, Olivia writes ‘the sweet Roman hand’ - that is she uses the lettering of Latin manuscripts that has become the recognised professional medium for all legal documents. It was being taught in schools and universities, but “a scholar and gentleman’, as the phrase went, would despise it as the alphabet of the paid writer. Olivia's lover naturally thought it ‘sweet’ because she wrote it, but Hamlet preferred the non-professional letters whose loops and flourishes grew to beauty at the point of a quill. He says that he “once did hold it a baseness to write fair”, but when (his life being in peril) he had to forge a legal document, the despised lettering did him “yeoman service”. In Eastington, the amateur handwriting finally gave way to the professional about the year 1700. For real illiteracy among churchwardens we have to wait until the eighteen-twenties, sixty years after the founding of our first free school!

Though essentially church accounts kept by church officers, they include from time to time items that belong rather to some secular business—to some department of the local government of the day of which churchwardens were the chief executive officers. We have already noticed the maimed soldiers tax and we shall find many more non-ecclesiastical items, including poor relief that should have been entered in the overseers' accounts, and repair of roads and bridges that were the responsibility of the surveyor.

Except for some unusual expense in repair of the fabric, or once in a while the casting of the bell, ‘Bread and Wine’ was always the heaviest item in our seventeenth century church expenditure. In 1616, for example, the total expenditure was £4. 11. 4, and of this £2. 9. 1 was for “*Bread and Wine*” for four communions — Easter, Midsummer, Michaelmas and Christ-tyde. Many, perhaps the majority, took communion at Easter only.

The wine was the expensive part, being imported and of good quality. Moreover the depth and capacity of the 1684 Chalice suggests that our ancestors sipped with more emphasis than is now fashionable. They may indeed have felt entitled to do so, by reason partly of the infrequent celebrations and partly because the cost was on each occasion defrayed by collection from the participants. Some few, no doubt, liked to taste enough to feel it was doing them good. The statement is not irreverent, any more than the action of the communicants. It is a case of ‘other days other ways’.

Moreover, the practice had a background of sectarian zeal. The right of the laity to partake of communion in both kinds was to the ordinary churchman one of the most obvious and most valued fruits of the Reformation, and the privilege of taking the wine was regarded as a triumph over superstition and kept in mind as such for generations; which goes far to account for the emphasis. As regards the receipts side of the accounts we may suppose that in theory church expenses were paid for by collection and parish expenses by a rate, but it is doubtful if a strict division was adhered to.

“*Item Layd out for a Bell Rope 2/2*” says an item in 1622. The ringers in those days must have pulled lustily and long to wear out so many ropes, especially after James Wetmore's bell came into use in 1653. It appears to have been heavier than its predecessor and involved the purchase of at least one new rope a year, besides frequent ‘shutting’ (splicing). In 1684 the price was 4/-; in 1753, 5/6; in 1833 it had risen to £1.1.

From 1616 until around 1750 the provision of an hour glass made a frequent item. It was indeed an article in which churchgoers would take the closest interest. Like a giant egg-timer whose sand took an hour to run, its purpose was to measure, for the preacher, the length of his discourse. There it stood on the pulpit niche, in full view. One pictures the upturned faces —the eager watchfulness as the upper sand lessens and the lower sand accumulates. A congregation such as young curates dream of. What an inspiration! What a spur to eloquence! The aged and somnolent, roused by the peroration (or by the tip of John Clutterbuck's white rod), add their gaze to the concentration on the last trickling grains whose passage means speedy delivery into God's good air.

That is, however, a one-sided picture. In contrast, where the preacher had a real message, where the sermon was used as a vehicle to convey essential news or sound views by a conscientious and able speaker, and where the hearers were only partly literate and books and news-sheets were scarce, then the hour glass was prized as a guarantee of good measure. The writer has no doubt that there were in those days congregations (as some historians have said) who, when the sands had run out beside an eloquent preacher, murmured and motioned to him to turn the glass.

The price of an hour-glass was stable over a long period of time. For about a century the price was always 8d. In 1742 it rose, but only to 10d. The hour-glass was finally made obsolete by pocketwatches and short sermons.

Again in 1616, “*Item laid out for a glasse bottle 2/6*”. Into this bottle wine was drawn from the barrel in which it came, and so poured into the chalice as required. By comparison with the hourglass the price suggests superior quality; a vessel worthy of the church. We note that it was a ‘glasse’ bottle, leather bottles being still in use in the parish.

In 1633, “*Itm. Laid out for a newe flaggon 4/6*." An even more expensive decanter. Too good to break; yet broken it must have been either by accident or else as a ‘graven image’ in Oliver Cromwell's day, for in 1650 it was replaced by two bottles at 1/- each. Plain and for use not show.

In 1622, “*It. Layd out to the gouldsmith for making the chalice xxxs. —ii d.*” (30/2). This chalice has disappeared.
In 1690, “*Laid out for a bason for Crisnings 4/-.*”
In 1697, “*ffor a wisk and Bisum 5d.*” These last were for the church cleaner; as also the long pole to carry a brush for the ceiling in the item in 1752, “*for a loog to Sweep ye Church 1/-*”. Old Eastington folk still use the word ‘lug’ for a long slender pole as well as for rod, pole or perch in the measurement table. Without the modern ceiling the church was much higher inside and there were beams to gather dust and cobwebs.

The Preface to our Book of Common Prayer written soon after the Restoration of Charles II says that its use had been discontinued “*during the late unhappy confusion*s" and we know that was true of Eastington because in 1646 the churchwardens paid 1/6 “*For a Directory*”. An Eastington chicken coming home to roost. The ‘Directory of Public Worship’ was framed by the Westminster Assembly of Divines and Richard Capel had some part at least in its production. Issued under the authority of Parliament in that year it forbade the use of ‘The Book of Common Prayer’ in the Church of England.

We do not believe Eastington was ever patient under the Puritan yoke and in 1661 our churchwardens made up for the lapse by purchasing three prayer books at once, whereas one at a time was the custom before and after that date. Their zeal was laudable, but the books themselves were superceded by the new edition, from whose preface we have quoted, in 1663.
The same preface goes on to explain the addition of the ‘Service for Adult Baptism’ made necessary by neglect of infant baptism during the same troublous times. Confirmation too must have been neglected. At all events we read in 1663 “*To Daniell Wilkins for writinge downe the names of children to be Catechised 1/-*”. We have previ-

ously mentioned the long and faithful service of Parish Clerk Daniel Wilkins. He was not above earning an occasional sixpence *"for mending the beiar", "for cutting the ettels and briars about the Church walk",* for mending the bell rope, cleaning up after the masons and tilers, shovelling snow from the gutters or lime-washing after the pargetter (plasterer), and we feel sure he gave value for money. He is one of the few Parish Clerks to sign the registers.

Curiously enough the churchwardens (that is of course the ratepayers) who paid for so much else never paid for a bible, nor for pen and ink. We suppose they were the parson's liability. Yet the churchwardens paid, at least once, for a surplice and frequently for the mending and washing. In 1635 for example:
"Item laid out for the Serples 34/10." Not too plain either for the induction of William Mews - new parson, new surplice. It was not 'a' surplice but 'the' surplice. More than likely his predecessor Richard Capel wore only a black 'Geneva gown'. It was he who frowned upon all Sunday games and resigned rather than read the leaflet saying what pastimes were permissible after service on the Lord's Day.

The purchase of the surplice is one piece of the evidence that his flock on the whole agreed with the king and not with their pastor about Sunday games and that the new appointment was popular. With all his learning and sincerity Richard Capel was too puritanical for his flock. It may have seemed to him (to use an old Eastington expression) that a surplice " stank of Rome."

Other seventeenth century purchases were: "*a book of arttickelles*", "*the Book for the fast*", "*a Book of Homelys*" and "*a pulpit cloth*". There were items "*for mending a foorme* " (a form), "*for cover to the fonte*", "*for the cowshine*" (the cushion), "*for 3yds of Green Cloth for the Comunion Table and the Deck*" (probably the reading desk), *“for Apaier of Girnels”* (journals), *“for A payre of Twistes for the dore”* (a pair of hinges), *“for railes and poast for the Churchyard”,* “for a youth tree” (a yew tree), *“for mending Mr. Mewes seat”, “for amat for ye parson pew”, “for a ffewneral cloth”* and *“for 2 Joint stools and Boxes”.*

All the above are purely domestic entries, and such are the majority. Here, however, is a selection linked with the wider world outside: “I*tm given at the request of Mr. Caple to a Scottsman 6d.”.* That was in 1633, and in 1641 *“Itm to Scotsmen souldiers 6d.”.* Scots began to come South in increasing numbers after the accession of James I. The facetious will note the ‘sixpence’ but it had no connection with nationality, for in 1628 we read: *“Item laid out to two Irish Women: to us directed 6d.”* and in 1631, *“Item to men that came out of Ireland 6d.”*

An item in 1649 reads, *“It. Laid out unto poore Irish 3/8.”* This was a subscription to a charity comparable to an effort just forty years later, *“What was given to Irish protestants in the yeare 1689, £4. 8. 4.*" and to another in 1628, *“Itm layd out to a minister of ffrance 12d.*" Though the amount is small we believe the ‘minister’ was a Hugenot collecting on behalf of the brethren. In 1629 we look nearer home with, *“It. given to a man that had lost by fire at Shirburne 10d*" and further afield again in 1661, *“Laid out for the Brief wch was rede in ye church yt spake of the gret Loss by fire in Dorcett 3/-”.*

To collect outside your own parish required the authority of the Bishop. The “*briefs*” to which we find numerous references, were copies of that authority sent from other parishes or dioceses with an appeal for financial help. To “*lay out for the brief*” meant to subscribe to the good cause.

Of somewhat the same nature is a link with the wider world under date 1629. *"Itm gave to a man that was taken prisoner by the turke who had the King's letters 2/-"*. From Shakespeare s plays we get an impression that the Eastern Mediterranean was infested with pirates; that capture of seamen and travellers was an everyday event; and that those who went unransomed, or were unable to make their escape were treated with inhuman cruelty. Our records appear to support this view. References to victims captured and imprisoned by the Turks are found in overseers' as well as in churchwardens' accounts.

On the other hand, the pretence of having been a Turkish prisoner sometimes provided a livelihood to "*sturdy beggars*". In the records of Gloucester Quarter Sessions there is an account of the trial of two vagabonds, in which one of them declared that the other taught him to twist back his tongue in such a manner that the two of them might prey upon the charitable, making unintelligible noises and conveying in dumb show that their tongues had been cut out by the Turks.

The 'Kings letters' was an authority issued by the Justices of the Peace entitling the bearer to official alms from the parishes through which he passed.

Twice in the year our churchwardens attended a 'Visitation'. Sometimes at Gloucester, frequently at Tedbury (Tetbury), occasionally at Paynsick (Painswick) or Hampton, taking with them the statutory fees and recovering from their funds incidental expenses of which the most constant was "*hors hier*" for their transport, and with it turnpike tolls from which they were not exempt, as the parson was in some places, whilst travelling in the discharge of his duties.

They had their setbacks. In 1619 they were 'on the mat', as we now say, before the Archdeacon's Court on two counts, one for "*not have-*

ing a convenyant reding seatt”, the other for “*not handing in Homely Bouck and a bouck of Canons”.* They were fined 14/-, and having provided the seat and books had to make a second journey to the court with a certificate from Mr. Capel that the order had been compiled with in all “*ptiglars*”.

We noticed how in the middle ages the Curate was ‘Sir’. It seems that ‘Reverend’ is a comparatively modern title. At all events our seventeenth century rectors were styled ‘Mr’. The Lord of the Manor might be Esquire, a Justice of the Peace would be so styled, but ordinary folk had no ‘handle’ (prefix) to their names. James Wetmore casts the bell, Sam Hailing mends the bellwheel, the sundial is made by Matthew Stokes or William Roules. John Joeyler traps the sparrows, and Jo Watkins the weasels. Thomas Croft, *“being in distresse”* is given sixpence. Our churchwardens are Thomas Blaynche, John Burdaie, Richard Roome and Nathaniel Clutterbuck. The Parator himself is plain Thomas Wood; but it is Mr. Capel, Mr. Mews, and Mr. Deighton. So that when we read in 1661, “*To a man yt come wth a cirtivicat from Mr. Thatch 1/6*" we realise that Mr. Thatch, if not the rector was given the title and was acting with the authority of rector, and we have little doubt that the record of William Mews “*during the late unhappy confusions”,* beginning with his sermon to the House of Commons, caused him to be suspended and replaced by Mr. Thatch until his peace was made with the new government.

The title ‘Reverend’ was indeed coming into use, in reference, however, not to the parson, but to the patron of the living. Whether our churchwardens addressed Nathaniel or Richard Stephens in this way we do not know. Throughout the seventeenth century the Lord of the Manor is never once mentioned in their accounts, and their subscription lists, whether “*toured the building of Poul's churche*” or for “*redding* (redeeming or freeing) *the slaves of Turkey”,* were headed, not by Richard Stephens who inherited the patronage with the estate, but by Samuel Mews who gave the chalice. The Lord and his family take their due place, however, in the baptismal and burial registers, though they appear to have celebrated marriage elsewhere, perhaps in the cathedral at Gloucester.

Spending long hours, half-studying, half-dreaming, over these faded pages, one gets a fascinated feeling of eaves-dropping, of being an unseen spectator of the lives of a people at once very like and very different from ourselves. In 1677 we read, "I*tem for makeing up the stone seats about the yew tree*". The stone seats, carried out of the church when wooden seating for all came in and placed in the churchyard, have long since disappeared, but in this entry we picture 'God's acre' in summer at any rate, as community centre.
The women sitting in gossip over their knitting, the men lounging against the fence just out of earshot, lighting with flint and tinder their clay pipes (we still plough them up from time to time) whose tiny bowls, little, if any, bigger than cigarette holders, are an index to the high price of tobacco whose importation by merchants from the West Indies was in its infancy. Mostly, however, they smoked native moss, fire-leaf or touchwood, that cost nothing. We picture the children playing at 'loggats' or 'running the maze' on the adjoining waste. Archery lingered on Butt Leaze, no longer a serious training for war, but still a popular sport, and here and there little groups are having a rough and tumble contest over a rag ball, in a parchment or leather cover, which they kicked in opposite directions. The women shake their heads over this new and dangerous game of foot-ball. Surely wrestling, and quarter-staff or cudgel matches were dangerous enough without this new horror. As for cock-fighting and bear-baiting they were for their betters. They might perhaps hear the sound of such excitement within the grounds of the Court and even, if they

were lucky, be smuggled in by a member of the staff, disguised as an under-servant.

In imagination we hear accents strange to modern ears, a little strange even to those of us who can speak as well as understand the Broad Gloucester dialect, but the topics may well be easy to follow. The weather, the crops, and the prospects of the harvest would surely take first place for the parish fed mainly on what the parish grew. The honey-harvest would surely be a topic. Honey was almost the sole substance for sweetening and bees-wax the prime source of church candles. Some sugar was indeed imported from the East and had been since the twelfth century, but in such small quantities and at so high a price as to be reserved for kings, princes and Archbishops. We may be sure it appeared but rarely on the table of either Samuel Mews or Richard Stephens; and speaking of honey no doubt someone had seen and would describe that wonderful hive with glass sides in the summer-house in the rectory garden across the road.

There might be talk of that new vegetable the potato, imported like the tobacco from the New World. Had it come to stay or was it just a passing fancy - a novelty people would tire of? Surely it was not going to supercede the old-fashioned artichoke ? A wide variety of gossip. The new graves. The sick relatives or neighbours. The rumour of epidemic (plague or small-pox) brought to Berkeley or Gloucester on a ship. The bad roads, neglected by the local authority as usual, the modern craving for travel, the bad manners of other peoples' children (no wonder crime increased), the purchases made when the pedlar called last week (there were no shops), the fairs at Leonard Stanley, Frampton and Gloucester. And was it Wednesday or Thursday that the ox-waggon would be at the fulling-mill to pick up a load of cloth for London or Bristol ? Luckily the moon would be near the full, with night travel and the roads so foundrous.

And was it true as the squire's butler said (he heard it at table) that the Duke of Monmouth was really born in wedlock after all, and the papist James, Duke of York, was not the real heir ? The rumour was cleared up in 1681 when The King's Declaration (a copy cost the churchwardens 1/-) was read in church by the parson, in which His Majesty said plainly that he had never married any woman but the Queen.

Reading such documents from the pulpit, or from the foot of the pulpit by the clerk was the normal way of resolving doubts and contradicting or confirming rumours. This practice together with the sermon itself constituted the poor man's newspaper or perhaps we should say the radio ‘Here is the news’. As for newspapers an occasional hand-written newsletter from London arrived, a week old, at the Court, passed on in turn to the Rectory (how the news helped to season tedious sermons!), went the round of yeomen, clothiers, and trades folk and landed weeks later in one or other of the ale houses, where it could only amplify the version that had previously travelled from church direct with the congregation filing in to crown the long sermon with the long drink and the longer commentary. We hope at that early date there was a ‘local’ at Churchend, but Millend is the nearest we know of, and what a distance to Westend Cross in the other direction before a dry discourse could be moistened

The writer sees our seventeenth century ancestors as a bold and self-reliant people deferring to the parson rather than to the squire but uneasy under any yoke. The blood of Hugenot weavers was in their veins, but their Protestantism was not that of the Puritans. It was Anglican of a type we should describe as low church. They would not go all the way with Richard Capel or even with William Mews, yet their sympathies would have been with the City of Gloucester that shut and defended its gates against Royalist troops. They stood neither for King nor Parliament, but for sturdy local independence.

In the seventeenth century our rectors more often than not held the living throughout the whole of their working lives, whereas it was unusual for any churchwarden to hold office continuously for more than a year, though he might hold it on several occasions. In the nineteenth century a churchwarden often retained his staff for thirty or forty years and the same is true of our own day, though perhaps not quite so often, while our rectors come and pass like April showers. In the twenty-one years 1931 - 1952 we have had six rectors. The same number served us for the previous hundred and fourteen years, and again the same number (six) for two hundred and one years before that.

The year 1662 has an entry, ”*It. Layd out for a terrut for the glibe lands 6d.*” Very little glebe now remains to our church. Some parcels have been given from time to time for the school, for churchyard extensions and perhaps other purposes. Some sixty or seventy acres have been sold in our own time! None of our parsons have ever farmed more than a fraction of their own glebe, but in 1622 the acreage and the rent-roll may have been considerable, amounting to a ‘terrut’ or little terrier.

We have already mentioned the terrier that came into use with the tithe map after the Tithe Act 1836, and which was the responsibility of the Tithe Commissioners. Earlier terriers were compiled by order of the vestry, not for tithe because that was paid in kind, but as assessment for rates and taxes. We have entries relating to a succession of such assessments. In 1674, “*Itt for parchments and drawing the Terrier 5/-*”. In 1680, “*Itt for draing the terrier 2/6.*” *In 1704, “Pd for the Tearier 6/-”.*

The terrier of the Commissioners was made for them by Charles Baker of Painswick, but the last vestry terrier was made in 1831 by John Warner of Eastington, who was, like Charles Baker, a qualified ‘Surveyor of Land’. He measured, we learn, all the lands of the parish for the sum of £16. In 1843 he made a copy of Charles Baker's terrier for the use of the overseers at a charge of £1. Oddly enough his son, John Warner, a successful business man, could not read and could write only his own name and that with difficulty, as our registers testify.

The earth (Latin ‘terra ‘) has long since claimed alike those who made and those who paid for its measurement and assessment, but we are fortunate to have Charles Baker's terrier, John Warner's copy and the 1841 Tithe Map on permanent loan to County Records in good preservation.

CHAPTER 6 - CHIEFLY ABOUT VARMINTS

HERE is one aspect of the churchwarden's work that appears at first sight so odd, so far off the beaten track as to merit a short chapter to itself. Namely the anticipation by them of the work of modern Ministries of Agriculture and County Agricultural Committees. In addition to all their other functions the churchwardens were 'Pests Officers'. An entry in 1640 gives the key note. "*Item for destruction of vermine 6d.*" Hear! Hear! say all of us. Those old fellows had the right idea. Yes, but the question is Which are the vermin? Those who have been members of local councils have some idea of the large sums of public money spent annually on the extermination of rats. Cartridges are purchased year after year by farmers for the war on wood-pigeons even when the price comes out as sixpence a bang. Grey squirrels are on the list. Carrion crows are shot at sight. Moles are trapped and poisoned. Rabbits are gassed. The muskrat scare of the nineteen-thirties is still fresh in our minds. Agriculturalists have their views about rooks and starlings. Call anything vermin and compassion is right out of court.

What the churchwardens regarded as pests is not clear in the earliest accounts unless one happens to light on the unusual entry because typical entries are in general terms, viz: (1641) "*Item to John Joeyler for killinge of vermin 6d.*". (1667) "*Laid out for catching of vermin 1/-*", (1685) "*Paid for varments 4/-*".
The amount is going up. (1686) "*Paid for vermines 6/8*". (1718) "*Paid for farments £1. 0. 5.*". (1733) "*For all sorts of varments £2. 2.11½* " .
Someone is getting extravagant with ratepayers' money.

These items have to be searched for among a vast miscellany of others over many years. A number of those others have been already quoted and we shall dip into the ‘treasure chest’ again and again until the last word is written. Strangely enough neither rats, mice, pigeons, squirrels, moles or rabbits are numbered among the varmints. But we will tell the story by quotation. (1628) - Third year of the reign of Charles I - *“Item laid out for crows or devouring fowls 4d.”* ‘Crows’ yes. Especially carrion crows. ‘Devouring fowls’ Fair enough, whether they devour our spring chicken or our early peas. Fourpence was not a big sum of money even then, but some cynic will surely remark that local authorities are still like that. They start by being very considerate to the ratepayers who elect them and end by having the shirts off their backs.

The very earliest agricultural entry escaped the writer for a long time, being on a much damaged page. (1622) On the throne James I, the wisest fool in Christendom - the old Scot who had such a down on witches, especially after they raised, said he, that great storm on him in the North Sea. (1622) “*To the Sparrow Catcher 1/2”*. This then is the first of numerous items - skirmishes, so to speak - in a long war on sparrows.

The sparrow is almost forgotten on the farm to-day, but a mere sixty years ago, for some weeks before harvest, the ‘bird minders’ were about the fields every morning before dawn and throughout the day until evening twilight, shouting and whirling their rattles. The feathered pests settled on the wheat in countless numbers while the grain was still soft and milky. They bore down the straw by sheer weight and stripped the ears, destroying a thousand times more than they ate. Eastington churchwardens had ceased to pay for sparrow heads long before that, but the sparrow-catchers still went their rounds in the early darkness of autumn evenings, for the sport and for a bite

and a drink at the farms where they called. They were a team of three. No. 1 with the net on a pole. Something like the lave net used in salmon fishing. No. 2 with the lantern, also on a pole and held behind the net. No. 3 with the beater, a pole unadorned or perhaps with a hook to rustle the ivy or the thatch. The startled birds flew towards the light and so into the net.
In those days every country schoolboy knew how to catch sparrows under a riddle, and every barn-door has a slot at ground level through which a handful of shot from an old muzzle-loader could sweep the surface of the yard along a straight trail of chaff and corn, and mow down perhaps fifty or sixty at once of the winged varmints feeding there in ‘suicide alley’. However, these operations dealt with stragglers only. With the ploughing of the stubbles the myriads that had chirped around since July were far from ‘The snare of the fowler’, back in their real homes in city streets and on city roof tops. Their visit to the country was a summer holiday only.

To-day the internal combustion engine has done in forty years what the churchwardens failed to do in centuries. Sparrows lived all winter long on the bye-products and waste associated with horses. The horse and the sparrow declined together. Cars have no nose-bag, nor is any part of their exhaust edible. Sparrows will survive the extinction of the horse, but in numbers quite insignificant. Still, in their long day they were varmints all right. Some immunity from their ravages was obtained by planting a bearded wheat, of which however, grain and straw were alike of inferior quality.

(1668) “I*tem laid out for a foxe taken 1/-*." Those of us who were brought up on the land in ‘Berkeley country’ were taught that the killing, the unorthodox killing, the killing without horse and hound and horn, and red jacket and yellow jacket, and ‘Jack the runner’ with the terriers, and half the countryside whooping and holloaing, was more than a crime. It was something that could only be the work of the deeply sunk in sin, the utterly depraved and vengeful. Foxes are indeed an occasional feature only of our churchwardens' accounts, but they were paid for from time to time, usually in singles at 1/- a head (rarely at 6d.) over a hundred and fifty years. The best bag was in 1725 “*Paid for 7 foxes 7/-*". For the benefit of those interested in comparative prices we quote an entry only a line or two above and note the value of our churchwarden placed upon his own time “*For my days work a-marrying of Sarah Allin 1/6*". To this cryptic entry we shall return. Foxhunting as we know it is a comparatively modern sport. In the Middle Ages royalty and nobility hunted the deer and the wild boar, but commoners hunted the hare as a sport in which the whole community could and did join on foot.

In 1600 one pack of foxhounds is known to have been kept in Wales and from then onward the fox was hunted, first in mountainous country on foot for the purpose of extermination and later for sport in more level country where horses could be used. In England such packs were kept by individual landowners for hunting on their own estates.

Our last payment for a fox was in 1817 and it was about that date the Berkeley and other hunts overpassed the limits of single estates and claimed whole districts for ‘the hunt’ and Eastington became part of ‘Tuesday country’. Previous to that, to Eastington churchwardens, the fox was no more than the varmint with the highest price.

(1724) On the throne George I - Pudding time - “*Paid for 9 Kites 3/-*”. This takes us much farther back into history. The sparrows flourished in our city streets in an era of sewers, dust-carts, and sanitary inspectors. Previously the kite had been doing the work of all three. The largest, perhaps, of our British birds of prey, they were the indispensable scavengers to the City of London until Stuart times.

As we read we picture those mediaeval London streets, foul and narrow, overhung by the upper stories of wooden houses; and after dark the good housewife throwing open an upper window, and with a "mind your heads" tipping out not only what we throw into the dustbin, but much of what now floats down the sewer. At dawn came those big voracious scavengers, like domestic hens with an enormous wing-spread; encouraged, protected, welcomed in their task of making the thoroughfare reasonably wholesome before fastidious better-class citizens took their walk abroad.

In rural districts they were no doubt suspected of taking chickens and lambs, but it is worth noting that in Eastington there was no price on their heads until well into the eighteenth century, by which date improved sanitation in town had driven them, starved and redundant, into the country. How are the mighty fallen! From having the freedom of the city kites sank to the level of varmints at 4d. a head. They are now listed as rare.

(1721) "*Paid Jo. Watkins for a fitcher 4*". A pole-cat was called a fitcher up to thirty years ago and probably the name is still in use though the pole-cat itself is rare. One was recently trapped in Woodchester Park and a larger one a few years earlier at Badminton. The skins of both are to be seen in Gloucester City Museum. They have cream coloured under-fur with long black hairs. In Frampton-on-Severn it seems they were once common enough to have put their name on the map in Fitcherbury Lane.

Our ancestors crossed the ferret (a native of North Africa) with the pole-cat to produce a hunting animal at once larger, fiercer, and less subject to pneumonia than the imported creature. In the writer's youth when a ferret developed a streak of black-tipped hair suggest-ing ancestral pole-cat blood it was called a fitcher-ferret and greatly prized. One is not surprised to find fitchers among the varmints. In Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, written five and a half centuries ago, the poisoner gets his supplies by telling the apothecary about the pole-cat in his spinney. It has been outlawed indeed from very early times.

The stoat and the weasel are quite as unwelcome visitors to our hen houses as the pole-cat itself and the entry ‘fitchers’ may cover all three. On the other hand in 1740 we find wisales (weasels) a separate item in the same account with fitchers. The same year has an entry for hawks. (1724) *“Paid for joyes 2/2”.* In a later entry the spelling is ‘jays’ and in another ‘jaqs’. Jays. They still strip the peas in Eastington gardens year after year, though so shy as to be rarely seen. "That blue-winged Judas, a jay" says Masefield in his epic ‘Reynard the Fox’. Varmints, they were; varmints they are, and always will be.

(1741) *“Paid for Sparrows and Tomtits 8/8¼”.* Tomtits. Every September they sit on the stems of choice pears and peck a tiny hole —just for mischief - in each one. The pear rots. All the choice pears rot, unless picked early or protected in some way. We are told they puncture the seals of milk bottles - just for fun - and nothing is easier to believe. They can indeed, be vastly entertaining hanging upside down on a string before our windows in the winter. If only we could forget those damaged pears! Varmints perhaps, with a small ‘v’ The odd farthing tells us their price.

(1722) *“Paid to Edward Stephens Jun. for 7 Woodpickers 1s/2d”*

Woodpeckers at 2d. a head. What folly! Naturally ratepayers who owned woodland were anxious to protect it, but didn't they know that a woodpecker only attacks unsound timber? (N.B. This Edward

Stephens was not a relative of the Lord of the Manor. The registers reveal a working class family of the same name).

(1740) *"Paid for Hickwals 2/10."*
(1741) *"Paid for Hawks and Hickwals this year 2/2"*
and " *Paid for Joys and Hickwals 6/8.*"

'Hickwal' was the great green woodpecker - the 'laughing yaffle' of the poet. The name is no longer in current use in Eastington though old people remember it well and it is still in use in more rural parts of the Berkeley Vale. There is a streak of mischief in this shy and handsome bird. It has been seen to attack a plum tree and strew the plums around like autumn leaves in sheer joy of life. This, however, is a rare and forgivable exploit which in no way explains the churchwardens' attack on the whole woodpecker tribe. They may indeed, have noticed that woodpeckers were most abundant where timber was least sound, and thought their presence was the cause, whereas it was the result of unsoundness. This does not prove our forefathers more stupid that we are. We still make comparable mistakes. Only forty years ago many gardeners waged war on the lady-bird, because said they, it caused big-bud in blackcurrant bushes. They had noticed a connection between the two. The connection, as every gardener now knows, is that the lady-bird comes to feed upon and so destroy the big-bud mites. The services rendered by woodpeckers are not perhaps so beneficial as those of lady-birds, but they are certainly not nowadays the unwelcome guests our churchwardens made them. We sometimes hear of woodpecker damage to old roof shingles but Eastington has no tradition of shingle roofing.

One name, the most prominent of all on the list of the proscribed has not yet been mentioned. The making this creature a victim seems so inexplicable, so contrary to commonsense, that few people would guess that to our Eastington churchwardens Public Enemy No. 1 - the

super-varmint of them all - was the hedgehog. The learned people who talked ‘hedgehogs’ on the radio recently obviously had no inkling of this official outlawry though they agreed about an old-fashioned belief that hedgehogs did harm.
First paid for in 1671 and last in 1825 and between those dates whenever any other creature is mentioned by name there with it, almost always, is the hedgehog. We may therefore, be quite sure that they predominated in those years when the entry read “*Varmints of all sorts*” or “*Burds and vermines*” or something equally indefinite. Sometimes they were tossed together contemptuously, “*Hedge-hogs and other varmints*”. Sometimes they were itemised in column, the name of the destroyer recorded as if he were St. George bringing back the dragon:

“Paid William Martin for a Hedgehog	*4d.”*
“Paid Mary Bennet for 5 Hedgehogs	*10d.”*
“Paid Ed. Ball for 2 Hedgehogs	*8d.”*
“Paid Sid. Lippiat for 3 Hedgehogs	*8d.”*
“Paid my daughter for 3 Hedgehogs	*6d.”*

So Stephen Beard, Churchwarden for the year 1722 goes on down a long page until there is scarcely room for the visitation fees, the bread and wine, the tiles for the roof, the nails and the laths, the hauling from Frampton, and the 1/- given to *“two poor Seamen in distress”*. The price for hedgehogs seems to have been according to size, anything from a penny to fourpence.

Mostly ‘head-money’ is understandable whether offered by Edward I for wolves six and a half centuries ago or by the Boers for Winston Churchill in our own time, but why our churchwardens - decent kindly men we may be sure - should have put a price on this harmless animal, and for so many years, defies rational explanation. We recall the much quoted schoolboy's essay beginning, “The badger is a very nasty animal. When attacked it defends itself", The hedgehog does nothing of the sort. If life gets difficult then it curls up and lets events take their course, like a voter who has no use for politics.

It is, or was, said that hedgehogs suck milk from cows, and in doing so cause damage to their udders. They are indeed, very fond of milk and will come at dusk to share the cat's saucer, when they are not hibernating, and so make friendly, if rather dirty, pets. In a life of dairy farming the writer has found them bringing forth and rearing their families in and around his cowsheds year after year without ever once seeing any attempt to establish a business relationship with a cow. However, though the accusation is false there seems little doubt that our ancestors believed it to be true, which shifts the problem without solving it, for we must then ask how this belief arose. Hedgehogs have been accused of spreading disease in some way by dissemination of the fleas that live undisturbed in their forest of spines; and again there is a lack of evidence. They may have stolen eggs, in the days when hens lived mainly on what they could scratch for themselves, and laid their eggs under hedges and bushes, but tradition says nothing of this. Hedgehogs were sometimes associated with witchcraft, as Shakespeare's Macbeth suggests, and so at enmity with the church, but we prefer to think they were destroyed from utilatarian motives

Hedgehogs are a tenacious race. More are killed on our Eastington roads by motor traffic in one year than the churchwardens paid for in three or four, yet they carry on.

One more and our list of old time varmints is complete.   (1721) "*Paid to Will Hurd for Hoops tod*". "*Paid Sam Hobbs for Woops 4d.*" And "*Paid to Jesse Knowles for Whops 8d*". in succeeding years.

From then on to 1755 the pages abound with entries of ‘Hoops, Woops, Whops, Hopes and Wopes’. This victim was not easily identified. Even the memory of the name has long since disappeared from Eastington, but in Arlingham we find it still in use among old farming folk as their name for the bullfinch. At one time the garden gun loaded with ‘dust-shot’ for use against the smaller pests was called a ‘woop gun’.

Certainly the damage done to orchard and garden, by bullfinches in a severe winter may be enormous. The sight of grass or garden ground beneath an apple, plum, pear or gooseberry, covered every inch with scales from fruit buds destroyed, has to be seen to be believed, and is enough to make any grower vow eternal vengeance. Beautiful, beautiful varmints !

These then had a price on their heads: Hedgehogs, sparrows, bullfinches, pole-cats, weasels, foxes, woodpeckers, tits, jays, kites, crows and hawks. A comparable list to-day might read: Rats, mice, pigeons, grey-squirrels, moles and rabbits, though we take even more seriously damage done by smaller pests whose very existence was unknown a century ago.

To spray potatoes, as we do, against the ‘blight’ or to sterilize soil against eel worm requires some material incentive, though it can hardly be in the form of head money; but one would have thought that in a less complex age the massacre of real or supposed tangible pests could have been left to the sporting squire, to the farmer with his gun, the keeper with his traps, the youth with his sling or catapult and to the natural murderous instincts of the human male. So in the main no doubt it was. War has been waged against ‘varmints’ on a voluntary basis since prehistoric times, but prices were put on heads at the expense of the community when a special effort at extermination seemed called for.

Paid persecution in Eastington was neither uniform nor continuous over the period covered by our records. It began in 1622 on a small scale, was intermittent throughout the seventeenth century, rose to a climax in 1740 when William Bird paid for every varmint listed except crows. The offensive petered out around 1755, and except for an occasional fox, no more head-money was paid until 1818, and then on a short list - hedgehogs and sparrows only. The measures taken may or may not have helped agricultural production, but our ancestors thought they did. The parson would have been especially interested while his tithe was a tenth of the actual produce. The greater the total yield the greater his share of com, hay, milk, eggs, beef, bacon, mutton and wool. We may be sure that in the view of some of those early nineteenth century farmers and parsons the country began to go down, and the pillars of civilization to shake, when a vestry in 1825 decided to discontinue payment for hedgehogs and to pay but a farthing each for sparrows heads. (Double the gospel price. “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?”).

(1832) *“For Sparrows Heads 4/-”.* The last shot in the two hundred and ten years war that opened in 1622 with payment of 1/2 to the sparrow-catcher. And this completes the story of pest warfare as set out under the hands of our churchwardens. It ran a parallel course in neighbouring parishes we believe, though few have preserved records of the campaigns. In Cam, indeed, we read of payment for sparrows heads between 1819 and 1837 to the amount of £37. 9. 6¾ for a total bag of twenty-two thousand six hundred and twenty-nine. For most of the period the price was a halfpenny, but for the last few years a farthing.

Man has been in conflict with the enemies of agriculture since tillage began and we prefer to regard the policy of rate-provided bounty-money as a late chapter of an age-old story. The enemies, no doubt, had changed through the centuries, and the important contribution of the churchwardens is the placing on record their part in the campaign. For this, William Bird and a long line of his colleagues deserve our sincere gratitude.

To them this ‘pests-officer’ business was a side-line, but not always an easy one. Beside paying the money they had to see that no one preserved breeding stock to rear the ‘varmints’ and also to be sure they were taken within the bounds and not imported from a neighbouring parish that had perhaps already paid for them. There is no evidence of any official offensive against insects, not even the wasp, let alone the really small fry of creation.

The rat is the most surprising omission, especially in the days before the modern brown species ousted the black. We reflect, however that seventeenth century folk had no inkling of the part it played in dissemination of the plague, and since hygiene was not yet a popular science they continued for the most part to take a bath annually or once in a lifetime according to their station, so giving a standing welcome to the deadly fleas of the black rat. As for the plague, they blamed that on to hot summers, wet autumns, mild winters, the licentiousness of ‘the Court’ and the wickedness of great cities. The last of these seemed as good as proved; everyone knew that the greater the city, the more shameful the vice and the more virulent the plague.

It is easy to smile over the outlook of our forebears as revealed in fading ink on yellowing pages, but we miss the moral unless, in imagination, we hear our great-grandchildren laughing their heads off over the clever things we are doing now in 1953.

Two more quotations. (1745) Year of the great Jacobite Rebellion; of Bonnie Prince Charlie; of the extinction of the last hopes of the House of Stuart, and of the founding of our famous Highland regiments. “*Paid for an Act of Parliament concerning diseased Cattle 1/*” and (1747) “*Paid for an Act of Parliament conserning the Catel 1/-*”. The threshold of a new era. Our churchwardens will be paying head-money for another eighty years, but here in embryo, in these documents bought to be read in church and posted on the door, is the leaflet service of the Ministry of Agriculture. The time was approaching when the major pests - the supervarmints - would be minute insects, fungi, bacteria, and viruses to be tracked down by the microscope and destroyed, not singly, but million on million by the help of the agricultural engineer and the agricultural chemist.

Yes, by all means let us smile provided we don't run away with the idea that the laugh is all on our side. Indeed, could those worthy churchwardens revisit our fields and farmsteads they might conclude that they have the laugh of us whose pest problems grow greater as our ‘varmints’ grow smaller. As enemies hedgehogs are more accessible and more vulnerable than streptococci.

CHAPTER 7 - THE PARISH REGISTERS

" Picked from the worm-holes of long-vanished, days "

WE are fortunate that our Parish Registers of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials are complete from the accession of the first Elizabeth in 1558. Our two earliest volumes (1558- 1686) were soundly and neatly re-bound by Mr. H. E. Hawker of Stonehouse in 1932. He has earned the gratitude of the parish. Our first reaction is one of surprise that they should be so easy to read, especially after the initial difficulty of deciphering the churchwardens' accounts. Entries for the first hundred and thirty years or so are in Latin, but that is no bar even to a poor scholar. The few set words often repeated ‘Baptised, Married, Buried, Son, Daughter, Wife Widow’ etc., and the months of the year are easily recognised and the eye can concentrate on names, numbers, dates and other relevant factors.

To make matters easier, for thirty-nine year items are in a highly professional hand, on ruled lines carefully spaced, with uniform spelling and well-formed modern lettering. We suspect the writer of putting some of his months in the wrong year until we remember that the first day of the year was March 25th and not January 1st until 1755 when the anniversary of the conception was replaced by the anniversary of the birth of Our Lord.

In 1598 the writing becomes cramped, the spacing chaotic, the lettering less regular; obviously written in haste and in hands changing from time to time though still in some sort professional. The explanation is that although the first date is 1558, no part of these registers was actually written before 1597. Records were kept and indeed were compulsory from 1538 onwards. (Before that, proof of the event lay in the memory of witnesses). How they were kept depended on the incumbent, and all too often loose sheets or odd scraps of paper were used.

It was in 1597 that Convocation ordered all entries to be transcribed into ‘parchment books’ at least from 1558. Our church-wardens kept their accounts on paper pages in parchment binding. Our overseers and surveyors kept theirs on paper pages with paper binding, but the registers were parchment throughout until the middle of the eighteenth century.

For nearly a hundred years, from 1558 onwards, the entries are unsigned. Morgan Jones, however, anticipated modern practice in 1653 by signing every marriage entry ‘Morgan Jones, Parish Register’ and a few years later the signature ‘Daniel Wilkins, Clerk’ appears but not above two or three times. No parson's signature appears until towards the end of the seventeenth century and then only the incumbents of neighbouring parishes with burial in wool certificates. In a note inserted between entries for 1698 and 1699 we find the signature ‘Samuel Saunders, Minister’ and his hand had kept the registers since 1678. He was probably curate to Samuel Mews who would be giving his time and attention to his more important posts of Prebendary of both Wells and Winchester Cathedrals, though his gift of the chalice proves his continued interest in Eastington. In 1706 Rector William Deighton makes the entries and signs them. His careful handling leads on to the legal standardisation after 1754 when Banns were introduced. Henceforward the parties to a marriage signed, as also did two witnesses and the officiating minister, in a well bound book of printed forms. In Baptismal and Burial registers the clean parchment pages continue to be used, signed annually by the Rector or his deputy until 1813 when for them too, printed pages of forms came into use. From now on the officiating minister signed every entry. The name and occupation of the parent of the baptised child was recorded and also, for the first time, the age of the person buried.

We meet with many unfamiliar surnames. Clutterbuck is indeed the commonest, with Blanch almost equally so. Clutterbucks are still with us, and though no Blanch has lived in Eastington for some generations the name is familiar; but there is nothing familiar about Fennel, Pirle, Keylock, Pride, Zelman, ffeysye, Sheabar, Jelliman, Jingle, Craft, Crown, Cripsold, Cudd, Skitter, Rouch, Staight, Yepp, Toe, Highway, Jurden, Glasse, Proverbs or Neat. This collection is interesting and the point is of some importance as indicating a migratory population, thus preluding an answer to the obvious query. What flotsam and jetsam of history, namely, can possibly be combed from lists of long-forgotten names left stranded, so to speak, on page after page of parchment three centuries old ?

Mere lists of names repel, at least until we discover clues to unravel their secrets and the tendency is to seize on the extras - the unofficial marginal notes dotted here and there. From these we learn the date of an induction or a resignation, the ancestry and native place of a rector or of his wife; or get information about population, inhabited houses, trades and occupations. Sometimes we find notes on the school with methods of instruction and management. In this way we learn, for example, that the great elms felled in the field before Oldbury House in 1950 were planted by the Revd. William Davies on what was his glebe land thirty-four years before the house was built. Such notes are all within the last two hundred years.

Among the entries themselves few names are of national interest. Nathaniel Stephens, of course, and William Mews, and ‘William Pemble, Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge, Master of Arts and Deacon of Theology’ who was buried among our people beneath the great yew (we read of elsewhere) to the North of the church. It appears that he had retired to Eastington to be near his friend and disciple Richard Capel. One or two others will have incidental mention.

Death is the great leveller to be sure, but at first we get the impression that all class distinctions have disappeared from all three sections of the registers at least in the years before 1754. Under Baptism we read, ‘son of Thomas Nash’ or ‘daughter of Edward Pitte’ with no hint, it seems, as to whether the parents were nobodies or somebodies. We do not know if George Budding, in the Spring of 1561, took his bride, nee Johanna Benet, home to a mansion or to a wattle-and daub hovel, with thatched roof and dirt floor.

Some exceptions there are. Nathaniel Stephens is given his title of Armiger (Esquire). The Rector and family are sometimes Mr., Mrs., or Miss, and the writing of such individual names gives us a clue to re-establishment of social distinctions. In general, the entries relating to wealthy or important people are to be distinguished by the more careful writing in bolder characters, or by some difference of ink or pen from those before and after. It was the lettering of the name of Edith Beale that led the writer to guess and later to confirm her connection with the family of Stephens. We suspect that an important baptism, marriage or burial would be entered at the time whereas the annals of ordinary folk were dotted down on scraps of paper or even hoarded in the memory of parson or clerk until a number had accumulated. This theory would explain also a good many anomalies.

In modern times we get much more official information as well as an occasional interpolation of news value, so that we learn of one, “*destroyed himself*” and of another, “*drowned in the brook*” but even in the earlier volumes, that are little more than lists of names, we derive an amazing mass of information once we realise it is there to be tapped, and so far from thinking them barren we come to regard them as an oracle to which we take our hitherto unanswered questions.

Did the Great Plague of London in 1665 extend to Eastington? We consult 'Burials' and find little deviation from the average. The oracle has answered 'No'.

Did the Plague visit Eastington at all in Elizabethan or Stuart times? Our registers suggest that 1612 and 1613 were years of 'visitation'. The yearly average of burials at that time was eight or nine, but in 1612 the number goes up to twenty-four, eighteen of them in the six months May to October. After May 1613, entries cease for a year, being resumed in May 1614. Corresponding irregularities in Baptisms and Marriages suggest disorganisation. We wonder if deaths were so widespread that in the panic formal funerals and registration were alike abandoned, and if somewhere bodies were thrown into a common grave and covered with quick- lime. We know of no record or tradition of such remains being found. What remains have been found, or reputed to have been found, notably in the field 500 yards South of the church, popularly called 'Bloody Vernal' have usually been attributed to casualties in the Civil War or the earlier Wars of the Roses. Entries run a similar course in 1553 when after thirty-one interments in that year we find seven only recorded in the next four. Here, too, baptisms and marriages are in accord. It would be unwise to rely overmuch on the absence of entries which may be explained by troublous times, human carelessness or oversight, or in other ways, but the twenty-four burials in 1612 and thirty-one in 1653 certainly point to severe epidemics of some sort. The deaths in the year 1612 were chiefly in the warm weather months and this is typical of plague. Indeed, we believe the well-known preference of townsfolk in those days for a North aspect sprang from their association of heat with the disease they dreaded. In 1653 however, of the thirty-one burials no less than twenty-seven were in the six months November to April, which suggests some scourge more akin to modern influenza. From the infrequency of burials in the next few years we gather that it swept away the aged and infirm. It is possible, of course, that both outbreaks were small-pox. In 1653 particularly, we are nearing the date when the plague-bearing black rat was to be exterminated by the brown rat, and small-pox, from early times one of ‘death's liege henchmen’ was to reign as killer No. 1 for the century that elapsed before the researches of ‘vaccination Jenner’ of Berkeley bore fruit. Had our churchwardens known of its deadly work they would hardly have spared the black rat, but that knowledge was far in the future, and the blame for the plague fell instead on the weather, the night air, the sinfulness of great cities and the general decay of religion. Be that as it may, during the four centuries (almost) of our records the two years we have mentioned are alone in showing excessive mortality, which proves how wise townspeople were to fly to the countryside to escape the pestilence whenever they had means and opportunity. The frequent appearance of new and unusual names seems evidence that Eastington had an influx of such visitors from time to time.

Another question. Do the registers support the view, held on other grounds, that even at the height of Puritan domination our parish was steadfastly Church of England? They do. The Puritans introduced fantastic Christian names, but nowhere in our books do we find ‘Tribulation Wholesome’, ‘Zeal of the Land Busy’, ‘Hold the Faith Littlewit’ or anything of that sort. Such names were, however, unusual. What was common among Puritans was the choice of names from the Old Testament, and we should find a preponderance of such names if Eastington had been a Puritan stronghold.

Instead, in 1589, with a wave of Protestant enthusiasm sweeping the country after the defeat of the Armada, in seventeen baptisms five Old Testament names are recorded. In 1599 only three out of seventeen. In 1647, when Cromwell's Puritan army was al lvictorious, when Eastington was, or had recently been, in sympathy with the City of Gloucester in its stand for Parliament, Old Testament namings went up to six out of fourteen. In 1653, year of Barebone's Parliament when faith in the creation of a ‘Golden Age’ by legislation was at its height, the gilt was already off the gingerbread with the installation of the ‘foreigner’ Morgan Jones, and in ten baptisms one naming only was Old Testament. In 1663, with the Book of Common Prayer re-established, there were three out of fourteen.

Some of our parsons leaned more towards Geneva than did their congregations. Four of Robert Ball's seven children had Old Testament names and five of the eight born to William Mews, but of Richard Capel's eleven, only one, in spite of his strict sabbatarianism and his black gown. Squire Nathaniel Stephens chose but two Old Testament names out of eight.

An illustration of the swing back towards Royalty and away from Parliament is found in the reign of Charles II. In 1672, 1673 and 1674, seven fathers of baptised children are named James. Searching back among the surnames of six of them for their own baptisms it seems certain that some of these were baptised under other names during the Commonwealth and that they changed them out of loyalty to the House of Stuart, at a time when the rival heirs to the throne were James, Duke of York, and James, Duke of Monmouth. The surname of the seventh was new at that date. He was ‘James Crown’. Were both names loyal adoptions? We have already noted that the memorial to Nathaniel Stephens, erected a few years after this, omits all mention of his anti-royalist activities. Plainly at this date Eastington had become definitely and strongly Royalist. Loyalty to the House of Stuart persisted. ‘The King's Head’ was named in the reign of William IV and ‘The Royal Oak’ in that of Victoria. So recently as the writer's youth no child dared attend Eastington school on the 29th May without an oak leaf buttonhole.

In all the baptisms hitherto mentioned there was one Christian name only, nor was any child given more until 1802 when we find ‘Mary Anne’. ‘John Henry’ follows, and the custom of giving two or more names, starting with the clergy and mill-owners, spread through all classes of society, but only slowly. As recently as 1850-51 in a hundred baptisms sixty-four still have one christian name only. An interesting trifle is that in the early eighteen hundreds some mothers of illegitimate children used the surname of the reputed father as a second christian name.

We may note also that no hyphenated surname is found in any of our records before 1841 when the Terrier gives Vyner-Ellis as a landowner not resident in the parish.

For the first hundred years, before the return of Charles II, our parish clerks appear to have understood Latin - at least enough for the purpose of making correct entries. By 1660 however, it had become a difficult foreign tongue. From 1661 onwards the marriages are recorded in English, but for baptisms and burials Latin persists in some sort for another twenty or thirty years. It was high time to abandon it however when translation reads “*Judith son of James Buddin*”, “*John daughter of James Crown*” and “*Joshua daughter of Daniel King*”.

Spelling of names was very variable, especially before the year 1750 or thereabouts. Our parsons were spelt ‘Capel’ or ‘Caple’ and ‘Mew, Mews, Mewe' or 'Mewes'. Stephens (Lord of the Manor) does not vary, but it is 'Wetmorh, Wetmore, Wettmor' or 'Wettmore', 'Rider' or 'Ryder', 'Toe' or 'Tooe', 'Rome' or 'Roome'. 'Fryer' (or ffryer) is spelt a dozen different ways and so is Clutterbuck. Double f is common in place of capital " F " as it is also in the accounts.

We suppose that the parish clerk actually wrote the items previous to the date when the parson's signature was required, but we learn little of the personalities of the writers. Some handwriting was better than others, though none could be called bad. Whoever was responsible for the work in the middle of the eighteenth century has taken the trouble to adorn some of the pages with large initial letters in gold after the style of the old English missals, but in general the entries are businesslike with no frills.

Double entries here and there suggest that death in childbirth was common before the era of modern midwifery. They included the wife of Robert Ball. Again, as we should expect, the infant mortality rate was high. Of Robert Ball's seven children, one was buried here, of Richard Capel's eleven, three died here; of the seven children of Williams Mews three, and Squire Nathaniel Stephens lost three out of eight. This takes no account of still-born infants of whom no doubt there were many. Among the poor the death rate among infants must have been apalling. It cannot easily be checked from the registers however, because of the migratory nature of the working population.

Whatever may be true of other parishes, in Eastington names come and go from the first entry in 1558 to the last in 1953. In spite of repeated legislation binding people to their place of birth, the registers prove conclusively that rarely has a family endured four or five generations and many names appear and disappear within the space of twenty years. The Stephens family squired us for exactly two-hundred years, but only by reason of heirs assuming the name with the Lordship of the Manor on more than one occasion.

The Clutterbucks, a clan rather than a family, have been with us continuously from the opening page, and in every class of society. Wealthy cloth-merchant Clutterbucks inter-married with Mews, Stephens and Cliffords (of Frampton-on-Severn). There have been Clutterbuck weavers, carpenters, wheelwrights, saddlers and artisans of all sorts. Clutterbuck farmers, Clutterbuck churchwardens, overseers, surveyors, constables and parish clerks. Clutterbucks appear at times on the lists of poor, but not proportionately to their number. On balance they have put in more than they have taken out. Mostly they were people with clever hands, and this quality marks those of the clan who are among us to-day. It is not possible to trace a continuous line of descent of any one branch, because individually they came and went like other Eastington families, but at no time since 1558 have we been without them, which is true of no other name. Some of their ancestors would have come over among the skilled Flemish weavers imported by Edward III or Edward IV, to improve the quality of English cloth, and their numbers augmented by refugees from religious persecution in the Netherlands in the reign of Edward VI and Elizabeth.

Perhaps it was as well the use of Latin was discontinued before 1678 because in that year burial entries became long and complicated. Each one had to include a sworn statement that the corpse was buried in ‘woollen only’. In modern times we have heard much - especially between the two world wars - of producers unable to sell and therefore unable (as consumers) to buy the necessities of life, but we thought of such conditions in terms of ‘science and the machine’ and excessive specialisation and division of labour. Here, however, in 1678 we find legislation to stimulate sales, to create a market for surplus products a hundred years before invention launched us upon the troubled waters of the modern industrial era.

Something of a Protection versus Free Trade set-up is suggested. Our Cotswold farmers who produced the wool, and our Stroud valley spinners and weavers who converted it to cloth, would, of course, approve an act of parliament favouring their products at the expense of Irish linen, Venetian silk and Genoese cotton. Such was the dominant theory of trade before the days of Adam Smith's ‘Wealth of Nations’. There was, besides economic theory, a widespread jealousy of the East India Company, wealthy by importation of foreign textiles, to prompt protective legislation. An immediate motive was however, provided by French legislation which excluded cloth in the year in question, thus leaving our merchants with big stocks on their hands. The experiment continued, by our registers, for eight years only, after which we suppose our cloth was readmitted by Louis XIV of France as part of the price of the Roman Catholic England promised by James II.

At first the statements on oath were certified by various Justices of the Peace, later by one Thomas Pearse, Master of Chancery, and for the last six of the eight years by the parsons of Stonehouse, Frampton, Frocester or Leonard Stanley, so that we meet their signatures earlier than those of our own incumbents.

The law was not always observed. Indeed the very first entry reads: “*Hester the wife of Nathaniel Naish buried Aug. 22nd. Memo that noe Certificate that the Corps was buryed in woolen only was within Eight days after ye buryall brought to the Minister which was Certifyed to the Church Warding August 31st*.” We do not learn, though we should like to, what happened to first offender Nathaniel Naish, but his example was not followed. On only one other occasion was there no certificate.

When we deal with Poor Law we shall see enough -more than enough - of the growth of pauperism, and just as the register shows us how ineffective was legislation to prevent migration so also they tell us how statutory enactments failed to check the growth of poverty in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In 1786 pauper burials were eight out of nineteen, in 1787 six out of eighteen, in 1788 five out of twelve; from which it almost looks as if between a third and a half of the population were officially paupers. In 1788 it appears the overseers made themselves responsible for the baptism of the children of paupers and in that year the number of baptisms rose to forty-two of which fifteen were of pauper children, probably from the newly-built workhouse in which Rector William Davies took so great an interest.

From June 1754 onwards, as we have noted, the Marriage Register is signed by the contracting parties and by two witnesses. This gives us the opportunity to ask a question about Education. How many Eastington adults could write in 1754, ten years before the founding of our first free school? Of the first fifty (twenty-five couples) to marry after that date, twenty-two sign with a cross - nearly half - and some signatures are so formless as to suggest they could write nothing else. In 1770 two-thirds made their mark. In 1784 just half. In 1807 three-fifths, and that forty three years after the founding of our charity school. We shall see later, however, that before 1824 the Eastington Free School taught only reading. Around 1835 the illiterate still exceed a half.

We have quoted the married couples because up to this date the witnesses could always write their names. The contracting parties, it seems, were required to find literate witnesses. One was usually the parish clerk. From 1835 relatives and friends of bride and bridegroom were admitted as witnesses even if they could not write. Therefrom of the first thirty-two witnesses twenty spatter the pages with blots and smudges as they try to make a cross with the point of a quill pen —not an easy matter at such an emotional moment even for those who can use one. In 1850 two-thirds of the parties still cannot write and the proportion is even higher among witnesses. Yet we must beware of blaming the school overmuch. Between 1800 and 1830 occurred an inrush of population reminiscent of a ‘gold rush’ or of the influx into the aircraft areas of Gloucestershire since 1939. Many would come from parishes without a school. By 1886 the schoolmaster has won. ‘Gaffer Wilcox’ of whom we shall hear more, has been Headmaster for twenty-seven years. The population is declining sharply. Only one of forty married makes a mark and of forty witnesses only three. The higher proportion among witnesses throughout is due no doubt to their being mostly a generation older.

Estimates of the population of the country - Gallop polls, so to speak, but lacking scientific accuracy - had been made from early times. The first official census as we understand it, was taken, however in 1801. The novelty as well as the importance of it prompted William Davies to make a marginal note in the Baptismal Register of the number, occupation and housing of his flock at that date. What of earlier centuries? Some writers, notably William Cobbett, have estimated past populations by the capacity of the churches. This method would give enormous figures especially as congregations stood, and is obviously unreliable. A church was erected primarily to the Glory of God and if its size measures anything it is the wealth and piety of the founder and his successors. Besides, churches were not for worship alone. In catering for public activities they took the place of school, theatre, concert room, village hall, council chamber and ecclesiastical court.

William the Conqueror's Domesday Book gives us material for a guess as to how many people lived in ‘Alcrintone’ in the year 1086. There were thirty-four dwellings, which means a population of less than two hundred. Five hundred years must elapse before we again get anything like accurate information, this time from our registers. The average of the census figures from 1801 to 1871 divided by the average of yearly baptisms gives a figure of 33.5, so that we can multiply a ten year average of baptisms at any decade we choose in confidence that it will give us a sufficiently reliable population figure. The number commonly used is 30, but the writer feels that a figure derived from our own statistics is probably more accurate for our own parish. In any case the difference is small.

Using this convenient and reliable yard-stick we find under Queen Elizabeth an Eastington population around 300. Under James I and Charles I there was an increase to 500 and a decline to 460 under Charles II. In the reign of George I it rose to 635, and under George II in 1775 it reached 700. The new machines for spinning and weaving had reached the Stroud valley and little by little old water-wheels were being harnessed to them and were speeding up the production of yarn and broadcloth. The factories took on more hands and population went up to 1000 by 1801 and to 1225 by 1811.

The steam-engine was coming in to supplement water-power. The mills were re-built and extended. The number of cottages built on roadside waste at this period measures in some sort the efforts of our grandsires to cope with ‘gold rush’ conditions.

It may seem strange that in so many cases no ‘chief rents’ were paid, but the answer becomes plain when we consider the dual roles of Henry Hicks, who as mill owner in those years, required more and more labour, and who realised that housing attracts and retains workers, and so as Lord of the Manor made the acquisition of sites easy. We have noticed how philanthropy and business went hand in hand when he provided the church clock, and we shall see further evidence in the support he gave to the school.

In the North of England the textile boom had spent itself as increased output of machine-made cloth outstripped effective demand, but in the Stroud valley the tradition of the craftsmen had from the first resulted in a cloth of superior quality and the influx of population was swelled by redundant workers from the Yorkshire mills migrating to a district where prosperity still held. Population rose decade by decade until 1851 when it was 1886, after which a decline set in. Viewed in retrospect this ‘golden age’ is seen to be no more than a prelude to industrial collapse. Trade languished; bankruptcy swept though the valley. Poverty already acute was aggravated by unemployment even while population was still on the increase. Mills and their goodwill changed hands at salvage prices thus enabling the new owners to work on a smaller margin of profit. The name of Hooper replaced that of Hicks whose water-wheels and ‘kettle of steam’ had shut down those cottage looms that had served to make wealthy so many branches of the family of Clutterbuck.

The decline in population continued until in the early years of the present century it came near 1100 and numbers of empty cottages were falling to ruin. Stability was then maintained until the second world war when aircraft and other defence industries within easy reach by public transport pushed the figure above 1500 and completed the transformation of Eastington into a dormitory village. This really began around 1900 when work at Listers of Dursley became attractive to the younger men who rode the new ‘safety bicycles’.

To-day at all events, not one in ten of our wage earners finds his work within the parish.

True enough throughout the nineteenth century and perhaps earlier, numbers of our people worked at Bond's mill and Beard's mill in Stonehouse parish but these mills were but a few yards over the boundary and our people walked there to work. Besides for decades they were in the same ownership with Millend, Churchend and Meadow Mills and all five made an organised group of which Churchend was the spinning centre. Meadow and Bond's specialised in weaving, and Millend in fulling, bleaching and drying. A field at Millend is still called ‘Rack Hill’, for here the drying racks stood on which the cloth was to be seen stretched, when it was not in the ‘holey house’ whose walls were perforated for ventilation as if alternate bricks were missing. The dyeing vats at Beard's mill completed the process.

The crime of cutting cloth from the racks was an easy and profitable one, which partly accounts for the severe penalties it carried. Tradition says that the successful thief usually buried the cloth until the hue and cry had died down. Sometimes, for fear or some other cause, it was left in its hiding place, so that parcels of rotting cloth have occasionally been discovered in our own times by deep-digging gardeners.

To return however, to population. In making the calculations the figures for baptisms were used as being less subject to irregularity than burials or marriages, but a careful check has shown that either of the two last might have been used and would have given totals in very close agreement.

We have seen that from 1813 onwards baptisms and burials were entered in books of official forms, as marriages had been for half a century. This followed an Act of Parliament passed in 1811 which also provided that the registers “*must be kept securely in an Iron Chest*”. No longer shall the mice make nests of them; and in our churchwardens' accounts in 1812 we read, *“Paid for Iron Chest to keep the Registers in £6. 16. 6.”* This chest is still in use. Since from now on the occupation of the parent of the baptised child is stated, we get a wealth of information about Eastington lives and labours. Typical entries are : ‘George Hay ward, Shearman; James Mayo, Pressman; George Bird, Billy-spinner; Edward Jackway, Millwright; Ann King, Weaver; Elizabeth Bird, Reeler’. All these were employees of the cloth mills as well as a Wool-loft clerk a Cloth-dresser and a Dyer.

There were independent tradesmen like ‘John Ford, Edge-tool Grinder; James Proverb, Shovel-tree maker’ and there were Wire drawers, Blacksmiths, Tanners, Farmers and Yeomen. Groom, Footman, Coach-man and Colt-breaker, recall to us the days when practically all transport depended on the horse, when work-a-day folk laughed at the suggestion of horseless-carriages and flying- machines, but believed in horse-whisperers as indeed some hunting and racing characters still do. By 1800 the ox had almost ceased to be a ‘labouring beast’ either on field or highway. In 1822 we first meet ‘Baker’ as a trade and we can hardly be wrong in supposing that previously housewives had all baked their own bread. Only a few years after, however, three or four bakers were delivering their loaves in competition with one another.

‘Engineer’ in 1823 reminds us that machines in the factories more and more complicated, are humming and clacking to the hiss and throb of the steam-engine. Some of the more intelligent are certain now that the ‘Iron Road’ is coming. Already in the North of England there is a locomotive steam-engine that really goes. Foreseen or not the railway was soon to arrive and transform Stonehouse in a decade from being Eastington's little neighbour with a parallel set-up of textiles and agriculture into the semi-urban community it has been ever since.

The designation ‘Waterman’ came with the Stroudwater Canal around 1800.

There is no record of a resident basket-maker, though osiers were fairly extensively grown in small fields as well as in waste corners and on the river bank until within living memory, and itinerant basket-makers made baskets to order for use of farm and household. Eastington osiers were of smaller growth than those of the Severnside beds, but were valued for their superior toughness. The mills were at one time users of baskets on a big scale, notably to carry the bobbins along field path, gravelled and wide enough for two women with the basket between them, from Churchend to the looms of Bond's and Meadow mills. These baskets do not appear to have been made in the parish.

In 1824 George and Rebecca Bowles appear as Master and Mistress of the ‘Charity School’. A full-time job, after sixty years of part time teachers, often more correctly described as weavers, spinsters, cordwainers, carpenters or tailors, that being their main occupation. The ‘Thomas Miles, Schoolmaster’ who was overseer in 1778 must have kept a private school.

‘John Trotman, Dealer in Teasils,’ in the year 1813, calls for some comment. The ‘Dealer’ would have been an independent merchant who bought teazles from the growers and sold them (after sorting and grading) for dressing broadcloth, to the mills all the way up the valley. Nowadays we find the teazle with its beautiful thistle-like heads growing wild in our hedgerows and if on examination we find the bristles are hooked we may guess that this is the ‘Fuller's Teazle’ and a survival from the days of cultivation. Any time from 1800 to 1880 some acres on one farm or another carried this profitable crop.

Teazles had to be grown on old turf dug with the spade —not ploughed. They were said to impoverish the soil and many years must elapse between crops. From digging the ground to cutting the crop was almost two years. A special knife, small and hooked, was used for cutting. The large central heads (‘Kings’) and the secondary heads (‘Queens’) were each cut and bundled separately, but the smaller heads were cut in bulk and sorted later. The crop was stored in a dry, well-ventilated shed where sorting and grading followed drying. Old men recently taken from us were employed in their youth as sorters and packers by the dealer, or by the factories to split the heads in halves lengthwise and wire them to the frames. Talk with these men revealed such vivid memories of sore and bleeding hands as seemed to have blotted out technical details of craftsmanship.

‘Carrier’ and ‘Toll-gatherer’ will slip into their place when we deal with the network of roads linking us to our neighbours and to urban centres of all sizes, near and far, and maintained by turnpike tolls.

The question that framed itself on opening the first volumes of these venerable registers was that of the vision of Ezekiel. ‘Can these dry bones live?’ Let the chapter end then in the hope that through its pages dead centuries of a past Eastington may rise and live again in the imagination of the reader.

CHAPTER 8 - WEDDING BELLS AND WORKHOUSE

“FOR my days work a-marrying of Sarah Allin 1 /6.” So writes one of our churchwardens in the year 1725.

Happy, happy scene ! A bright morning in Easter week with Sunday's flowers - daffodil, primrose and wallflower - still fresh on pulpit, reading-desk, and window ledge; each pillar a spiral of beauty. All the relatives, all the well-wishers, all the neighbours, all the curious, all the gossips; and in the foreground our genial churchwarden with a buttonhole of white violets. A little later in the year it might have been one of those flowers called ‘tulip’ recently imported from Holland and very fashionable.

> *“Let the wenches dawdle in such dress*
> *They are used to wear, and let the boys*
> *Bring flowers in last month's newspapers . . “*

A pity to spoil the picture, but why did our churchwarden have to be paid for his day's work ?
“*Let the wenches dawdle . .*” Now we think of it, the poet is writing about a funeral, not a wedding, but the lines are apt. Sarah Allin's was no love match, but a forced marriage - a marriage arranged for her by churchwardens and overseers.

Was Sarah a prostitute - a harlot as they were then called? We think not, at least not professionally. There is some evidence that her life was a little irregular, which was very wrong of her, but that was not the reason for enforced matrimony. Her crime was being a widow with two young children (one of them sick) chargeable to the parish. Shocking indeed to an age where arranged marriages (by parents or guardians) are rare and forced marriages unknown, but there was nothing in Sarah Allin's nuptials to shock an age in which few marriageable women had more than a narrow range of choice.

At first glance Shakespeare appears to campaign vigorously for the woman's right to marry a man of her choice, but his heroines were usually so discreet as to fall for men of their own class and circle who were ultimately acceptable to the family. Moreover they were often conveniently without either parents or effective guardians. He stages too, the heroine facing the pre-reformation alternatives of a convent or an arranged marriage, not incorrectly described under those circumstances, as forced. In any case, a contemporary audience that wept for Juliet and sympathised with Rosalind might well have drawn the moral that trouble follows any relaxation of strict supervision, or any departure of a daughter from the house of her parents before Holy Church has blessed her union with a carefully selected husband. An old maid might be pitied if she had never had an offer, otherwise she was treated with contempt as a creature of unnatural instincts, and condemned hereafter ‘to lead apes in hell’. Our churchwarden was not inhuman by the standards of his own age.

In the early centuries of Poor Law the aim of its officers was to relieve poverty, not by what was called ‘charity’ but by enabling the pauper in some way to become self-supporting, and the point of view has never been entirely abandoned. Older people remember the Hunger Marchers before the first world war whose banners bore the slogan “It's work we want. Curse your charity !” To-day we have come to despair of any permanent solution of the problem of destitution along the lines of self-help, or at best we hope faintly, but in 1725, indeed any time before the Industrial Revolution put the means of production out of reach, in so many cases, of the willing worker, the aim was entirely reasonable and by no means unsuccessful from the ratepayers' angle. Forced marriages are one example of the policy in action. We shall meet with others. Sarah's new husband, John Chew, was a widower with children chargeable to a parish as hers were, and of two dependent units the marriage made one self-supporting family. We shall return to Sarah Allin. Meanwhile to get the Poor Law and its Eastington officers in historical perspective.

In the Middle Ages the relief of the sick, the aged and the destitute was the work of the Church and of private charity, in so far as they were not provided for by the ‘Manor’ which, in its best days, supported all its members. Indeed the destitution of those who rebelled against its discipline - who refused to fit in to the structure - was a powerful binding force.

The Lord of the Manor, the steward, the reeve, the hayward, the woodward, the shepherd, the neatherd (cattleman), the swineherd, the ploughman, the smith, the mason, the carpenter, the potter, the saddler, the basket-maker and the rest, with their assistants and learners, together made up a complete unit of production and consumption. Each did his job and each took his share of food, clothes and shelter. Admittedly the shares were grotesquely unequal, but the members were all responsible to and for all.

The unattached units (‘beggars’ for short) who wandered from hundred to hundred, who were ‘whipped from tithing to tithing and stock-punished and imprisoned’ were for the most part criminals on the run, discharged soldiers, or discarded serving-men, unemployed or unemployable. ‘Multiform ragged louzels’ unable to obtain or unwilling to accept a footing in this close corporation, who accordingly paid the penalty of starvation and persecution. Occasionally they formed gangs, the terror of isolated farms and small townships. More often they crept about in twos or threes showing their wounds and deformities, real or pretended, blessing the hand that gave alms and cursing the dogs guarding the doors of the uncharitable.

From the abbey door even these were not turned away empty, though in return they were expected, like the tramps in nineteenth century workhouses, to perform some task, to hew wood or draw water, to mend the roads, work in the field or garden, or labour for the mason and carpenter building or repairing the fabric. After Henry VIII quarrelled with the Pope and the monastries were dissolved, this good work came to an end. In any case the manorial system was breaking up. From generation to generation more and more serfs were becoming free men, and all too often this meant freedom to beg, steal, starve and hang.

By the reign of Queen Elizabeth I the long called-for legislation took shape. ‘Poor Law’ came into being, and from then onwards the ‘Parish’ took the responsibility that had been shared between manor and monastry. It was a typical English compromise, a re-arranging of the old components in a new administrative unit. The church was represented by the parson who now became the civil as well as the spiritual head of the parish. Under him the churchwardens bore the chief responsibility which in the matter of poor law they delegated to overseers. The whole set-up was under the supervision of the local Justices of the Peace who appointed officers from those approved by the vestry and who ‘allowed’ the rate, whereby its collection became legal. Their responsibility was not to the parish but (through the hundred) to the King or Queen, in other words to the central government.

This was roughly the position after earlier piecemeal legislation had been consolidated under the Poor Law Act of 1601, and we may be sure the working of the act was discussed as a desperate measure or an as interesting experiment by some of the theatre audience that in 1605 first heard that outburst of King Lear, beginning:

" Poor naked wretches whereso'er you are
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides
Your looped and windowed raggedness defend you
From seasons such as these."

This poor-law legislation was indeed revolutionary, yet private charity was still and would be for centuries mainly responsible for founding hospitals, and asylums, and indeed for feeding the destitute. Voluntary alleviation of sickness and want was indeed supplemented by the state more and more from this time forward, but the most spectacular measure in our first comprehensive poor law sprang from a deep-rooted belief inherited from the Middle Ages that poverty could be repressed by punishment - from the assumption that ‘The poor in the lump is bad’ and the able-bodied vagrant is work-shy. ‘Houses of Correction’ were built - half prison, half workhouse - where ‘Corrective Training’ as we now call it, was attempted, and a measure of success over a period of some two hundred years suggests that Elizabethan poor law legislation was not entirely ill-conceived.

After all, in those days when Eastington and Stonehouse between them could muster up scarcely five hundred souls instead of to-day's five and a half thousand, much of many people's labour was directed not to acquiring money to spend on necessities, but on the production of the necessities direct. Men and women grew much of their own food, spun and wove and made their own clothes, ground their own corn (some of their querns still survive) and baked their own bread. Most employment carried with it some provision of food, clothes, and shelter. Waste land was abundant and though it might be a capital offence at law to take the squire's deer from the park or his carp from the fish-pond, much wild life was to be had for the snaring in waste and marsh. There was firewood to be had for the gathering and rushes for the cutting. Sometimes there was wood for building, for furniture, for tools and implements, for ploughs, sledges, carts and waggons, and the rushes served for bed and carpet as well as thatch. Rights of common varied a good deal, but everywhere they did much to make the majority of the poor self-supporting, and the aim of our poor law pioneers was to reform the idle and criminal, who were regarded for the most part as identical, and to support the deserving poor only after all attempts to make them self-supporting had failed. Keeping this steadfastly in mind we turn to the surviving volumes of our overseers accounts.

Beginning in the closing years of George I they cover the period from 1724 to 1828 with some few pages missing. The earlier accounts are lost, the later ones were handed over, we suppose, to the Wheatenhurst Union at its formation in 1835, and are, we presume, lost also. An item taken here and there will illustrate the range of the overseers' responsibilities.

(1726) “*Payd The Constable his years Disbursement £1. 13. 6."*
(1727)”
“*Pd for mending the pound £4. 8. 9."*
(1734) “*Pd Bredg Money 13/9.*"
(A county rate this, for maintainenance of bridges).
(1734) “*Gave to twelve men abused by the turks 2/-*”
(1735) “*To Jno. Pegler Towards the Singing Seat In the Church £1. 9. 6."*

These reveal a certain amount of overlapping with other departments. Payments to the constable and to victims of the Turks that belong properly to these accounts sometimes appear in the churchwardens' books, as well as repairs to the pound, and some payment for bridges which we should expect to find only in the surveyors' accounts, and one would not have expected anyone but the churchwardens to be responsible for ‘the Singing Seat’ which was the choir-stall or bench. The day's work ‘a-marrying of Sarah Allin’ with which the chapter opens, should have been charged to the overseers and not the churchwardens.

Possibly our village elders put the spirit above the letter. After all it was ratepayers' money from whichever account it was drawn and we may be tempted to envy an age not quite strangled by red tape. Envy quickly dies however, when we uncover the very real difficulties met in the work for which overseers were created and for which they were primarily responsible —the work of handling the problem of poverty. As yet, however (in 1724), the situation was well in hand though much ingenuity had to be used to keep it so, as further quotations will show.

(1724) *“Pd Stock Money £1. 11. 9.”*
(1725) “Pd ye stock in trade £2. 18. 5.”
(1726) *“Paid The Constable Stock Money £1. 17. 9.”*

‘Stock Money’ was to buy stock, that is to say materials - wool, flax, leather, osiers, timber - to be given or loaned to indigent Artisans for the carrying-on of their trade. Sometimes the tools as well as the materials were supplied. Not direct support, but the provision of the means of production. Doubtless this gave more than subsistence to the recipients, though it required the passage of almost two centuries and the evolution of a more complex society to re-discover and name ‘occupational therapy’.

From time to time maintenance was given to sick or aged householders, yet lest they should have or appear to have something for nothing, it took the form of a payment for house room they must give to some other chargeable person or persons. So Sarah Allin's boy, aged three or four, was billeted for a few weeks, presumably during his mother's confinement.

(1725) *“Pd Charles Fenell for keeping Allin's child 1/6.”*

But Charles Fenell and the child are both in ill-health and the child is moved elsewhere to be nursed.

“Pd to bring the Child away 8d.”
“And for the loss of my time 1/-”
“Pd for keeping Sarah Allin's son from October ye 3rd till November ye 2nd and Curing his leg 12/-.”

Twelve shillings for a month was a large sum compared with the standard rate which appears to have been 1/- per week. The 8d. was for transport, and the 1/- would pay a day's loss of time.

We believe this item covers skilled treatment at some distant hospital, perhaps Gloucester or Berkeley. Meanwhile, Sarah and her infant child were supported pending marriage so soon as the overseers could find a suitable partner.
“Pd widdow Allin 24 weeks at 1/- a week £1. 4. 0.”
After almost six months the partner is found and the matter proceeds normally.
“Pd for ye Lisance and the Marriage £1. 9. 6”
Part of this sum would be a bribe to the ‘happy man’ or more correctly and sympathetically, an attempt to guarantee success by giving the union a good send-off.

Best of all, John Chew, the bridegroom, lived in Leonard Stanley and henceforward Sarah Allin and her children would be the responsibility of that parish should they ever again become chargeable. Meanwhile Charles Fenell was being supported in his sickness.

“Payd Charles Fenell 51 weeks pay at 1/- per week £2. 11. 0."

He dies leaving a widow, and the sequel is plain to read in consecutive entries in the year 1727.

“Pd for a Coffin and Charles Fenell's Funerall 14/- "
“Pd on bering Sara Fenell to make Oath 19/7 . "
“Pd. Jn. Sandford on the same Acct. 10/6 . "
“Pd expenses in marrying of them £3. 6. 0."
“Pd Ed. Witchell to bring her away 2/6."
“Pd for takeing Butt at Cheltenham 17/9 . "
“Pd the Constable there 6/6."

It seems that Sara is pregnant and, being examined on oath before Justice Sandford, names Butt as the father and so the marriage is arranged. Another master-stroke. The happy pair will have ‘a settlement’ at Cheltenham and not at Eastington. This marriage cost more than Sarah Allin's, partly because Cheltenham was a long way off in 1727 (eleven years before the first stage coach linked it with Gloucester, Oxford and London); partly because Butt had first to be rounded up; and partly because the match called for more pressure and more diplomacy. After all, they could not be compelled to marry. The woman could indeed be given the alternative of starvation, but it had to be made worth the man's while unless he too had ‘poor relief’ which could be stopped. Affiliation orders meant nothing to the indigent for although a man could legally be charged with the support of his bastard child, proceedings were only taken if he or his family had means, as a document in the possession of the Parish Council testifies.

Perhaps we dwell too long on these ‘old, forgotten far off things’ but, again, perhaps ‘it is good for us to be here’; to re-live in imagination the life of an earlier Eastington and to realise that the names in these pages are not the invention of a novelist, but those of mortal men and women who trudged along our roads when they were little more than lanes, green or muddy, who' toiled at the forge, the loom, the spinning-wheel, the carpenter's bench or in the fields that lie around us, and who were called on Sundays to the same church by the same bell that called us, until so recently discarded and melted down at Birmingham to serve some more sinister purpose.

Each parish was responsible for its own poor, as we have seen, and one result was that far too much of the energies and resources of each was dissipated in the effort to place responsibility elsewhere, and for three centuries no parish escaped the constant expense of law-suits and of legal advice leading up to them. Our vestry minutes and overseers' accounts are alike filled with the names of those successfully transferred to Stonehouse, Nympsfield, Stroud, Fretherne, Gloucester, Bisley, Frampton, Woodchester, Westbury, Painswick and elsewhere. Mostly the contention was with neighbouring parishes, but was not confined to them. Romsey in Hampshire, Harborne in Warwickshire, and Ombersley in Worcestershire, were among those with whom we had legal contention. Our churchwardens and overseers who often earned their own living by ‘hard work’ were alive to the wastefulness of all this and were at times of opinion that the legal profession earned its money too easily. Between the leaves of a vestry minute book is a letter from Bloxsome and Son of Dursley, dated 1834, recalling their success in resisting the claim of the parish of Romsey, pointing out that settlement of their account was long overdue, and ending with the philosophic reflection that ‘short reckonings make long friends’. Even after the liability had been decided either by agreement or by a court order there was still work for the constable and expense to the parish carrying out the removal.

The tradition of the stony hearts and the tight fists of overseers dates from the early part of the nineteenth century when social and industrial conditions had brought the whole poor law structure to the verge of collapse and when honest and humane overseers abandoned a hopeless task and were replaced by selfish and cunning characters with fewer scruples.

So long, however, as the situation remained under control our overseers were not ungenerous by the standards of the age. They tried to do their ‘arranged’ weddings in decent style; and how their hearts warmed to a funeral !

(1735) *“payd for Coues Bering. Bread and Chees 2/2.*
For a Cofing 4/6. Alle 3/-, flaning 1/1½ —8/7½”
“Payd for a Cofing for Nath. Malerd and for Bread and Chees and Alle and flaning 8/-.
For Bread and Chees for ye wakers 2/-.”

Not bad shows. So good, indeed, that solvent citizens must do better and thus, in due course, pauper burial with bread and cheese makes " burial with ham " a corner-stone of Victorian respectability. Where direct relief had to be given it was for the most part in kind. Clothing was provided.
(1724) "*”Pd for a Brien to Wasceites 14/2½.”*
(If these were waistcoats as we understand them the price seems excessive. Were they a surgical waistcoat?).
(1725) *“Pd for a apron and necloth 2/-.”*
“Pd for doulas to make swaths and a shirt 1/6.”

Sometimes repairs to property were carried out.
(1725) "*Glazing Ja. King's Windo 12/-, boards etc. 3/6 .*"
"*Leading ye Watter out of ye house lod.*"

And sometimes repairs to furniture.
(1725) "*Pd Hen. Sanders mending a bed etc. 2/6*"

Sometimes apprenticeship was paid for as it was also from time to time in the churchwardens' accounts.
(1725) "*Pd for ye Indenture and spent at her binding 6/10 .*"

Fuel was sometimes provided.
(1724) "*for 8 hors lod of cole for ye wid Miles 13/4 .*"
"*for 4 hors lod of cole for ye wid Watharen 6/8.*"
"*for 3 hors lod of cole for ye wid Burnet 5/0.*"
Widows were singled out for such help perhaps because they had no man to hew wood for them.

As yet (around 1730) cash allowances were a small percentage of the whole cost and it will be enough to quote two, though the first is not relief in cash at all, but payment to a second party for services rendered.
(1733) "*To the Cewer of John Lewis leg to Nathll perkins by a Lowens 7/6*"
"*To Thos Craft for Bering his Child by a Lowens 5/-*"
Possibly a grant (an allowance) towards burial and not the whole cost. The Crafts were not a prosperous family. The only poor person mentioned by name in the first hundred years of churchwardens' accounts was a Thomas Craft who in 1679 was given 6d. "*being in distresse*". Father or perhaps grandfather ?

In the first half of the eighteenth century in an Eastington with a population of six hundred scattered in a dozen little hamlets, infectious disease, though much less prevalent than in great cities, as we saw in the foregoing chapter, was still a factor to be reckoned with.
A somewhat cryptic item occurs in 1733.
“Gave Feildinge pretended small-pox 4/-.” (Suspected?).

A more straightforward entry in 1736 reads:
“Pd the Nurs in ye Small pox 6 Weeks at 7/6 £2. 5. 0."

We suspect small-pox too in another item in the same year.
“Sickness 9\- And a Nurs 8\- - 17/0."

And yet again in the wholesome old-fashioned sanitary operation called " bug blinding " in the writer's youth.
“pd William Bird for White liming Millard's House 2/6."
This is the same Malerd (as spelt by next year's overseer) whose ‘wakers’ were regaled with ‘bread and chees’ and William Bird is the churchwarden who paid for so many ‘varmints’ in 1740. A builder and decorator by trade perhaps.

There was other sickness in 1736.
“pd Doctr Cork for a plaister for Blanch 6d.”
“For Physick and Bleeding Danl Wilkins 1/6d.”
This Daniel Wilkins was, no doubt, a descendant of his namesake who washed out ‘the late king's arms’. Almost certainly Dr. Cork's mistakes had frequently to be covered up (in Eastington phrase)’ with a pick and shovel’ but what could one expect at that rate of pay. The nurses were equally badly paid, though we must bear in mind that in those days, more than a hundred years before Florence Nightingale, they were quite unqualified.
Often a relative undertook the job, e.g.,
“Payd Bety Brayn's Mother for tending the Family 7/-.”

At best the nurse would have been an intelligent ‘Home Help’.

Though complicated by sickness, the problem of poverty, reasonably well in hand in 1724, as it had been since 1601, remained under control for another fifty years. After that deterioration set in. Today we know why. We know too, how our ancestors strove desperately to make Poor Law do its job for a hundred years after it had broken down past any repair on the old lines. One reason for the breakdown was the increase of population with the demands it made on production, and this must have made itself felt even if social and industrial habits had remained constant instead of changing, as they did, with a violence greater than in any period in the previous history of the world.

The most far-reaching changes were due to that grim offspring of science and the machine, the Industrial Revolution, to which we must constantly refer; but it was preceded and accompanied by an Agricultural Revolution equally important but less spectacular, being spread over several centuries. A revolution that was creating acute problems of local government in Eastington as elsewhere, when sources of power other than human, animal, wind and water, existed only in the dreams of philosophers and poets. The change over from the common field system of manorial times with its rigid rules, to individual ownership, initiative and responsiblity meant enclosure alike of common ploughland, common pasture and waste; and the new set-up, though inevitable and ultimately beneficent, blighted our countryside with a widespread poverty against which churchwardens and overseers fought a rearguard action - a long drawn-out losing fight - from beginning to end of their dynasty as local government officers.

From Tudor times onwards it was plain to the educated that a growing population could not be fed by a static agriculture. The experiments of the great agricultural pioneers Thomas Tusser, Jethro Tull, Robert Bakewell and so many others, could only be carried out on farms under their own personal control. As we deduced from the study of our tithe map, a considerable area of Eastington land was free from ‘common-field’ control from a very early date. Shakespeare too, shows us Justice Shallow at his country house (plainly with a home-farm) in Gloucestershire boasting of his new orchard, ordering the headland to be sown with red wheat, giving instructions for the smith's bill to be ‘cast and paid’ and for some of William's wages to be stopped for losing a sack at the fair. Justice Shallow was farming his own land, and Falstaff was envious of his ‘land and beefs’ while the translators of the ‘Authorised version’ were penning the words - “*Seest thou a man diligent in his own business? He shall stand before kings*” that are typical of the new outlook. Everywhere, and not only in agriculture, the individual was replacing the corporation as the unit of productive enterprise.

Wholesale enclosure however, came but slowly, attaining a maximum in the eighteenth century and slowing down as it neared completion in the nineteenth. Enclosure awards were on balance a good thing. They might have been more intelligently framed and more humanely administered. Wisdom and humanity could have softened the blow, but they could never have won for any enclosure the approval of the landless and unlettered many who have left us in no doubt as to their views on the subject.

> *“We prosecute the man or woman*
> *Who steals the goose from off the common;*
> *But leave the greater felon loose*
> *Who steals the common from the goose”*

A man might be very poor yet never entirely destitute so long as he could run down a leveret, snare a rabbit, a woodcock, a landrail, a thrush, or a lark; and take plover's and moorhen's eggs, and spear eels, and carry home sticks and rushes; and mix clay and cowdung to plug a chink of the house wall of wattle and daub which Shakespeare had in mind when Hamlet says—

“Imperious Caesar dead and turned to clay, Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.”

If, in addition, his geese grazed the open spaces and his hens scratched beneath the brambles without let or hindrance, he was beginning to rise in the social scale. Enclosure acts altered all that. The new owners fenced and guarded their territory, and to deter trespassers strewed them with spring-guns and with man-traps of the same design that a more humane age regards as too cruel for rats and rabbits.

As a result every parish had its quota of landless and uprooted men and women. No longer able to use any unhired time in supplying their own wants they must now sell all their labour or starve. Even those whose main income was derived from cratfsmanship - weavers, smiths, shoemakers, carpenters, potters, basket-makers and the rest - were accustomed to use their rights of common and usually had a share, if only a small one, in the cultivated field. They must now work harder at their trades and sell more produce if they are to remain solvent. In periods of trade depression they could no longer turn their attention to producing food for their own mouths. The land, traditionally theirs, was ring-fenced against them and they must often have turned instead to the overseers for the relief that brought with it the stigma of pauperism.

Around 1775 distress from enclosure had reached its height and poor-law machinery was breaking down. Yet there is no reason to suppose it could not have been re-adjusted to deal with enclosure problems had not the Industrial Revolution arrived to add to them. In Eastington the spinners and weavers concern us most, because they were the majority of the working population. The application first of water-power and afterwards of steam to the production of cloth was the direst catastrophe except to the few who were able to obtain employment as key men. Unable to compete with mass production, the broadcloth from their cottage workshops was left on their hands, their silenced looms gathered dust and wood-worm, while they themselves stood cap in hand at The gates of Millend, Churchend, Meadow, Bond's or Beard's mill offering their labour at starvation rates which would have to be supplemented by the overseers whenever the wage-earner had dependents.

With this grim prospect still in the unknown future, we have seen our overseers dispensing poor relief with a not ungenerous hand so that Sarah Allin and the widow Fenell could live somewhat irregular lives without becoming noticeably worse fed or clothed, and indeed historians tell us that in the country generally about that date, illegitimate children were an asset to the mother because of the generosity of parish support. They tell us moreover, that in 1750 there were so many unmarried mothers that the ‘Houses of Correction’ would not hold them.

On the receipts side our overseers' accounts give us a wealth of information, but its list of names and assessments provide statistics rather than the human stories that start from item after item of the expenditure. Personally they are little more than a reliable guide to the position of the individual ratepayer in the social scale, whereas taken as a whole they give realism to the historical background against which local authorities waged for so long their unequal war against the new poverty of the factory age.

In 1724 Eastington ratepayers numbered 78 as against 400 in 1824. (In 1953 there are 390). They had multiplied twice as fast as the population. The privilege of paying rates was coming down the social and economic scale. Assessments in 1724 ranged from £1.13 down to 2d. In making comparison with to-day's assessments and demands we must remember that the rate was differently calculated. Instead of 18/- or 19/- in the pound we read ‘8 of this rate’ so that the occupier of the shack or parcel of allotment ground assessed at 2d. would pay ¼d .

The following year there was a drop to ‘6 of this rate’ and at this figure and on the 1724 assessments the ‘poor rate’ stood for nearly twenty years, proof enough of stability so far. The decades following tell another tale. In 1745 it was again ‘8 of this rate ‘; in 1755, ten; in 1760, sixteen; and in 1770, twenty. In 1778 there was a re-assessment on a new basis at a level, approximately four times the old. Called a ‘Twelve-penny rate’ the first annual demand was for 5 of the new units. The individual ratepayer was now paying three and a third times as much as in 1735. There were still but 71 ratepayers.

It appears that the rate required was calculated by the overseer, agreed by the churchwardens, passed by the vestry and then approved by two justices in writing as follows:

(1736) “*We his Majesty's Justices of Ye Peace (one of the Quorum) do allow this Acct. Tho. Savage, S. Harris.*”

If irregularities were later discovered the justices must share the blame, but a few years after the foregoing the phrase was varied to shift the onus, and reads "*We allow this account if true*." Plainly they are taking no chances.

In the eighteenth century magistracy had sunk to a low ebb. Pride of office and sense of responsibility were weakened almost to extinction and did not revive until half way through the nineteenth century. The additional duties put upon the local justices during the Commonwealth -some of them running counter to conscientious scruples - had confirmed individuals among them in the practice, begun during the Civil War, of allowing any distasteful duty to lapse, and appointments to the Commission of the Peace ceased to be sought by the best type of citizen. In 1666 Samuel Pepys has much ado to persuade his cousin to accept the office, his persuasions being met by many excuses. We shall see later how Justices throughout the country took the easy path that led downhill. Meanwhile in Eastington in 1778, difficulties were piling up. Lengthening poor lists, rising rates, houses of correction full, homeless paupers billeted in the houses of other paupers. Since 1735 the annual amount collected and spent by the overseers had risen from £84 to £276. Some drastic remedy seemed called for and accordingly a meeting of the vestry decided to build a 'Workhouse'. The act permitting such action either by a single parish or a group had been passed in 1723, but had been little used. There was no workhouse in the immediate locality.

However, we would be pioneers. Once more Eastington should have a niche, if only a small one this time, in the national history. Other parishes had their stocks, their whipping-posts, their ducking stools and their lock-ups. The reason we had none of these is a little obscure. We know that Stonehouse, being in the same position, had once applied to Quarter Sessions for permission to set up stocks only to be refused. Leonard Stanley had stocks and so had Standish, but they were ancient market centres and were besides under the control of important religious houses. No longer would we be envious of them. Let them cope with poverty by ‘out relief’ if they could. Let them go on baling out the sinking ship with a tea-spoon. We for our part would henceforth use the largest of buckets. We would tackle the problem in a comprehensive way, we would revive the aim of the first Poor Law by building a house, half hospital, half factory, where the helpless could be nursed and the indigent might work according to their ability and be maintained according to their need. We know now that the policy failed everywhere, not only in Eastington, so that the name ‘Workhouse’ still stinks in the modern nostril. But was the aim really ignoble, and the founders brutes? On the contrary, the more we study our records and the better we get to know the individual actors the more certain it becomes that they were the decent kindly men we have styled them.

The vestry resolution of 1778 was not implemented for another five years, due probably to some imperfection in the Act of 1723, because in 1783 ‘Gilbert's Act’ confirmed the earlier legislation with safeguards, including the appointment of ‘Guardians’, and in that year our vestry borrowed £400 to build and furnish a workhouse. It must have taken much time and thought to decide, as the vestry did, exactly what to do with the surplus. Time and thought were wasted; there was a deficit. In 1784 a further £100 was borrowed and still another £100 in 1785. The whole £600 was advanced by the Rector, the Rev. William Davies, who was the driving force behind the project and of whose humanity there is no possible doubt. Repayment was irregular and leisurely. In 1789 a special vestry was called to consider the paying off £430 outstanding and it was agreed to pay £30 per annum. Such payments are recorded for a time, but fall far short of the total. It is doubtful if the debt was ever settled in full, and he charged no interest. William Davies married a sister of Dr. Jenner (vaccination Jenner) of Berkeley. Yet it was not until 1835, thirty-seven years after vaccination was officially accepted by the medical profession, that the vestry paid for *“a general Vaccination for the Cowpox for the poor of the Parish”*. Perhaps we were too near the prophet's own country. William Davies had then been dead eighteen years. His descendants have since been proud to bear the name ‘Jenner-Davies’.

However, the ‘house’ was built to stand, as it does to-day, overlooking a productive garden sloping southward down to Oldbury Brook, soon after cut through by the Stroudwater Canal. The walls are Frampton brick, as one would expect at that date. Some neighbouring parishes were experimenting along the same lines, but their populations and rate totals alike being less their enterprise for the most part ended with the acquisition and adaptation of one or two cottages.

In 1785 a three year contract to ‘farm’ the poor was made with John Minett, of which the original manuscript is in the possession of the Parish Council. He was to feed, clothe and house his charges according to standards laid down. He must provide *“a Dinner of good and wholesome Butcher's Meat well-dressed at least three Times in ever week . . . and Cheese at all Times when they have no meat, and the Bread . . . to be made of Wheaten Flour only, and the drink to be made of good Barley Malt after the Rate of two Bushels at least to every Hundred Gallons.”*. Much, no doubt, depended on the integrity of the ‘farmer’ but it does appear that the tradition of ‘black bread’ (made of a variable mixure of damaged wheat, barley, oats, rye, peas and beans) if not entirely fictitious, survives from a much earlier period, and was applicable rather to the labouring class in their own homes. Few of the poor outside the workhouse walls had butcher's meat three times a week in 1785. In the event of default there was provision for complaint to the Justices of the Hundred of Whitstone (the Petty Sessional Division of Whitminster). We are disappointed, though hardly surprised, to find that this right did not extend to the poor themselves but only to churchwardens, overseers and other principal inhabitants of the parish; in other words ratepayers.

To carry out his obligations John Minett had the use of the new workhouse and of four cottages in which the overseers had been housing some of the poor before the date of the contract. He had also at his disposal an isolation hospital in the shape of another cottage remote from roads or other dwellings situated between Millend and the Leonard Stanley boundary in ‘Ketchpool Tyning’. This hospital has long since disappeared, but its foundations were re-discovered in the Autumn of 1941 when after more than a century under turf ‘Ketchpool Tyning’ was ploughed and planted with corn.

In payment John Minett was to receive £200 per annum and the proceeds of the work of the able-bodied poor. Some he could hire out to farmers and tradesmen (smiths, carpenters, wheelwrights, etc.) and others to the cloth mills. Some broke stone for the roads. The garden was cultivated and the overseers rented other land on which much of the food of the inmates was produced. In 1829 the overseers took to one acre of potatoes produced by pauper labour under Thos. Tyrell, who farmed not the land but the poor, at a valuation of £8; probably to distribute as out-relief; and in 1835 a select vestry resolved *“that a piece of ground called Graftworm be taken to dig of Mr. Moses Golding at 17/- per acre, and the able bodied paupers be employed to dig it at 2d. per lug”*. ‘Lug’ is still the Eastington word for rod, pole or perch, either linear or square.

In 1827 a total of £19. 5. 8 was paid under ten headings for repairs and ‘harness’ for the looms of James Underwood, Joseph Hill, and J. Ayland, and in 1828 the overseers paid 10/- for repair and carriage from Gloucester of four ‘Pin Blocks’and 8/3 for fifteen ‘Pin Stools’. Later on we discover vestry minutes or ‘memos’ on the margins, proving the looms and their fittings to be the property of the parish and not of the individuals. We do not know if they were used in the ‘house’ or in the men's homes, but the ‘house’ was certainly, in some sort, a pin factory. The technique of pinmaking and the tools in use in Early Victorian days can be studied at the Gloucester Folk Museum in Westgate Street.

Eastington enterprise in building a workhouse deserved to be successful not merely in banishing destitution, but in doing so without inhumanity. The march of events defeated alike the public spirited rector and the perplexed vestry of ratepayers. Firstly the Enclosure Acts, secondly the Industrial Revolution, and with them at a critical juncture a grave lack of vision, courage and confidence on the part of Justices of the Peace.

In 1563 Justices were entrusted with the task of fixing rates of wages in relation to the price of corn. The duty was re-affirmed in 1600 and faithfully performed for the next forty years, being abandoned during the troublous times of the Civil War, though the act was not repealed. In the eighteenth century the alarming growth of poverty led to agitation for a resumption of this protective service.

In 1795 a meeting of Berkshire's Justices at Speenhamland made history, not by a wise decision but by a weak and ignoble evasion. Called to fix a legal wage payable by employers they fixed instead a weekly income. If the wage was equal to the statutory income well and good, if less, the ratepayers should make up the difference.

Justices throughout the land copied an easy and cowardly way out and by the time it was realised that the employer would year by year pay less and less it was too late to go back to the hard way. Besides, economic theory had turned against wage fixing, which did not return until our own century. In Eastington as elsewhere, deterioration was rapid.

The workhouse and the farming of the poor swallowed-up more and more ratepayer's money. By 1820 the annual cost was £456, and this quite apart from out-relief that had been abolished in the first years of the experiment, but which returned, becoming more and more costly, especially after the Speenhamland decision. At this point we ought perhaps, to note that between 1735 and 1820 our population increased from 700 to 1600; the number of ratepayers increased from 78 to 400; the total collected and spent rose from £56 to £664; and fifteen years of overseers' accounts, ending in 1820, occupy a larger book than the fifty years beginning at 1724.

The building of the ‘house’ brought about an immediate, if transient, improvement in the position. Breakdown was as yet in the future and our overseers were still humane. In an agreement with George Knowles who farmed the poor in 1789 there were stipulations as to medical attention, burial rites, conditions of labour and church attendance. A payment of two guineas to the ‘Governor of Gloucester Infirmary’ was also stipulated. The Gloucestershire Royal Infirmary was founded in 1755, but this is the first recorded Eastington payment to it. In 1828 the payment was four guineas and with it a sum of £15. 12 to ‘Glor Assylum”.

In 1818, a woman, Ann Carefield, was appointed overseer. She came of a family of tenant farmers whose menfolk filled various parish offices from churchwarden downwards for a generation or two before and after that date, and did so with ability and integrity, as we feel sure that widow Ann did in spite of ever increasing difficulties.

Under date 1830 we read *"John Clark appointed Assistance Overseer at the sum of 4/- per week"*. With a population that had risen to 1800 the work was getting too extensive and detailed for the unpaid overseers, and with rates so high the assistant overseer would be expected to save more than his salary. It is impossible to say if he did so, but we do get an insight into how he set about the task. Note for example in 1833.
"Relief withdrawn from Widow Gower for renting a house at 5 gs per annum and not taking lodgers".
"Relief withdrawn from Alice Minett if she refuses to be examined by the Justices as to the Father of the child she is pregnant with".
"That application be made to Peter Clutterbuck in Horseley Gaol for arrears of his Bastard money and in default to be proceeded against"

Pressure from overburdened ratepayers is making their appointed officers hard.

As the nineteenth century advanced maintenance of the official poor became so costly that ruin faced the smaller ratepayers, and lists of those excused payment on grounds of poverty made their appearance - another anticipation of modern legislation. Population remained stationary at a figure around 1800 for some thirty years, but unemployment was on the increase.

We are intrigued by an item of 1834. *"Charles Hooper allowed off the next rate for steam-engine at Meadow Mill rated at £30"*. Such a high rate suggests punitive action against the new machinery for causing the unemployment that caused the poverty, as folk believed. The excusal, on the other hand, suggests pressure by the mill-owner who was the employer of the great majority of the workers and a liberal subscriber to charitable organisations.

In parishes without a workhouse the position was often even worse, out-relief being paid not only to the aged, the sick and the workless, but also, as a result of that Speenhamland decision, to many in full employment. Reduction of the smaller ratepayers to the ranks of those they supported made thrift futile, and the last traces of incentive disappeared from the lives of the indigent. The Workhouse Act of 1834 altered all that. Parishes were grouped in 'unions' each having a workhouse. Out-relief was abolished. The destitute must enter a workhouse and work, or starve. Families were broken up. So severe was the new poor law administration that free employment, however hard or ill-paid, was preferred to the 'House' whose regime was harsher than gaol. A cruel remedy, but possibly better than the chaos it replaced. Little by little the worst features were abolished. Out-relief came slowly back, becoming gradually more generous until increasingly humane conditions could, in our own time, pass smoothly into their place in the social services of the 'Welfare State'.

"Drive out humanity with a pitchfork" (to vary the proverb) "she comes creeping back".

In 1834 a Mr. William Franklin was employed to value our workhouse for sale to the Wheatenhurst Union. In 1836 a vestry agreed to the sale. In 1837 a vestry appointed three 'guardians of the poor' to represent the parish on the board set up to deal with poverty in Arlingham, Brookthorpe, Eastington, Frampton, Fretherne, Frocester, Hardwicke, Harescombe, Haresfield, Longney, Moreton Valence, Saul, Standish, and Whitminster, the parishes of the union, and to use the workhouse for that purpose.

The kindly decent treatment the first overseers had tried to give and which our own century has succeeded in giving to its social and industrial casualties was lost sight of in the panic reaction from the Speenhamland expedient and its sequel. The boards of guardians proved tougher than the overseers and guarded the ratepayers more effectively than they guarded the poor, which was what our legislators and their electors intended whatever euphemisms may have been uttered in Parliament or elsewhere. The provisions of the act could be administered by none but misers' hands directed by hearts of flint.

Our overseers accounts end in 1828, but the vestry minutes continue to shed light on a sad and shameful epoch in the history of Poor Law. The administrators were quick-witted. In 1842 we read "*that the Guardians be recommended to advance £5 to enable Eliza Davies aged nine years to accompany her Aunt to America*" One name the less on the lists. Poor waif! In the same year over forty ratepayers were excused payment on grounds of poverty, and the vestry forbade surveyors to have stone broken except by pauper labour. In 1843 two hundred tons of stone was unloaded at Mr. Hooper's wharf (by Meadow Mill) and hauled by farmers to convenient sites for breaking.

The year 1843 was marked elsewhere by insurrection, by tumultuous gathering of the destitute and workless, by the smashing of machines and burning of stack-yards. In Eastington a vestry was called to arrange means of employing the poor labourers but we hear nothing of any breach of the peace. These years, however, have left their mark. In the writer's youth old folk still brooded in bitter reminiscence over 'the hungry forties'.

Since the best type of citizen evaded the office of overseer under the 1834 Act it is not surprising to find within ten years of that date our only record of mis-appropriation by a surveyor of poor law funds. In April 1844, Messrs. Bloxsome and Jackson were instructed to recover £56. 17. 7 from S. Silvey who had been one of the overseers in the previous year. Whether he had squandered it on drink, women or gambling we shall probably never know.

Nor if he went to gaol. His successor was Elizabeth Rugg of whom we know nothing except that she was our second and last woman overseer.

We have followed the relief of destitution on its downward path to a state of affairs of which the nation has ever since been ashamed, and we take our leave of them amid scenes that Charles Dickens has immortalised in the story of Oliver Twist, Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Corney. As in life, so in death. Bread, and cheese and ale ‘for the wakers’ has gone for ever.

> *“Rattle his bones over the stones ;*
> *He's only a pauper that nobody owns.”*

A pity indeed that in our own age of compassion and humanity Poor Law should be remembered not for the good work performed over the first two hundred years, but for the cruelties and bestialities that marked its period of breakdown, compared with which the forced marriage of Sarah Allin was benevolence itself.

CHAPTER 9 - THE ROLLING ENGLISH ROAD

" These high wild hills and rough uneven ways
Draw out our miles and make them wearisome”

So Shakespeare makes the Duke of Northumberland speak in his play ‘Richard II’. The scene is one of the roads leading down from the Cotswolds near Dursley and along which the troop of horsemen is making its way to Berkeley. The dramatist knew this part of the country well and had relatives living thereabouts. He would have found our Eastington roads less steep, Millend and Springhill giving the only serious gradients, and much less stony. Indeed the greatest danger would have been that of getting stuck in the mire except in the height of Summer and in severe frost, at which times the roughness would have been formidable.

More than four hundred years after the date of the event depicted, and two hundred years after Shakespeare's death, one of our Surveyors, John Taylor, measured the roads of Eastington and set them down as ‘Turnpike Road’ miles and ‘Bye Roads ‘ miles. This survey was in 1815 (year of the battle of Waterloo) and referred to metalled roads only. It did not include the unpaved green lanes. The best of them were rough and totally unfit for to-day's traffic, but regarded as adequate to the demands of their day. Up-to-date measurement would show but a trifling increase in length.

We take our roads so much for granted that only by an effort can we picture an Eastington without them, as it was before written history began. In the stone age, archaeologists tell us, only the tops of the hills and hillocks were cleared and cultivated, the lower ground being thicket and swamp. Travel was, however, organised intelligently in relation to the stage of development of the scanty population. Books have been written about ‘the old straight track’ by which movement on foot took place from one prominent landmark to another through a waste of scrub made up of hawthorn, blackthorn, bramble, briar, willow, elderberry and many another shrub interspersed with oak, ash, elm, beech and other timber trees. Probably no attempt was made to define the track itself except by posts or cairns at the selected landmarks on which the traveller kept his eye as the early ‘steeplechases’ of another age did on church towers. The traveller clad in his skins and armed with his stone axe could rest fairly safely on the uplands, but through the afforested valleys he took the shortest route and did not linger. The wolves saw to that. Local roads there were none, only a maze of tracks around tribal dwellings.

A track or tracks may have crossed our parish between the same high points at Claypits, Alkerton, Cress Green, Westend, and Nupend, that have more recently been used by the makers of Ordnance Survey Maps, on which they are marked with a triangle - but this could only have been after the Stroud Valley took its present form. In very early pre-history, as noted in Chapter I, an arm of the sea, half lagoon, half lake, stretched up the valley of the Frome as far as Stroud. At Cainscross its width was from the main road across Dudbridge to the base of Selsley Hill; at Stonehouse its width was the length of the railway embankment from the station to where the cutting popularly called ‘The Gullet’ begins; in the centre of Eastington it filled the dip between the tops of Springhill and the Lodge Pitch; and on our lower boundary it reached from Claypits to Whitminster Pitch.

This sheltered waterway would have been navigated by natives in coracles, which were boats to carry a single person and propelled by a paddle. They were very light, made of skins on a wicker frame and carried overland by a strap over the shoulder. Coracles are, or were until recently, still used on the middle reaches of the River Severn. A specimen is in the Gloucester Folk Museum. The foreshores of this estuary formed natural highways parallel to the waterway and no other thoroughfares were needed for passage up and down the valley. Travel by land or water was a matter of individual physique, as it is unlikely that animals were used for transport at so early a date.

The first Gloucestershire road-makers in the modern sense were the Romans who nearly two thousand years ago covered most of Britain with paved military roads, on which men, horses bearing riders or drawing chariots, elephants, and ox-drawn baggage-waggons moved in straight lines from one fortified town to another. The main Gloucester-Bristol road was probably Roman, but not military, and no military road came through Eastington. The ‘iron’ road bearing that metal from the Forest of Dean crossed the Severn at Newnham, reached Arlingham Cross by ‘the straight mile’ and arrived at Eastington via Perryway. It entered Eastington Fields where it forked so that one road reached Alkerton Cross aiming at Frocester and Tetbury, while the other followed the Frome much as the present road does to reach Stroud, Chalford and Cirencester. Roman coins have been ploughed up in Eastington Fields. There seems no reason to suppose that Roman non-military roads were any straighter or indeed much better than those of the Middle Ages, except where, as at Arlingham, a causeway had to be constructed.

Frocester has a Roman name and we are not surprised to learn that the remains of a Roman villa were discovered some years ago near St. Peter's Church. More recently a second has been discovered and is in process of excavation in the field immediately South of the Court Farm tithe barn. Eastington too, has the remains of a villa. It stood near the North bank of the Stroudwater Canal in the field immediately below Westfield Bridge. A pocket of Cotswold stone in the bank and bed of the Frome opposite the spot marks the ford over which a private road linked the villa with the ‘iron’ road across Eastington Fields. A shallow gulley shows where it mounted the bank alongside the hedge of the Rudgey Tyning.

The Romans withdrew their legions in A.D. 410 and the civilian population collapsed before the invading hordes of Angles, Saxons. Jutes and (later) Danes, who for the most part robbed, murdered and burned and who at best were sea-faring folk with little use for roads. The great military highways decayed and were overspread with thorn and thicket. When the country re-emerged from the dark ages and roads returned with returning civilization, part of the Roman road network came back into use though little or nothing was done by way of repair.

The last Roman milestone disappeared from our parish in the general clean-up that followed the taking-over of the main roads by the County Council, when it seems that a number of milestones were found to be redundant. Two of these, rectangular in shape and in almost new condition, were used to buttress the ends of a bridge wall at Churchend until the bridge was rebuilt in 1908. For eighteen years their iron plates twenty feet apart gave the distances from Gloucester as nine miles and eleven miles respectively. Bewildering indeed to travellers, but to inhabitants our two-mile bridge was a cherished community joke to set alongside Bisley gates, Cranham docks and Dursley weddings. Because it was showing its age the Roman stone was probably broken-up for road metal.

Truly all progress has a price. The irony is that the best Glouceser-shire roadmakers since the Romans should have allowed this historic relic to perish. It stood against a wall on the Frocester Road close to the King's Head Hotel.

In Manorial times roads were the responsibility of the Manor through which they passed; which in practice meant that some little attempt was made to clear and surface a path or two around the Manor House, the Church and the Monastery, whereas the wide stretches beyond were nobody's business. In mediaeval towns the responsibility fell on the adjoining occupier to keep his length of street. The central government was weak and an attempt to strengthen it was the prime motive behind Norman highway policy.

“Before the Romans came to Rye,
Or out to Severn strode,
The rolling English drunkard made
The rolling English road”

Thus G. K. Chesterton, and the picture is attractive because our roads still look like that, and possibly his point was just this and no more. As a student of history he knew that before the Romans there were no English roads, but only the ‘track’, straight or moderately so, along which the traveller plodded, his coracle on his back for the crossing of waterway barriers and used meanwhile as a knapsack. The track linked one with another, groups of caves, pit dwellings, brushwood encampments, and timber and mud townships, each with its maze of twisted pathways winding from dwelling to dwelling.

For all practical purposes we may regard Roman roads as the only predecessors of our modern highway system that dates from Saxon and Norman times. Norman ideas about good roads had nothing to do with surfacing. The road their statutes enforced was a green track, wide and clear of trees, bushes and other obstructions, so that there could be some deviation when tracks got foundrous, so that the honest traveller should not be ambushed by robbers, and so that, as a result of improved communications, ‘the King's writ’ should run in every part of his dominions.

Examination of our Eastington roads with the help of an old map shows how much wider than to-day they were only two hundred years ago, and how strip after strip of roadside waste has been enclosed with or without the building of a dwelling on it. This encroachment mostly took place between 1790 and 1830 when the value of land was increasing step by step with our fast-rising population, and when - the road being now free from highwaymen - a narrow metalled strip of the original highway met all traffic requirements.

To bring unused land under cultivation as garden or field was definitely a gain to the community, besides limiting the camping of gypsies, whose presence has always been resented by settled populations. Accordingly the Lord of the Manor exercised the only power and privilege remaining to him and made encroachment legal on payment of a few shillings or a few pence per annum. In Chapter VII we have already noted the helpfulness of Lord of the Manor, Henry Hicks, in the provision of roadside sites.

Going back to Norman times, whereas locally roads followed the winding paths from dwelling to dwelling and from farm to farm, skirting the boundaries of cultivated land, as highways between townships they swung across country veering from ford to ford and from bridge to bridge to negotiate river barriers. Where we find bridges built on the site of an old ford, as is our three-arched bridge at Millend the road obviously came before the bridge, but in many cases the bridge came first and of this our two Meadow Bridges carrying the Stroud Road are examples. From early times bridges became a national affair while roads remained for centuries a matter for the individual manor and the individual parish, the reason being that bridges were essential to the royal sport of hunting, but roads were not. Hunting bridges were built at strategic points and the tracks linking them ultimately became roads. This refers to main bridges. Bridges of local utility were locally built and maintained.

Where natural stone abounded pedestrian river crossings evolved from fords to stepping stones that became real bridges when clapper-stones were laid across them. For horsemen, pack-horses, and ox and horse wains stone bridges of one or more arches came in Roman times if not earlier, but not at Eastington. Having no natural stone our first footpath and bridle-path bridges were two parallel tree trunks held together by spars, and our first bridges for vehicles must have been a larger number of parallel tree trunks with spars. The swing-bridges on the local canals though built of sawn timber have essentially the same design. Coppice oak grown long and straight and free from branches was favoured for such bridge-building, and in the first instance, being for the King's hunting, the material would have been supplied from the ‘King's Forest’ of Dean.

An item already mentioned in Chapter II from the churchwardens' accounts in 1660 is a good illustration. It says, “*ffor a Loane to the Church bridge 1/6.*” This is the bridge from Butt Leaze to the churchyard, now of brick and stone, but originally carried by two tree trunks or beams and the word ‘loane’ (or ‘loon’) was in common use for any large beam up to a generation ago. Smaller pieces of timber like the spars of the bridge were called ‘lasts’. At that date the Meadow Bridge of loons and lasts had already been replaced by the stone arches, hump-backed and narrow, that gave place to ferro-concrete bridges in 1908. The Millend Road ran through fords at the mill and Trilly Brook. Beyond that the cart road to Churchend was unadopted (as we now say) and led to the mill over a wooden bridge. There was no bridge by the school but only a ford.

In our surveyor's accounts and elsewhere we meet items of repair of Oldbury Bridge, Nastend Lane Bridge, the ‘Penin bridge’ (on a footpath from Nastend to Stonehouse) and the ‘Bridge at Horrell’ which was probably at the bottom of the footpath down Steep Harrow. Like the Church Bridge these were maintained by the parish. On the other hand in 1655 (under Cromwell's rule) we read, “*Item payd toward Chepstow bridge 1/2*” and this represents a special county rate levied for a main road bridge. We say a special rate because the bridge is named - and normally all the county bridges, including our Meadow Bridges and Wixter's Bridge on the Bristol Road, were maintained by those annual contributions from each parish that we noted in the overseers accounts (Chapter VIII) under the heading ‘Bridge Money’. Notwithstanding the responsibility of the county our churchwardens did in fact execute repairs to Wixter's Bridge in 1675 at a cost of 3/-. That they did so in error is plain, for another hand has scrawled across the entry the words *wich oghut nat to be*”. The critic could not spell, but he knew the ins and outs of local financial liability. As the highway authority the parish took on where the manor left off, appointing officials with the same authority and laying similar burdens on its citizens. At first there was no question of a money rate at all. Each ratepayer was assessed at so many days labour or at so many ‘plough's duty’. In other words working men had to give statutory amounts of the labour of their hands and farmers statutory amounts of service with horses or oxen, drawing carts, waggons, sledges, ploughs, or harrows, at the actual physical task of road repair. Wealthy men were put to the expense of providing both the labour of their employees and ‘plough's duty’ according to their assessment.

Our surviving surveyor's accounts begin in 1739 and end in 1817 (unfortunately 1740, 1741 and 1742 are missing) and cover the age of

early progress in metalled roads —the golden age of stage-coaches and turnpikes. Some of the first items however, give an insight into the earlier set-up of personal service then in transition towards commutation to cash payment. Under date 1743 we read:
“Reed of twenty Labourers their Duty £2” and
“Recevd. 9 Labourers Duty at 2/- each 18/-”.

It had been the custom for the surveyor to call out the labourers and teams to work according to their assessments. In Winter to dig ditches and cut back thorns and bushes, and in early Spring to level and repair rough tracks, but from the beginning of seed time to the end of harvest too often the roads had to shift for themselves. In the last resort the surveyor had compulsory powers, but our ancestors were at least as fertile of excuses as we are and more often that not he (the surveyor) was a farmer himself with crops to sow and harvests to reap.

By 1743 increasing use of the roads had made additional labour as well as material essential and highway rates had for some time been levied to pay them, so that commutation of labour dues made for uniformity and convenience. The ratepayer could now follow his job without being interrupted by the demands of the surveyor and the surveyor could engage a permanent staff and hire such seasonal labour as was available. The same year, 1743, records: *“pd 30 Labourers for Bear, 3d Each Man 7/6”.* Thirsty work was unmechanised road-making and water was, as we have seen, for the most part dangerously undrinkable.

The stage-coach had by now (1743) established itself firmly and put traditional methods of road maintenance out of date. When Richard Capel set out to join the Assembly of Divines at Westminster in 1643 he travelled on horseback as Nathaniel Stephens was doing to and from the House of Commons in this and other years, accompanied on many occasions, we may be sure, by William Mews, who was a Londoner, his father having retired from legal practice at Lincoln's Inn to settle in Eastington.

The only alternative to horseback was walking.
Ox-wains and pack-horses were making long journeys; our Eastington clothiers could not have sold their cloth had it been otherwise, but they accepted the unpaved green highways as they were and took their time.

Stage-coaches began to ply on the outskirts of London from early in the reign of Charles II, and from the first they demanded something better than green lanes, boneshaking and wheelbreaking in Summer and in Winter knee-deep in mire. As their numbers multiplied highways more and more remote from populous centres required more stone, gravel and labour. With increasing attention to repair came increasing rates and increasing resentment that stay-at-home people in rural parishes should be at the expense of providing roads to carry strangers past their doors from one distant city to another.

Eastington must have been harder hit than some other parishes, having no native stone and little gravel, but for every country parish the problem was how to make the road users pay for the roads. The obvious answer ‘Turn-pikes’ came to hand almost with the birth of the stage-coach itself. Around 1670 the first of these barriers was set up on the first main coaching road - the Great North Road. But the King's Highway was traditionally free to all and the toll-gate was immediately torn down by indignant travellers.

The attempt to collect the ‘road-tax’ was for the time abandoned, only to return with added force of law in the early decades of the eighteenth century. The resistance of the defenders of ‘the open road’ was long and stubborn. Throughout the kingdom anger was vented openly by force or secretly by night on the hated toll-gates wherever they appeared. In 1731 we read of rioters tearing down turnpikes in the Forest of Dean, beating up the keepers and so intimidating them that ‘none could be found to undertake the office’.

However, if roads were to be repaired to carry the new traffic, turnpikes had to come. Little by little active resistance gave place to a smouldering resentment which outlasted the stage-coach era. At all events this essential but unpopular tax became firmly established and in 1736 we find our Eastington overseers paying ‘turnpicks’ on some of their journeys. In 1739 with the co-operation of the local justices turnpikes were set-up in our own parish. Almost certainly Eastington ratepayers were stirred to action, as were those in many another parish, by an advertisement appearing in ‘The Gloucester Journal ‘ of November 23rd, 1738, which declared, that if God permitted, the ‘Gloucester Flying Machine’ would perform the journey to London in the short space of three days. This was the first stage-coach to link Gloucester and Cheltenham with London. The well-to-do made their wills before taking a dangerous journey requiring divine approval and six horses to draw a coach carrying about the same number of passengers. We smile indeed at the simple (conventional) piety of our ancestors. We smile too, at the metaphor. They were no more a smiling matter at the time than our recent aerial circumnavigations (without a ‘by your leave’ to Providence) are to us.

To Eastington however, the most serious aspect of the new era of travel was financial, and to the great relief of our surveyors the turnpikes provided funds permitting expenditure really generous by all previous standards. This was in 1740. Logically enough the first turnpikes were set up on parish boundaries so that tolls should be paid by those passing through while movement within the bounds remained free. Unlike bridge-tolls, road-tolls were not levied on pedestrians but on horsemen, cattle and (most heavily) on the wheeled vehicles for which a paved road was demanded. Those who travelled on foot were exempt, in theory because they did not need a hard road, in practice because they included a large number of the destitute and because they could easily pass without the knowledge of the ‘keeper’. The turnpike was not a gate in the modern sense with pales or bars, but exactly what the name says, a pike or pole hinged to turn across or alongside the road to stop or to permit passage. Visitors to the Cotswolds may still read the list of tolls preserved and repainted at Bagstone gate. Turnpikes made metalled roads possible, but they brought their own problems. Too many of them threatened stagnation to the transport the metalled roads had released. A ‘pike’ on every road on every parish boundary reduced seriously the speed of the coaches and the profits of the coach owners. Besides there were serious inequalities some parishes taking much money for short stretches of road and others taking little for a greater mileage. The Bristol-Gloucester Road marked the boundary between Eastington and Frampton, but the road itself from Wixter's Bridge to the Frome Bridge, that gives its name to the hamlet, was wholly in Eastington Parish. Indeed since the turnpike era covered roughly the years when the parish functioned in two separate halves this important length of highway linking the South-West with the Midlands, and South Wales, was wholly repairable by ‘Alkerton Tything’. True enough Alkerton might set up a ‘pike’ at each end of its mile-and-a-half of arterial road, but Coaley Parish, for example, with only a quarter of a mile, could do the same and collect an equal amount of money.

The Alkerton highway receipts for 1743 appear to have been:
“From turnpikes £25,"
“of twenty Labourers their duty £2," and

"by a fourpenny Rate £13. 11";
and in 1744 no less than £43. 2 from turnpikes, as well as
"Six Plows Duty 6/-" and
"32 Men for their Duty 1/- Each, £1. 12."

Under an Act of 1751 a new and more equitable set-up was achieved. 'Turnpike Trusts' were formed with responsibility for definite stretches of road. The money collected was apportioned to each parish in the trust according to its length of through road. Local roads had still to be maintained by 'Labour Duty', 'Plough Duty' or their compounding money, and by a highway rate. From around 1767 the Trust seems to have itself done the repairs for the most part, though from time to time the responsibility reverted to the parish on receipt of 'Composition Money. In 1806, for example, Eastington Side Account says "*To composition to the turnpike £24. 6. 3*"and the Alkerton Tything Account says *"To composition to the turnpike £33. 5. 10½"*. Perhaps the actual work of repair was a matter of arrangement. Turnpike-keeping was a hazardous occupation. The risk of being knocked on the head by robbers increased as yields increased with the traffic. The octagonal shape of many pike houses was designed, it is said, to save the keeper from surprise attack from behind a corner. On the other hand the risk of being beaten-up by zealots, fanatical or merely selfish, diminished as coaches and taxes alike became part of the life of the nation. Smouldering resentment however, flared up again for a time in the early nineteenth century, particularly in South Wales where toll-gates had multiplied unduly, and where men in women's dress calling themselves Rebecca's daughters after Genesis XXIV, verse 60, where her people say to Rebecca "let thy seed possess the gate of them which hate them" entered upon a crusade of violence and riot such that troops had to be called out to suppress them. Other grievances, social, economic, and political, became identified with toll-gates, being used to foment agitation.

In spite of the risk, turnpike-keepers were ill-paid, and were, like the watchmen of the day, mostly aged or ageing men seeking semi-retirement; and though a responsible position it appears to have been under a cloud. Tax gatherers have never been popular, but the holders of this office were despised as well as hated. Tony Weller, the old stage-coachman in Dicken's ‘Pickwick Papers’ being thwarted in his plans says, “*Mark my words, Sammy. I'll do somethin' desperate with this ere property - somethin' desperate. I'll keep a pike . . . A pike. I'll keep a pike. Say goodbye to your father, Samuel, I devote the remainder of my days to a pike.*" Self humiliation could devise no deeper degradation. Hermit and outcast both he would sit at his toll-bar like Job on his ash-heap beside the road to the city.

To return to our Eastington roads, the material used was at first local gravel only.
In 1743 a Mr. Jammes was paid 15/- “*for a Gravel pit Lying Open two years in the Nasfield*”.
In 1747 a Mrs. Cock and Nath King were each paid 4/- for “*pits lying open in Budlow*”.
These payments entitled the Surveyor to help himself from the pits. Before long, however, our scanty supplies of local gravel had to be supplemented by stone from some Severnside quarry, as
in 1763 “*for my Hawling 32 Tons of Stone from Frampton Pill £3. 4. 0,*”
or by seeking Cotswold quarries.
In 1757 a surveyor paid “*Quarrage to My Lord Morton's Steward* “ and in 1772 we read, “*Pd Mr. Bigland for Quarrage of 25 Loads of Highways Stones for the bye Roads etc £1. 5. 0.*"

This was stone from Frocester Hill, which became the main source of road metal for a hundred years or more. Other sources were Stinchcombe Hill, Selsley Hill, Rodborough Hill, Uley Hill, Hampton Green, Strouds Hill, and Doverow Wood. Evidently the small stone-cap on Doverow was removed for road-making in the turnpike era.

A big drain on our scanty local deposits was the making and maintenance of the causeway formerly called ‘The Gravel Bank’ and now known as ‘The Ham Bank’ to afford a passage for workers plodding to Churchend Mill and for churchgoers from the Millend and Middlestreet direction. The low-lying Ham Lane alongside was the private property of the mill-owner until 1779 when the parish assumed at least some responsibility for it, as the following quotations show.
“Makeing ye Ford through Millend Brook £25. 10. 7.”
“Repairing Ye Ham Lane with ye remains of the stone (15 loads) for the Ford and Labourers £5. 12. 2.”

The surveyor seems to have made the road so convenient, the ford not withstanding, that goods traffic coming through the parish (as it does to-day) on the journey between Stroud and Bristol preferred it to the steeper ‘pitch’ at Springhill. To this our rate-payers took exception and a vestry minute dated 1780 ordered the placing of a ‘Gate or Toll’ opposite Fernell's House to prevent waggons going through brooks at Millend and a notice at “*the Bridge leading into the Stroud road*” (Churchend Mill Bridge) to say “*no Waggons unless for use of Parishioners only*”.

In 1790 the vestry undertook to build a bridge at Churchend (by the school) as well as one (the three-arched bridge) at Millend. The parish also took over, it seems, the bridge in existence at Churchend Mill over the ‘New River,’ - so called because recently cut by Henry Hicks at the time he built the new weir above the mill. The meanders of the ‘old river’ can still be traced in the Ox Ham across the ‘new river’ from Butt Leaze.

That the cost of some of these amenities was shared between the parish and the mill-owners is proved by an incident in 1845 when an arch of Millend Bridge collapsed under the weight of a cloth waggon which fell into the river, the horses being saved by the waggoner who cut the traces. The owners of the vehicle (Messrs. Budd & Co.) claimed damages of the parish. Backed by legal advice the claim was successfully resisted. A demand that the millowner (Henry Purnell Hicks, son of Henry Hicks) should execute repairs was, however, ineffective.

It was not only at Millend that a bridge followed hard upon the repair of a ford. In Nastend Lane in 1747 William Wole had been paid 2/9 for “*Pitchen Nastend Brook*” and in the very same year stone was hauled for the bridge being built there. Mr. Clutterbuck of Frampton having made a gift of ‘two Guinies’ towards the cost. Perhaps the explanation is that parts of Nastend at that date belonged to the Frampton Court Estate. We suppose this was the Richard Clutterbuck who shared with Richard Clutterbuck of Eastington (who lived at Nastend) the gallery under the tower. Entries in the accounts suggest that hauling was at first more expensive than the road material, and an item in 1747 "*pd Richd Wiles for Mending a Sledg 6d.*” reminds us that sledges were probably more common than carts on our Eastington farms and certainly for short distance work on unmetalled roads. Their main use, however, has continued into our own days, namely transporting stone from hill quarries to the lower ground where carts and lorries may be more safely loaded. On Doverow the path from Ryeford, popularly known as Baby Lane, follows a deep gulley cut out by the sledges. All parts of the Cotswolds show these artificial valleys. Some very impressive tracks were made in the removal of the stonecap from the Long Down at Cam where, following each side of the ridge, they converge at the South-western end to meet the base of Cam Peak and then turn West from between the two hills. Some few little used highways have escaped road metal to this day. An example at Alkerton is Snakey Lane from Alkerton Green to Puddlesworth, and at the other end of the parish the lane linking Nupend with Nastend. There are traces of several others, some of them wholly or partly thrown into the adjoining fields. It was to Snakey Lane, that in the first warm days of Spring eighty or ninety years ago, the boys of Alkerton carried tin whistles, when those instruments were cheap and popular, to charm snakes from beneath the rubbish and undergrowth. True or not, old men's gossip in the writer's youth avowed the experiment a success so spectacular as to give the musicians ‘the creeps’ and frighten them back to the turnpike road.

The green lane that entered the parish at Perryway and still plainly defined along the top of Steep Harrow, crossed the road at the top of Springhill, passed where the front door of Eastington House now is, emerged at Millend and mounted by the bridle path to Cress Green to reach the Leonard Stanley boundary near the site of the new sewage works. This was a Mediaeval road following roughly the track of the old Roman ‘Iro’ road. For the most part compensation roads were ‘dedicated’ (to use the modern phrase) when it was closed. The road from the Village Hall to Millend, given in substitution for the track from Springhill to Millend ford, is called the New Road to this day.

With ever increasing traffic surveyors began to seek out and experiment with material more durable than soft limestone, and
in 1798 we read “*To 40 tons of Bristol stone at 2/10 per ton £5. 13. 4*” and “*To breaking 40 tons of Bristol Co. stone £1. 10. 0.*"
This is the first recorded use of the hard dark stone that slowly replaced the soft Cotswold stone, first on main and after on bye roads

over a full century. Not until around 1900 was the last Eastington road surfaced with ‘Bristol Jacks’ as the blue or black stones were nicknamed (after that Bristol Co.), whether they came from Chepstow, Tytherington, May Hill or The Malverns. If that 32 tons from Frampton Pill in 1764 was shipped from Chepstow it was an experiment in advance of the age.

“I whacks 'em and cracks 'em for ninepence a day,” says the old stonecracker's song, and 9d. per ton (40 tons at £1. 10) seems a low rate of pay, though it was a higher rate than was paid for breaking the soft oolite from Frocester Hill. The price must have fallen the lower for being in competition with pauper labour in the years immediately before the overseers of the poor took over the whole business of stone-cracking.

The breaking of stone by the ‘parish’ survived into the twentieth century. In the writer's youth the tramps who called at the Workhouse (an average of six or eight) nightly for bed and breakfast, were required to break each his weighed portion of stone before leaving and to throw it through an inclined grating on to the verge outside, A favourite schoolboy trick was to push some of the stones back through the holes in order to hear the futile threats and the bad language of the ‘roadster’ on the other side of the wall.

It was the foreign stone with its hard sharp edges that first made rolling essential. Stone from Frocester Hill with a surface of gravel from the pits of Netherhills would lie down well under normal horse traffic though producing great quantities of mud to be scraped and piled on the verges, from which it was eagerly removed by farmers as a cheap and reliable source of lime plus horse manure for their crops. Local builders hauled some of the cleanest of it to their yards to sift for use as a basis for mortar. With quicklime it made a mortar so soft indeed as to be scratched by the finger but so resistant to weather as to show the pointing clear and true from the trowel after more than a century, while the black mortar made with crushed clinker that succeeded it for a decade or two around 1900 has perished utterly in twenty years.

Naturally our surveyors, in the interests of economy, resisted the expense of rolling to the last. It is doubtful if any steam roller came to Eastington before Turnpike Trusts were displaced by County Councils in 1889, though their use was well established in towns. We may be equally sure that from time to time at least, the vehicles of farmers and hauliers having a wheel tread of six inches or more were exempted from tolls, or taxed at a reduced rate in consideration of their value in rolling and setting the stone, but we can find no Eastington record of this.

An interesting result of improved surfacing was the change in the design of horse shoes. Roman horses were unshod, their hooves being hardened by much standing on paved courtyards. Though in use somewhat earlier elsewhere, it is doubtful if horseshoes came to England more than a century or so before the Norman Conquest. The earliest shoes were wide plates about a sixth of an inch thick covering the vulnerable part of the foot (the sole), and with a small open central arch that allowed the frog to breathe and to keep the foot healthy by contact with the ground. Used on un-metalled roads for the most part they were more often cast and lost than worn out, which is perhaps why we find so many of them, crusted with rust but with little sign of wear, when ever an excavation is made in an old road and especially when an old highway, being enclosed in a field, comes under the plough. With metalled roads, rolled reasonably smooth the foot of the horse needed less protection and a narrow shoe came into use, but because wear was increased the iron was much thicker. The size of the old wide shoes suggests that on the average horses were smaller in the centuries of green lanes than in the late-Victorian era of steam-rollers. The old highways frequently yield ox-shoes, though being smaller and thinner than the horse-shoes most of them have perished from rust and it is less easy to find good specimens. Triangular and about a twelfth of an inch in thickness they continued in use on plough oxen from the Conquest onwards to our own day and will continue in Gloucestershire until the last ox-team has left the fields of Earl Bathurst's farm at Cirencester.

On the roads they were in use so long as ox-wains plied with merchandise between town and town, and any time before the coming of the railway it was usual to shoe also any drove of cattle being moved to a distant market, and for shorter journeys in emergency. Many are the stories told of farriers toiling all night by' lanthorn' light tacking shoes to the feet of a drove of cattle travelling frost-bound roads to Gloucester or Berkeley Market or elsewhere, and then of the sudden thaw or fall of snow that came with morning light making shoes unnecessary.

For a decade or two before the abolition of turnpikes the only one remaining in the parish was at the Canal Bridge, called the Pike Bridge for that reason. Others over the boundary were at Cambridge, Perryway and Whitminster. The pike house at the Canal Bridge was demolished to make way for the house built by the Canal Company for the lock-keeper. Those at Cambridge and Perryway are still inhabited.

Seventy or eighty years ago carters used great ingenuity in choosing routes through the bye-roads of one parish after another to avoid turnpikes. Sometimes this could be done for long distances. To travel between Eastington and Stonehouse, via Frocester, Stanley Downton and Bridgend and so escape the Canal Bridge pike was common practice. This turnpike had two ‘gates’ (that is poles or single bars) one across each road.

There was no connection with the bridge except the name. The turnpike came first by half a century. Bridge tolls were quite a different matter, and where they were levied (to pay for the bridge) as at Westgate Bridge in Gloucester around 1800 the ‘gates’ at each end were real gates as we understand the word with a ‘wicke’ "at the side for pedestrians. Westgate Bridge tolls became ‘news’ when the building of Over Bridge was in progress in the early nineteenth century. Labourers from Gloucester, incensed at having to pay tolls twice daily as they walked to and from work, ‘assembled in a tumultuous manner’ and tore down the gates. Bridge tolls still exist elsewhere. The one best known to Gloucestershire travellers is where the Thames is spanned at Hungerford. Eastington has never had a bridge toll. The ‘gate or toll’ envisaged by the 1780 vestry at the Millend ford was a road toll to discourage its use - if the minute was ever implemented, which is doubtful.

Before turnpikes and for forty or fifty years after they became common there was no ‘Keep Left’ rule of the road. The ancient rule on these arteries of trade was that goods waggons had precedence over horsemen, pedestrians and what few other vehicles there were. When the bells of wain-horses were heard approaching all other traffic must give way whether in wide foundrous green lanes or on one-track metalled roads. This left unsettled however the problem that arose when two waggons met, or later on, two stage coaches.

“Great oaks from little acorns grow’ and ‘Keep Left’ was established mainly through the common sense and determination of a Lord Mayor for the year 1772 in the matter of London Bridge.

Not content merely to make a rule, or a byelaw, as we should call it today - his predecessors had more than once done that - he saw to it that the rule was observed, so that by example and law it spread rapidly over the whole country. There is evidence elsewhere, if not in Britain, of ‘Keep Left’ (or ‘Keep Right’) rules being enforced centuries earlier, but only as a temporary measure over a limited area when for any reason there was a concentration of large moving crowds as happened in Rome at a Papal Jubilee.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century the railways had completed what the canals had begun and the last long distance transport vehicle had disappeared from the roads. Local traffic had increased, so that rarely did ‘grass grow in the streets’ but the turnpike ceased to provide a substantial sum towards upkeep. Once more the long-suffering ratepayer shouldered the main burden and the way was prepared for the reign of the new highway authorities the County and District Councils. Turnpikes ceased, not as some have said because they delayed traffic, but first and foremost because they had outlived their usefulness as a source of revenue.

Roads are among the most permanent of human monuments; yet when the first ‘horseless carriage’ gurgled, spluttered and lurched along our English roads following a red flag carried on foot in the eighteen-nineties, few if any recognised in it the herald of the greatest epoch of road-making in the history of the world. Their surface is very different, yet in most cases elsewhere, and in almost every case in Eastington, they are the same roads that came into being in the Middle Ages to carry knights in armour to battle or to the tournament, or to lead droves of fat cattle, sheep or pigs to market. The knights in armour are gone for ever but the livestock so recently jostled into railway trucks are back on the roads, no longer on their own feet but in their own lorries.

Before the twentieth century few travelled on wheels. The many travelled on foot and much of their travel was along field footpaths. In 1952 our Parish Council scheduled seventy-five of these and formerly there were more. They were not intended to be amenity paths where lovers of nature might stroll for pleasure, though used for this purpose in Summer. Many of them, and the most frequented, were for workers to pass to and fro between their homes and their work in field or factory. More numerous but less used were those pointing to the church at the centre of the parish, as a glance at the ‘footpath map’ will show. Besides serving the pious living these were the ‘corpse paths’ along which bearers shouldered many a coffin, when a wheeled funeral was still a luxury of the very rich, from dwellings large or small to ‘God's Acre’ resting here and there their burden on a stile. Often the ‘work path’ and the ‘corpse path’ were identical, as where it led to church, school and Churchend Mill.

Field tracks on clay soil become foul in Winter and in days before the advent of tarmac roads, buses and bicycles, fields that today show no trace of a path were striped with a dozen or a score of parallel tracks made by travellers seeking firm footing. A few of the most essential paths were surfaced by the churchwardens or by mill-owners. Laying of gravel was greatly extended by the Parish Council from 1895, when it took over the local government functions of the Vestry, until the outbreak of the First World War.

Charles Henry Hooper, millowner, churchwarden and the first Chairman of Eastington Parish Council surfaced several paths at his own expense with factory ashes and in addition erected a number of substantial and convenient stiles. Since 1914 gravelled or clinkered paths have steadily reverted one by one to grass tracks whose use is for the most part negligible.

With the introduction in 1839 of a County force of paid police the unpaid parish constables were no longer responsible for keeping the peace, but in Eastington one at least continued to be appointed as late as 1898 under the old manorial name of Waywarden. His main duty now was to round up animals straying on the highway and lock them in the parish pound until the owner redeemed them on payment of a small fee.

In an age taking more and more interest in roads and less and less interest in fields it seems expedient to add that the field ‘Pound Leaze’ is so named from the pound that stood at its entrance on the plot of land opposite Alkerton Green. Being of wooden posts and rails all traces of the ‘pin fold’ (to use Shakespeare's word which is still current in some parts of England) disappeared soon after the practice of official impounding ceased in Eastington more than fifty years ago. Here and there, especially where rights of common have survived, pounds are still maintained, and the press from time to time records cases of ‘Pound Breach’ brought before local Magistrates' Courts, where some person is charged with the offence of releasing animals from the pound without the authority of the responsible official. The other pound used by ‘Nupend Tything’ stood near the Baptist Chapel and fell into disuse and decay around the same date.

With the application of steam power to the woollen and other industries of the Stroud Valley the demand for coal increased by leaps and bounds. The turnpike roads proved inadequate and the cost of transport even from the Forest of Dean was excessive. A certain amount came also to the wharves of Frampton and Framilode from the Midlands and from South Wales. To extend water transport and bring wharf and factory together the Stroudwater Canal was cut and its imposing series of ascending locks built in the seventeen-nineties after many difficulties and delays, the first Parliamentary Bill for the project having been promoted in 1730, more than sixty years previously. The ‘cut’,as a past generation proudly called it, carried coal to every factory in the Stroud Valley and eventually through the Cotswolds by tunnel to the Thames. There was a contemporary project for using the River Frome itself as an inland waterway. The reaches between mill-dams were to be deepened, widened and straightened and the ‘gates’ themselves were to be by-passed by the use of escalators using water-power to raise or lower vessels from one level to another. The tonnage must have been small, but the plan did not fail for that reason nor from any engineering difficulty. The conflicting interests of landowners, mill-owners and farmers, and a multiplicity of problems not resolved by Act of Parliament brought the plan to nothing.

The Canal is derelict; the locks in decay; the water sunk to a muddy trickle. “Ichabod! Ichabod! The glory is departed! “ This same waterway (to revive an Elizabethan metaphor) was once
“vena porta” (the gate vein) through which an ample share of employment and prosperity (of ‘the work, wealth and happiness of mankind ‘) flowed, and was to flow for ever, to the Stroud Valley and so to Eastington.

The coal wharf below the Pike Bridge came with the canal. So did the ‘Coal Pen’ near Meadow Mill whose high stone walls and locked doors guarded the coal unshipped from barges to await transport to Meadow, Churchend and Millend Mills as required. The hard ‘foreign’ stone that displaced soft limestone on our roads was brought by their competitor the canal, to be discharged at the ‘stone-wharf’, now overgrown and hard to recognise some fifty yards above the Pike Bridge. Here amateur local geologists could chip the blocks for fossils and minerals and speculate as to the source of blue limestone, black basalt, or pink granite in days before the invention of’ tarmac’.

A hundred years after completion of the tunnel the Severn and Thames portion above Chalford was abandoned. The water leaked away through the limestone faster than pumping from deep springs could replace it. Cracks developed and widened (said report) when the nearby railway tunnel came into use with a second engine ‘boosting’ trains up the gradient with consequent shaking of the rocks. The financial fabric of the Canal Company was even more certainly shaken by competition from the new form of transport. The Stroudwater section (Stroud to Framilode) survived the First World War, but the dredging mud-boat and house-boat now lie where they sank at their moorings just above the Pike Bridge soon after 1922, about which date the waterway was given over to sedge and silt, to the wild-duck, the heron and the moor-hen. Hardly a minnow survives in what was once the haunt of anglers from far and near, and even lovers are deterred by the thorn barricades nature is weaving more and more densely across the tow-path, that one-time ideal trysting place.

Among the streams diverted by the cutting of the canal was Oldbury Brook. The channel alongside the road where it joined the canal-weir water is still called ‘the divers’ (the divert). This diversion meant raising the level of the brook by eight or ten feet which has caused periodic flooding ever since, though much less likely to occur now that the level of the canal has fallen. The road too was raised though less than the brook, the original channel being deep, and the bridge was rebuilt at a higher level and further from the Workhouse (now The Willows) than the old stone arch which may still be in its original position buried deep under the road. From early times this had been a main bridge maintained by the county rate.

At the junction of the divers with the canal a boat-house sheltered the ‘ice-breaker’ until both decayed with age and exposure. Last used in January or February 1895 the ‘ice-breaker’ was a stoutly built boat of the width of our largest coal-barge. It was towed by a rope on the bow and rocked by a rope on a short mast-head (both by man-power from the tow-path) so that beam ends projecting tooth-like at water level moved up and down tilting and breaking the ice-sheets.

The dry-dock has been mentioned in connection with its use by the Baptists during the rebuilding of Nupend Chapel. It stood between the canal, from which it was filled and ‘the divers’ into which it was emptied, both by gravity. A high roof covered with wooden shingles gave ample clearance for vessel, shipwrights, and repairing gear. A clock-turret rose above the up-stream gable, and the large clock-face gave the time unofficially to passengers over the Pike Bridge and officially to the lock-keeper in his house, telling him when to affix and when to remove from the nearest lock-gate the padlock that immobilised shipping during the hours of darkness and over Sundays. Thus the hand-worked donkeys got their day of rest. Always a pair, these hardy creatures moved slowly, keeping a steady pull on the rope. They had brief respites indeed at each lock, where they were given their nose-bags and sometimes a drink of water, but their hours of toil were from dark till dark while the journey lasted and in Summer this meant a very long day. Very rarely a single horse (invariably worn out or crippled) took the place of the pair of donkeys.

Near the dry dock stood the forge and carpenter's shop, burnt out some thirty years ago. The dock itself was last used some fifty years ago and only the site remains.

There was another divert of less importance on the Whitminster boundary. Compensation water fell over Coffin Weir (named from its shape) on the lower side and on the upper a half-swamp planted with willow and poplar has resulted from the raised level of the stream. At another point opposite Nastend Lane the canal tapped and cut off a spring with reputed medicinal properties. Here too, compensation water was provided to supply a pond or ponds and it is unlikely the cattle missed the medicine.

Near the same spot a path from Nastend to the church was diverted to pass over Blunder Lock (the second lock above the bridge whose name probably refers to some forgotten incident in building), a somewhat perilous passage. The path was closed soon after the building of The Leaze (Eastington Park) and the two lodges where formerly was field and coppice. The path from Westend to the church suffered a similar diversion, but passed more safely over Westfield Bridge and along the tow-path to Court Orchard by the coal-pen.

At the time of writing (1953) the canal owners are promoting a bill to allow them to abandon an enterprise producing only liabilities for its shareholders.

Eastington has remained untouched by the railway, though in the heyday of expansion a line parallel to the canal was projected, with a Severn Bridge to link the Stroud Valley with the Forest of Dean. A Parliamentary Bill was prepared and presented, but later withdrawn. Probably the bridge was the difficulty.

We have traced the growth of our roads from their beginnings as green clearings for the passage of pedestrians, mounted travellers and pack-horses. We have seen the demands of wheeled vehicles met by metalled roads and the cost defrayed by turnpike tolls. We have seen the rivers crossed first by fords and hunting-bridges and afterwards by road bridges for vehicles, of wood, stone, brick, and ferro-concrete. Throughout we have made use of illustrations from our own parish. Later on we have noted diminished use and decay as first canals and then railways came into competition with the roads and with one another. That phase has ended. Except for specialised traffic the roads have shaken off those one time giants of transport. Thanks to rubber and the internal combustion engine ‘the wheel has come full circle’.

The present is to ‘The Rolling English Road’ with no foreseeable limit to expansion.

CHAPTER 10 - THE FIRST FREE SCHOOL

INSIDE St. Michael's Church a tablet on the wall at the West end tells how in the year 1764 eight men subscribed £452 to form a fund “*For teaching the poor children of this Parish to read.”*. Three of them are described as ‘Clerk’ that is they were in Holy Orders, and it seems likely that the wealth of all the eight was derived directly or indirectly from the manufacture of woollen cloth, for which as we have seen, the Stroud Valley was famous for generations before the First World War.

The £452 was invested in South Sea Annuities and the dividends used to finance the first Eastington Free School. The trust deed of 1779 setting out particulars and giving legal status to the enterprise by the appointment of trustees is still in the possession of their successors the present trustees of the ‘Eastington Free School Endowment’.

Little is known of the very early workings of the Free School and we should know even less but for the fortunate survival of a receipts and payments book covering the years 1817- 1833. The handwriting shows several changes of treasurer. In every case the lettering is thin and clear with a forward slant and perfectly legible. The flowery capitals and slight curving-upstrokes suggest a well-cut quill held in a practiced hand unused to manual employment - a contrast to the writing of overseers and surveyors whose entries we have quoted. Some treasurers have signed their names and we recognise them as old friends. We have met when the vestry minutes were claiming our attention.

Weighing up the evidence it seems that we are indebted to Wadham Huntley who became Rector in 1817, for providing the serviceable ledger that has survived and for making one or other of his curates responsible for businesslike and lucid entries. To the historian his contribution is more valuable than that of Rector Robert Stephens, who subscribed to the original fund, or that of any other Eastington inhabitant who anticipated or followed his example in subscribing annually.

There were before 1764. and indeed until recently private schools (‘Dame's schools’) for paying pupils. The y were usually carried on single-handed or by two members of a family. Frequently the teachers were cripples or in some way unfitted for more active occupation. Some were well-educated, others scarcely at all. The fees were invariably low. To judge by the products that have survived, the emphasis was placed on good handwriting and fine needle work. Most schools were run by women, but there is a tradition of a school at Churchend kept by ‘Soldier White’. There is little doubt that this ‘broken soldier’ was the Thomas White who in 1831 was paid £1.3 by the trustees “for attendance upon the boys in church”.
It was nearly seventy years since John Clutterbuck was supplied with his white rod “for preserving good order” among adults. During that time congregations had dwindled and manners improved, but full attendance was expected from the school children and some discipline was called for.

For the year 1817 receipts were confined to the half-yearly dividends, a church collection and a sum of twenty guineas from ten subscribers, making a grand total of £66. 5. 7½. The only payments were salaries in annual, half-yearly or monthly amounts. The recipients and totals were:

Williams Hurd	£6.
Samuel Price	£3.
Mrs. Tanner	£12. 12.
Mrs. Davis	£10.
Mrs. Howell	£8. 8.

Before we analyse the economics of this employment it is important to realise that these were not teachers in a building provided and equipped by the trustees, but householders who took groups of children into their homes for instruction much as the ‘Dames' schools’ around them did, the trustees finding the money and not the parents. Payment was for teaching ‘Reading’ only, in accordance with the terms of the Trust Deed. First a simple ABC book, then the Bible. In 1818 fourteen-and-six was paid for books, and this is the only payment other than salaries before the building of the first schoolroom.

The teacher or the scholars would normally provide all that was necessary for such primitive instruction. Education was not centralised. Mrs. Davis had her school at Alkerton (Vigar Street), Mrs. Tanner at Nupend and William Hurd at Millend. Teaching was often a spare time supplementary job. An old parish magazine tells us that William Hurd was a weaver with two looms, and that boys learned their letters against a background of continuous hammering from the primitive textile workroom under the same roof and subject to the interruptions of Hurd's journeymen at the second loom, who when they repeated the alphabet would shout to them not to say ‘jay’, which was wrong, but ‘jod’. There are grounds for believing that William Hurd's class was of half-time pupils working in Henry Hick's cloth mills.

Such was the Eastington Free School for the first sixty years of its existence. In 1824 came a new set-up with the building of a real school room. Squire Henry Hicks gave the site, on the boundary of the churchyard where the War Memorial now stands, and £50. The London National Society contributed £100 and the Gloucester Diocesan Society £20. There were other small private subscribers. The building, in ground plan rectangular, in appearance like a low barn, cost £255 and there was a deficit of £52 which Henry Hicks lent free of interest, and of which only part was repaid over the next six or eight years and that almost entirely from his own subscriptions. His monument on the wall near the North door of the church makes no mention of his many benefactions to the parish of which the building of the school was perhaps the most important.

Of this our first parish schoolroom no tradition survives and the facts are derived from a 'building account' at the back of the receipts and payments book, and the position of the school itself is established through the title map and terrier. The price suggests a construction of brick and tile, but its short life (35 years) suggests poor design, material or workmanship. Probably all three were sub-standard. The school had no playground. No doubt the children climbed or crept through the fence of "oak posts and elm rails" and played in the churchyard before and after school. There was no break for play. The pupils were there to learn and learning was a serious matter. The schoolroom continued in use until the present school was built and was described in 1837 as "*small, low, ill-ventilated and with no classrooms, no lobby and no space for expansion*".

The 1824 building was divided into two schoolrooms by a partition and teaching became a primary if not a full-time occupation by the appointment of George Bowles to the boys and Mrs. Bowles to the girls department, each at a salary of £25; an early recognition of equal pay for equal work.

With the acceptance of a contribution from the National Society the school now began to develop on the lines of a National School, thus bringing to an end sixty years of teaching to read only. Appearance in the school accounts of amounts for slates, slate pencils, pens and ink, shows an expanding curriculum. Writing and Reckoning (called Arithmetic) were now being taught and almost certainly Needlework.

The school ceased to be entirely free and from 1825 onwards 'children's pence' appears as an item in the receipts; and ownership of their own premises meant that the trustees paid for coals from the same date, seven years before George Holoway installed the first stove in the church. The issue of a broom to Mr. Bowles, reminds us that anytime before about 1870 an Eastington headmasters' duties still included those of caretaker and cleaner, so that to save his hands and his pocket he set his pupil-teachers to sweep and dust daily and to light the fire in the Winter. The era of official pupil-teachers or student-teachers had not arrived but we may be sure Mr. and Mrs. Bowles saw to it that the cleaner's work was done by the older scholars.

Previous to 1824 the salaries quoted had been paid somewhat irregularly being sometimes a month, sometimes a quarter in arrear. In 1823 Mrs. Tanner lost two months money by absence, which seems reasonable, but why trustees who were so careful of their monies should in 1827 have voted a pension of £8 to Mrs. Davis for age and services three years after she ceased to be employed by them is difficult to understand. Granted their kindly feeling and gratitude, one still has doubts as to the legality of this payment. Paid it was however, being retrospective from 1824 and continued until 1831. After coming into line with the National Society payments were more punctilious, though money was hard to come by to meet the growing expenses.

The church collection in 1817 had realised £11. 15. 2½, but this was an isolated effort by the Revd. Huntley. In 1826, probably because of the interest taken by the Diocesan Society, we find among the receipts "*the proceeds of a Charity Sermon by the Bishop*" amounting to £25. 11. 3 after deducting 18/9 for "*advertisements etc.*". For some years after a 'Charity Sermon' on behalf of the school became an annual event with a steady decline in the takings so that the Bishop's total was never equalled - though the Revd. Veal did quite well for a mere curate in 1827 when his sermon helped the fund to £16. 7. 0 after deducting £1. 3. 6 "*expenses for Hand bells etc.*"
Modern advocates of brighter services please note.

Sunday school had been held in the church for many years, the children sitting on forms in the chancel which was, as we have seen, very poorly lighted before the removal of the chancel-arch in 1850. After 1824 it was held in the school, the children being taken from there to the church service. The appointment of Thomas White to attend with them must mean that George Bowles was otherwise occupied for a year or two from 1831 onwards, because that would have been a normal part of his work. Now 1831 was the year of the barrel-organ experiment. Dare we assume that the worthy headmaster turned the handle ? And was it unpopularity shared with the organ that cost him his job in 1832 ?

Meanwhile an item or two in the accounts may deserve our attention. Under Dec. 1824 we read "*Reward for discovery of window-breaking 2/6*" and are reminded that payment of informers was the normal way of bringing criminals to justice, though the 'Association for the Protection of Property' mentioned in Chapter II was not to come for another ten years. In 1829 Curate and Treasurer David Laing records default by "Farmer Savage" in respect of children sent to school, for whom he promised to pay. The amount is £1. 2. and the Treasurer makes it good himself. The defaulter was no other than Joseph Savage, occupier of the largest farm in the parish, churchwarden for forty years, and at one time or another surveyor, overseer, constable, guardian of the poor; in his time the most considerable figure in the public life of the parish, but whose hopelessely illiterate entries have ever since been the joy of students of Eastington Church documents. Whether the children were his own or those of his farm-workers the incident confirms our suspicion as to the value this self-made man set on ‘book learning’.

In 1831, *“Purchase of an hour-glass 1/6”*. How logical! With the new subjects a time-table. With the time-table an hour-glass. The church clock was less than fifty yards away, but on the other side of the tower. There was no school clock and a school-master (or mistress) at £25 a year would rarely own a watch. Whatever the reason for the charge, in 1832 Mr. and Mrs. Bowles have faded from our history; the partition dividing the school is removed and the two departments are in sole charge of a Miss Dellew at a salary of £40, which is so much above the current rate for the job as to convince us that the headmistress was required to find and pay her own assistants. This experiment in co-education was of short duration.

In 1833 the partition was replaced and we find Samuel Long in charge of the boys and Sarah Howell the girls, each drawing £20 per annum. At this date the school became officially united to the National Society, which endorsed the practice of requiring regular attendance at church and Sunday school. Other conditions were that all books used must be on the list approved by the S.P.C.K. (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) and that teaching must be in accordance with the system of Dr. Bell as practiced in the Central School, Westminster. Dr. Bell's was a monitorial system, copied and adapted from the experiments of other educational pioneers, whereby, in accordance with the spirit of the age, factory methods were applied to teaching. The flood tide of enthusiasm for the new system carried Dr. Bell to wealth and fame and the system itself was well calculated to appeal to those of our trustees whose aim was to produce godly, sober and industrious machine hands.

In Eastington as elsewhere the monitorial system whereby pupil taught pupil was found inadequate for more than the rudiments of education, and the National Society rules at that date were altogether too narrow for a parish where the free churches had so considerable a following. However with a toleration characteristic of its liberal traditions, the parish so eased this rigidity that in 1857 the 'Memorialists', in pressing for a new school, could assure the Privy Council "*that the children of Dissenters have hitherto been admitted to the National School at Eastington on terms which allow perfect liberty in withdrawing them (whether Weekdays or Sundays) from any lessons to which they, the parents, object*". A slight exaggeration is pardonable when a new school is so urgently needed.

The new National School was built at Churchend on glebe land (the site of the old rectory) the gift of Rector Thomas Peters, and it has been the scene of our educational efforts since 1859. A house was built for the headmaster. The bell-turret near the North-west corner and a painted glass window in the South gable emphasised its connection with the church. Other windows had large panes of heavy opaque glass.

We like to believe that the adjoining Churchend Mill stood on the site of the corn mill listed in Domesday.

> "*Where millstones for a thousand years*

Have furnished food from ripened ears,
Beside this stream we set our schools
That bread no more may nourish fools.”

The cost of the schoolroom was £800 and of the house £242, of which £495 was a grant from the National Fund - in other words taxpayers' money - and the remainder public subscriptions. The ‘Trust Deed’ which was to continue in force for ever (says a contemporary memorandum) was deposited in the ‘Parish Chest’ but disappeared around 1899 while its provisions were being invoked by partisans of the established church on the one hand and by dissenting zealots on the other, as we shall see in due course. Meanwhile the document itself may still be awaiting ‘counsels' opinion’ at the bottom of some deed-box ‘in Chambers’. The dividends from the original Free School Fund were a major part of the school income until legislation made them superfluous in April 1903. From that date income was allowed to accumulate until a Board of Education scheme dated July 1907 was accepted by the parish, since when the income, now from Railway Stock dividends, has been used mainly for scholarship to secondary schools at Stroud.

At the restoration of the church in 1885 the ‘Ten Commandments’ on two tablets of stone had been removed and set up inside the school. By 1907 the gold lettering had faded and the managers gave consent to their use as ‘Honours Boards’ to record the names of those obtaining Eastington scholarships. The earlier names were indeed those of the best scholars at the time, but with the arrival of a comprehensive scheme of County scholarships the funds came to be used to help those who missed them by narrow margins. Many names in the second as well as in the first flight have justified both the Board's scheme and the policy of the trustees.

No longer needed for scholarships, an annual grant to the school library and an occasional clothing grant represents to-day's expenditure from the fund. For the most part the income is accumulating and a new " Scheme " is awaited.

So much then for the faith and vision of those wise and kindly men who in 1764 put up their £452 *“for teaching the poor children of this parish to read”*.

In 1765, Thomas Evans, Churchwarden, paid £4. 2. 6. of rate-payers' money for “*the Table of Benefactions for the Charity School”* to which the opening sentence of this chapter refers, so that all who can read may honour the memory of: Richard Stephens Esq., Robert Stephens, Clerk, Philip Sheppard, Clerk, Samuel Glasse, Clerk, Mr. William Knight, Mr. Joseph Ellis, Mr Richard Clutterbuck and Mr. Onesiphorus Elliott.

Close linked with them in the history of our school are the names of Henry Hicks and Wadham Huntley.

It is sometimes said that the foundation of schools for the children of the poor in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries sprang from the need to keep them out of mischief after their employment in factory and mine was forbidden by law, and writers occasionally give the impression that humanitarian legislation suddenly handed hordes of degraded children back to their parents completely out of hand, a menace to the property of their well-to-do neighbours who accordingly put up the money for schools in self-defence. In sober truth however, the abolition of child labour was a very gradual process extending over two centuries of propaganda and one and a half of legislation that almost kept pace with the social conscience. Not until 1819, fifty-five years after our school was founded, was employment of children under nine forbidden. Not until 1891 was the age raised to twelve.

There is more truth in the suggestion that schools were a move by the employing class to produce a more efficient type of artisan. Even so this is no unworthy motive; the benefit is shared. The writer is however, prepared to believe that the most powerful underlying motive of the founders was a sincere desire to make mankind more worthy of kinship with the Creator. Such sentiments sound strange in our ears, but they were far from being cant or sarcastic wise-cracks to those who found the money for schools for the children of their poor neighbours.

As to child-labour, we may clarify the issue by asking bluntly who attended the school founded in 1764 if all the children were at work; because the answer is inescapable. Very few of them were at work. Those cottage classrooms were shockingly overcrowded and to cope with the numbers, Mrs. Tanner, Jane Davis and the others had to use monitorial systems of their own. “*Do you hear the children weeping O my brothers?*”

Eastington children were weeping sure enough, but over their lessons, and the supreme educational achievement of the present century is to have dried up those tears, so that Shakespeare's “*whining schoolboy with his satchel Creeping like snail unwillingly to school*” really is out of date.

Starting with the view, current in the writer's youth, of education raising man step by step from the dark ages to modern times, we at first reject as inconceivable the fact that among the ‘working classes’ illiteracy was greater when Victoria came to the throne than when Elizabeth I left it, but there seems little doubt of the fact.

In Shakespeare's play ‘The Winter's Tale’ we find a delightful picture of a sheep-shearing feast, which all authorities agree was a familiar Cotswold scene. Such feasts were not confined to Shakespeare's day nor to the Cotswolds. They were still a feature of village life at Arlingham and other out-of-the-world parishes less than sixty years ago.

Now in the play ‘Autolycus’ the pedlar comes to sell his ballads and is at once the centre of attraction. The Elizabethan ballad, often crudely illustrated, was not difficult reading. On a level intellectually (not ethically) with a child's reader. Easy or difficult however, the point is that he was selling reading matter to readers. In Shakespeare's ‘Midsummer Night's Dream’ we meet a group of artisans (“*hard-handed men*”) putting on their play. They learn their parts from the script. There is no copy for Snug the joiner and he asks for it. “*Have you the lion's part written? Pray you, if it be, give it me for I am slow of study*”. An Elizabethan audience did not think it strange that such men should read and write nor that Peter Quince should be their playwright and producer and maker of ballads. The jibe was at their slowness of study - at the ‘little learning’ that a later poet called ‘a dangerous thing’; and Shakespeare's mockery elsewhere at the illiteracy of watchmen, constables and other officers is proof of a popular audience sufficiently educated to enjoy a pleasant feeling of superiority. Even before the reign of Elizabeth, Tyndall had translated and printed an English Bible, as Wyclif had done still earlier, so that folk might read the scriptures in their mother tongue. Plainly there was something that could be called a reading public.

The preparation of the Authorised Version of the Bible was one of the first and most notable events in the reign of James I. In it our forefathers in that reign might read St. Luke IV. 16. “*And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up : and as his custom was, he went* *into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and, stood up for to read".* It did not occur to our forbears that there was anything unusual about the son of a poor carpenter being able to read, and to read eloquently. In that age of theologians no one claimed it for a miracle. All around them the sons of the carpenter, the smith, the shoemaker, the mason; of Nick Bottom the weaver, Tom Snout the tinker, Robin Starveling the tailor and the rest worked with their father at his trade, and except by those parents destitute of self-respect, were taught their letters as a matter of course.

Few parents are or have been callous towards their own flesh and blood when under their personal supervision and even the orphan apprenticed to a stranger might hope for something more than food, clothes and periodic beating. Cruelty came in with the harnessing of power to the factory and the mine. Provision of simple repetitive jobs performed among large numbers where 'the economic motive' (sometimes called 'avarice' for short) drove the machine, that drove the team, whose members drove one another; these were the conditions that provoked Elizabeth Barrett's poem, 'The Cry of the Children'. All mankind honours her share in helping to free young lives from the horrors of the mine and the factory. Even at this distance of time we feel anger within us that her words seemed to fall on deaf ears and legislation came but slowly.

"Still the iron wheels go onward
Grinding life down from its mark,
And the children's souls that God is calling sunward
Spin on blindly in the dark."

Child labour was a legacy from the Middle Ages, but child-slavery came with the Industrial Revolution and tangled inextricably with it, came the wave of illiteracy that has left its record clearly in our parish registers and which ascended the social scale so that our churchwardens' accounts tell the same story. The writer will not attempt to explain, but only call attention to the phenomenon of literate and struggling fathers followed by illiterate and prosperous sons as in the case of the two John Warners instanced in Chapter V.

No explanation excuses child-slavery, but to get a true balance, we should bear in mind that at its worst it could apply only to a minority of children, that is to those of the very poor in intensely industrial centres; and in the spirit of counting our blessings, the existence of our school of itself proves that this evil, this sin against posterity, left Eastington comparatively untouched.

By 1859 the nation was grappling seriously with the problem of illiteracy. Soon the problem would be that of the half-lettered, who (like Shakespeare's rustics) could read no more than large headlines; who could write only their own names and reckon only on their fingers or with the aid of counters, and, worst of all, who thought themselves educated because their parents had paid a penny or twopence a week for them to go to school and who had no urge to carry mental advance a stage further.

The foundations had been laid. From now on we shall find teaching in our school becoming at once more comprehensive and more specialised and for a time its problems will tend to centre round all that is implied by the word ‘curriculum’.
To our school then let us return.

CHAPTER 11 - THE NATIONAL SCHOOL

EASTINGTON National School was so called from 1833, but of its history during the last twenty-six years in the old schoolroom almost nothing survives, so that the chapter opens on the threshold of 1859, with a new schoolroom almost completed. The new school represents a compromise, the position being that the Church of England and the Wesleyans of the Parish had each applied to the newly set-up National School Committee for a grant towards building a school. The Committee decided on ONE school owned by the Church of England but in respect of which dissenting parishioners were to have certain rights. Questions of their concession on the one hand and of enforcement on the other provided later on, as we shall see, a platform for fierce sectarian contention, but in the main the compromise was justified by results.

In 1863, four years after the opening of the new school, the Board of Education made an order that a ‘Log Book’ should be kept in every state-aided school and our earliest volume survives in excellent condition. Its entries are in the hand of Edward Wilcox who had been appointed headmaster at the opening in July 1859. Besides his work in the day school, his duties embraced night school, Sunday school, taking the scholars to church and coaching his young teachers before morning school. In addition he was his own attendance officer as was his successor until 1891. The coaching of staff for at least one hour before morning school was the responsibility of the headmaster until 1903. Frequent entries, “*Closed school at noon to prepare for a concert*”, suggests yet another duty and we have already noted the absence of an official cleaner.

As regards his staff, his position is reminiscent of an old-time tradesman with a number of apprentices. Bright boys and girls on reaching leaving age became monitors. After a year or two they might qualify as ‘pupil-teachers’ and after four years pass by examination into a training college or acquire the status of assistant teachers. In this set-up we detect something of Dr. Bell's monitorial system modified by the work of Dr. Kay the pioneer of pupil-teachers and training colleges.

Not until May 1883, was an assistant teacher appointed at Eastington. Up to that date Mr. Wilcox was the only qualified teacher, and he carried on with the help of from three to five monitors and pupil teachers.

In 1863 the day school attendance averaged ninety-five and the night school seventy-six. Early entries, especially the oft-repeated “*Children very restless*” give a picture of a conscientious man, young for a headmaster in those days, who found discipline difficult to maintain. He was much preoccupied with the weather and no wonder, seeing that poor attendances reduced the Grant. “*Weather very showery*”, “*A thoroughly wet day*” are typical entries. Then we read under 13th July, “*Many children helping with the hay*”. Poor fellow, with both wet and fine against him. Yet an occasional “*Lovely day, 102 present*” shows him on top of the world. Alas, a few days later he laments how “*The briskness of trade, and the activity among the farmers keep my senior scholars from school*”.

On the whole, agriculture appears to have disrupted lessons more than the factories did. Employment in field or factory was permitted after the age of nine, but few parents took advantage of it judging by the total number on books at ‘National’ and infants schools. The problem was absenteeism. Often at the time of the Spring sowing, we read *“Several boys away bird-keeping*” or to that effect. The value of child labour was seasonal. The older ones particularly could be very useful leading horses, turning hay, binding sheaves or gathering fruit, and it was the custom of some farmers and farm workers to keep them, especially the boys, at home during the Summer months.

The headmaster countered by removing their names from the register in May or June and re-admitting them in October or November “*their memories quite gone*”. Thus we read,*”Re-admitted Julia Warner away about 6 months*” and a little later “*Readmitted Charles Enos Warner after 8 months absence*”. This expedient did something to improve the percentage attendance and minimise loss of grant, and such-self defensive action was forbidden by H.M. Inspector of Schools in 1884.

After increasing slowly, the night school attendance declined. The day school figure on the other hand almost doubled in sixteen years being 167 in 1879. The increase does not mean that more Eastington children attended school so much as that the better paid artisans and tradespeople were sending their older children to the National School, instead of to private schools, as the name ‘Charity School’ ceased to be used and as the reputation of ‘Gaffer’ Wilcox became firmly established. An old admission register shows a number of entries around the age of nine from better off families. In 1880, average attendance reached 181; a really dangerous over-crowding which was no doubt partly responsible for epidemics increasing in numbers and virulence. Some of the records of their ravages are quaint, others grim. “*Hooping cough increasing among the upper classe*s” is plain and sensible enough after the reader has thought twice. Feb. 1882 says “*Children from Workhouse all away on account of Smallpox*”. A little later we learn that there were six cases in the ‘House’. Deaths from measles as well as from scarlet-fever were common, but not until Nov. 1886 do we read, “*Several away with bad throats. Two have died*”. We turn the yellowing pages hurriedly to read in his clear Victorian handwriting what we expected, the dread word ‘Diphtheria’ for the first time. A very early entry in Dec. 1863 suggests at once a modern medical inspection and ‘old forgotten far off things’. It reads, “Girl sent home with the itch” (i.e. Scabies). In those days “Don't shake hands with me. I've got the itch," was a form of greeting all too common.

‘Gaffer’ Wilcox, as the whole parish called him (his name is still a tradition) believed in homework. He begun as he meant to go on. On Sept. 8th, 1863, we read, “*New Rule. All scholars that do not bring home-exercises to be kept in at play-time*” and to the end of his tenure these ‘home exercises’ are referred to again and again.

Oct. 14th, 1863: “*A Public Tea was held preparatory to the opening of the Night School. Present 140*”. Other days, other ways. To-day the loud-speaker van, in 1863 a public tea. In 1867 this annual event attracted a company of 180. We don't know who paid, but many worthy citizens must have been prepared to subscribe to a movement concerned with making scholars of potential hooligans. Even so, the pranks of the night school boys have only lately ceased to be a topic wherever old men met over a glass to recall their lost youth. The girls (Bless them!) have left no such record.

Except the headmaster, who was, so to speak, ‘a pressed man’ the night school teachers were volunteers. Good men doing a good work; their visible reward a few words of thanks and praise from the Chairman at the public tea, to recruit them for one more winter's work. Well may H.M. Inspectors' report of March 1887 describe them as ‘active and faithful’.

Some voluntary help Mr. Wilcox had in the day schools. The Rector and his Curate were in and out taking ‘Scripture’ or ‘Holy Scripture’ frequently, and quite often ‘Reading’, bringing us back once more to that tablet in the church. Occasionally the Curate might take over for half a day, if the head was unwell. At one time the Revd. Vine took over the school regularly once a week from eleven till twelve.

The date of the commencement of the month's ‘Harvest Holiday’ varied between July 13th and Aug. 24th, as if some attempt were being made to fit it in with the period of maximum demand for child labour on the farms. In other words the School Board waited until they thought fine weather had come before ‘breaking up’. Those were normal years, but in 1879 they waited until Sept. 5th and the holiday lasted three weeks only. From other sources we know that they waited in vain.

Farmers who remember 1879 are now met but rarely. In the writer's youth however, that ‘black summer’ was freely quoted as the wettest and worst on record. The harvest rotted in the field and sheep died of ‘liver rot’ (fluke) by the thousand, faster indeed than they could be buried. Here and there it spread to the cattle, leaving some farms almost unstocked and the farmer altogether ruined. Plainly the holiday was postponed waiting for the harvest weather that never came.

On Feb. 20th 1872 we read “*Gave children half holiday to follow hounds*”. This was one way to avoid a poor attendance, because when the ‘Meet’ was local some children played truant and followed in any case. The habit of giving extra play for good attendance grows with the years. We are sure the teachers appreciated the reward and also that both teachers and scholars watched for Feb. 18th, the Gaffer's birthday which brought extra play or a half-day throughout his headship. Perhaps his birthday was partly responsible for the hunting holiday on Feb. 20th - the 18th was on a Sunday that year. We shall see later how extra play brought trouble to one of his successors.

There were holidays, whole or half days, for the night school Summer outing to Malvern or Portishead, for visits of H.M. Inspector, to celebrate the attainments of old scholars, for the annual cleaning of the brooks that drove the water wheels of the cloth mills, to prepare the room for concerts, and, of course, for Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1887.

No account book has survived to give us details of the ‘childrens' pence’ and though the ‘Log’ contains a number of references to totals collected, especially between 1873 and 1876, we are not able from them to determine the scale of charges nor the number who paid, though we gather that excusals and defaults were common.

For his first eight or nine years the syllabus was limited to ‘the three R's’. Needlework and Scripture, from the last of which dissenters could, but did not, withdraw their children. On Aug. 8th 1867 however, “*David Malpass, an old scholar, gave an interesting account of his voyage round the World*”, and (perhaps as a result) towards the end of 1868 a new subject appears- Geography. In March 1874, H.M. Inspector mentions Grammar, and in the following May “*30 children gave evidence of having been taught Drawing*”. Singing is mentioned at about the same date. In 1878, History. Plainly the curriculum is gathering speed.

Inevitably on go the brakes. In May 1880, H.M.I, says of the new subjects Physical Geography, Euclid and Algebra “*the experiment is not encouraging*”. Was it mathematical discouragement that caused Mr.

Wilcox then to abandon the practice he started in 1878 of giving his weekly average to one decimal place?

Of his test examination papers in Arithmetic, he has left us an example or two. At least we know where we are with them. No mental tests. No nonsense about problems. No superfluous words. “4076 @ 10¾ " was one of two sums set for Standard VI in Sept. 1868. Of official examinations he notes (Jan. 11th 1865) “*Children looking forward with pleasure to the Examination*”. ‘With pleasure’ - The little treasures! Too late now to tell him about ‘wishful thinking’, but how our heart goes out to the young ‘Gaffer’ on the eve of the annual ordeal in ‘the good old days’ of payment by results ! What relief to turn the page and read that they did quite well !

We learn that in 1872 the government grant was £57. 7. 0, the highest up to date, representing almost exactly ten shillings per child, and in imagination we see the knitted brows of local economists at market, meet of hounds, flower-show, hunt ball and ale-house parlour; and hear local financial doctrinaires discussing its relation to that recent and hateful innovation, Income Tax. Weren't we giving too much free education? Were we getting value for money?

Were schoolmasters a pampered race? Where would the extravagances of the 1870 Education Act land us? All this against a background of ancestral voices prophesying bankruptcy. If Edward Wilcox knew of these murmurings he was much too busy to give any heed. His was a dedicated life. First the school, second his family.

And now a more modern wielder of chalk and duster searches his ‘Log’, moving dreamily forwards and backwards and forwards again gleaning a few last scattered ears. An occasional entry “*Nothing particular*” suggests “Happy the country that has no history’ and ‘halcyon days’. From 1871 the entries are not daily as they have been, but weekly. No longer any need to write *“Nil”* when inspiration failed.

July 15th 1880: *“Alfred Davis fell into the river and was carried away. His body had not been found”.* Considering the proximity of dangerous water such tragedies have been surprisingly rare throughout the life of the school, though many have had narrow escapes.

July 11th 1867: *“Too hot to learn.”* How well we know that feeling.

" The moving finger writes and having writ
Moves on . . . . .

Complaints of weather and of restless children (he rarely complained of his staff) gradually give place to a secure and confident tone, setting out the achievements of the school and of its old scholars. The Parson continued to drop in for Scripture and Reading; the Parson's wife inspected the needlework; C. H. Hooper Esq. lectured to the night school on Nature Study and Temperance. Pupils who had sat under the ‘Young Gaffer’ came back to the ‘Old Gaffer’ leading their children by the hand to ask him to take them on and “learn them same as you learned me”. His reign of almost twenty-five year's seemed remarkable until exceeded by that of John W. Rowbotham who came in 1906 and left after more than thirty years, still brimful of energy to enter upon another successful career, this time in Holy Orders.

Yes, there was a Mrs. Wilcox. If her name is anywhere written in her husband's or H.M.I.'s reports it has eluded our search. Fortunately there is other evidence of her existence and of her teaching Needlework. It almost looks as if the provision of a wife to teach that subject was one more duty covered by the headmaster's meagre salary. She made good needlewomen of her pupils and in an age when moral welfare organisations were few and ineffective, she was alert to the dangers besetting adolescent girls, so that there are yet living old ladies now in their eighties, who remember and bless the guiding hand that kept them off the streets where poverty and prostitution went hand in hand.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilcox gave a dignity to the domestic virtues and taught by example that poverty is no bar to culture. Their two daughters became teachers, their four sons took Holy Orders each through a university. One of them founded a correspondence college that enjoyed a wide popularity.

As with their family, so with their pupils. Wintour F. Gwinnell, a cottage lad, scholar and pupil-teacher, in the early years of the school, re-visited his native place in November 1916 and as ‘Professor Wintour-Gwinnell, one of our leading British Geologists’ gave a public lecture in the schoolroom. In it he attributed his interest in Geology to finding a fossil (Ammonite) when a parish well was sunk on Alkerton Cross near his home in early childhood, and he attributed his advancement to the timely help and encouragement of Edward Wilcox.

His academic achievements earned celebration holidays for his old school and prompted no doubt, the inclusion of Physical Geography in the time-table. Harold Keys, who was the first Eastington assistant master, afterwards took Holy Orders as a Cambridge M.A. Other boys became headmasters, and shrewd, honest, hardworking and prosperous businessmen. Girls became teachers. Some like Alice Keys (sister of Harold) became headmistresses of important schools.

One boy, again from a cottage, leaving at twelve, entered a cloth mill where he remained almost all his working life, a humble employee. He had learned from his well-loved ‘Gaffer’ the value of self-education and as he matured, his leisure hours were filled to overflowing with public work. In his later years he sat, not without dignity, upon the Whitminster Bench.
“*Pupil Teacher Gouldin*g” says an entry in 1868, “*left to-day to better himself”*. Late in life, as a prosperous cloth merchant, he would sometimes tell an interested listener how he found he had no aptitude for examinations and how he resented having to sweep, dust and carry coals before school. Declaring it a ‘dog's life’, he handed in his notice. The ‘Gaffer’ had stirred up something in him, and given him a glimpse of himself, ‘a round peg in a square hole’. He did better himself.

Edward Wilcox, his life's work done, ‘fell asleep’ at Arnberley shortly after retirement. He too had faith and vision.

CHAPTER 12 - THE INFANTS SCHOOL

TO lament, time after time, the loss of documents important to the local historian is futile, but at this juncture the breakdown of evidence at a date so modern is particularly exasperating. That there is a story of the origin of our infants' school as interesting as that of the ‘National School’ is certain, and the writer still hopes some day to light upon the clues linking that mysterious pension paid to Jane Davis from 1824 to 1831 with the school of which our earliest glimpse is in 1875. Meanwhile an interim guess is that the pension was really a grant to Mrs. Davis while she continued teaching younger children under the auspices of another organisation having something of a free church bias, but sponsored, for all that, by that devoted son of the Church of England, the first Charles Hooper, who maintained the zeal for education of his predecessor Henry Hicks. It is thought that one or both of these men came under the influence of Samuel Wilderspin the pioneer of infants' schools, but evidence is lacking.

Our earliest infants' school log book opens in 1875, when we learn from it that Mrs. Hillier has been fairly recently installed, with a single girl monitor for staff, in a new building. This school-room adjoins the Methodist Chapel and is in use to-day as a Sunday school and a social centre.

The school had been held, we believe, in one cottage after another since its foundation, but had more recently been housed in a temporary building nearby. From the opening pages we gather that children attended up to nine years of age and that Mrs. Hillier has just obtained her ‘Certificate’ by long service and not by examination - that is the purport of a somewhat ambiguous entry.

There was much sickness among the children and her own health was not good. The are are no figures for attendance. No names of those admitted. No accounts of children's pence. We may be sure Mrs. Hillier recorded them - in books since lost.

We may be sure also that attendance was, and had to be an obsession; yet except for a rare "*So many children away gleaning*" and an occasional reference to the weather, she keeps the 'skeleton' loss of grant well to the back of the cupboard. Her weekly entries are businesslike and impersonal. Unlike Edward Wilcox she does not unburden her soul in daily or weekly soliloquy. Self-reliant and perhaps a little strait-laced, she did a workmanlike job along old-fashioned lines and got results, which was exactly what the authorities demanded in spite of references to 'the new methods' that begin to creep in. In the words of the old phrase, 'she knew her place' but took no nonsense from pupils, parents, managers or inspectors. "*Her children arise and call her blessed*" says her headstone in Eastington Churchyard.

On May 1st 1878, the school came under the control of the National School Committee. Hitherto it seems to have been supported by voluntary subscribers who appointed managers. The children's pence helped a little. Charles H. Hooper was Correspondent and held, as the most generous subscriber, a controlling interest. The Rev. S. Lynch, ('Daddy' Lynch to some still living) was a constant visitor. He was 'one of Fanny Peters's curates ' (as gossip called a somewhat rapid succession of assistants employed by Rector Thomas Peters) and an eccentric bachelor who was however, beloved of the whole parish.

> *"E'en children followed with endearing wile,*
> *And plucked his gown to share the good man's smile"*

James Warner who died in 1961, aged 101, remembered teaching ‘his reverence’ to play ‘the bones’. What a golden memory ! As to those curates, it is not at all unlikely that Mrs. Peters, a woman of character and ability, had some voice in the choice of curates, but be sure Eastington made the most of the rumour.

With a new infants' classroom in prospect at Churchend, and removal expected in the near future, only children under six are admitted as from May 1878, and about this time ill-health forced Mrs. Hillier to retire, as Mr. Hooper records in a eulogistic entry. We like to believe that her last days were comforted by the esteem in which she was held by the whole parish. *“In Affectionate Remembrance*” says the headstone in our churchyard, and for once we feel that epitaph and sober truth are one. She died in 1880, aged fifty-nine.

We shall see more of Charles Henry Hooper, Esq. as the spotlight of local history settles on him. Meanwhile we wonder how so short a tenure could Have made Mrs. Hillier a household word among a generation scarcely passed away, until we learn from another source that she had kept school for many years in a house at Churchend before coming to the old schoolroom at Alkerton. She was mistress of the infants' school itself for twenty-five years and she may well have kept a private school before that.

On June 25th 1878, Miss Willey of Farnham, Surrey, took over. Her very name is forgotten, but she lives again in the pages bf her log book. Her writing is difficult to read —not bad, but out of control. A voluminous autobiography compared with Mrs. Hillier's terse record. She has obviously studied and committed herself to ‘the new methods’ and her ‘Object Lessons’ cover an admirably wide and varied range.

‘Dust in the balance’ (for our purpose) weighed against an early entry of July. 31st 1878. *“Punished J. Cooper, F. Powell and S. Shill for throwing stones at an unfortunate man*”. (N.B. They did not learn that from the cinema). On Aug. 6th (six days later) the children are cautioned against throwing stones at fruit trees adjoining the playground.

In the first place, what a glimpse of a school-yard where feet rattled loose stones and raised dust clouds in Summer and splashed mud and water in Winter. What a picture of those turnpike roads with their loose stones raked into ruts and pot-holes. All around lay equipment for the game of ‘Dock’. A descendant of Elizabethan ‘Loggats’ played with large stones instead of wooden blocks. Really dangerous, though ankles were mostly saved by stout lace-up boots of real leather made by the village cobbler. Outlawed by teachers and parents the game survived surreptitiously at least until 1906. It may yet survive ‘underground’, but with shops full of sports equipment, dust bins carrying away broken toys from every home and school children abroad in gym-shoes, its survival among the young is unlikely. Revival by a public house coach party on a picnic is another matter.

In the second place we suspect weak discipline, and further entries bear this out. Punishment “*for throwing stones*” is varied by punishment for “*throwing stones and creating a disturbance*”. On July 5th 1879 we read, *“Punished William Grist for taking 9d. from the money-box in the cupboard*”. This box no doubt contained the ‘children's pence’ and presented the same temptation then that ‘dinner money’ does to-day.

Miss Willey's girls appear to have given little trouble, but the boys were completely out of hand. All, or nearly all, of them under seven, they threw stones, played truant, pilfered, lied, swore and defied her. Punishment was ineffective. Her sincerity and zeal in the application of ‘the new methods’ seems if anything to have made matters worse. She just wasn't cut out for the job. Her distress overflows into the pages of the log book and evokes our sympathy after three quarters of a century.

On Aug. 1st 1879 is entered H. M. Inspector's report. Much as we feared. No word of praise. Everything bad. Discipline worst of all. “*My Lords have ordered the Grant to be reduced by one tenth under Article 32(B) for defective discipline*”. Under the same date, we read, “*Mistress sent in her resignation*”. Poor Miss Willey! She had an unhappy time amongst us. How we wish we could discover a happy sequel, and learn how ‘Prince Charming’ (that Victorian ideal) was waiting in the porch and how she found domestic bliss amid pots and pans and pinafores for a little family - all girls.

To get back to sober fact. On Oct. 31st 1879, Miss Willey's last entry records the closing of the school behind Alkerton Chapel, and on Nov. 7th a firmer, clearer hand records re-opening in the new classroom at the National School, where Mr. Wilcox has recently complained of difficulty caused by the noise of building etc.

This initial entry of the new mistress concludes “*Better times in store*”. We have no clue to what she had in mind, but the words are prophetic. The writing seems half-familiar so that we learn without surprise that the writer is Mary Wilcox, daughter of the head of the ‘Big School’ and that although it was still an independent school and not an infants department there was close co-operation from now onwards.

If as we suspect there was a free church bias, it weakened as the school left the precincts of the Methodist Chapel. The Revd. Lynch still visited and C. H. Hooper is much in evidence. Among the visitors are names of families important and well-known, now lost to the parish. Hicks, Stanton, Ricketts and Davies catch the eye. In spite of the inducement of fees (children's pence) reduced to 2d. per week for the first child and 1d. for others of the family, Miss Wilcox started with a class of thirty-three only. She had the help of one girl ‘monitor’ (Not until 1892 do we meet the word ‘monitress’) and was successful from the start. H.M. Inspector's reports at first compare her favourably with Miss Willey and unfavourably with Mrs. Hillier, but get better year by year until overcrowding almost past belief makes progress impossible. We cannot resist two short quotations from a glowing report of Oct. 3rd 1884; *“such deficiences as exist . . . . are limited mainly to a want of intelligence on the part of the children*”. We have come up against that sort of child ourselves. “*In marching the children should avoid the appearance of running*”. What is wrong with ‘toddling’ for those recently admitted at three years ?

We visualise that classroom 32 feet by 18 feet as we follow the weekly average from 30 to 44, 51, 54 and (in 1881) 65. By April 1883 it reached 88.6; number present at all 96. The average attendance of the two schools together was around 270, with less space than is provided for to-day's 90 to 100. The assistant recommended by H.M.I, in 1884 was not provided, nor the additional classroom recommended in 1885. In 1887, the Grant was reduced by one tenth for neglect of the managers to provide the pictures recommended in the last two annual reports. Visiting the sins of the managers on teacher and scholars.

Mary Wilcox inherited her father's ability as a teacher and we suspect that she was once a pupil of Mrs. Hillier, but her reticence was all her own. If overcrowding, lack of assistance and almost complete absence of what is now essential, equipment, ever brought old-fashioned weariness of well-doing or new fangled frustration; if she was ever ‘properly browned-off’ we get no hint of it from her regular weekly entries. Edward Wilcox brought his problems, his failings and his triumphs to his log book as to a confessional. His daughter slept on it, waited until Friday afternoon, and then wrote, “*Weekly average 56.4.*” After that first cryptic forecast of “*better times*” she never ‘let herself go’ again.

One has to search for the few quotable passages. On Aug. 3rd 1883, “*Christina Huggins aged 5 years was drowned in a pool at Westend on her way home from school yesterday*”. Was this by any chance the same pond where a similar tragedy occurred some fifty years later ?

Like the father's, the daughter's writing and spelling are both excellent. In 1886 she spells ‘Whooping cough’ the new way coming into fashion with a "W" for the first time. We may assume, lacking proof, that she left to nurse her father in his retirement. Her headship lasted eight and a half years and her influence for longer than usual for so short a tenure. After her father's death, she resumed teaching elsewhere. For her too as we take leave of her Log we hope that there were ‘Better times in store’.

The Infants' School can be regarded from now on as a department of the National School, though it was not officially so until 1897, in which year this log book ends. Mrs. Aris became headmistress in 1888 and Mrs. Fendick in 1891. Both were wives of headmasters of the ‘Big School,’ and both were competent if somewhat pedestrian. What H.M.I, and the managers demanded they supplied, helped greatly by a sharp decline in numbers.

Tradition has by-passed them, but their entries raise here and there an echo. (June 1893) “*William D has a weak intellect* . . . . “ and is often “*absent without reasonable excuse*”. “*Billy D . . . .*” was a harmless “*natural*”. He attended school but little, partly because he had almost three miles to walk, and learned nothing. He lived into his fifties and would only work (in a clumsy fashion) and was only happy close by the hum and throb of a threshing machine and the hiss of steam from the traction engine that drove it. If offered other employment he replied, “*Only fools and donkeys work*”.

On Sept. 29th 1893, “*An American Organ has been presented to the school by Miss F. Peters on the occasion of her marriage to Mr. T. Matthews*”. This the school's first musical instrument, continued in active service until long after the First World War.

In a report in April 1892, H.M.I, complains of room taken up by the gallery. Up to that date an infants' classroom without a gallery had been unthinkable. It was removed in 1908. With school films and visual aids so much in vogue its return may shortly be hailed as a modern improvement.

CHAPTER 13 - THE REIGN OF KING CHARLES

CHARLES Henry Hooper the mill-owner was a great and good man according to Victorian standards. Family businesses were giving way to impersonal Limited Liability Companies, but he was still ‘the father of his people’. Wages were low, but his workers were men and brothers not wage slaves. He saw the solution of economic and social problems, perhaps too simply, in terms of religious observance, total abstinence and primary education.

A strong churchman himself, his zeal for organised Christianity as a whole knew nothing of sectarian bounds. He subscribed to the free churches only a little less than to the Church of England. His interest in all his employees extended to an active curiosity as to how they passed their Sundays, and each Monday morning his younger hands showed the foreman their attendance cards signed by a Sunday school teacher. As a result St. Michael's Church, and Wesleyan and Baptist Chapels, and the Sunday schools of all three filled to overflowing.

The eight or ten public houses were reduced to six (there are now four) and their trade was not brisk. He erected and maintained a memorial fountain in front of the largest of them, so that no one should be driven to alcohol by thirst. It commemorates Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and has been waterless for decades. So long indeed that cynics have lately forgotten to call it ‘Hooper's folly’ and younger folk agree when visitors mistake it for an ancient market cross.

A minority contracted out (so to speak) of the patriarchy by spending their week-end and evening leisure in neighbouring parishes. There were no buses, no tarmac roads, no safety bicycles, and while a few dare-devils bounced and wobbled over the rough roads on penny-far-things travel for the vast majority was on foot. Field foot paths were worn wide by bands of thirsty pilgrims journeying to and from ‘locals’ at Stonehouse, Frocester, Slimbridge, Frampton and Whitminster.

As for education, we have seen Mr. Hooper, a supporter of the night school and correspondent and benefactor of the infants' school at Alkerton. On its removal to Churchend, he became officially treasurer and unofficially the ‘strong man’ and the driving force of the managers of the new school. In an age when every notable person in the parish had a nickname, the title of ‘King Charles’ was used with respect and affection.

Something of this was conveyed to young Joseph Moore as he approached Eastington School for an interview on a fine day in the Spring of 1888. Heat and nerves made him thirsty, and coming from Stonehouse railway station, he called at the New Inn to ask the way and to drink a half pint of beer. He was a temperate man, but mistrusted teetotallers, and hearing from the ‘regulars’ how the land lay he decided that his luck was out and was half inclined to return he way he had come.

However, he kept the appointment. He liked Mr. Hooper in spite of the ‘water-waggon’ complex. Mr. Hooper took to him, and by holding his breath at times lest the great man should smell beer (so he has told the tale) he was appointed assistant master. His salary of nearly £40 a year covered extra work as a Sunday school teacher and as church organist. It was indeed a fortunate day for Eastington. While headmasters, correspondents, treasurers, parsons and churchwardens came and went, while mills and factories closed for demolition or re-opened with new industries in new names, Joseph Moore remained, in one capacity or another, for over sixty years the good and faithful servant of his adopted parish.

Edward Wilcox was succeeded by John Aris. His is another forgotten name - forgotten even by his old scholars who, if you ask the name of the headmaster after Wilcox, answer invariably 'Gaffer Moore'. Yet John Aris did good work, and if, as H.M.I. said, he took to a school where "*even in the upper school some children count on their fingers and in the lower by strokes on their slates*", well what did he expect? Even to-day many a boy grows to manhood through both primary and secondary education never realising that he cannot count until he takes up darts. He learns then in a few evenings.

Joseph Moore was a teacher in advance of his time. Where he taught drudgery was unknown - an unusual state of affairs around 1890. His 'Object Lessons' were a joy, and whereas his class (Stds. III and IV) occupied part of the large undivided room for other lessons, his object lessons were given in the small classroom, lest other classes should have their attention diverted from less interesting tasks. The ambition of younger scholars was 'to go up into Mr. Moore's' and the two years with him passed all too quickly. He had a system of his own of slight incentives, but often a word of praise from him was sufficient to awaken dormant and unsuspected energies and ambitions.

His work as a teacher ended in Feb. 1900. Though he tried again and again he could not qualify by examination. We have seen how in 1875 Mrs. Hillier was awarded her certificate for service, and the same thing has happened to Eastington assistants in recent years, but such exceptions were not countenanced in his day and Mr. Moore left the profession with the rank of 'ex P.T.'. He became Attendance Officer and later a very human Relieving Officer under the Poor Law, and a Registrar of Births and Deaths. So completely did his personality permeate the school that at this distance of time an entry on Sept.11th 1891, "*The temperature of the school 70 degrees*" at once suggests that this, the only reference to (quite reasonable) Summer heat, was prompted by a recent object lesson on ‘The Thermometer’ by Mr. Moore.

Of events under headmasters Aris and Fendick, we may note a few. In 1889 ‘Harvest holiday’ becomes ‘Summer holiday’. In the same year poetry learned by heart becomes more like real literature and includes verse from Tennyson, Wordsworth, Macaulay and (Std. VII) Shakespeare. In Aug. 1891 The School Committee accepted the Government offer of ‘Free Education’. Exit children's pence. Enter the attendance officer. In Aug. 1892 is the last log book reference to the night school. How long it survived after that we do not know, but it had been declining for some years and the raising of the school age to twelve in 1891 rendered it less indispensable, and the Winter session of 1892-3 may have been the final flicker.

(Apr. 27th 1892) *“A supply of water has been laid on to the school”*. The pump in the playground was soon dismantled, but for several years other pumps functioned all over the parish, the nearest ones to the school being at the bottom of Springhill, at the bottom of the Lodge Pitch, and handiest of all, at the end of the road by Churchend Farm. It you held your head below the top of the wall there was cover all the way and the temptaion in a hot Summer playtime was irresistible.
“O, everyone that thirsteth, and hath the price to buy, Come to the stolen waters and live before you die.”
The price was one stroke for the first time and two for the second—but only if you were caught; and beside the sweetness there was always a good chance, that not you, but your companion with his mouth to the spout, would receive in it one of those large yellow ‘long-finger’ water snails.

The ‘Check System’ introduced in Sept. 1892 is well worth study by those interested in the use of incentives in school or elsewhere. The ‘Checks’ were metal discs of which three were issued to each child each morning, to be added to or subtracted from by the teacher throughout the day according to behaviour and industry. At the end of the day they were collected, and each child's total was booked. At the end of the week, for the three or four highest scores prizes were given of stamps to be affixed to a form which when full could be paid into a Post Office Savings Bank Account. The children were encouraged to buy their own stamps to add to the forms, and thus, as a by-product an impetus was given to the savings movement.

An entertainment to raise funds was the prelude, when C. H. Hooper, Esq., like the apostle of industry and thrift he was, expounded the scheme and outlined the golden hopes of the promoters. For a time the hopes appeared to be justified, but it seems that irregular methods of accumulation and of making returns crept in and spread, and a later headmaster was glad to abolish (about 1900) a scheme where the prizes too often went to the astute rather than to the diligent.

The checks were commonly hoarded in the mouth (pushed into the cheek to read or answer a question), a great comfort in dreary lessons and in competition with the pitch that was the school's chewing-gum. The pitch came by illicit ways from the railway, and formed, together with the checks themselves, part of the trade-by-barter system of the school that included slate-pencils, nuts, apples, sweets, marbles, tops, hoops, knives and indeed anything prized and portable.

We hope Mr. Hooper was not too disappointed. After all there was a permanent gain in some dozens of Savings Bank Books in the hands of parents.

During these years, the school was very near his heart. About H.M.I.'s reports no headmaster could have been more anxious. Within a few minutes of the arrival of this official visitor at the school, a message would reach Eastington Lodge by the mouth of the school's fastest runner and the messenger back in his place while the log book was still under examination. After a decent interval Mr. Hooper arrived, not on foot but in his carriage-and-pair. (He happened to be passing). So convenient to whisk the august presence away to lunch.
He was entertained royally. Everybody, including H.M.I, saw through the game, but we may be sure the school report was no worse for this attention to his creature comforts. There was curiosity at the time, and the point was never cleared up, as to whether for such an important guest a rigidly teetotal table provided anything more exciting that water to drink!

How secure and stable it all seemed! Church and chapels, day and Sunday schools, cricket club, swimming club, missionary society and brass band; parson, organist, headmaster, teachers and scholars all accepting gratefully the advice and guidance and the friendly helping hand of C. H. Hooper, Esq. Knowing full well of the impending collapse we turn to March 31st 1897 an read in his own hand “.. *introduced the new Headmaster, Mr. Booth”*.
In June of the same year, there was a holiday for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Still peace.

On June 9th the new Rector called and the same day he (the Rev. Richard Rimmer) was appointed correspondent of the managers of whom he was ex-officio chairman. His predecessor the Rev. Vine had been a kindly father of his flock for several years and had come to lean more and more upon his churchwarden, Mr. Hooper, who was now only too anxious to extend the same vigorous service to the young parson. His help was unwanted. His advice unwelcome.

(Feb. 23rd 1898) “*Ash Wednesday. Children attend Church at 11.0 A.M.*”
It had come at last - what the dissenters feared in 1859. It had come after forty years.
(May 19th) “*Ascension Day. Children attend Church*”.
And Charles Hooper was one who had pledged himself, when the Trust Deed was framed, to see that Wesleyans and Baptists had fair play. He controlled his annoyance and when as long after as November in the same year, he entered the school somewhat discourteously (says Booth's entry) it was only to complain that the children were damaging the hitherto well-kept garden in front of the building.

For the time being that ended the matter, but when on Jan. 6th 1899 the children were again taken to Church we read that “*C. H. Hooper called and objected to this with threats*”. Church again on Feb. 2nd. This time some parents object. The cold war is warming up, though hostilities are not yet out of hand. However one afternoon a little later, Mr. Hooper, visiting Churchend Mill, noticed the children having a long playtime. A message from him by the mouth of a mill-hand told Mr. Booth to have the children in at once as their play interval had been exceeded. Mr. Booth with North-country directness bade the messenger convey to Mr. Hooper that the headmaster was competent to manage his own time-table.

This word-of-mouth interchange lost little by reporting and made public a state of affairs so far only guessed at. No longer merely a school quarrel it overflowed into every part of the parish and engaged the passions of every section of the community. One explosive incident touched off another and the world looked on at a scene of one-time friends fighting actions for libel or slander, of neighbours threatening one another with ducking in the river, of house-dogs trained to snatch mouthfuls of trouser-leg from visitors and of a Rector burned, together with his lady friend, in effigy in the King's Head field, now the housing estate of the Rural District Council, at Alkerton.

Churchwardens laid down their staves. The choirmaster vacated his stall. Fearful citizens armed themselves with ‘life-preservers’ (as those overgrown Victorian ‘coshes’ were called), and the columns of the local press overflowed with copy like the answer to every editors' prayer. The din of battle echoed wider and wider until it supplied headlines for the great ‘London Dailies’. All this might yet have been averted if only old " King Charles " had stepped into the school himself to discover what scheme for the benefit of his scholars had made the enthusiastic head oblivious of the passage of time, or if only young ‘General’ Booth had been less on his dignity!

Retracing past events in the pages of the log book, we begin to realise how almost completely the whole catalogue is forgotten, but quite a few who remember little else of their schooldays still recall the fine February afternoon with a feeling of ‘something going on’ in the air, when playtime lasted until evening hymn and dismissal. In the absence of this incident peace would have been kept a little longer, but not indefinitely while the root cause of conflict remained.

Feb. 15th 1899 brings Ash Wednesday and Church, but sixteen children, whose parents objected, stayed at school and did ‘sums’. For this attendance at Church, John Booth records written permission of H.M.I, and later records the refusal of the managers to believe in the existence of a letter they have not seen -the managers, that is, with the exception of the Rector (Chairman and correspondent).

The Rector took the view that Eastington was a normal Church school, and supported and encouraged Mr. Booth, who agreed with him, by his almost daily presence in school. A tall, dark, handsome young man with hypnotic eyes and a compelling voice, he held his head high and strode the country roads, a long forked stick in his hand, like a squire of broad acres. A pair of bull-dogs followed at his heels. At first their ugly faces terrified the children, but later finding them docile, and encouraged one fears, by their parents, we see boys receiving corporal punishment in school, for pelting them with stones, at the hands of the Rector himself, with the approval of the headmaster. More fuel to the fire.

From now onwards, Mr. Booth began to do this or that "’with the permission of the Rector’. The parish resounded with arguments about ‘the conscience clause’ on which Mr. Hooper insisted as strongly as any dissenter. Mr. Rimmer doubted, so he said, if the Trust Deed contained any such clause and declared the copy produced to be spurious. The Trust Deed itself, though in existence at the beginning of the dispute, could no longer be found when its production was demanded, and each side accused the other of destroying the evidence.

There is little doubt to-day that the copy that has survived is authentic. On all hands its conscience clause, framed to avert just such a position as had arisen, was now quoted more or less accurately by dissenting partisans whose consciences had given them no twinge on this account for forty years.

Thirty parents now signed a memorial ‘praying that their children should not be taken to Church’. On May 15th, 1899, Mr. Hooper had scarcely finished distributing prizes for attendance, when the Rector entered. Mr. Hooper withdrew amid the laughter of the children “*which I stopped*”- So writes Mr. Booth in the log-book that reveals so much. Only those whose dormant memories are awakened by every entry can realise how much is omitted. In March 1900, the Parish Meeting censures Mr. Booth. He wonders what for! In March 1901 the school is used as a Polling Station for a Parish Council Election. “*Gas cut off by Messrs. Hooper*”. The school was lit by gas from the supply that came to Churchend Mill. Mr. Booth would be a little over-sensitive about that election in which he was a heavily defeated candidate. Mr. Hooper, who was (as usual) top of the poll, would not have countenanced any action causing annoyance to voters, but whether the " cut-off " was accidental or a practical joke by employees on voters and candidates alike has never been determined. Next morning before opening of school, early scholars, prompted by parents, chanted “*For he's a jolly good fellow*” with censorable variations.

Defeated with Mr. Booth was a young man of good family and independent means, self-styled and accepted as Count de Segri, Nobleman. Ennobled, he explained, by the true King of England, a descendant of the Stuarts, whom he had met abroad and to whom he owed allegiance. He dressed the part. Kilt, bonnet, sporran and dirk showed to advantage on his well set-up frame. He looked every inch a Highland chieftain. He was not taken seriously but regarded as an interesting eccentric and a village show-piece, until on the death of Queen Victoria a shocked parish learned that a paper pinned to the Church door proclaimed the accession of a Stuart pretender. With commendable discretion he avoided the public eye and made an early departure from Eastington. Common gossip blamed him for the seditious document, but the police took no action, and a minority whispered that it just another of the practical jokes of the Rev. Rimmer. It was he who arranged the nomination of both unsuccessful candidates “*for fun*” he said afterwards.

School attendance got worse and worse. Children ran off at playtime to follow the hounds. In vain Mr. Booth harangued Mr. Frank Miles, the attendance officer. In the face of public opinion Mr. Miles, a conscientious but discreet man dared not recommend, and the attendance committee dared not undertake, prosecution. Employers took advantage of the position to engage school children. ‘Conscientious objection’ extended to all school religious instruction. Mr. Booth developed ‘neurasthena’.

On April 17th 1902 we read, “*Log Book will be kept in the School House*”. Around this date several entries have been carefully and completely obliterated. Our guess is that Mr. Hooper had started to hit back either by entry or erasure. He must have been sorely galled by the sharp arrows aimed at him by the Yorkshireman from between the stout leather covers.

A day or two after, on medical advice and with the Rector's permission, Mr. Booth goes away to Bude. A letter follows signed by four managers giving him notice. Mr. Booth returns. Mr. Rimmer calls managers' meetings - no one but himself attends. On June 3rd another notice of dismissal. Mr. Booth replies, saying the notice is not legal. On June 19th Mr. Hooper, as treasurer, cuts the requisition list before sending to the suppliers. The school cleaner resigns and the place is not filled. On Aug. 28th after Summer holidays, the salaries of assistants are paid, but Mr. Booth is referred to the solicitors of the managers.

On Sept. 1st, the school doors are barricaded by a son of Mr. Hooper and some mill hands. The police are in attendance to prevent a breach of the peace. A notice on the door proclaims anyone who enters a trespasser. Later in the day the Rector is allowed to unlock the doors and admit Mr. Booth. In spite of handbills and personal visits neither teachers nor scholars appeared for some three weeks, after which first the teachers and then the scholars came in small but sufficient numbers for re-opening. The storm was blowing itself out. Parents got tired of having children around them getting into mischief. Onlookers found incidents less amusing by repetition. In the local press the ‘Eastington School Difficulty’ now filled an inch or so of an inconspicuous column. Conscientious scruples became a bore. Still the tug-of-war went on. The four managers resigned and Richard Rimmer ex-officio chairman somehow found supporters to fill their places. The parish remained hostile, and there was only one way to peace.

Richard Rimmer resigned and left the parish in Nov. 1902 and his managers (in June 1904) put an end to the sorry affair by ordering discontinuance of church attendance in school time. In Aug. 1904 the Booths, man and wife, left to take up work in Dr. Barnardo's Homes, where Mr. Booth had a successful career. In the infants' department, Mrs. Booth had been a good and conscientious teacher. To the outsider she gave the impression of being narrow and opinionated, but her kindness of heart was unquestionable. Her loyalty to her husband was made easy by her loving admiration of him.

After her death he married Miss Florence Coates, an assistant who served Eastington school faithfully and well during his headship and for several years after his departure. He frequently revisited the parish, the honoured and much-loved guests of some who had most fiercely opposed his policies. From first to last the parish knew him as ‘General’ Booth after a more famous Booth, whose style of beard he appeared to imitate, but the nickname like that of ‘King Charles’ was affectionate.

Both these men were sincere, kindly and unselfish. In the height of the struggle mutual admiration and respect were never quite lost and might easily have turned to friendship. The character of the debonair and Reverend Richard Rimmer is more difficult to assess. He too was sincere, at least in his determination to have a thorough-going church school. The same sincerity shone through is really eloquent sermons. He had another side. There were times when he seemed to forget his sacred office and become the care-free, irresponsible young man about town, using (or misusing) his rich intellectual gifts to foment trouble, and to whom the implacable earnestness of the other two was part of a great lark. Few of his flock approved the fondness for horse-racing that was to prove his downfall a few years later; yet in fairness, it must be said that he never allowed it to interfere with his duties as our Rector.

It would be wrong to suppose that the school itself under Mr. Booth was ever really in a state of chaos or that education made no progress. Indeed he did so much to amplify the good beginnings of Aris and Fendick and was so indefatigable in new schemes that one feels there is nothing he might not have accomplished had his energy not been so unhappily diverted. Purchase of a kitchen range that girls might learn cookery and of books to be the nucleus of a school library were among the projects he brought into being. A piano supplemented the ‘American organ’, wheezy and rheumatic but with long life still before it. Insanitary slates were abolished throughout the school. His plans for adult education and for young peoples' clubs never had a chance.

Charles Hooper lived some few years more, and although less active, his interest in the school only ceased with his death. On balance, in spite of the troubled years, the school and parish have cause to value in retrospect the reign of ‘King Charles’.

CHAPTER 14 - COUNCIL SCHOOL NO 129

WE do not propose to carry the story of our school further, at least not in any detail. Approaching our own times we tread softly. All around lie youthful dreams and ambitions - for the most part unfulfilled. Our grey-headed neighbours bending over their prattling grandchildren were pupils of Joseph Moore, John Booth and Florence Coates. They listen a trifle bewildered to stories of to-day's lessons, especially as the children only laugh when asked to say their seven times table or to repeat the alphabet. Yet somehow they can read - they bring home library books. Most of them can bring back the right change from the shop and some can even write a letter.
They must be clever kids.
‘General’ Booth would have made real scholars of them."

John Booth was followed by Owen Davies of Cardiff with Mrs. Davies in charge of the infants. Their stay was brief. In May 1906 came John Rowbotham. Mrs. Rowbotham did not teach, but became a great asset to the social life of the parish, being more than anyone else responsible for the flourishing Infants' Welfare Clinic. She rests in the shadow of the church they both loved so much. Quite early in their time came many changes long expected and urgently demanded by H.M.I.. The classroom was enlarged, a glass partition was erected to divide the large room, the gallery in the infants' room was removed and the room re-floored, and the thick opaque window panes replaced by clear glass. The leaded diamond panes of the painted glass window suffered the same treatment. Painted and presented by the Rev. Thomas Peters, its blue, red and gold patterns framed a number of texts. “*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart therefrom*” and “*Remember thy creator in the* *days of thy youth"* are two that come to mind. One would like to remember 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' but truth must prevail.

Its removal was bitterly resented by some older inhabitants who remembered the donor and his family. On the other hand its beauty had been marred by catapult practice and repair would have been difficult and expensive. The beautiful slender bell-turret with its wooden shingles had a slightly longer life. It was voted expensive to maintain and removed in Sept. 1926. Each generation makes its own excuses for vandalism.

On Jan. 12th 1909 was the first modern medical inspection, and by about the same date the school library became really adequate. In 1907 Mr. Rowbotham revived May Day celebrations that have continued without a break ever since. The May Queen, elected by her fellow scholars, is crowned at the school as the first event of a day of marching round the parish followed by a crowd of parents and sightseers, with stops for Maypole and Morris dancing, and for refreshments on the lawns of residents. In the first years a 'comb' band headed the procession and provided accompaniment to the dances. One or two years when older boys had sufficient talent a penny-whistle band took its place. Nowadays a gramophone. The loss of the older scholars makes organisation less easy, and spacious, well-kept lawns are a thing of the past, but the present headmaster of what is now Eastington Council School No.129 continues to uphold the tradition.

We have been unable to find any document throwing light on the 'half-timers', i.e. scholars who attended school for five half days a week and put in the remainder of the working week at a cloth mill. Henry Hicks, we know, established a class of such children around 1818, taught we believe by William Hurd , but if the system as the writer knew it about the year 1900 was a survival from those early years it is indeed strange that our log-books never once mention it.

Whether a survival or a revival the writer remembers clearly these boys and girls within a year or so of leaving age. Too few to form a class of their own, want of continuity deprived them of the benefit of the instruction in the classes they joined. They were tired and listless, and regarded by the other scholars as dunces. Doubtless they as well as the teachers were relieved when they reached leaving age. To describe it as an irritating futility is not to condemn the aim of the promoters. A school or even a class for such pupils was an entirely sensible idea, but to try to fit a few of them into normal school classes amounted to little short of victimisation. The Rev. John W. Rowbotham frequently comes amongst us. He takes a service in church, crowns the May Queen, or sits down with us, the guest of honour, at a football dinner. His old scholars cluster round him. His memory for every one of them is proof - if proof were needed - of the unremitting attention he gave to their welfare from the days when the excuse for absence was too often “*No boots*” through all the years between until it had changed to “*No bus*”.

There is one other whose record calls for a word. One whose modesty would instantly reject any special claim to a niche in the hall of fame. On June 1st 1910, Miss Elsie Watts commenced duty in charge of the infants' class. She retired on July 23rd 1953 after forty-three years continuous service. Pupils leave the infants' class so young that it is impossible to guess in how many she has kindled the spark of scholarship; what impresses us is the widespread loving memory in which old Eastington scholars hold their Miss Watts. Another Mrs. Hillier, whose children have reason to call her blessed.

Here then we take leave of our school, and if here and elsewhere in these pages the emphasis has been placed on people rather than on bricks and mortar and measurable material things, that is surely as it should be.

Have we brought the story too near to our own times? Better perhaps to have halted while faith was yet unclouded and before doubts arose as to whether after all the vision might prove a mirage? With reading so often stopping short in adult life at the ‘Comic’ or ‘Strip Cartoon’ stage; with ‘Mathematics for the Million’ sufficient only for the darts-board, and with writing inadequate beyond the requirements of Betting slips and Pools,"we cannot help sometimes wondering, ‘Was it for this?’. Yes indeed we are too near our own times. Let us step once more into the North porch of our Church and turning to the West arrive at the font as we did when first we entered with our God-parents. Let us spell out once more slowly and reverently the faded eighteenth century lettering on that wall tablet; and renew in our hearts the faith and the vision.

CHAPTER 15 - THE LAST SHEAF

“When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field and hast forgot a sheaf. ..” - Deuteronomy xxiv. 19.

TIME after time, starting a chapter or a section at an early date, we have brought that part of the story well into the Twentieth Century. What remains is to achieve some unification against a background of events in the lifetime of many still living. In spite of a resolve to avoid fantasy and follow ‘close upon the heels of truth’ some pages have been concerned with probabilities, deductions and intelligent guess work. Much of the history of the school is, however, by a participant in the incidents recorded, and almost all that follows might be signed ‘eyewitness’.

What to-days' roads are to the modern child, we can only guess. To the toddler of sixty-years ago plodding to one of the little dame's schools, through mud or dust according to the season and over loose stones always, they were wonderland itself.

There were massive shaggy-legged horses drawing carts and waggons; cobs and nags delivering meat or bread, sleek clean-legged high-stepping hackneys speeding with carriage-and-pair, dog-cart or gig; and ponies and donkeys harnessed to tub or governess car. There were a few penny-farthing bicycles and as many ‘twopence-farthing’ tricycles each with heavy spokes and very narrow solid tyres of ‘gutta percha. The ‘boneshaker’ and ‘hobby horse’ with their wooden or iron tyres and propelled by the feet of the rider striking the ground, had passed away with the previous generation.

Once in a while, that newly-invented iron monster a steam-roller was seen at its work —it could actually go backwards. Even the old people watched, without open disapproval, the machine that was giving our roads a surface free from ruts, from pot holes and from the loose stones that lamed the horses. With luck a man with a red flag might appear followed by a traction engine hauling ‘the drum’ (threshing machine) from one farm to another.

Threshing machines were not new. Moved by horses from place to place and driven by horse-gearing needing four horses, they had been in use here and there for fifty years without displacing any appreciable number of the human threshers who wielded a ‘nile’ (flail) all through the Winter on floors in barns and sheds dotted about the parish. The skins of the large eels caught on night-lines or in ‘putchins’ (eel traps) in the Frome, were in great demand as being tougher than leather for the joint of the flail.

The coming of the traction engine to move as well as drive ‘the drum’ finally released the workers who ‘niled’ out and winnowed the grain, with a consequent saving of human life. The work was dusty, the building ill ventilated, exclusion of birds and vermin being the first consideration, so that tuberculosis took a heavy toll. In those days much cable ploughing and mole draining was being done by traction engines with winding drums.

About the same date, travellers reported to groups of disbelievers having seen one of those ‘horseless carriages’ following its own red flag. The loungers around the blacksmith's shop (demolished to make way for the Co-operative Stores in 1914.) laughed incredulously. “He must be a fool” they said, “to expect us to believe that”. Incredulity disappeared however when a real motor car actually passed through the parish, and after the red flag had disappeared and the speed limit had risen from four to twenty miles per hour, the whole parish (as it seemed) turned out to see the passage, on their way from Bristol to Gloucester, of a hundred cars attempting a journey of a hundred miles under the auspices of ‘The Daily Mail’. Solid-tyred, on three wheels more often than on four, their varied designs had an underlying suggestion of a common ancestry - by waggonette out of Bath chair. Few finished the course.

They carried no speedometers, but an estimate of their speed between Cambridge and Claypits can still be made. A cycle-shop had recently been opened on Alkerton Cross, where ‘safety’ bicycles could be hired at sixpence an hour. Only some half dozen well to do citizens owned these novelties, others, especially the young, saved their sixpences for week-end hiring. These cycles had pneumatic tyres, which was a great advance, but they had a ‘fixed wheel’ and no brakes.

To advertise his business, the blacksmith who owned the cycle-shop, had a bicycle built for his ten year old eldest son. This was the first child's bicycle in the district then, and for many years after, and on the occasion of the ‘motor run’ the rider, little John Howell, plied on this cycle between Wixter's Bridge and Claypits to report from time to time “There's another coming” - and in due course it arrived.

On the same road, A 38, where now vehicles sometimes flash past for hours at the rate of sixty a minute, one could journey from Eastington to Gloucester (fifty to sixty years ago) and see no more than a dozen vehicles (except in the city) and as many ragged tramps. The roadside inns were falling into decay, ruined by the railway. When cars began to appear here and there horses took fright and refusing to face the invaders, turned in the road and bolted. Horsemen shared their dislike if not their panic and addressed vitriolic letters to the local press and to the local Member of Parliament demanding in the name of humanity that the " murder cars " be barred from the roads and their owners required to build well-fenced private tracks on which to indulge their suicidal propensities.

The temperature of aged aristocrats and of their employees fell to normal when younger members of the family brought the machines home in triumph, and Eastington became enthusiastic for motoring when the Rev. Ward came with his car AD 1, giving rides in the first windswept snorter of that number to all and sundry of his flock.

By 1900 doctors had become a habit with the majority, though many still took their ailments and those of their children to ‘the wise woman’ who lived in a lonely cottage this side of Nympsfield. Reputed to be the daughter of a doctor (possibly unregistered), her bent and aged figure could be seen about woods and hedgerows early and late, and here patients sought her if they found the cottage empty when they called with their ringworms, warts, styes, whitlows, chilblains and more serious ailments.

Ringworm was very prevalent and lightly regarded. The pupils of Gaffer Wilcox cured these unsightly blemishes by covering them with ink. When however, the old fashioned iron and logwood gave place to modern carbon powders, the ink-well ceased to be a fountain of healing.

The word tuberculosis (or T.B.) had not then reached common speech. Sufferers from what was called ‘consumption’ or ‘the pine’ haunted cow sheds during milking hours and rising early in summer months collected and ate raw the tiny transparent dew snails. Others slept under hedges rolled in sheep skins; these being reputed remedies. An ordinary cold drove the victim to the forge to hold his head over the hoof burning at the touch of the hot horse-shoe. The health-giving agent was no doubt the ammonia. A garage affords no such elixir of life.

The immense range of machines, tools, jigs, and gadgets that lighten the labour of every worker existed only in the dreams of a few moon-struck mechanics and no housewife could have foreseen either to-day's labour saving household appliances or our infinite variety of packed goods. Tea came to the grocer loose in the chest and lard in wooden buckets. Conical sugar-loaves had to be broken into lump sugar with a pincers-like cutter. Candles that did not require snuffing were coming into use - a " snuffer" is now a museum curiosity —and most homes had begun to use oil lamps that were almost always temperamental and frequently dangerous. There was no packet yeast. The baker got his can of "’barm’ (Shakespeare's ‘dram of eale’) weekly from the brewery. The blacksmith made almost all his own tools. The carpenter and wheelwright bought their timber in the tree-trunk and reduced it at the saw-pit, the long rip-saw being handled by the ‘top-sawyer’ above the timber who guided the saw, and the ‘bottom-sawyer’ in the pit who worked half-blinded, half-choked, and half-buried in saw-dust for less money, being the unskilled assistant. The last sawpit to be closed down stood in the garden, now Mr. Barnfield's, near Warner's Garage.

Thatched houses were few, but thatch fires were still not uncommon, mostly caused by sparks from a chimney fire or a garden bonfire. The burning thatch was torn off with an iron rake and the fire quickly put out if taken in time. Sometimes an onlooker ran to the Post Office to ask the operator of the ‘dot and dash’ telegraph to call the fire engines. “*And have you got your sixpence?*” asked the postmistress. “*And will you undertake to pay the fire-brigade*?” These were routine questions. The service was not free and only when the owner guaranteed payment did the engines arrive - too late. The journey from Stroud with horses took half an hour or more.

Interesting characters to children were the ‘snailers’ who came round in March and asked permission to search the garden. With a slender hooked iron rod, they drew clusters of their prey from walls, hedge-bottoms and rockeries to fill their sacks. Their trade, they said, was with the glass-blowers of Bristol who ate the ‘wallfish’ to strengthen their lungs. Bottles were still being blown then ‘by word of mouth’. Snailers still visit us, but not regularly. Fearful and wonderful were the dancing bears. Huge brown shaggy creatures in charge of a gang of six or eight bearded foreigners. Our elders said they were Poles and we supposed that related to the stout staff seven or eight feet long carried by each to keep the chained bear at a respectful distance and to poke the beast to persuade it to stand on its hind legs and shuffle to the strains of a concertina. At night they slept under a hedge grouped around their captive.

Before the coming of motor cars, they were the worst enemy of the horsemen. A horse had only to smell a bear to become unmanageable through fear. Horsemen turned down side roads or into farmyards or fields while bear and bear-leaders passed by, or made their journey by an alternative route.

Travelling circuses, menageries and fun-fairs were occasional visitors, very welcome to a parish that for the most part had to make its own amusements. A sight of the bearded lady or of the lion tamer putting his bald head in the lion's mouth was a change from the sameness of performances by our brass band, our string band, and our local vocalists, and from monthly ‘penny readings’, magic lantern shows and ‘Band of Hope’ concerts. Italian organ grinders, complete with monkey trained to collect the pennies, might be seen sometimes two or three times a week and occasionally a real German band could be seen and heard on Alkerton Cross.

"And she went and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers"
The harvest field depicted in the Book of Ruth needed no explanation to anyone born in Eastington around 1890, but was recognized as any local corn field. Men cut the corn with a sickle or with a 'fagging' hook, women workers bound the sheaves and the poor by an unwritten law derived perhaps from Deuteronomy, gleaned the fallen ears for themselves, and were sometimes invited, as Ruth was, to share the refreshment provided for the reapers. Eastington people did not use the world 'glean', poor women and children made up parties to go 'leazing'.

To those born since the First World War, such a picture is historical re-construction. Science has transformed the technical process and swept away the social scene. The combine-harvester threshing as it moves across the acres is of another age from the sickle and the flail.

Local labour was supplemented by gangs of Irish 'faggers' (labourers) who came over each season "*to cut the Sassanach* (Saxon) *wheat*". Large gangs operated on the Wiltshire Downs and on the Cotswolds, and usually we employed only small off-shoots from these towards the end of the season. They held the hook in the right hand, but instead of the crook held in the left many Irish reapers used the left foot to hold the straw against the blow and to fashion the sheaf.

"The sower went forth to sow . . . . "
Sixty years ago the corn-drill had come into pretty general use, but something like half the Eastington acreage was sown broadcast on the furrows as it was in that two-thousand years old parable. The sower wore at his waist a 'seed-lip' suspended by shoulder straps. From this

oval basket he sowed with alternate hands, or simultaneously crossing his swinging arms, to cover a wide strip in his walk up and down the lands (ridges). Small parcels of land were planted with the hoe or with the dibber. It is on record that the last arable crop carried by Mr. Warner's orchard at the top of Millend Pitch, was wheat planted with the dibber, three grains to a hole.

Scores of working-class people rented allotments in the fields in every part of the parish, not primarily for garden produce, but for bread corn. Dug with the spade or ploughed with the ‘breast plough’ that made a man do the work of a horse; planted with the hoe and hand-weeded, some of it came to harvest somehow in spite of the sparrows. It was reaped with the sickle in handfuls, or ‘by hook and crook, bound in sheaves and built into ‘pucks’. These small pillar-box stacks of twenty or thirty sheaves stood on the land until the holder got the loan or hire of a threshing floor and a horse and cart.

The corn was threshed and winnowed, collected by the miller's cart, ground at the mill (Fromebridge usually) and returned as flour, less a percentage taken by the miller as payment. Suspicious folk planted a little barley with their wheat so that they could identify (as they thought) their own corn in the flour. Suspicion of the miller has a long ancestry. Chaucer thought it well founded five and a half centuries ago, and in these days of gigantic milling companies and associations, it is still current and still futile. A few grew barley instead of wheat because its beard made it safe from sparrows, and in such households ‘barley skoters’ were on the menu while the supply of flour lasted.

As for the hay-field of an old man's youth, it seems incredibly remote. The blacksmith was knocked up at two o'clock or earlier on June and July mornings to grind scythes by lantern light so that the mower who turned the handle of the grindstone, might start at earliest daylight and mow for several hours while the night dew on the grass made cutting easy. The harsh whirr of the grindstone, the splash and drip of the water from the scythe held on the stone in the focus of light by the blacksmith's hairy arms, and the dim lit background of scythemen each with his blade awaiting his turn suggested a picture by Dore from Dante's Inferno.

In the field you could watch the row of bent backs and swinging shoulders moving slowly like a long caterpillar eating its way into the crop and from time to time was heard the harsh " Urr —urr " of stone on metal as backs were straightened for simultaneous whetting.

“Let them be as the grass on the housetop . . . wherewith the mower filleth not his hand”, says the Psalmist.

Since nowadays the whole process of cutting, curing and storing hay might be labelled " Untouched by hand," younger folk must wonder why a “handful”. Not so their elders who have watched the mower a hundred times take up his handful of grass to wipe the blade before whetting, just as he did in the days of the translators, in the days of King David, and right back into pre-history. Each man's blade was adjusted on the ‘snaithe’ (the shaft or handle) before use with a traditional ritual of individual measurement by forearm, hand and stretched-out toe.

The heat of the day was given to rest and refreshment in the shade, with resumption of work as sunset approached, and the working day only ended with the darkness. With a full moon mowing might sometimes continue all night. In showery weather the damp grass mowed easily all day; the scythes gained on the haymakers and the farmer called a halt just as money (at the agreed price per acre) was being easily earned. This provoked discontent. An acre per man per day was considered good going, but old men still recall over their beer how hay-trusser Charles Powell, the ‘don’ (doyen) of them all frequently accounted for two singlehanded.

The farmer's turn for annoyance and indeed frantic exasperation came when in a spell of really settled weather, with the grass stems getting dry and tough, the whole gang of eight to a dozen decided that a holiday was called for. Leaving the field in a body the members planted themselves at ‘the local ‘ soon after opening time (6.0 a.m.) and deaf to entreaties and threats, remained immovable until closing time (10.0 p.m.), these being the official hours. It was unwise to offend them lest the action should be repeated daily while their cash and their credit lasted, and lest the whole operation of haymaking should be brought to a standstill. While the sun shone and the crop stood the mower was the master.

Turning, raking, stacking and thatching were all done by hand. Today the grass is cut with a tractor mowing-machine, turned and raked mechanically and tied by a baling machine moving around the field and dropping its bales like a queen-bee depositing her eggs. An elevator lifts the bales on to a lorry; a second elevator moves them from lorry to Dutch barn and the job is complete. Hay and harvest gangs formerly consumed large quantities of cider made in the parish from farm orchards, and the intake somehow stimulated an enormous output of muscular energy. The men who more coolly handle dangerous modern machinery have the wisdom to depend upon tea and minerals.

Though travellers thronged the footpaths where no track is visible, and though the fields were from time to time full of working folk where now a single man rides a machine, hay and harvest scenes sixty years ago teemed with wild animal life that has almost entirely disappeared. The scythe uncovered birds' nests of many kinds and of all sizes from the pheasant's to the skylark's and the grasshopper-warbler's. There were grass snakes, vipers, blindworms, stoats, weasels, moles, voles, field-mice and frogs. The young of the two last made excellent bait for large eels in Frome and Stroudwater Canal. The slightly irritating note of the invisible corn-crake dominated the air for weeks on end. It is doubtful if one has been heard in Eastington for twenty years.

For a few years after the coming of mowing-machine and binder, wild life seemed more and not less abundant, but that was because of the slaughter of the innocents. We saw more corpses and fewer live creatures. Scythes worked slowly across a field from one side to the other so that there was always an escape route and time to use it by day or night. The path of the machine encircles the field, drives its inhabitants to the centre and there slaughters them. Except sometimes in large fields the whole mowing is one operation of a few hours.

From one cause and another badgers, foxes, hares and rabbits have declined in numbers. Pollution has killed the fish in the Frome, once famous for trout and excellent for coarse fishing until the advent of coal-tar dyes and flush lavatories. In those days the otter was a native and not a rare visitor. Swallows are losing, ground, probably because modern houses, Dutch barns and garages have replaced thatched eaves, old barns and cowsheds so that nesting is difficult. If two or three old houses now under demolition or in bad repair were re-roofed with modern tiles the swifts (locally called squeakers) would disappear completely from the parish. Sixty years ago most cottages had both a vine and an apricot on the South wall and this was true even of those shacks with low ceilingless rooms, dirt floors, and windows of an assortment of mall leaded panes of twisted green glass. Wine making had been abandoned though the tradition survived. The grapes were green and mostly unpalatable, but reputed good vintage.

As a safeguard against burglary, all except the poorest houses had shuttered windows. Few used banks, the wealth of moneyed people being stored in gold pieces in an oak chest beneath the bed. One old man whose name has already appeared in these pages, could be observed on Sunday evenings, through a chink in the shutter, counting sovereigns and half-sovereigns poured out in a heap on the table.

In general money was scarce. Shops abounded; mostly cottages with a living-room window for display. Goods were often stale or shop soiled. On pay-day tradespeople set up their stalls in the millyards to intercept some of the meagre weekly wages at the source. It was an age of nicknames. Not only King Charles and General Booth, but every male, of any standing, and some females, were habitually referred to in this familiar style. Some were more flattering than others as in the case of the blacksmith's expert assistant who was ‘Genius’, the engine man at the Stonehouse brickworks called ‘Knowledge’ and the farmer called ‘Kindness’. At the other extreme were ‘Pumpkin Tom ,Poor Pity, Afternoon Willie and Half Bushel’, and others whose names might give offence to their descendants. Betwixt and between came ‘Baltic, Boxer, Drummer, Soldier ,Cocker and Length-of-Days’ Most of them had some origin obvious to their generation. Partly the custom arose to avoid confusion when one christian name was the general rule, but mostly it appears to have sprung from the necessity of finding ones own amusements; and nicknaming neighbours, especially the high-ups, added to the gaiety of life.

Several of the above and many others were the invention of ‘Billy’ Goodrich, an illegitimate son of a local squire. Half-crazy, half-inspired; in the true line of descent from Shakespeare's fools, his speech mingled utterances of profound wisdom with childish babblings. His nicknames caught on, often displacing earlier ones, because they were apt and witty. He lived almost the whole of his adult life in a cottage in the fields on the Frocester boundary, far from the road and from his nearest neighbour. The tract of farmland around was known even before his time as ‘The Wilderness’ and here in his later years on fine Sundays, folk from far and near flocked to his hermit's hovel as to the cave of a prophet, not forgetting to bring offerings - and in particular gifts crowned by a cork, without which the oracle was disposed to long fits of silence. His cottage demolished, and its site a mere pattern on the grassland, he was laid to rest at Frocester in the shadow of St. Peter's Church, since derelict as if to add to the peace and quiet he loved. Gone the Roman Villa among whose ruins he sleeps; gone the Saxon Church that preceded St. Peter's. Less permanent all three than the camp and the round barrow of the ‘flintmen’ overlooking his grave from the nearby Cotswolds.

What would his comment have been had he met the latest theory that ‘Frocester’ comes from ‘Frog caster’ - i.e. the one-time camp, derelict and abandoned to the frogs ?

The age produced other characters only a little less picturesque, of whom we will introduce only ‘Foreman’ Burford, self-appointed, unsalaried poet-laureate of Eastington. In ballads varying from the passable to the ridiculous, he chronicled births, marriages, deaths, festivals, concerts, fires, and natural phenomena with equal facility. A circus, a brass band concert, a cricket match and an eclipse of the sun were impartially immortalised. His verses were immensely popular with the half-lettered and were sung as marching tunes by groups of workers walking to and from the factories. We fear that this shoemaker, assistant overseer, and first clerk of our Parish Council spent hours transcribing copies for distribution (by request) when he should have been plying his trade. His crowning hour came when one of his impromptu ballads sang an unpopular watchman out of the parish in a matter of days. Full of years, he died in proud Victorian poverty. His ballads survive only as broken snatches in the memories of the over sixties; but he spake well of all men and was kind to little children.

Rabies had not been brought completely under control and the writer remembers periods when public safety was safeguarded by compulsory muzzling of all dogs off the chain for a week or two at a time. Gentlefolk and well-to-do tradesmen had only recently abandoned carrying swordsticks as a defence against ‘mad dogs’. One old carpenter still made a habit of carrying a saw (as he explained) for the animal to bite. Walking sticks were some protection. Their rare use to-day has little to do with rabies, but results from increased use of wheeled transport and from improved surfacing of the roads.

In all his local researches, the writer has never once seen any reference to gypsies earlier than his own memories. This is surprising, specially as tradition says that when we had more length of green lane, that is to say before so much was metalled or enclosed and built upon, they swarmed in every part of the parish in spite of being unwelcome guests.

In 1901, control of Alkerton Green was vested in the Parish Council, which promptly banned the ‘didecoys’ whose presence there had long been a source of irritation. Hostility availed nothing. Once in the eighteen-nineties, after a severe epidemic had broken out amongst them from which a child died, they disappeared and shunned the site and the Alkerton side of the parish for several years. In the present century there has ben intermarriage with residents from time to time, and with a more settled way of life has come more conventional sanitary habits and an appreciation of the advantages of education. Most gypsy children we meet nowadays can read and write and moreover this is becoming a source of pride to their illiterate parents.

Unlike Frocester with its great tithe-barn, and Frampton-on-Severn with its magnificent green, Eastington attracts few sightseers. Those who came are mostly descendants of Stephens, Mews, Capel or some other name mentioned in these pages. Their interest rarely extends beyond the church and churchyard. Now and again an archaeologist strays to Alkerton in search of the vanished Roman mile-stone, or misled by report as to the antiquity of the "Victoria" monument. An occasional visitor seeks the whale-bone arch in the garden of Alkerton House. This pair of bones came from a whale stranded in the Severn in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Other pairs made an arch beside the Severn at Priding, still in good preservation, and against the walls of Berkeley Castle where exposure has now weathered them almost or quite out of existence. There may be others unknown to the writer.

Natives revisiting their birthplace after years of absence, sometimes walk in the field (Pound Leaze) above The Grange, to see the summerhouse. The carved stone carried by the brick walls has a beauty of its own. The pomegranates are particularly striking. There appears to be no very solid evidence to support the theory that the stonework came from the Court on demolition in 1778. The date fits however, and its traditional name ‘the haunted house’ may well spring from the legendary curse on the House of Stephens.

“They have their exits and their entrances”.

Not only the shadowy figures of the distant past, the Baluns, Audeleys and Staffords, but the Stephens family too, whose monuments dominate church and churchyard.

Henry Hicks and his dynasty came and went like a summer noontide. His mansion is now a County Council home for old people. The chronicle of the Hoopers is a little longer. Charles H. Hooper's ‘Temperance Hall’ has been a bungalow since his club closed down fifty years ago. The bathing hut he built for the swimming club fifty yards below Westfield Bridge disappeared about the same date leaving only the hollow excavated for its accommodation.

“*The old order changeth*” and Eastington from time immemorial a colony of weavers has made no cloth for thirty years. “*Nothing standeth at a stay*”. “*Oblivion is not to be bought off*.” The church band, the church barrel-organ, the parish brass band, the parish string band, Harvest Suppers, ‘Jack in the Green,’, the traditional carols, and the Gloucestershire version of the Wassailing Song one by one “*they have their day and cease to be*”. Such instances are near to the age we live in. The fluid nature of our population from very early times we have already noted. To-day the coming and going of individuals and families has been halted for a matter of a decade by the housing shortage, but will certainly be resumed as building overtakes the lists of applicants.

Of the Parish Council and Clerk in 1953 three only out of ten were Eastington born and the writer has sometimes attended meetings of parish activities and found himself the only native.

Yet there is a something about Eastington that maintains its identity from generation to generation, from century to century. Our Parliamentarians of the seventeenth century, our Hanoverians of the eighteenth, our Chartists followed by our Radicals of the nineteenth and our Bevanites of the twentieth have an unmistakable kinship, and with them through the centuries has run a golden thread of common-sense and moderation that has saved us from extremism and excess. From time to time we have imported, as we still import, discordant elements. After a few years they either leave or succumb to the influence of the place and become Eastington-minded. Eastington has always triumphed in the end. Her motto might well be that of a well-known Severn Vale grammar school "*Disce aut discede*" which may be translated, "*You must learn or leave*".

Alfred E. Keys,

Alkerton House.

First published 1953

Reprinted 1964

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