

# Woodbury History Society Newsletter 2022



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## Chairman's Annual Report for 2022-23

Among all the gloom and despondency of the past couple of years there is positive and cheerful news to report from the Woodbury History Society!

The Society has been very active during the last 12 months with four interesting and well-attended Talks meetings. An exciting programme has already been planned by the Meetings Secretary for the coming year, including a full day's meeting in the summer based on material from the Society's extensive archives. The programme is detailed below.\*

Membership of 65 current members is enthusiastic and supportive, and at the AGM in February we look forward to electing a full Committee of ten members including Chairman, Treasurer and Archivist as detailed in the Society's Constitution, and also the recently appointed Society Secretary and Meetings and Events Secretary.

**Nick Burgess**

### Programme 2023

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb      Woodbury History Society AGM, 19.30 WVH    *(The AGM will be followed by a social evening with light refreshments, a second-hand book stall (and perhaps a few recipes from the past!).)*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> March    Talk on 'The Lower Otter Restoration Project' by Kate Ponting and Charlotte Hodgson    19.30    WVH
- 4<sup>th</sup> May      Talk by Robert Hesketh ' A Curious Look at Devon Churches' 19.30 WVH
- 24<sup>th</sup> June    An Exhibition ' Woodbury Beneath Our Feet'    themed around Woodbury History Society's large collection of the late Nigel Tucker's finds around Woodbury with his metal detector    10.30 to 15.30    WVH
- 7<sup>th</sup> Sept     Talk by Jan Betteridge of Topsham Museum ' Topsham, Echoes of a Maritime Past'    19.30    WVH
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Nov     Talk by Simon Dell on 'Dartmoor Prison' - afternoon meeting    14.30

WVH = Woodbury Village Hall

## Woodbury's Fairs and Markets

In 1286 Woodbury received a Royal Charter for a market to be held every Tuesday and also for an annual Fair from 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of July over the feast of St Swithun - so the church appears to have already had its dedication to the saint at that period. The churchwardens' accounts record the rents paid for several years from 1538 for standings in the Church House, called the Market Place. The rent varied from year to year for the standings, though it is not recorded who the market men were. In 1581 the rent of 9s was received from 'the market men in the Shambles' - the Shambles being the butchers' markets. The following year the churchwardens also received the additional rent of 2s 6d for 'the little alehouse'. In 1594 a dyer was charged 4s for a standing in the 'little house', as well as 10s 2d received from the butchers and others for standings in the Shambles. There is no record as to whether the markets continued after this date, though it seems almost certain that they did. There are records in the Devon Quarter Sessions papers of 1693 describing Woodbury parishioners taking produce to the market at Honiton.

After this date there is no mention of the market itself, though the Church House was brewing ale which was sold for the needs of the church. These sales of beer were part of the annual festival known as 'Ales'. Not only was there eating and drinking but also entertainment, which were presumably held during the feast of St Swithun.



**A medieval mummers' play**

There are records of men in Woodbury acting the parts of Robin Hood and Little John

in the mummers' play, which was some-thing like an annual pantomime. Robin Hood was the subject of many 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century folk plays of which few traces remain. Woodbury is lucky in having such good accounts by the churchwardens which give an idea of what the actors wore and when this entertainment ceased. Evidently after the reformation the plays were frowned upon and were eventually suppressed. The accounts show that in 1537 '12s 2d was given to Austin for his plays', and three years later 8s was paid to Robert [sic] Hood and Little John, and 3s for the wardens' labour ('as the custom is'). In 1554 a payment of 12d was given for someone to make a visor for a 'fool', and the following year 7d for bells for the 'fool'. In 1573 the 'Ale' entertainment raised 40s with William Downham acting the part of Robin Hood, and Walter Holwell as Little John. Expenses for the play were 20s 10d for 25 yards of canvas and 16d to Andrew Pearce for making Robert [sic] Hood's house. The following year 3s 8d was paid to William Hobbs for making the fool's coat, and 16d for making Robert Hood's house.

Two years later the accounts record that 40s was again raised from the 'Ale' with William Downham and Walter Holwell as Robin Hood again taking part. The records also note what was received for the sale of the church ale: 4s in 1554 and 1557. Expenses were paid for various items used: 2s for pots, cups and iron vessels bought and used at the Church Ales in 1556, and in the following year 5s 10d for 10 yards of linen for two tablecloths, and 3s 2d for treen



dishes, pots and cups (made of wood) for selling the Church Ale. Sadly this entertainment of 'Ales' and mummers' plays appear to have ceased by the early 1600's, victims of the Puritan influence from this time. It is possible that the festivities continued but were not supported by money from the churchwardens – unfortunately these Accounts are the only record of what went on in the parish. It would be fascinating to know exactly where the plays were held, what Robin Hood's house was, and how many characters took part. It seems pretty certain that the 'little ale house' where the ale was brewed and on whose ground the markets were held was 'The White Hart'. The name of the pub is one of the oldest and dates from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century – a White Hart being the emblem of King Richard II.

Money was raised in the parish to brew the ale. The first record of this money was known as the 'Malt Rate', in which farmers voluntarily gave amounts of malt towards the brewing, according to their ability. This was first written down for the year 1536 naming the contributors and the amounts that they gave. Two further lists of contributors have survived for the years 1605 and 1631 – the contributions in this

last year were now monetary ones. This 'Malt Rate' eventually became the 'Church Rate' and was used, as originally intended, for the upkeep of the church. The documents do not record the actual dates of the 'Ales', but it seems likely that they would have been held during the feast of St Swithun when the annual Fair took place. Were these 'Ales' part of the Fair or were the celebrations quite separate? The last date recorded for some sort of festivity was in 1556 for the plays when Puritanism was affecting parts of Devon. After the Civil War when the Monarchy was restored there was freedom to enjoy oneself again. Unfortunately there is no record of whether the community held Fairs – it may be because they were a normal activity in the summer and did not need comment unless there was crime or trouble which occasioned an appearance before the Justices. It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when there was an increase in the numbers of newspapers being published, that news and activities in the parishes was reported. Parties were arranged to celebrate great events and normally paid for by wealthy members of the community as well as the Lord of the Manor. One of the first feasts recorded in Exeter newspapers was to celebrate the victory over Napoleon.



**Lord John Rolle**

*On Thursday, 23 Jun 1814 the happy return of Peace was celebrated at Woodbury and through the liberal subscriptions of Lord Rolle, Major J T F E Drake and Thomas Huckell Lee, etc. the lower class of the inhabitants of this populous and extensive parish were most substantially regaled. The morning began with ringing of bells, hoisting colours, fixing up laurel, rose and other flowers; and at eleven O'clock a great number of the inhabitants met on the green, where the Prince Regent's Proclamation of Peace was read by Metcalf Graham Steel, Esq. mounted on his charger. The most considerable of the inhabitants then walked in procession towards the Church, accompanied by an excellent band of music, followed by about 50 persons, who remained of the last muster roll of the late Corps of Woodbury Volunteers raised by T H Lee, Esq. in 1798: who now, at their particular request was drawn by them alternately, from his house at Ebford Barton, in his gig chair decorated with laurels and flowers, accompanied by Lt T L Brown, to the church where the service of the day was performed, and an appropriate sermon afterwards preached by the Reverend John Edsall. After which the procession again proceeded through the town of Woodbury, attended by little girls dressed in white who danced at intervals; it was shortly after joined by two wagons with laurels and flowers, and containing the ready dressed produce of a remarkable [flue], a well fed ox, together with several*

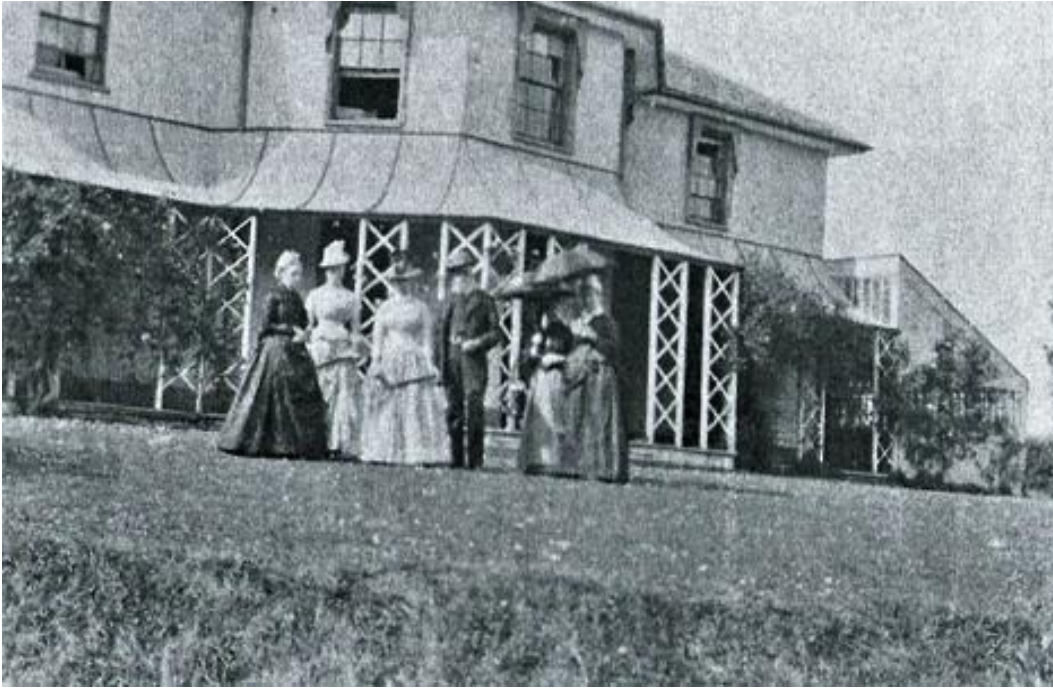
*hogsheads of cider, a great quantity of bread and plum puddings. On arriving at a large field near the Globe Inn, kindly lent for the purpose by Mr Butter (surgeon), the beef etc. was regularly distributed to the poor of the parish, who were all accommodated with sitting room forming a very extensive circle; the late Volunteers were furnished in the same manner in a smaller one, and had not reason to regret their having been once Woodbury Volunteers. The poor were plentifully supplied with beef, bread and plum pudding at the dinner, and a considerable quantity of each article remained unconsumed, which was reserved for the relief of those who were prevented from attending by old age or other infirmities. On the cider being broached, rural festivity soon appeared and continued during the afternoon, accompanied by dancing etc., and proper order was observed through the day. After the distribution to the poor, several gentlemen of the parish dined together at the Globe Inn, where an excellent dinner was provided after which many loyal and constitutional toasts were drunk, productive of mirth and good humour. In the evening, after tea, dancing commenced at which the band performed, and the company did not separate until nearly 12 o'clock.'*

In 1858 the local newspaper gave an account of a Pleasure Fair '*held in Woodbury in the Whitsun week and on the Thursday a number of rustic games, projected by the worthy host of the Globe, were indulged in by the Woodbury youngsters and others of larger growth. These games consisted of the wheel-barrow contest by blindfolded boys, jumping in sacks – a very lively game, juggling, donkey racing, and finally dancing, of which the lads and lasses never seemed to tire.'*

Various celebrations also took place for Royal events including the Golden and Diamond jubilees of Queen Victoria. In 1887 the newspapers described how Woodbury celebrated the Golden Jubilee with a Fete on the lawns of the House.

In 1897 the local newspapers described how the children assembled on the Arch in the afternoon for the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee, and after singing the National Anthem, marched to Sydney Cottage, where each received a Jubilee medal. In the meantime a willing body of helpers were busy on the Oakhayes lawn, kindly lent by Sir Charles and Mrs Troake (the tenants), getting the food ready for the aged people and the children. A meat tea had been provided for all over 60 years, and an ordinary tea for the children. But after these had partaken there was sufficient left for everyone else. A long list was included of all the helpers in the tea party, and also of the musical entertainment that followed. At 9 o'clock there was a torchlight procession from Broadway to Woodbury Castle, where a large bonfire had been built. The material was given by the Hon Mark Rolle, and about ten Woodbury men carted it to the Castle and built the bonfire.

In Woodbury Salterton the celebrations included a dinner, sports, and a tea party; dancing was held in the evening which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. 'Arches had been erected in the village, and the schoolroom was decorated with great taste. Special care was given to the enjoyment of the children and to the old people, who could not leave their homes. A feeling of universal happiness prevailed'.



**Oakhays House in the 1890s**

It was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the big celebrations took part in each village of the parish when floats on various themes were assembled and carnival queens elected. Quoting Roger Stokes, who was born in and lived all his life in the village:



**Crowning the Carnival Queen**



**Maudie Yeo as Mayor**

*'Prior to and following the last War, there was always quite a social aspect to the Village. This culminated in the restarting of the Woodbury Carnivals, after the War had finished. After such a long period of hard graft, and with many of the men being away at war for a considerable time, people just wanted to have some fun. Each carnival would have a "Mayor" and a "Queen". Both were required to sell a maximum number of tickets to attain the post. In particular the contest for Mayor was extremely hard fought, and "dirty tricks" were not unknown, although all in good fun! There was always a Carnival football match at which Percy Sharland had the hereditary position of "Doctor", and revived the flagging teams with his vast array of coloured water carried in his doctor's bag. The annual carnival procession would line up from a starting point at the top of Oakhayes Lane, and stretch back to the old Webbers Farm to Jack Nash's butchers shop. Here they would*

*be judged before the procession around the village took place. There was a Carnival Season each autumn, and many of the tableaux would visit neighbouring villages, and I myself remember going to Exminster and East Budleigh in a flying machine, which skimmed the trees as it went along. In those days no one seemed to take any notice of danger! Two or three marching bands would be in attendance, and many solo artistes would be in fancy dress, all collecting money for a good cause as they went along. A carnival fair was always set up on the Green for the week, and I well remember going up on a "Big Wheel" on the Green, and watching a motor cyclist going round and round on the Wall of Death. Those were the days!*

Sadly, these much loved events were unable to continue in the later years of the century due to a changing population and interests, as well as all the political correctness and health and safety measures enacted.

Events are still organized in the village, though in a different style, and again to celebrate Royal occasions – these have included tables laid out in the Arch for tea parties for the children of the parish as well as stalls and music on the Village Green. As has always been the case groups of very willing and generous people in the parish have given their time and energy to arrange these celebrations.





This last picture of Robin Hood and Maid Marion harks back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Robin Hood plays here brought up to date by the well-dressed young Roger!

**Gill Selley**

*(With many thanks to Roger Stokes for the use of his Carnival pictures)*

### **THE PUFFING BILLY – EXTON**

Although the Inn, then called The New Inn, dates back to the 16th century there appears to be no further details until 1785 when Richard Hall was landlord and a meeting of the Woodbury church vestry and parishioners was held there. This was to hear the Overseers of the Highways complaint regarding Sir Francis Drake of Nutwell, who was a descendant of the famous admiral. He tried to block the right of way footpath along the river Exe. It was vital for local people, particularly from Woodbury, Topsham and Lypstone to reach the river in order to continue trading. He was at that time obliged to abandon his idea

When the railway line from Exeter to Exmouth was opened in 1861 the Inn was renamed the Railway Inn.

We now come to the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the census for 1871 shows Robert Bradbeer being a "Beer & Gin Retailer" and living in Exton. He was part of a large family involved in many local businesses. The 1891 census showed William and Betsy Potter with Betsy's niece Lucy, whom they had adopted as a child, living at the Inn. William's occupation is blacksmith and inn keeper. They had already been living there from about 1881. As a child Lucy remembered a fire one night and beer barrels exploding. The cob walls were saved but the thatched roof was replaced by tiles. |



Upon their retirement Betsy arranged for her niece Lucy to take over the tenancy of the building and in 1909 Lucy and her husband William Fry moved in with their 2 year old son Archibald known as John. Betsy and William moved into the Railway Inn cottage which was actually at one end of the same building.

The following is as related by John who lived at the Railway Inn with his parents for the next twenty one years:

*Life at that time was still very primitive. Their living space was very inadequate, and the sitting room doubled as an extra smoking room. All they had was a kitchen with a coal burning range a table with 2 or 3 chairs and a safe on legs under which John kept his few toys. Water had to be fetched from a pump or water butt in the yard. In winter this had to be done the night before or the pump would be frozen in frosty weather. To thaw out the pump newspaper was wrapped around it and then lit. Spring water tasted the best. Kettles were boiled on the wood burning stove. Candles were used before 1923 when electricity was generated by John Newman the proprietor of the Exton Electricity Works using energy from the village water mill. Even then candles were used in the bedrooms for a long time.*

There were no indoor toilets, just two earth closets and later water closets filled from the pump were installed in the garden, for the Inn and the adjacent cottage, which were periodically cleared by George Tucker who did odd jobs around the village.

Everything required for the Inn including the beer was delivered by horse drawn carts and Lucy Fry would give the horse a draught of beer, which he came to expect.



The Fry family remained at the Inn until the 1930s.

Later in the 1960s -70s the Inn was officially given its present name of Puffing Billy and also now has a thriving restaurant and outside seating area. With the coming of the cycle and walking path it has become even more popular. It has always taken an active part in village life.

**Audrey Elphick**  
Exton

### **The History of Forge Cottage – Woodbury Salterton**

Forge Cottage is typical of many small cottages in the parish. Originally the home of local tradesmen or agricultural workers it was originally owned by the Putt estate before being inherited by Richard Marker in the mid nineteenth century. Located at the southern end of the village it is one of a pair of semi-detached cottages.

Forge Cottage and its semi-detached neighbour, Thyme Cottage are both Grade II listed buildings on the British Listed Buildings site. It is thought that Forge Cottage is circa 1600 whilst Thyme Cottage is later, circa 1700. They are listed together as one entry. However, I shall only be discussing Forge Cottage in this article.

Built of roughcast cob on stone footings it is gabled-end with a thatched roof. Originally, a simple 2-cell building it is much remodelled. Its name has only been Forge Cottage since 1967 when a degree of internal restoration took place under a new owner. The forge was housed in a separate building which is in fact attached to the neighbouring house, Sunny Cottage. What is not known is whether it was built prior to Sunny Cottage (which is about 200 years old), at the same time, or maybe even later. If built before then it must have been a detached building but somehow I think this is unlikely. This poses the question; has it always belonged to the cottage

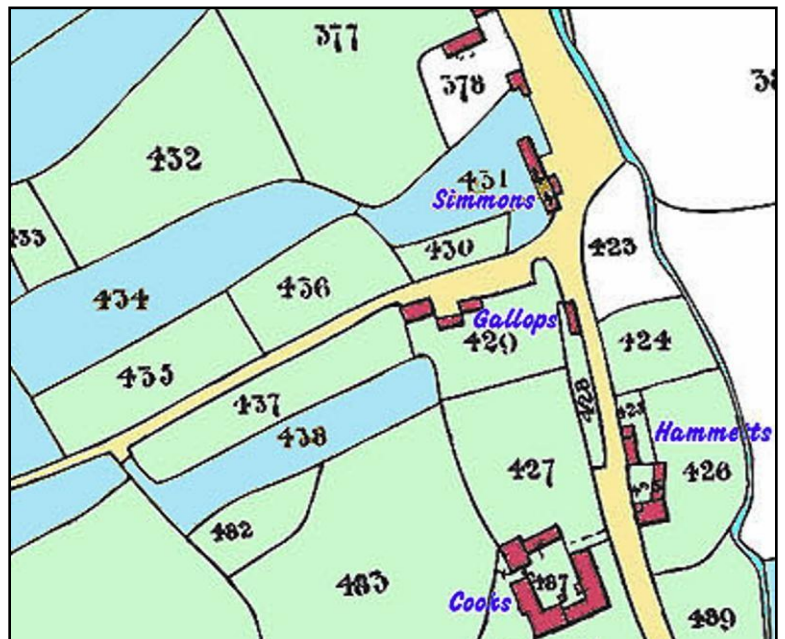


now known as Forge Cottage? I will explore this further when I discuss the blacksmiths of the village later.

Prior to its change of name to Forge Cottage it was No 1 Simmons Cottages. This implies that the other cottages on the Simmons site were No.2 and possibly No.3 Simmons Cottages but this question too will be further discussed before I conclude.

**Sunny Cottage about 1965 showing the forge attached to the left** resides in the Devon Records Office. The map and its accompanying schedule (the apportionment list) gave the names of all owners and occupiers of land in the parish. Much of the land at that time was owned by the estates of Lord Rolle or Thomas Putt. In 1844 Thomas Putt died and being unmarried his estate passed to his sister who was married to the Rev Henry Marker. When he died in 1854 the estate passed to his nephew, Richard Marker.

Simmons was the name of the piece of land (approx 0.75 of an acre) identified on the tithe map as 431 and is the location of the dwelling(s) of the same name and also Sunny Cottage which clearly lies within the same boundary. The implication is that someone by the name of Simmons originally occupied this plot of land but I have been unable to determine who this was. At this time (1839) it was part of the Putt estate. No other properties in the Woodbury parish have the *actual* name Simmons linked to them. However, on the tithe map a small farm near Woodmanton in the southern part of the parish (tithe 1912) is named 'Simmons' but this was an error and later corrected to Symonds. A large farm in the north west part of the parish, Great



**Portion of the 1839 tithe map showing tithe 431 'Simmons'**

Houndbeare (now in the Aylesbeare parish) was owned by a William Symons, a different spelling to the Woodmanton farm. who may possibly have been the same person or a relative. It has been suggested that maybe a member of one of the Symonds/Symons families had occupied tithe 431 in the past and that their name had changed over time (as names do) to Simmons. However, this is pure conjecture as I am unable to offer any other explanation.

Two families emerge as having a connection with the Simmons land, namely the Autons and the Furses.

### 1. The Auton family

I will discuss this family first as the only fact we can be absolutely sure of is that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century 1 Simmons Cottages was the home of Edwin James Auton and his wife Emma (nee Furse). Edwin was the third child of James Auton and Amy Gill. James' family came from the village of Broadhembury (near Honiton) where his fourth great grandparents, John Auton (1605–1650) and Joan? (1610-1645) had lived. In 1814 Charles Auton moved from Broadhembury to Oake, (a village near Taunton) where on 29<sup>th</sup> March that year he married Hannah Meer, from Staplegrove, Somerset. The fifth of their nine children was James, born in October 1827, at Hillfarrance a small village close to Oake.



James, an agricultural worker, may have met his wife, Amy, when she was working as a servant in a house at nearby Milverton in 1851. Amy, born in December 1831 came from Southleigh, a village to the south east of Honiton. They married at Milverton on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1851 and their first son, William, was born at Milverton. Mary, their second child, was born at Southleigh three years later.

#### Church of St Michael – Milverton later

By 1856 James and Amy had moved to Woodbury Salterton where Edwin was born on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1856. Their reason for moving is unknown, possibly accommodation or work or both. In 1861, as indicated on the census record, their family had grown by the addition of another son, Charles Robert in 1859. James is shown as an agricultural labourer and Amy is a lace maker, an occupation that seems quite

common amongst women in the village throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their actual address in 1861 is not shown (normal practice in rural areas) but it is interesting to note that a Mary Ann Furse is the next entry on the record. I shall return to this when discussing the Furse family later.

Moving forward ten years to the 1871 census James and Amy were living at No.3 Cox's in the parish of Sowton. At that time Sowton was a fairly large parish and I haven't been able to locate the location of this address. They had added five more children to their family by then but there was to be no more as in June that year James aged 44 died. Meanwhile, Edwin had taken up employment as an agricultural labourer on a 176 acre farm in the Sowton parish with a family named Froom.

By 1881 Amy is living back in Woodbury Salterton at 61 Grindle Road. She is described as a Honiton lacemaker (in fact several women lace makers are shown as 'Honiton' lacemakers). Edwin is living with her at this time along with his two younger brothers, Josiah (14) and George (11). They also have a 22 year old male lodger who, like Edwin, is an agricultural worker.

In 1891 Amy is still residing in the village with her son Charles plus a lodger and two visitors. She is said to be living on her own means but no doubt is still making lace.



**Sunny cottage is centre left with the forge just beyond  
(photo is early 20<sup>th</sup> Century)**

Also living in the village at this time is James and Amy's first son, William, with his wife, Mary Jane Hill, who was born in Woodbury Salterton. At this time they have three daughters and two sons. Their first son is aged five and named, would you believe, "Edwin James" !

In August 1893, Amy died.

### **The Furse family**

I should mention initially that the spelling of the name varies between Furse and Furze throughout the records I have used. In birth and marriage records it is virtually all 'Furse' so that is what I shall go with. It seems more than likely that during the first half of the nineteenth century one or more of the cottages on the Simmons plot

was occupied by members of the Furse family. As mentioned earlier the tithe apportionment list relating to the 1839 map indicates that tithe 431, (named Simmons) was occupied by a Joseph Furse, as were several other tithes in Woodbury Salterton. At that time the adjacent tithe, 378 (Herds House) was occupied by a William Furse.

In 1841 William Furse, a carpenter aged 50, was living in Woodbury Salterton. He was born in Woodbury, and baptised on 19<sup>th</sup> April 1789. His wife, named Mary, is from Christow (on the western side of Exeter). William and Mary have four sons; Robert aged 25 who is also a carpenter, William 20, a blacksmith, Joseph 18 and John who is 13. Robert is said to have been born in Woodbury but all his three brothers were born in Aylesbeare.

In 1851 William senior is still resident in Woodbury Salterton together with his wife Mary and youngest son, John who has now become a carpenter. As to their other sons; Robert has moved to The Broadway in Woodbury where he is a wheelwright and has a wife, Jane, and two young sons. William is still employed as a blacksmith and resident in Woodbury Salterton. In February 1845 he had married Mary Ann Martin-Cradick at the Bedford Chapel, Exeter. They have two young daughters, Elizabeth and Sarah and a son named William. Joseph, who is also a carpenter, is residing in Woodbury Salterton. He now has a wife named Mira (nee Wilson) who was born at Aylesbeare in 1822 and is described as a lace maker. They married in July 1846 at the church of St Mary Major in Exeter (by St Mary's Steps and the 'House that Moved'. They have a son, Lewis, and two daughters, Augusta and Theresa.



**Church of St Mary Major, Exeter  
(where Joseph & Mira married)**

Advancing 10 years to 1861 there have been some big changes for the families. William and Mary senior have both died, Mary in August 1853 and William in January 1856. Both were buried at Woodbury Salterton, presumably in the churchyard? Their eldest son, Robert, and his wife Jane are still resident in Woodbury where he has now become a blacksmith as well as a wheelwright. Their two sons, John (17) and Walter (14) are still living at home. John is also a wheelwright, so presumably working with his father. They have living with them a 19 year old apprentice wheelwright. Meanwhile their second son, William (the blacksmith) seems to have just disappeared. There is no record of his death in any of the records I have searched and no further mention of him in any census records so it is a bit of a mystery to say the least. However, William's wife, Mary Ann, continues to reside in Woodbury Salterton and is now head of the household with two young daughters, Sarah and Elizabeth. The interesting point



**St Mary's church Devonport**  
**The location of Emma's baptism**

is that, if the census record is compiled in order of households, then they are living next door to James Auton and his family which includes Edwin. Is this perhaps one of the cottages at Simmons and they are neighbours?

Moving on to Joseph, in 1861 he and his wife Mira had moved to Stoke Damerel, Devonport (Plymouth). He is still employed as a carpenter and Mira as a lacemaker. They must have made the move between 1854 and 1859, as two further children; Charles (1852) and Mary (1854) were born in Woodbury Salterton before their last child, Emma, was born at Devonport in December 1859 and baptised at Devonport St Mary on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1860

The youngest of William and Mary's sons, John, is now living at 1 Homer Street, St Marylebone where his occupation is a joiner. He has a wife named Sarah and son William aged five, born at Northfleet, Kent. I failed to find anything about Sarah but it maybe that she came from the London area as there doesn't seem to be any local record of their marriage.

By 1871 Robert's wheelwright business at Woodbury seems to be flourishing as he now employs three men. Joseph, with his wife Mira and their daughters, Mary (17) and Emma (12) had moved back to Woodbury Salterton but it's not possible to identify the location of their home. Joseph continues to work as a carpenter and Mira is now a 'carpenter's wife' (is that an occupation?). Emma is a scholar so is presumably attending school. As to their younger brother, John, who had moved to London, I can find no reliable trace of him or his family. It is possible they had emigrated; there are many with the same name living in the New World.

The year 1881 finds Joseph still living in the village but just with his daughter Emma, Mira having died in October 1875. Robert and his wife Jane are still living in Woodbury where he continues to operate his wheelwright business, still with three employees.

### **The joining of the Auton and Furse families**

In December 1881 Edwin James Auton (known as "Ned") married Emma Furse at Woodbury Salterton. I am pretty sure the venue would have been the Holy Trinity Church as Edwin was quite involved with the church. He had been appointed sexton in 1884 which is further confirmed by the 1891 census.





**The Holy Trinity Church Woodbury Salterton  
(where Edwin was sexton and he and Emma probably married)**

### **Edwin and Emma's home**

Although I cannot be sure that they lived at one of the Simmons cottages when they first married, I think it is quite likely. If so it would probably be because of the connection of members of the Furze family who originally held the tenancy to the Simmons properties. It is quite likely that her father, Joseph, and her uncle, William, were connected in some way but this is just a calculated guess based on the location of the forge and that William had been a blacksmith.

Another indicator is the 1859 'Poor Rate List' which shows the following in relation to tithe 431 (Simmons):

Robert Furze/John Hook - tenement & garden (0.18 acre)

Robert Furze/Henry Manley - tenement & garden (0.0.12 acres)

Robert Furze/William West - tenement & garden (0.0.15 acres)

This implies that there were three cottages on tithe 431. For reasons which will be explained later I believe that they consist of Simmons Cottages 1 and 2 (currently Forge Cottage and Thyme Cottage, and Sunny Cottage, which is clearly on tithe 431 and may have been named No 3 Simmons Cottages at that time.

I'm not sure about the identity of the Robert Furze referred to in the list. It is just possible that he is Emma's uncle, the wheelwright/blacksmith who lived in Woodbury who might have had the tenancy of Simmons cottages in 1881 and been sub letting to Emma's father, Joseph. If so, Emma might have already been residing in one of

the cottages with her father at the time of her marriage. Joseph lived until October 1884 and possibly Edwin and Emma were living with him at the time of his death.

Further evidence, is the 1889 Poor Rate list which shows that Edwin Auton was occupying a cottage and garden in Woodbury Salterton which was, at the time, in the ownership of the Richard Marker trust. The Simmons cottages were part of the Richard Marker trust.

All this is pure supposition as there is no evidence to support it but I do think it is a strong possibility.

### **Blacksmiths in Woodbury Salterton during 19<sup>th</sup> century**

Whilst we know that there was at least one forge in the village, was it the only one? Also, it is not known when it was built. As mentioned previously it is attached to Sunny Cottage which, like Forge Cottage, is built of roughcast cob but the forge



building is built of brick so is possibly more recent. Cob went out of use as a building material around 1925 but the forge definitely existed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The question is would it have been there in 1851 when we know that Emma's uncle, William, was a blacksmith.

It does seem unlikely that a village of this size would have needed more than one forge although there was more than two blacksmiths living in the village at various times between 1841 and 1901

### **The forge building as it is now**

Following a trawl through the census records between 1841 and 1901 I found the following blacksmiths residing in the village:

- 1841 - William Furse and William Pyles
- 1851 - William Furse
- 1861 - Joseph Beavis and Henry Newberry
- 1871 - Edward Baker and George Day
- 1881 - William Wood
- 1891 - William Wood
- 1901 - James Dell

If there was only one forge in the village then in the years when there were two blacksmiths resident they presumably shared it, possibly in business together, unless one was working in another location, e.g. Woodbury.

By 1917 it looks as though there is no longer a blacksmith in the village. This is mentioned in a letter by Mr F G Turner (the village schoolmaster for the previous 40 years) when referring to the decline of the village, no doubt due to World War 1.

### **Edwin and Emma and their family**

The 1891 census confirms that Edwin and Emma are residing in the village with three daughters; Maud, Annie and Elsie and two sons, Charles and Lewis. Emma gives her occupation as a dressmaker. Although there is no written record it is believed that she also made lace.

By the time of the 1901 census the three girls had left home but Edwin and Emma now have four sons living with them; Charles, Lewis, Herbert and Cornelius. On 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1903 their last child, a son was born. He was named Horace Reginald.



**Emma Auton in front of 1 Simmons Cottages with Horace and another**

The boys in the photo are estimated to be aged about three and five years old. One of the boys is Horace but it is not known which one. It seems unlikely that the other boy is Cornelius who is six years older than Horace, so possibly he is a cousin or maybe even a friend. The photo was probably taken between 1906 and 1908.

In 1911 there was a change in how the census forms were completed and it became

the responsibility of the head of the household instead of the enumerator. The 1911 census for Edwin and his family shows that Charles and Lewis are agricultural labourers whilst Herbert is a domestic gardener. Cornelius is at school and seemingly Horace hasn't started yet. The 1911 form also required the postal address to be given but it has only been shown as "Woodbury Salterton". Another aspect of the 1911 census form is that the total number of rooms in the house must be indicated, meaning living rooms, bedrooms and kitchen. Edwin has shown this as four.

### **Edwin and Emma's sons in the First World War**

I am sure that many of Edwin's male nephews of the relevant age were involved in the First World War but here I shall confine this account to the sons of Edwin and Emma.

Of the five brothers three joined up. The first to go was Charles who enlisted in the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Coldstream Guards on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1914. The 'Coldstreamers' were among the first British regiments to arrive in France after Britain declared war on Germany. At the first Battle of Ypres the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion was virtually annihilated and by 1<sup>st</sup> November had been reduced to 150 men and the Lt.



Quartermaster. Charles was killed in action at Ypres on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1914, aged 26. Charles was part of the Expeditionary Force and died the day after the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion arrived at Ypres, one of its many casualties in Flanders. He was awarded the Star, Victory and British War medals. Charles was buried at the war cemetery at Ypres and his name is inscribed on the Menin Gate Memorial.

### **The Menin Gate Memorial**

Herbert, who had suffered quite a lot of illness at school, also enlisted in the Coldstream Guards, on the same day as his brother Charles was killed. Herbert survived the war to marry Gladys M French in 1926. In 1939 they were living at Belvedere View, Woodbury Salterton where his occupation is described as a male nurse at a mental hospital. He died in 1972 aged 78.

On 11th September 2016, Cornelius, at the age of 18, also enlisted in the Coldstream Guards. He survived the war although he did receive a gunshot wound in August 2017. He was awarded the British War and Victory medals but apparently never married and died at Woodbury Salterton in 1930, aged 32.

Horace was too young to join up, being aged only 15 by the end of the war on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1918.

### **No1 Simmons Cottages – Conclusion**

Emma died in June 1934 and the 'England and Wales Register 1939' finds just Edwin and his son Horace residing together at 1 Simmons Cottages. Edwin has retired and Horace is a smallholder and general farm worker.

Edwin died on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1943 aged 87 but he had failed to make a will so the resolution of his property was dealt with by the probate office. The result was that on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1944 the two Simmons cottages, which had been acquired by Edwin on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1920, were transferred to his beneficiaries. These were Edwin's three living children, namely; Elsie, Herbert and Horace. It was agreed by Elsie and Herbert that the cottages should go to Horace and he therefore became their owner.

The part of the conveyance relating to the property transferred to Horace Auton reads:

*"All those two cottages garden and land comprising together 1.432 acres site in the parish of Woodbury Salterton numbered 366D and 375 on plan on conveyance of property to said Edwin James Auton dated 24th February 1920."*

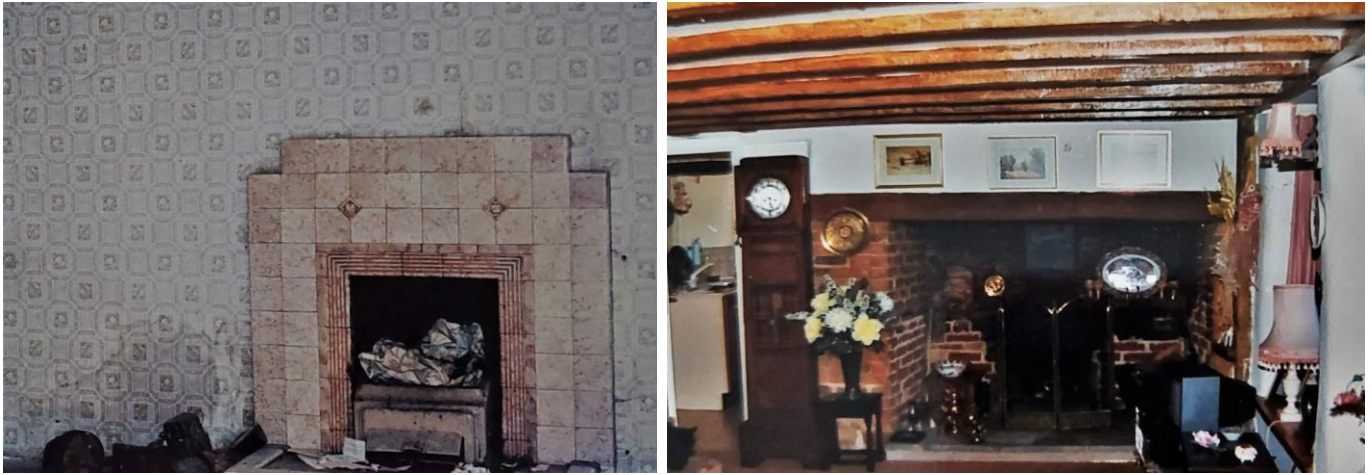
The numbers quoted are shown on a map, used as part of the legal documents in the transfer. They correspond to 431 & 434 on the 1839 tithe map. I have been unable to identify the source of this map but it *may* be one used by the Marker estates to identify their properties. Individual tithe owners sometimes prepared maps for their own use to show who owned what land.

In November 1956 Horace married, probably at the Holy Trinity church. Following the marriage he resided at Bridge Cottage, Woodbury Salterton. On 6<sup>th</sup> September 1966 he sold No.1 Simmons Cottage (but not No.2 or the adjacent land to the rear). The new owner changed the name to The Forge Cottage but it is now known just as Forge Cottage. At the time of the sale there was no mains



drainage and the toilet was an Elsan closet in the garden. **1 Simmons Cottages at time of sale by Horace Auton**

The new owner carried out both external and internal alterations to the cottage. The position of the front door was moved and some of the original features including an inglenook fireplace were restored.



**The fireplace before and after**

Whilst installing a new staircase a plank and muntin screen was discovered and also restored. Plank-and-muntin' screens are set in a slot which is alternately wide and narrow. They are usually constructed of oak and set beneath a moulded beam. They are quite common in Devon, particularly in longhouses



**The plank and muntin screen – before and after**

Horace Auton died on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1983 aged 79. Prior to this he must have also sold No.2 Simmons Cottages which is (as previously mentioned) now named Thyme Cottage. Forge Cottage changed hands three more times, in 1971, 1981 and 1986. Also, in 1986, Forge Cottage became a Grade II Listed Building.

In January 1988 planning permission was granted for an extension at the rear for a dining room and ground floor bedroom constructed at the rear. This was completed

before the last change in ownership in July 1991. Since then the only change has been the addition of a conservatory at the rear.

The fields behind the cottage, corresponding to tithes 434, 435 and 436 on the 1939 map, are still owned and managed by descendants of Horace Auton.

In conclusion I would say that although I was unable to go back further in the history of Forge Cottage it has been an interesting exercise and, I believe revealed some of the history about Woodbury Salterton during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Records used**

The UK census records are a valuable source of information about the residents and their occupations at specific locations. Taken at ten yearly intervals, the first full census took place in 1841 but the amount of information available then was very limited. From 1851 more detail is available, including addresses, relationships to the head of the house and in particular, place of birth. However, in rural areas specific properties were often not identified. Prior to the 1911 census the forms were completed by an enumerator who relied on the information provided, no doubt verbally, by the head of the house. This resulted in numerous errors in spelling of names and places made when compiling the records, and, more recently, typographical errors made by those tasked with digitising them, although these are often corrected in the digitised record when errors are reported. The 1861 census record for James Auton and his family is a classic example of the errors that frequently appear in them. Here their surname is recorded as Oaten instead of Auton, James is shown as aged 28 instead of 34 and Amy as 26 rather than 29. Also, Edwin is recorded as Edward. A search just using exact mode would not have found this record. So, whilst a very useful tool it has its limitations. This means having to search using a variety of methods and with a bit of luck you eventually find what you want.

Other records which are invaluable are those of births, baptisms, marriages, banns, deaths, probate and military records. They tend to be more accurate in terms of dates, spelling of names, places etc, often because they have been provided and compiled by professional people. When it comes to buildings then the British Listed buildings site is very useful, if the building concerned is in the list.

***Malcolm Randle***

My thanks go to Gill Selley for her advice and assistance and to Katharine Wheeler of Forge Cottage for the use of her photos and records.

**A recent photo of Forge Cottage appears on the front cover**

