

WOODBURY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Newsletter- No. 1

December 2001

Discovery of a medieval ring in	page 1
Woodbury Whitsun Fairs in Woodbury	page 1
Village Oil painting of Lt Col Brent	page 1
Influence of Lady Rolle in East	page 2
Devon Woodbury Parish Family	page 2
History Day Community Landscapes	page 2
Project Society News	page 2

The discovery of a medieval ring in Woodbury

On 28th April 2001 Nigel Tucker was metal detecting in the old cricket field at the top of Globe Hill (where for many years village events took place, and in which he had previously found various silver and copper coinage), when he unearthed, from the newly ploughed soil, an exquisite gold ring set with an emerald. Because of its perfect condition he assumed it to be of the 20th century, but after searching through various reference books and finally consulting John Allan, Curator of Antiquities at the museum in Exeter, it was found to be medieval. Under the 1996 Treasure Act, it was necessary to report the find to the local coroner, and at the subsequent inquest it was declared treasure. The British Museum, being informed, assessed and valued it. It was found to be of roughly 18 carat gold (being 76% gold, 17% silver and 7% copper), set with a cabochon emerald (uncut but polished) and dated to the late 13th century — it was valued at £2,200. It is hoped that local people will soon be able to see the ring as Exeter Museum has indicated its wish to buy it. The field in which the ring was discovered was very close to the ancient sites in Oakhayes Lane, where it is thought the Albermarle family, Lords of Woodbury Manor from the late 12th to late 14th century, had their manor house. Since the ring was of high quality it is surmised that it could have belonged to a lady of the Manor House, possibly lost by accident in the field; or more mundanely perhaps it was a midden loss, the contents of which were spread over the fields as fertiliser.

A fuller version of the discovery and details of the ring can be seen in an article by Nigel Tucker in the Society Archives.

Whitsun Fairs in Woodbury Village

The Whitsun fair in Woodbury appears to have been held in the field adjoining the Globe Inn as its landlord was involved with organising many of the games. These were described by the *Flying Post*, in 1858, as being "indulged in by the Woodbury youngsters & others of larger growth". The games were described as wheelbarrow contests by blindfolded boys; jumping in sacks (a very lively game); jingling; and finally dancing, "of which the lads and lassies never seem to tire". There is a further report of the Fair in 1861, when the donkey racing was described as "capital" and "the animals were in high spirits and kicked up their heels with an asinine vigour that was most bewildering to the riders, and extremely amusing though somewhat dangerous to the spectators".

Portrait of Lt Col Brent

When Dr Robert Brent retired from his professional practice his wife was presented with a portrait of him, in full uniform as a Lt Col of the Artillery Volunteers, painted by a distinguished artist from Torquay, Mr Sidney Hodges. This was a very generous testimonial as the portrait was a life-size oil painting. At the presentation Brent said "that although retiring from his profession he should continue to do all he could for the benefit of the agriculturists & poor of the neighbourhood. Much as he should appreciate any testimonial from his friends, that proposed to be given to him, he should receive as a double compliment. He never thought he should have the honour of being taken by so distinguished an artist as Mr Sidney Hodges". Mrs Brent kept the portrait after her husband's death in 1872 until she moved, at the age of 81, to Fairfield House in Newton Abbott in 1902, leaving Sydney Lodge

where she & Robert had always lived. She presented the portrait to the Brent Masonic lodge in Topsham, founded by her husband, where it still hangs in the Masonic Hall there. The painting is interesting because there seem to be no other illustrations of the uniform of the Volunteer Artillery in Devon. There is an undated photograph of the portrait, printed on card, taken by a professional photographer of Exeter. Possibly a glass plate was made in order that Brent's friends and acquaintances would be able to have a memento of the doctor.

Influence of Lady Rolle in East Devon

In August 1863 an elderly labourer called William Budd was taken before the magistrates charged with using threatening language towards Lady Rolle. Lady Rolle said that she saw Budd cutting turf on Colaton Common and when she was 20 yards off the man said, in a threatening way with fists upturned, "I want some cider, you had best not deny me. Come on, come on". Budd had mistaken Lady Rolle and her young companions for lace girls (who dressed in great finery). The case was dismissed.

In September the *Western Times* reprinted the following poem which was printed in *Punch*:

To My Lady of Bickton

Eat your lunch! Lady Rolle! Eat your lunch,
In peace & becoming sobriety,
You have always desired notoriety,
And now you have got into Punch.
And Punch has declared that poor Budd
Was "atrociously, awfully" rude,
In thinking My Lady could be
A poor lace girl — so shabby was she!

Your Ladyship surely is pardoned,
For bringing the horrible case,
Of a "miscreant, atrocious & hardened",
To be moved with shame & disgrace.
But how was My Lady outwitted,
When she "flung her own parasol down".
And compressed her sweet face to a frown,
While the magistrates uttered "Acquitted".

The following year there was a complaint sent to the *Western Times* concerning the influence wielded by Lady Rolle in the appointment for the Clerk of the Highways Board of the Woodbury district, though it was difficult to prove. It was known (according to the newspapers) that she wielded much influence with magistrates, but it was useless to complain.

Society Archives and Library

Carol McFadzean has catalogued most of the Society records and these may be borrowed before the bi-monthly meetings or by arrangement.

From Coronation to Golden Jubilee

We envisage holding an exhibition, in the Woodbury Village Hall, on 11th and 12th of May 2002 to include memories and memorabilia of all parishioners during the Queen's reign. At the same time, in the small room, will be a display of photographs, both old and new, of houses built over 100 years ago, together with old pictures of the people who lived in them. There will also be displayed copies of old deeds and documents, the census, as well as items from old newspapers and reports from various courts of law concerning Woodbury people.

Community Landscapes Project

This project is run by The School of Geography & Archaeology at the University together with Devon County Council. Volunteers will be taught about modern survey methods, and scientific analysis of soils and sediments. Activities will be organised in four specific areas of Devon and training will be given in the following: fieldwalking, fieldsurveying, ecological surveys of woodlands and hedges, documentary work, sampling bogs and soils, and visits to the School of Geography & Archaeology to see scientific analyses and computing work. This experience could be usefully applied perhaps to our own parish landscape by anyone volunteering to take part. More details of these projects are available from Committee Members.

Programme for 2002

3rd Jan AGM followed by a social evening

7th Mar "The History of Lace-making in East Devon" an illustrated talk by Carol McFadzean

2nd May "The Duke Family of Otterton" an illustrated talk by Harry Lane

4th Jul A walk around Woodbury Salterton

5th Sep "The Ubiquitous Dr Brent — benevolent dictator of Woodbury" an illustrated talk by Gill Selley

7th Nov "Admiral John Duckworth — a Topsham Worthy?" an illustrated talk