



Autumn colour - The Plantation Woodbury Salterton

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Chairman's Report 2024-2025

The History Society series of talks continues to attract new members. The Society now has 84 members.

In the early part of the year I was invited back by the Woodbury Community Hub in Park Close, to give a talk on village history.

The Society are working with Woodbury School. Throughout the year we have provided local historical information and artifacts for school projects. In order to foster an interest in local history, we are sponsoring a history competition at the school in the new year.

In the summer the Society held a successful social event, at which we made a contribution to the restoration of the Church Rooms.

On Remembrance Sunday I laid our wreath at the Woodbury Service of Remembrance.

In November, Joyce Peachey and I attended Woodbury School and gave a talk to a class on the experiences of local people during the Second World War.

At our AGM in February, we look forward to electing our Society Committee including Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Archivist and Events and Meetings Secretary. We are looking for new members to join the Committee to keep the Society thriving.

**Adrian Christopher
Chairman**

Programme 2026

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| 5th Feb | AGM inc. Sue Maunder talk on Woodbury House |
| 5 th Mar | Andrew Chatterton – Britain's secret army in WW2 |
| 7 th May | Mark Stoye Witchcraft in Exeter 1563-1685 |
| 25 th Jun | Social event |
| 3 rd Sep | Brian Golding - History of weather forecasting |
| 5 th Nov | Rosemary Griggs – A woman of noble wit, Sir Walter Raleigh's mother |

Programme 2027

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 4 th Feb | AGM |
| 4 th Mar | Todd Gray, 'Devon's Home Front Diaries. 1937-1945' |
| 6 th May | Jim Causley, 'Sabine Baring-Gould and the Traditional Folk Songs of Devon' |
| 24 th Jun | Social Evening |
| 2 nd Sep | Maureen Bond, 'The Templar Way Story' |
| 4 th Nov | (to be confirmed) |

**Memories of life in the A.T.S. 1942-1946 by a country lass
(a Woodbury girl)**

After the bombing of the city of Exeter it seemed to be the time for action and shortly after having to attend an interview re call up for service, I volunteered and, after a medical, was accepted for the A.T.S. with ideas of becoming a driver or something equally glamorous!

Not having travelled further than Taunton, it was daunting when papers arrived to report to Droitwich a training centre. On St David's Station, Exeter I met another girl on the platform from Torquay who was going as well, it was nice to have another Devonian for company.



**Gladys Selina Middleton
1945)**

Arriving at Droitwich we were transported to a large hotel which had been taken over by the army for the duration of the war. We spent six weeks there having our initial training. Being kitted out was a nightmare, me being tall (5'9") size 32-34-36 and weighing 8st 4lbs. To get a tunic jacket long enough in the arms and the right length skirt only obtained by having a size bigger about!

We were issued three of everything in underwear, two pairs of shoes (walking lace ups) and lisle stocking – no tights or nylons then. All the cleaning gear for brass cleaning and spit and polish, a housewife pronounced 'houseiff' containing mending materials – needles etc. I must not forget a knife, fork and spoon and enamelled mug which travelled with you through your time of service. There was a kit bag, steel helmet and service gas mask. Also a P.T. Kit – an orange V-necked top, trimmed with brown on the neck and short sleeves, pleated brown shorts and gym shoes.

Hair was to be worn off the collar, longer hair was rolled up around a bootlace and tied around the head.

There then followed a period of training. Learning how to march around the streets. Being tall, I was a 'marker' at the end of the line of three rows of girls. There were a lot of sore feet breaking in those new shoes. There were tests of all kinds and essay writing to find out which branch of the service we were most suitable for and most needed. We were given a service number and a pay book and a tag with our

number on it to wear around your neck at all times. Pay parade for the first time was exciting. I received eleven shillings a week of which I saved two and sixpence (the old half crown).

Eventually we were assigned to our different branches of the service. I was with the M.H.A.A. and went to Blandford for further training. I went with one stripe, a Lance Corporal, a change to use my needle and thread to sew the stripe on my sleeve, no extra money for this. The camp was outside of the town and was completely different from being in a hotel.

We were formed into platoons with a male Sergeant in charge. As this was a mixed company we were given our different jobs on the gun site for which we had to be trained, mine was at first the height finder. Others were on the predictor, and the spotters. Girls on the radar and men on the guns.

We were issued more kit. Denims and khaki boiler suits, very smart! Battle dress and blouse top and trousers, brown boots and gaiters worn for gun site duty, drill, route marches and guard duties. A heavy greatcoat, more brass buttons to clean. Life now was very full. Drill and marching were intensified and we soon became able to jump at the word of command. The Naafi was the place to relax and have a cuppa in your time off.

After a bit of further training our battery went to a cove on the North Cornwall coast for live training practice and, after some leave, we were assigned to our first place of action outside of Reading. We were in Nissen huts (a large semi-circle of galvanised iron) about 24 beds in each hut in the charge of a Corporal which I had become by then.

The beds were iron with 3 "biscuits" for a mattress, hard but better than the concrete floor, army blankets, sheets and one pillow. Every morning beds were stripped and the blankets and sheets were folded in an exact oblong and wrapped around with one blanket and placed at the head of the bed ready for inspection. There was an iron round stove in the hut for heat in the winter, the pipe chimney going through the roof. There were rotas for duties in the hut and the ablutions where toilet and washing facilities were. We did our own laundry and ironing, airing was between the blankets on your bed. The cleaning of boots and shoes "spit and polish", blancoing kit and brass cleaning were daily chores.

The food for which we queued was plain and plentiful. I said I never wanted to see prunes and rice again. After each meal we washed our plates etc in tin baths of hot water outside the dining room (a large Nissen hut) next to the cookhouse where spud bashing took place when on "fatigues" (a punishment).

There were lectures to attend and we had to be able to spot and name all enemy and British planes. While stationed here our 24hours off were usually spent in Reading to shop gaze or a treat to the flicks, I remember seeing "Gone with the Wind". While attending a local village hop I met a lady with two young children who was very kind and invited us to her home and remained a lifelong friend. The Salvation Army canteens were very good, a place to meet for a snack and a chat.

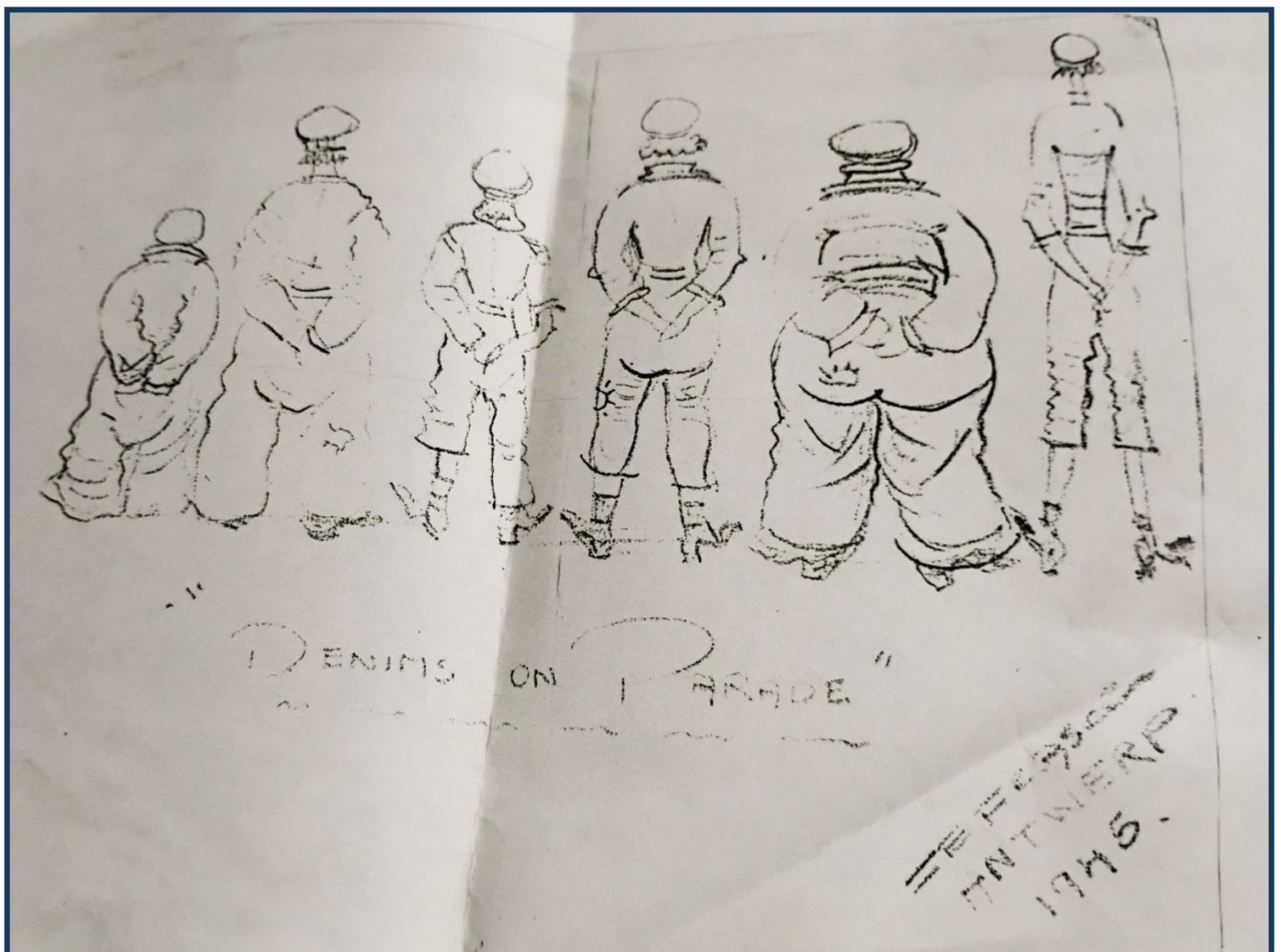
When the alarm sounded it was 'at the double' to the gun site if on duty. At night you pulled on trousers over pyjamas (blue and white stripped), grabbed a coat, steel helmet and gas mask, not forgetting your boots and got there as quickly as possible.

There was a flurry of activity when the "big wigs" were coming to inspect the site. I

remember at one inspection even the stones around the hut being white washed. Kit inspection was usually once a week, everything laid out on the bed in the correct order and really spit and polished or else!

I went on several courses, one on gas. I remember being apprehensive at having to go through the gas chamber. Luckily my gas mask was OK and I came out safely. We learnt first aid and how to treat people affected, a blessing that it was never needed. Whilst on this course I remember seeing red squirrels for the first time, they were going up and down the trees in the woods. Another course was learning how to plot the course of planes from the coast over the country. It was early May and we were in tents and with frost at night it was a bit parky.

The A.T.S. girls came from all walks of life from England, Scotland, and Wales. I made several friends, one from Yorkshire with whom I remained in touch. Eventually I was posted to another company in the same regiment near Wokingham. You got used to being sent where needed without knowing the reason why. We were stationed at various sites in the Home counties and sometimes when on 48 hour leave we went to London, staying at Y.W.C.A. hostels. I remember going to see 'The Dancing Years', coming out to an air raid, getting to the train in darkness and being packed like sardines in the train corridor and getting a few bruises from steel helmets on your back.



A cartoon sketch drawn in Gladys' time in 1945 in Antwerp

There were sick parades and dental parades. I went on one and had a tooth filled, the next week another dentist pulled it out. After a period of P.T. I had an injury to

my foot and had to report sick, had heat treatment and was excused P.T. for a time and it was the beginning of foot problems for me. Standing on parade for long periods for inspection was not a thing I enjoyed. During hot weather quite often girls had to fall out feeling faint. There were also church parades for those not on duty.

We did have a few ENSA shows, one I recall starred Cicely Courtneidge. There were also dances in the Naafi, in our heavy shoes of course!! We were stationed in Kent when the doodle bugs were coming over and were on duty nearly all the time. I was on duty for 72 hours at one time and when the next alarm went I slept through it all. It was the first time I had seen hop fields and cherry orchards in bloom and it was a sight to remember.

When stationed near Ramsgate and Margate we experienced the shelling of the coast and were at Manston, when D day took place. To see all the planes going over the channel was awesome; we did not know what was happening at the time. We spent a period at a place near Great Yarmouth and visited the lovely Gorleston ballroom; imagine our non dancing shoes on the lovely floor.

We went up north to Morpeth. It was winter and we had snow two feet deep to contend with. We had to dig through the snow to find the coke and scrounge wood. As I was the only one in our hut who knew how to use an axe I was the chief chopper upper. The people in the village were very friendly and we spent a happy New Year. After a drink in the pub my friend and I were invited back by a couple to their home for supper and to see the New Year in. The lady cleaned the hearth and made everything just so then her husband brought in the New Year with a huge lump of coal. We walked four miles back to camp after that.

We went to Blyth by truck for firing practice and remember marching up the 101 steps to the cliff top. This was the prelude before going overseas; all were volunteers for this adventure. When travelling to and fro from leave, we experienced the trials of getting though London, those escalators, when loaded with a kit bag etc, were a wee bit difficult.

Eventually we were trucked off to embark for Belgium by troop ship, we sat around surrounded by our kit, first time on the sea for many of us. We crossed by night and the first impression of Ostend was the smell of fish. There were trucks waiting driven by soldiers (who did not look too pleased to see us). We were taken to hotels the army had requisitioned for the duration. I can remember the wedge shaped pillows and how the cleaners cleaned the tiled floors with mops and squeegees, no kneeling for them. The beds went into the wall at the touch of a button. We were soon travelling on through the night (I did not see anything of France) arriving at Antwerp where we were stationed on the river bank. There were cafes where we could get a drink and music was always playing in the background. It was our first experience of shared toilets, if you had to go, you had to go! We were still in Antwerp when VE day arrived and a crowd of us went to a cafe up the river and celebrate with champagne, saving the corks for souvenirs, found our way back in the wee hours. Afterwards we were moved to Knokke in what was a hospital, this was near Bruges and we visited on our off duty times, it was a lovely place with a lot of waterways. Eventually we were near Brussels, not a lot of water there; we were rationed to one pint a day. We went by truck to the public baths in Brussels for a bath and shampoo. Down the road was a prisoner of war camp with running water!

We were found posts in hospitals. N.C.O's, not being allowed to work in the wards,

one of my jobs was in charge of the linen stores. The soldiers came in to collect their blue trousers and jackets with red ties; some were for special wing, we realised.

Editors Note

In 1944/45 soldiers from the Allied Forces came to Belgium to collect their blue trousers and jackets with red ties as part of their uniforms. This was during the liberation of Belgium from German occupation. The Belgian soldiers wore these uniforms as they fought alongside British and Canadian troops to reclaim their country.

After that I was off to the kitchens where I had an office preparing diet sheets for different illnesses, this was quite interesting for me. Whilst there I was granted compassionate leave and had my first air trip home to England in a Dakota, a troop plane with no seats so we sat on the floor. Coming back to the hospital by tram

from Brussels I fell off at the stop, drivers were a bit quick at moving off. We had several trips around Brussels on our days off. A friend and I were taken by horse and carriage by a couple of G.I.s to see the Manneken Pis (*see photo*). It was quite a day, they seemed to have plenty of money to spend. We also had our portraits taken in Brussels; we were the cat's whiskers. The war being over life was a bit more relaxed.



The Manneken Pis - a famous bronze statue and one of the most important landmarks in Brussels

It was 1946 and we were gradually being demobbed, the married A.T.'s first. I flew back in a Dakota again, then took a train to Taunton where we had a medical and were demobbed and given a clothing grant and a ticket home. My military conduct: exemplary. We received a gratuity but I can't remember how much. Eventually two medals: France/Germany Star and war medal 1939/1945.

My one regret was not taking up my officer's recommendation to become an officer, I thought my education was not high enough. I saw parts of England I should never have seen and met many nice people in the service.

Gladys Pile (nee Middleton)

This account was written in 1993 by Gladys for a great niece as part of her WW2 project and passed on to me by my cousin, Margaret Jones.

Gladys, my aunt, was a Woodbury girl [1915-2001] who volunteered for the ATS in 1942. She came from a farming family, the Middletons, who live at Lower Mallocks, Woodmanton, a small hamlet on the south side of Woodbury village. After the end of the war, she came back to Lower Mallocks, later marrying Fred Salter from The Bungalow, Woodbury, now Deepway Farm. When widowed she married John Pile from Rydon Mill Farm and after his death moved to Park Close.

Joyce Peachey [nee Middleton]

Woodbury Carnivals

From the second half of the 1940s to the late 1950s, Woodbury held a Carnival week. This included a carnival tableaux procession, many of which were on agricultural trailers. These were lined up in Oakhayes Road and Bonfire Lane, prior to parading around the village. Many of the tableaux were provided by village organizations, such as the British Legion, the Cricket Club, the Women's Institute and the School. Each year the Carnival elected a 'Mayor' and 'Queen', based on the maximum sale of penny tickets.

Carnival Week Programme Oct. 24th – 29th 1949

- Monday: 7-8pm Royal Marines Band. Playing on the Square.
8.30pm Crowning of the Queen.
9pm-1am Old Time Dancing. Admission 1/- Children 6d
- Tuesday: Grand Carnival Whist Drive. Doors open 7.30pm for 8pm admission 1/6
- Wednesday: 'Flutterbyes' Concert Party. Doors open 7.30pm for 8pm Admission 3/6 (Res.) 2/6, 2/-, 1/-
- Thursday: 7pm sharp, Carnival Procession. 9pm-1am Fancy Dress Ball. Savannah Dance Band. Admission 2/6
- Friday: Young Farmers Entertainment.
- Saturday: 4pm Children's Tea Party and Fancy-Dress Competition. Classes under 5 years, 5-11 years and over 11 years. Admission adults only 1/-.
8pm-midnight Old Time Dancing. Admission 1/-

All the above events to be held at the Public Hall.

As a young child in the 1950s, I can remember staring with awe at the floats of the Woodbury Carnival lined up on Oakhayes Road. Seeing the local people on the floats dressed in their costumes and then being amazed to recognize some of them under their makeup



Carnival swinging star 1955



Another entry at a Woodbury Carnival

Profits from the carnivals went to support local organisations. Mr. Harry Stokes, the Carnival Committee Chairman, wrote the following foreword in one of the Carnival programmes.

It does not seem a year ago that I wrote asking everyone to do their bit, no matter how big or small, towards making our Carnival a success and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your energetic response. People who saw it are still talking about Woodbury Carnival, and we now have a high standard to live up to. Besides individual tableaux, almost every organization in the Village provided a tableau, which is as it should be; it is a case of 'united we stand –divided we fall. When you look through this booklet, you will see that the Carnival Committee has arranged an excellent programme again for this year's Carnival and have tried to cater for everyone.

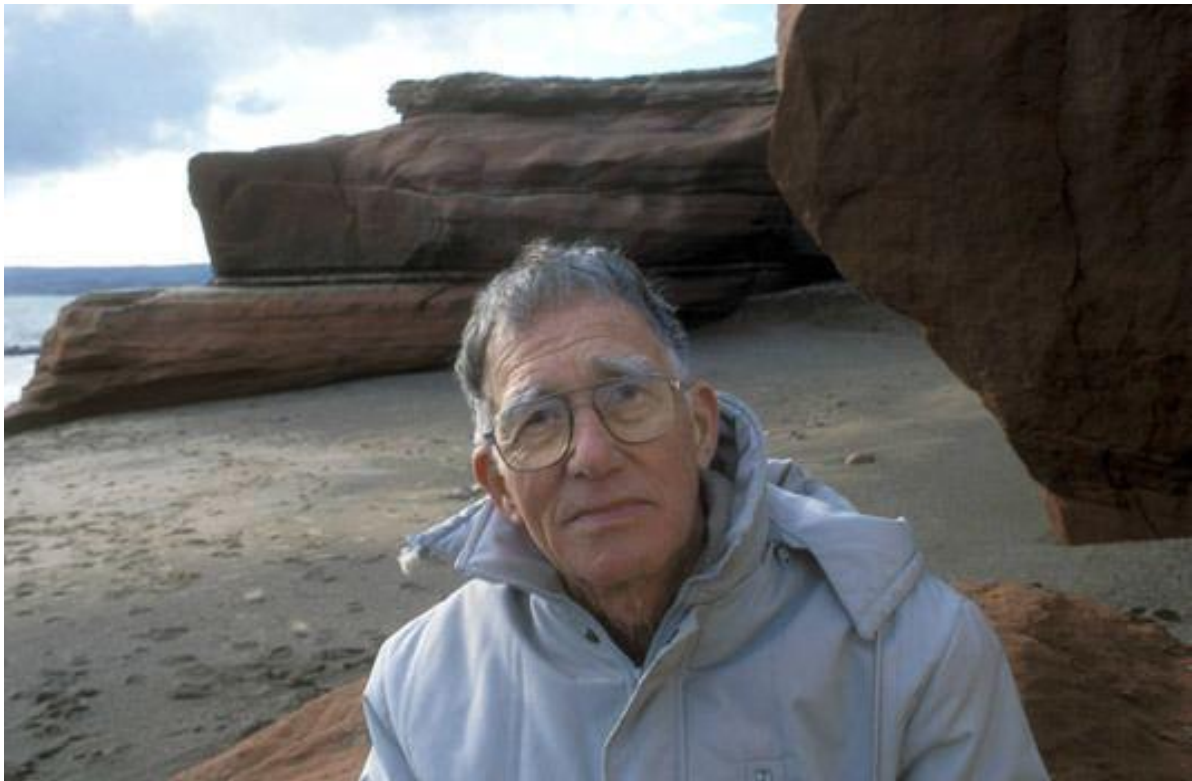
Woodbury people should consider themselves very fortunate to live in such a fine village: I personally think it is the best village in England, and I hope you do. That, however, does not mean that there is not room for improvement. One of our greatest needs is a Playing Field for the children, and I am glad to say that your Parish Council have almost completed negotiations for one, but money will be needed to lay it out, and some of the profit from the Carnival will go towards the cost. Our Church Tower, which was built by Woodbury people over 500 years ago, needs restoring. It is the duty of each generation to hand it on to the next in good order, so the Committee have allocated a portion of the profits from the Carnival to the Tower Restoration Fund. Other organizations which need money will also be helped, and lastly, but by no means least, the S.S.A.F.A

It is a very true saying that you only get out of this life what you put into it, and I therefore ask for your help and support, either by taking part, or giving very generously, to make this Carnival an even greater success than the last

Harry G Stokes

Adrian Christopher

Hermann Arndt (aka Zvi Aharoni) in Woodbury
(Woodbury's famous recent resident)



Hermann Arndt

In the 1980s a recently retired German businessman (banking) and his wife took up residence in Woodbury. Hermann and Val Arndt came from Hong Kong via London, Val returning home to help look after her parents and for Hermann to start a new life in Devon. Val was a talented actor and musician and was soon involved with the village music hall and with choirs in Exeter. Both had played tennis in Hong Kong, soon coming along to Woodbury Tennis Club to be regular playing members. They had a large garden keeping Hermann occupied growing fruit and vegetables and also keeping hens. He was passionate about protecting wild animals; any mouse caught (humanely) would be released on the common. Val worked at the university and Hermann was occupied by the garden, tennis and voluntary work in the village. Hermann was always first to the courts on club sessions, sitting on the bench awaiting the arrival of an opponent or two; when no one appeared he would complain with his usual phrase 'is this a tennis club'. When sufficient members were present, he would find reasons not to play until better players (e.g. Tim Greenslade) were available! (He was, after all, rather old and appreciated any help). On court his line calling was interesting but normally to his advantage. (See previous brackets!) Play had to stop if a worm appeared on court, to be carefully removed to the grass at the side.

At the summer barbeque he was always in charge of the cooking, very much in control. He was also in charge of the lighting at the November Music Hall performances; every year he would 'complain the music was too loud' as Nigel Alcock played the introduction music!

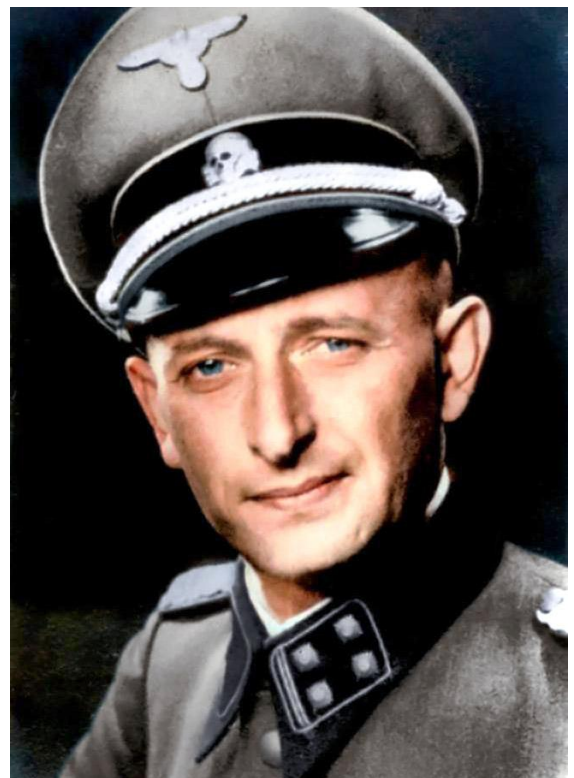
All seemed normal, he lived a quiet life and blended into the background. But there were a few inconsistencies in his story. He let it be known to me that he had served in the war with the British army in Italy, unusual for a German!! In the 90s he was away from Woodbury in Germany a few times as he had a few stories to tell!!

It must have been some time in 1996 that I received an excited telephone call from

my friend Mick Murell (Woodbury builder) informing us of an article in the Daily Mail exposing Hermann as Zvi Aharoni who had captured Adolf Eichmann in Argentina in 1960 and was now living quietly in a Devon village. It transpired that Hermann (Zvi) had intended that all his knowledge and information would go to the grave with him. However, there was so much incorrect information circulating in the press, provided by other Nazi hunters, that he felt the truth must come out. He wrote his story in the book *Operation Eichmann*.

He had been born Hermann Aronheim in Frankfurt in 1921. His family moved to Berlin in the 1930s and had planned emigration to Palestine, but his father was too ill to do so. After he died the rest of the family were able to leave for Palestine, on one of the last legal exit permits, just before Kristallnacht. Once there, he changed his name to his Hebrew name Zvi Aharoni, and helped set up a kibbutz. As the British were recruiting German Jews to act as intelligence officers and interrogators of captured enemy soldiers, he was soon recruited and was sent to Italy, returning to Palestine at the end of the war. He was there on May 14th 1948 when the Israeli state was recognised by USA and UN, but there was no Palestinian state recognised – a tragic mistake according to Zvi.

In the new state he worked for the Israeli intelligence service Shin Bet before joining Mossad and the hunt for Nazi criminals. In 1960 information was received in Israel that Eichmann was alive and living in Argentina. Zvi was sent on a scouting mission, found him and identified him, then returned to Israel. He was then in a group which went back to Argentina, found Eichmann and took him to a safe house to be interrogated by Zvi (experienced German-speaking interrogator) who extracted the confession which would ensure he was found guilty. This mission was successful as described in Zvi's book *Operation Eichmann* and also in the Netflix film *Operation Finale* starring Ben Kingsley as Eichmann. This film downgrades Zvi's role, as the information was taken from other sources. Other Mossad agents claimed principal parts in Eichmann's capture but Zvi was the only experienced German-speaking interrogator in the group. Zvi also tracked down Josef Mengale (the angel of death at Auschwitz) but Mossad decided not to mount a capture mission, due to insufficient evidence.



Adolph Eichmann

In the 1970s Israel was not the same country that Zvi had helped to mould; there had been an influx of ultra-orthodox Jews and a progressively right-wing influence. Also his first wife had died. It was time to move on to banking in Hong Kong and China, where he was successful in meeting Val, whom he would marry and then accompany her back to England and finally to Woodbury in Devon, for a safe, quiet and happy life.

After the information was out and many people in the village knew of Hermann's previous life, he was allowed to get on with his life, without too many interruptions, with a few local interviews and one with BBC Radio 4. The tennis club decided that it should celebrate the start of a new millennium by selecting an honorary member,

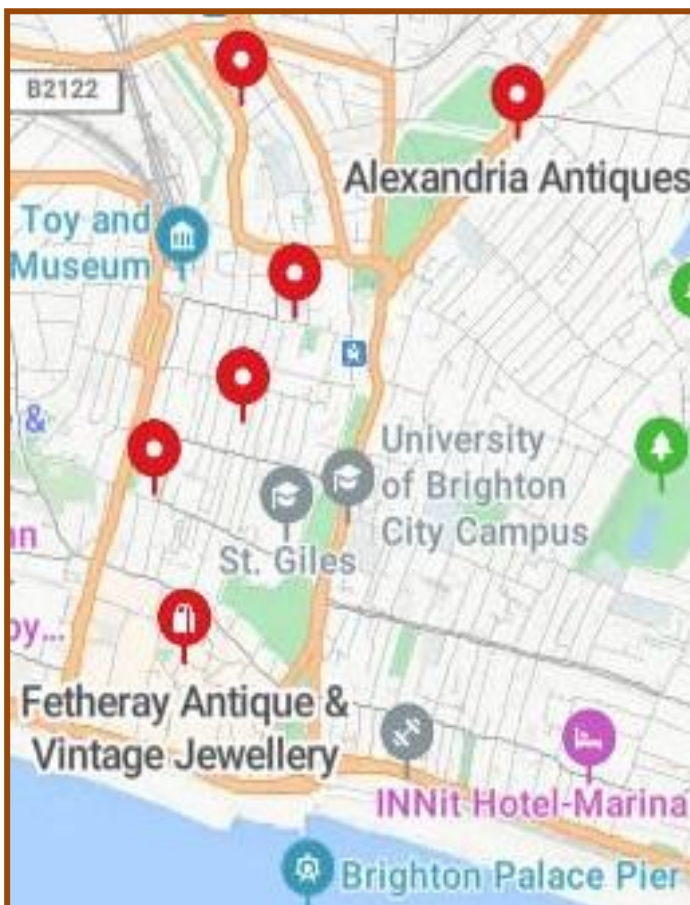
Herman (Zvi) was the chosen one! Retiring from tennis in his 80s he was still active and could be seen driving down to the Post Office in his mobility scooter, a very different mode of transport to driving the getaway vehicle with Eichmann in 1960. I had frequent conversations with Hermann sitting on the bench at the tennis club; I remember on one 14th May him saying 'this is not a day for celebration, all those years ago there should have been a lasting resolution to the Palestine question with two states' It is fortunate that he is not with us today to see the disaster unfolding in the country for which he did so much. I had the honour of speaking at his funeral in 2012 and I have been privileged to have known such a brave and courageous man

Pat Browne
Nov 2025

Art and Antiques crime during the 1970's and 80's

Between 1968 and 1971 I was a sergeant in the Devon and Cornwall constabulary, at that time stationed at Bude in North Cornwall. It was, for most of the year, a very quiet area except during the three main summer months when the population increased by around 200% and the crime rate proportionately with it. I have to admit, that compared with Plymouth where I had spent the previous seven years, it was a very nice place to work.

During the late 1960's the theft of art and antiques had become a major problem for the police nationwide. In particular it affected large country mansions, some of which were open to the public. They were, at the time, a prime target for this type of crime as most had collections which could be easily disposed of in a market which was greedy for this type of property, in particular silverware, jewellery, porcelain and anything easily transportable. Paintings were occasionally stolen but not being so easy to dispose of, as they were more easily identifiable and inclined to be rather large so not so easy to make off with.



The area known as 'Brighton Lanes'

The offenders were usually travelling criminals who specialised in this type of crime but they could involve local ones who would acquire their knowledge by various means. As often as not the offenders had good contacts in the criminal fraternity who could easily dispose of the items. However, there were those who already had a good knowledge of this type of property and had good outlets for it. In fact, so good was their chain of contacts that many high value items could be out of the country within a few days or less, and these were rarely recovered.

Often, many of the stolen antiques would end up in an area of Brighton known as the "Brighton Lanes" which was, and still is to some extent, a popular centre for the antiques trade. They are a network of narrow lanes dating from the late 18th century famous for their small shops and

alleyways. The Lanes were originally connected to Brighton's fishing industry. Fishing boats would dock nearby, and the catch would be carried through The Lanes to be sold in local markets. The character of the area reflects its maritime heritage.

Teams of buyers from Brighton would circulate the country, mostly targeting smaller houses where people might own items of value that had been inherited, such as family heirlooms. They were known as the "Brighton Knockers" simply because that was what they did. They just knocked on the door (or rang the doorbell) and persuaded the occupier to invite them in to see what might be available. Often they would persuade the owner to part with an item of value for a ridiculously low price. They could be very plausible and persuasive whilst at the same time they would be noting the existence of other even more valuable items in the house. Later these would be stolen to order, usually by means of burglary. Invariably, once stolen, if the item hadn't been disposed of elsewhere it ended up in one of the less reputable shops in the Brighton Lanes.



From what I can see now the 'lanes' don't seem to have as many antique shops as they did during the period I am writing about. There seems to be a lot more cafes and restaurants now and perhaps the area has improved its image a bit.

Bristol was another location where stolen antiques quite often turned up. There were a lot of antique shops there.

One of the entrances to the Brighton Lanes

To return to my main theme, namely burglaries at the larger houses, most of which were located in isolated places. These had become a real headache for the local police as property descriptions were often poor and the items not marked in any way. Mostly these were relatively large multi roomed houses which had been the home of the same family for many years and were often tucked away out of sight of main roads. Most police Forces had created a department within their CID to specialise in this type of crime. Usually the local officers dealing with the initial complaint needed some help to enable the type of property stolen to be accurately described. Also, forces had appointed Crime Prevention officers whose duties included visiting potential targets to ensure that property was marked in such a way that it could be identified and to advise owners on making a photographic inventory of their more valuable items. They also gave advice on the most up to date burglar alarms (although by today's standards they were pretty primitive) together with other methods of making the house more secure.

In 1964 the United Kingdom was divided into nine police regions, each being responsible for maintaining its own Regional Crime Squad (RCS). All police forces were required to second a proportionate number of police officers to their own RCS departments. They were formed to combat the problems caused by travelling criminals and were part of a broader initiative to enhance police response to organised crime. The Devon and Cornwall Force was part of No.7 district along with Dorset, Wiltshire and Avon & Somerset with the Regional Headquarters at Bristol. The Devon & Cornwall

well on its way out of our area by the time it was reported. Frequently the offenders were stealing to order so the sooner we got involved the more chance we had. However, to be honest, the criminals involved were very well organised and were invariably several steps ahead of us. We were more likely to be successful when we were responding to information from a reliable informant that a crime was planned at a specific location. This involved what we called a 'stake-out' but they were not always a success and could involve many hours just watching and waiting. When we did strike lucky it was a tremendous morale booster.

During my time with the RCS I travelled to most parts of the UK (except Ireland) assisting other police forces with their enquiries into high value burglaries but in particular we spent a lot of time at Bristol where they were experiencing specific problems. This was partly due to its accessibility to London via the M4 motorway. A burglary could be committed in the area and the stolen property disposed of in London or the Home Counties around two hours later. Or it could even be on a ferry on its way to the continent within four or five hours.

The Metropolitan Police had a department known as the 'Art and Antiques Unit' based at New Scotland Yard. Items of stolen antiques and art that had been recovered by police in the London area could end up in their store which was in a very secure location. If it seemed possible that their store might contain property stolen from a burglary in our region we would take the complainant to have a look at the item(s) to try and identify it/them. Some of these visits proved to be successful and the owner was re-united with their property but more often than not we drew a blank. Occasionally we were employed on joint operations with the Metropolitan Police RCS squad and if a chase was necessary that was the function of the 'Flying Squad' (known as The Sweeney) with us following up, which could give quite an adrenalin rush.



My office window for five years with view of the Middlemoor roundabout!

travelling to other parts of the Force area. Occasionally I also got involved in enquiries concerning a local authority where, possibly a crime, such as fraud had been alleged. Often this involved twinning arrangements with a town on the continent or contracts.

After two years on the RCS I returned to normal duties in Exeter, much to the relief of my wife and family then, in September 1977 I was transferred to the Force Headquarters CID at Middlemoor, on promotion to Detective Inspector. Here I was directly responsible to the head of the Force CID and his deputy. The job was often referred to as the Detective Chief Superintendent's 'bag man' as sometimes it was necessary to accompany him, or his deputy when they had special enquiries to do. Mainly this just involved administrative work such as taking statements, putting the report together etc. However, I also assisted in setting up and running Incident Rooms at major enquiries, mostly those involving murders. Sometimes this meant

One of my responsibilities, and the one I enjoyed the most, was organising and running the annual Antiques Studies Course. This was a national course that had been set up by the Devon and Cornwall force in 1975 and invites were sent out to all police Forces in the UK to nominate a police officer to attend. We had a limit of 20 officers

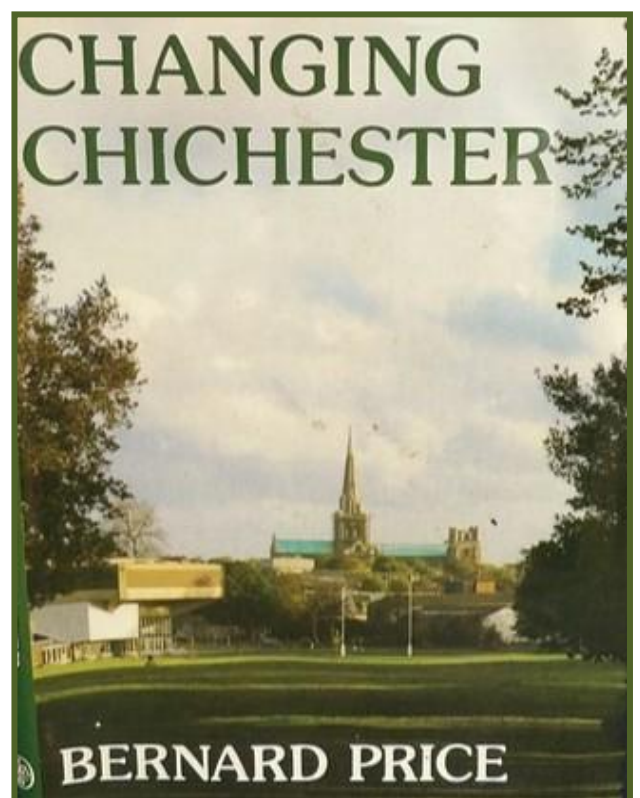
although there was a bit of flexibility in this but we never had a problem in filling it. The course, which lasted a week, always took place in February and was located in the Police Training College at Middlemoor. By the time I took over running the course the content was fairly well established. Speakers who had expertise on the types of property most likely to be stolen had already been identified and their fees and expenses established, although sometimes they needed to be renegotiated. Some speakers were local people who had been recommended and who were known to have a specialist knowledge in their particular field but some came from further afield. These could include auctioneers with specialist knowledge. Generally we avoided dealers but our speaker on clocks and watches ran a family business in Exeter and his knowledge was second to none. My role was as liaison officer, to ensure all the speakers and the officers attending and the timetable had been arranged. The speakers, if staying overnight, were accommodated in the VIP suite at the Training College whilst the police officers attending stayed in the students accommodation. The first course that I organised was in February 1978 and I contrived to sit in on as many of the lessons as possible although I did have other duties to attend to.

The subjects covered included most types of property that by reason of age could be classified as antiques, i.e. over 100 years old. This was flexible as items with artistic merit such as paintings and sculptures or items made of precious metals or porcelain could be included even if relatively modern or, perhaps, the creator had some degree of fame. Also a talk by the chief security officer at either Sotheby's or Christie's were included, both of whom were retired senior police officers. (In fact I was invited to visit Sotheby's with my wife so we took up the offer and made a day of it. It was incredibly interesting and we even attended an auction before we left).

Our star speaker was Bernard Price, a specialist in English pottery and porcelain who also had an excellent knowledge of many other articles that came within the description of art and antiques, in particular furniture and silverware. He had written three books which had been published and he been involved for some years with the well known Radio and TV presenter Arthur Negus whose TV programme "Going for a Song" had become very popular. Prior to that Bernard had his own radio programme, "Talking about Antiques", which began in 1966.

Bernard's home town was Chichester, Sussex, a cathedral city where he was born in 1934 and about which he was passionate. He had written and had published three books about it. The cover of one is reproduced on the right. He was known locally as "Mr Chichester" but he also had an extensive knowledge of Sussex and the South Downs. "*Sussex - People Places and Things*" was another of a number of books penned by him in which he revealed fascinating insights into the gems of Sussex's hidden past.

If you would like to know a little more about Bernard please click on the following link: <https://www.oldcicestrians.co.uk/bernard-price/> Because of his specific interests in furniture, silverware, porcelain and pottery, it was those subjects that Bernard covered on the course. In his talk on porcelain his special interest was in articles made by the



Wedgwood factory, of which he had an impressive knowledge. In particular he would mention the history of the Portland Vase, something in which he had a very special interest.

I think it is worth including something about its history although it is virtually a story in its own right. The following are some notes I have made about it from a number of sources.

The Portland Vase

The Portland Vase is the most famous and sophisticated cameo glass vase to have ever been discovered. Based on its scenes and the style of work it is officially dated between AD 1 and AD 25 but is believed that it may be older than this, probably made in Rome between 30 BC and 20 BC. It is now considered to be one of the greatest art works in the world and the finest known example of cameo glass. The figures in white relief depict the marriage of Peleus and Thetis from Greek mythology (Peleus was the father of Achilles).

Legend has it that the vase was discovered by Fabrizio Lazzaro in the sepulchre of the Emperor Severus at Monte del Grano near Rome and excavated around 1582. In 1601 a letter from the French scholar, Nicholas Fabri Peiresc to the painter Peter Paul Rubens, records the vase as being in the collection of Cardinal Francesco Maria del Monte. It then passed to the Barberini family collection where it remained for two hundred years, being one of the treasures of Maffeo Barberini, who later became Pope Urban VIII. It was at that time known as the Barberini vase.

In 1779 it was bought by Sir William Hamilton, British ambassador in Naples (who was known to be a great connoisseur and collector) from James Byres a Scottish art dealer, who had acquired it from the Barberini family. Hamilton brought it to England in December 1784. The Dowager Duchess of Portland, having already become aware of Hamilton's purchase of the vase and known to be a great collector of antiquities, in particular vases, was the first person to visit him on his arrival. There then followed protracted and secretive negotiations with the Duchess, conducted through Sir William's niece, (who was a maid of honour to Queen Anne). The Duchess eventually bought the vase following direct talks with Sir William and put it in her private collection. It was only seen by a few trusted friends before she died on 17th July 1785.



The collection of the Duchess, consisting of 4,155 items, was sold in a sale lasting 35 days ending on 7th June 1786.

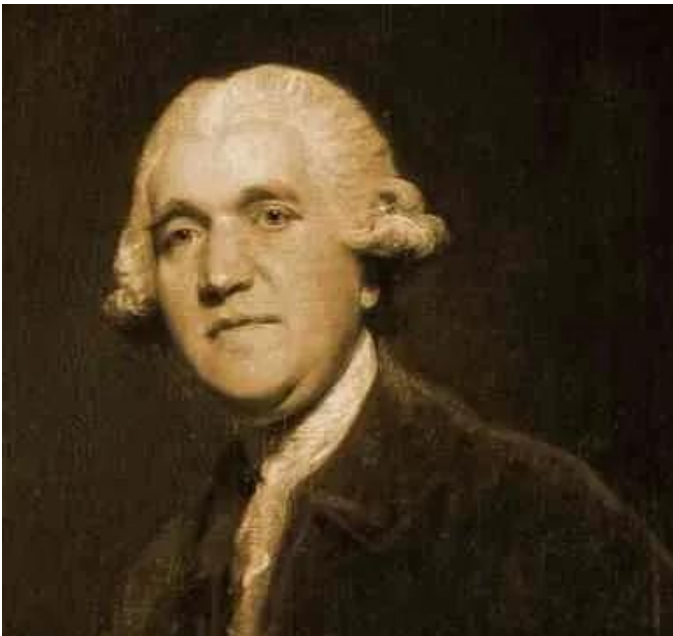
First edition copy of the Portland Vase by Josiah Wedgwood 1790 at the Victoria & Albert Museum

The vase was the last item to be sold, bought for £1,029 by the duchess's son, William Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of Portland. In honour of a previous

agreement he then loaned the vase to Josiah Wedgwood to enable him to make a jasperware copy of it. Once he had had a chance to examine and understand the intricate detail of the vase, Wedgwood started to have some self doubts about his ability to do it. In 1786 he wrote to Sir William Hamilton:- *'When I first engaged in this work and had only Montfaucon's prints to copy, I proceeded with spirit and sufficient assurance that I should be able to equal or excel, if permitted, that copy of the vase; but now that I can indulge myself with full and repeated examinations of the original work itself, my crest is much fallen'.*

Sir William advised Wedgwood to make as close a copy as possible but to correct some of the signs of damage or decay. As Wedgwood had already pledged to a number of friends that he would make the copy he went ahead with it.

After many attempts Wedgwood produced his first copy which took him four years. He had discovered that, contrary to the belief that it was made of hardstone, it was in fact made of glass which was not black but dark blue. This could be seen when held up to a strong light. Also, the figures on it in white were made of glass.



After several failed attempts Josiah Wedgwood managed to make a perfect copy of the Portland vase. He managed to copy the cameo's delicacy by a combination of undercutting and shading the reliefs in grey and it marks his last major achievement

Wedgwood put the first edition on private show between April and May 1790, and the exhibition proved so popular that visitor numbers had to be restricted. He then went on to show it in his public London showrooms. A copy of the vase is also held at the Victoria & Albert Museum. It is said to have come from

Josiah Wedgwood 1730-1795 the collection of Wedgwood's grandson, Charles Darwin, and copies are also held at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, with others at the British Museum and the Indianapolis Museum of Art. The soap magnate William Hesketh Lever, who had one of the finest collections of Wedgwood jasperware in existence, purchased two of Wedgwood's Portland vases. It is believed that between 45 and 50 copies of the Portland Vase were made by the Wedgwood factory. The current value of one of these depends very much on condition but I recently saw an advert for a first edition example, which certainly appeared to be in excellent condition, for sale at just under £129,000.

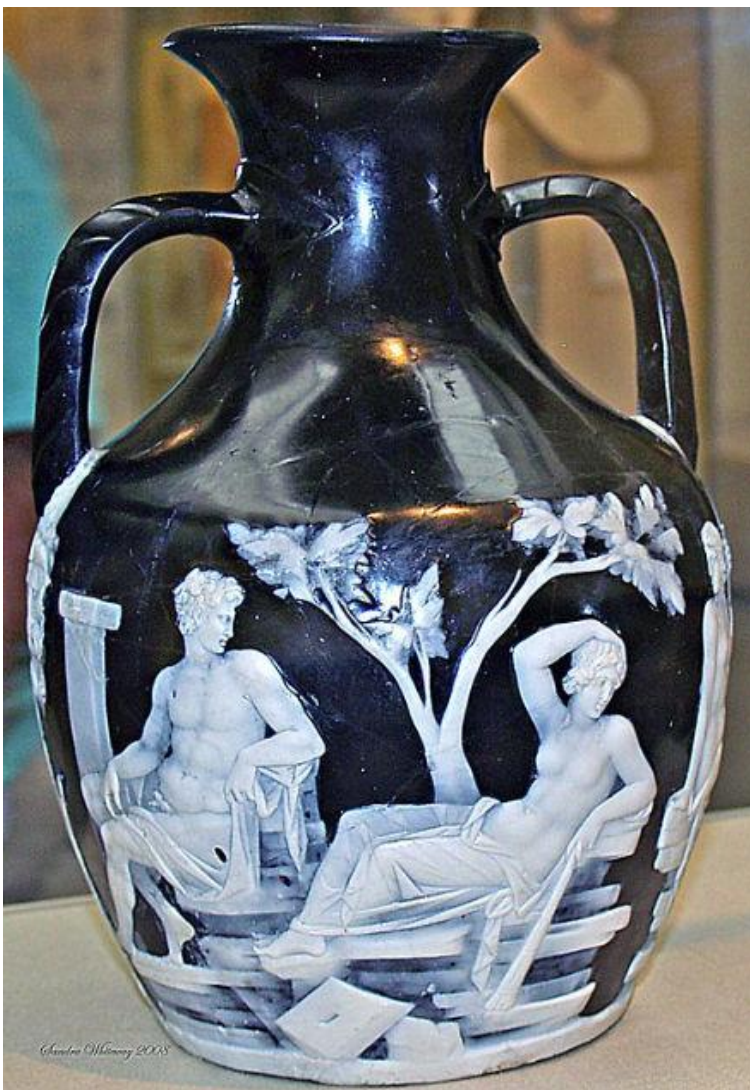
The original vase measures about 10 inches high and 7 inches in diameter. It is made of violet-blue glass, and surrounded with a single continuous white glass cameo making two distinct scenes, depicting seven human figures, plus a large snake, with two bearded and horned heads below the handles, marking the break between the scenes. Between 1929 and 1932, the 6th duke put it up for sale at Christie's but it failed to reach its reserve. It was finally

purchased by the British Museum from the 7th Duke in 1945.

The vase also inspired a 19th-century competition to duplicate its cameo-work in glass, with Benjamin Richardson offering a £1,000 prize to anyone who could achieve that feat. Taking three years, glass maker Philip Pargeter made a copy and John Northwood engraved it, to win the prize. This copy is in the Corning Museum of Glass in New York.

Cameo glass vessels were probably all made within about two generations when the glass blowing technique (discovered in about 50 BC) was still in its infancy). Recent research has shown that the Portland vase, like the majority of cameo glass vessels was made by the 'dip-overlay' method whereby an elongated bubble of glass was partially dipped into a crucible (a fire-resistant container) of white glass, before the two were then blown together. After cooling the white layer was cut away by a skilled gem cutter to form the design.

The Portland Vase has served as an inspiration to many glass and porcelain makers from about the beginning of the 19th century onwards. Since 1810 it has been in the British Museum when the 4th Duke deposited it there after a friend of his broke its base.



At 3:45 p.m. on 7th February 1845, the original vase, at the British Museum, suffered a disaster when it was shattered by a man named William Lloyd. He had been drinking all the previous week and threw a nearby sculpture on top of the case, smashing both the case and the vase. He was charged with the crime of wilful damage. He was sentenced to pay a fine of £3 (equivalent to about £460 today) or to spend two months in prison. He remained in prison until an anonymous benefactor paid the fine. The name William Lloyd is thought to be a pseudonym. Investigators hired by the British Museum concluded that he was actually William Mulcahy, a student who had gone missing from Trinity College.

Later, in 1845, the vase was pieced together with fair success by British Museum restorer John Doubleday but

The original (repaired) vase in the British Museum

he was unable to replace thirty-seven small fragments of the vase, which had been put into a box and apparently forgotten. They were later recovered and in 1848 the vase was restored again. Wedgwood's copy of the vase was particularly helpful with the restoration.

By November 1948, the restoration appeared aged and it was decided to restore the vase yet again. It was dismantled by conservator J. W. R. Axtell who confirmed that the circular glass base removed in 1845 was not original. Another reconstruction was completed by February 1949, in which he was only successful in replacing three of the 37 loose fragments. He reportedly used "new adhesives" for this restoration, which some thought might be epoxy resins or shellac, but were later discovered to be simply the same type of animal glue used in 1845. He also filled some areas with wax but no documentation of his work was produced.

By the late 1980's the adhesive was again yellowing and brittle. Although the vase was shown at the British Museum as part of the 'Glass of the Caesars' exhibition (November 1987 – March 1988), it was too fragile to travel to other locations afterwards. Instead, another reconstruction was performed between 1 June 1988 and 1 October 1989 by Nigel Williams and Sandra Smith who were overseen by David Akehurst (CCO of Glass and Ceramics). He had already assessed the condition of the vase during the exhibition and decided to go ahead with reconstruction and stabilisation. The treatment had scholarly attention and press coverage. The vase was photographed and drawn to record the position of fragments before dismantling; the BBC filmed the conservation process. Conservation scientists at the museum tested many adhesives for long-term stability, choosing an epoxy resin with excellent ageing properties. Reassembly revealed some fragments had been filed down during the restorations, complicating the process. All but a few small splinters were integrated and gaps were filled with blue or white resin.

Little sign of the original damage is visible, and, except for light cleaning, it is hoped that the vase should not require major conservation work for at least another century.

So to return to the Antique Studies Course, Bernard's lectures took place during the last two days of the course at the Force Training College and culminated in a pre-arranged visit to a local house or a museum. On previous occasions these had included both Killerton House and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum. Normally a few articles were made available for the students to handle and discuss and Bernard would ask a few questions to test what they had learnt. It was



Ugbrooke-house and gardens

normal for him to travel to Exeter by train on the Wednesday and I would meet him at the station. Before taking him to Middlemoor we would normally visit the planned location to discuss what articles he would like to be available for the visit. On the last course with which I was involved in February 1981, it was planned to visit Ugbrooke House, near Chudleigh. On this occasion, as it was more convenient for us, and for Lady Clifford, who would be our host for the visit, we decided to go on Thursday evening.

Ugbrooke House is a stately home in the parish of Chudleigh situated in a valley between Exeter and Newton Abbot. It is a Grade 1 listed building over 900 years old and it featured in the Domesday Book. It was originally in the possession of the church before passing to the Courtney family of Powderham Castle. It has been the seat of the Clifford family since the early part of the 17th century who have held the title 'Baron Clifford of Chudleigh' since 1672.

We arrived at around 7.30 pm and were met by Lady Clifford who I had met when I visited previously to arrange the visit. That was in daylight but I have to say it was very atmospheric in the dark. Lady Clifford showed us around and we selected a number of items which it was agreed we could use when the course visited the following afternoon.

The visit went very well and Bernard felt it was very satisfactory. As usual we had one of our police photographers present, and one of his photos is included below.



The photo shows Bernard Price (centre) discussing a porcelain plate with members of the course. Lady Clifford is on his left whilst I am next to her

For me it was an ideal end to my association with the Antiques courses and Bernard Price, for whom I had a very high regard. He was one of the nicest persons I have met and an absolute gentleman. Sadly he died fairly young at the age of 59 in 1993 but, had he lived to at least average age, I am sure he would have added so much more knowledge to the world of antiques.

Lady Clifford , who was born in 1919 as Katharine Vavasseur Fisher is the mother of Thomas Hugh Clifford, the 14th Baron, and the current incumbent. She died in 1999.

Nowadays, after several reorganisations, in 2013 the National Crime Agency (NCA) was formed. It is responsible for leading the UK's fight against serious and organised crime. It has over 4,000 officers who gather intelligence and disseminate to Police forces. The RCS units are now known as Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU's) and the NCA works closely with them and other organisations such as Interpol and Europol. This is crucial for tackling crimes that cross regional and international borders. The crimes themselves have changed and whilst antiques may still be targeted they are nothing like the problem they used to be. Owners now protect them better and burglar alarm systems and methods of marking property have become much more sophisticated. The main concerns of the NCA and the ROCU's are now human, weapon, drug trafficking, cybercrime and economic crime.

Finally I would mention that I have seen the original Portland Vase at the British Museum and it is indeed a beautiful and impressive article. It was not possible, at least for me, to see any signs of the repairs. I have also seen the first edition Wedgwood version at the Victoria and Albert and it is also well worth a visit if you happen to be in London and you have some time to spare.

Malcolm Randle

The Leather Industry of Woodbury

The production of leather was reliant on several processes and occupations, the history and descriptions of which can be found in the records of Woodbury parish. The parish farms in the early period, though of mixed farming, were dependant on large flocks of sheep and cows, not only for milk and wool, but also for sales to butcher-farmers who would remove the skins and sell them to fell-mongers whose job it was to remove the flesh from them and prepare them to sell to tanners to turn into leather. The skins of different animals produced different types of leather: boots and saddlery needed tougher leather using the skins of oxen and cows, sheepskin was used for parchment

There were several tanners in the parish recorded in a variety of records. The first one I have found is in 1630 in the Will of a gentleman farmer called Alexander Duke (from a gentry family of East Devon), in which he leaves closes of barton land to a relative called Henry Hanne, a tanner of Woodbury. I have not been able to identify exactly where his tannery was, but it is most likely to have been one at Gulliford where three fields at Coombe Farm are called Upper, Middle and Lower Tan Park. Alexander Duke leased Coombe Farm from Sir Thomas Prideaux, as well as other estates in the parish.

Adams Tenement

Twenty four years later is a record of William Collins, tanner in Woodbury, who stood surety for a local man in the Devon Quarter Sessions. There were two possible sites for his tannery, one at Coombe Farm (as mentioned above) or more likely at Adams Tenement on Broadway – the latter tannery was well established in the 17th century.

William Collins died in 1696. By 1699 Anthony Copplestone was running the tannery

there, later joined by his son John, and remained in business there for 30 years. The estate was divided into three small lots of land and included a cottage and tanyard. Before the stream was put underground in the early 19th century it ran down the side of the tannery along Broadway. Adams Tenement disappeared in the 19th century and the cottages, known as Coplestones, were built on the grounds.



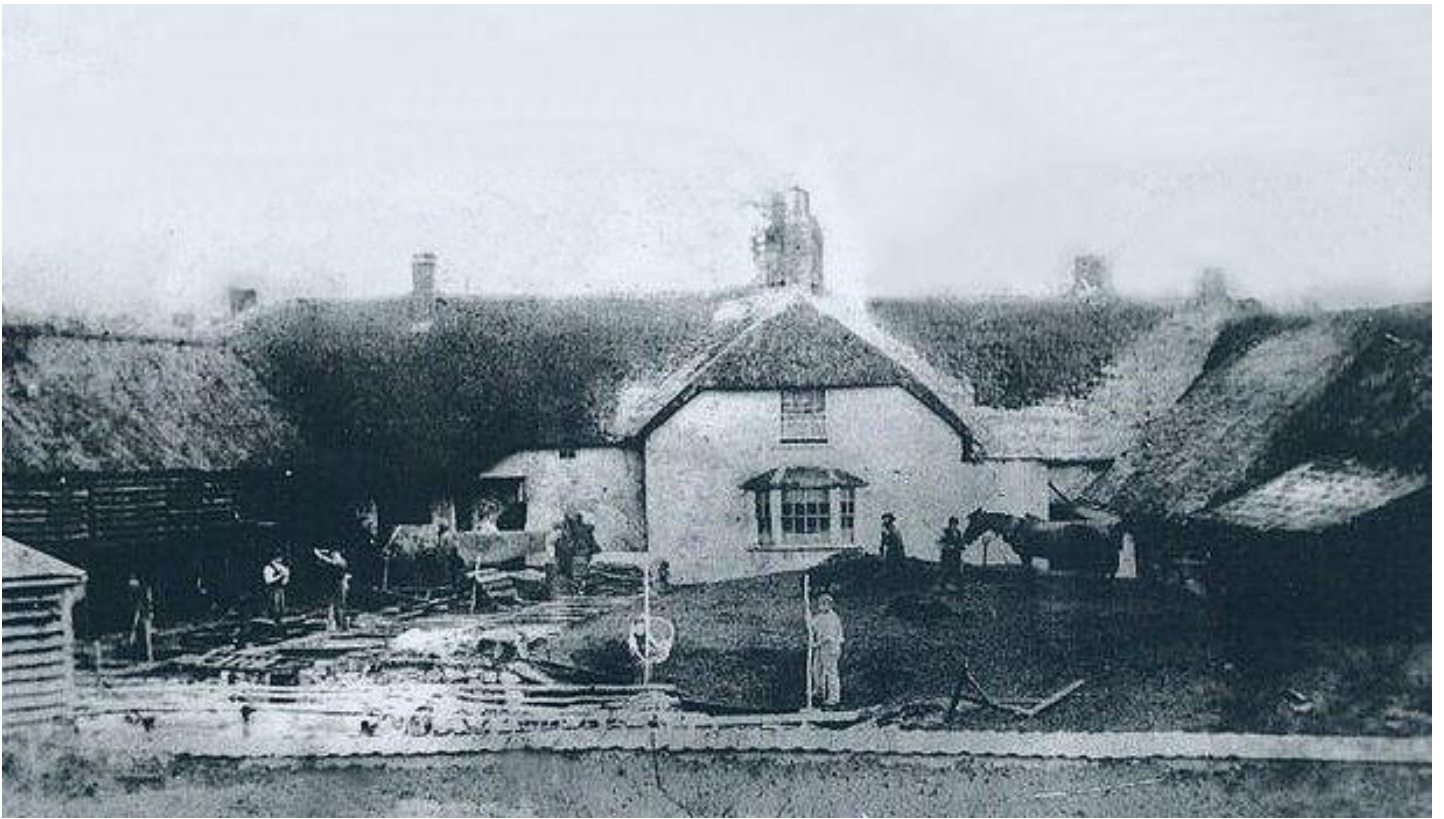
Coplestone Cottages where the tannery once stood

On 18th May 1716 *The Postboy* (a London newspaper) published a petition from tanners to the House of Commons complaining of the mischief to the petitioners' trade by bark being exported to Ireland, this was a vital ingredient in the tanning process. Tanners in Exeter petitioned on behalf of themselves and others in Devon. The Coplestone family would have been represented in this petition.

The tannery was still in operation in 1765 when a record shows that Thomas Weeks had leased the whole of Adams Tenement, including the tanyard, at the same time as operating the tannery at Gilbrook. By 1798 the Broadway tannery had ceased and the Gilbrook one had already been sold by Thomas Weeks to William Hole.

Cornishes on the Green

Peter Sharland, a younger son of a wealthy family of tanners, moved to Woodbury in 1808 and bought Thorn Farm on the Green. In 1830 he formed a partnership with his nephew, Henry Wippell, and together they ran a tannery from the old barns and outbuildings of Thorn Farm that adjoined the brook alongside the road by the churchyard. The old established and successful tannery at Gilbrook formed stiff opposition to the new one on the Green known as Cornishes. The partnership was



Thorn Farm - Tannery

dissolved in 1837 and Henry Wippell ran the business on his own. Peter, who was living in Izel Cottage, opposite the Green, until his death in 1842 came from a family of tanners in various parts of East Devon. After Sharland's death in 1842 Henry Wippell ran the tannery jointly with his son-in-law, Thomas Gibbing. Gibbing took over in sole charge after the death of Wippell in 1848. He eventually sold the business in 1856 and it was bought at auction by Thomas Ware, who with his acquisition of the Gilbrook tannery in the same year now held the monopoly of tanning in Woodbury. Ware ran both tanneries with his sons until 1884, there not being enough work to warrant two tanneries in the village he returned the lease to the Rolle Estate and it was then leased by Mark Rolle to a machinist called Edwin Berry, who built a dwelling house which he named April Cottage, on part of the land of the tannery.

Gilbrook

The largest and most unusual tannery was at Gilbrook and was part of an estate owned by the Vicars Choral of the Cathedral in Exeter. There is no record as to when the tannery was first used, though it was obviously an ideal spot having plenty of land and water from the fast-flowing Polybrook running alongside the house. The first tanner recorded there was Thomas Weeks in 1749 when the dwelling house was a cottage - it wasn't until the 19th century when it was altered and enlarged, ending up with the beautiful house that now stands back from the road beside the bridge.

After his death he was succeeded by William Hole in 1790. A Rectory Manor survey of 1811 noted that the gross yearly value of the estate was £95 15s, with an annual rent of 7s. It commented that it was a very good dwelling house, and that the tanyard was on the premises. The timber on the property was listed as:

7 firs, 1 oak pollard, 2 ash pollards, 5 beech trees, 17 elm saplings, 4 ash saplings with a total value of £10. 3s.

After William's death in 1818 Thomas, his son, took over the tannery business and farm attached, but by 1824, struggling to make a profit, he placed an advertisement in the Exeter newspapers offering the following for sale at Gilbrook:

Live stock, corn, husbandry implements, empty casks etc. the property of Mr. Thomas Hole, who is about to decline farming: comprising 20 choice breeding ewes, one ram, one pony with good action, one sow in farrow; two ricks of wheat, one rick of oats, sull, drags, harrows, horse harness, one pair of broad wheels and hackney saddle and bridle; winnowing fan and stand, corn sieves, three ladders, pig and sheep troughs. A quantity of cleft wood, large trendle, four empty cider pipes, one beer hogshead, upright cheese press, and a variety of other articles.



Gilbrook House and site of the old tannery

Thomas continued to run the tannery for the next few years until he was declared bankrupt and the business was sold by public auction in 1829. The newspapers described the 10 acre premises, known as Gilbrook, as being within the Rectory Manor (of the Priest Vicars of the Cathedral) and comprising

The messuage and dwelling house, tanyard, gardens, orchards, fields, outhouses ; the 'valuable and improvable' property was described as being within a ring fence, well situated for the business of a tanner (the tannery having been there for a great number of years) with the availability of good quality bark, and additionally close to Topsham Quay.

The sale of the stock-in-trade comprised the farm stock, cider, casks and empty casks, as well as the household goods and furniture of Thomas together with the following:

35 tons of bark in lots, 100 hides & skins, iron & wood striking beams & pins, Bodley's bark mill nearly new, brass roller & bed, 6 pumps, shutes, barrows, buckets & other utensils, large beam, scales & weights, a double-screw cider press & horse engine, a dry piece of elm squared for a screw, three hogs heads of cider, about 30 empty pipes & hogsheads, kieves, tubs, funnels, jibbing, half hogsheads, barrels, cans etc

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In 1848 Sanders was living in Gilbrook House and an assessment of the taxes he paid show that the window tax for 10 windows was £1. 8s, a tax of 10s was paid for one occasional servant, 10s for one working horse, and £1.8s 9d paid for one riding horse over 13 hands.

In 1855 the following appeared in the local newspapers:

Notice is hereby given that the partnership lately subsisting between Messrs. Sanders and Ware, Tanners of Woodbury, was dissolved at Christmas last by the retirement of Mr. Sanders; and that in future the business will be conducted by Mr. Ware and his son, under the style of firm of Ware & Son, by whom all debts will be received and paid. Dated: 13 April 1855



Thomas Ware - tanner of Gilbrook

In 1856 William Sanders surrendered Gilbrook estate into the hands of the Rectory Manor and Thomas Ware was admitted as the new tenant – the lease was sold to Ware for £1017 for the entire estate – his descendants were the last tanners at Gilbrook. Some of the transactions of Ware & Sons have survived including a receipt showing the oak bark that the firm bought from the Rolle Estate in the 1870s. The port dues from Topsham show that in 1862 Thomas Ware & Sons received a delivery of 65 tons of bark from Ostend for its two tanneries. The same year the firm exported from Topsham 80 bags of hair, one of the by-products of the trade. In 1859 Ware & Sons paid 'poor rates' for the Gilbrook Estate and Thomas Ware himself paid the rates

for Cornish's House (probably Thorn Farm dwelling house) land and yard on the Green, an orchard and tanyard. In 1863 the business was doing well enough to obtain 100 salt hides by ship – it is not known where they came from but large quantities of hides were being brought into the country from South America by this time. Whether these were tanned hides for the use of the family's leather business in Salisbury and Bristol or skins to be tanned at Gilbrook is unclear.

In 1862 the Ecclesiastical Commissioners sold the freehold of the Gilbrook estate to Thomas Ware (junior), Edward, John and Henry Ware for the sum of £649. In 1882 the partnership of 'Ware & Sons' was dissolved and it was agreed that Henry alone should run the Woodbury business of tanneries and leather merchants, and take on the debts and obligations of the partnership

According to a member of the Ware family, still living at Gilbrook House, "many local men were employed at the Gilbrook Tannery and they used to wait on the bridge until summoned by a large bell rung from the yard" – she adds that "a mill was put in by Mr George Berry's grandfather and was used to grind Myrobalan (a type of Indian acorn used for dying and tanning). As the mill was not being used to its full capacity in this way it was also put to use for corn-grinding about 1884."

Due to the importation of cheap hides from South America in the early 20th century the tannery found itself unable to compete and the Ware family diversified in 1913, making use of Berry's mill, into grinding and selling animal feed and fertiliser. In 1969 the business was sold by the Ware family, but manufacturing was continued there until 1975. Eventually the premises were taken over and refurbished as a wholesale shoe company. In 2004 this business moved from the site, which has now being developed for a small estate of houses and the long link with the tannery is gone forever.

Woodbury Salterton

Josias Force, the son of William who was a farmer/butcher living in Halls Farm in Woodbury Salterton, was described as a tanner in his examination for bankruptcy in 1779. Whether this means that there was a small tannery in Salterton or whether he was working for one of the tanners in Woodbury village is uncertain. There is no documentary evidence of a tannery in either Halls Farm or Bridge Farm, which the family later owned. The Grindle Brook ran close to the farmhouse and premises of Halls, and a brook alongside the village street ran fairly close to the courtyards of Bridge Farm, so the possibility of a tannery on one of these sites cannot be ruled out.

One other tanner, possibly from Woodbury Salterton was Thomas Saunders. He appeared before the magistrates from 1683-85 for absenting himself from the parish church. He was almost certainly a Quaker and was married to the daughter of Jonathan Collier, a well known Quaker living on the borders of Woodbury and Colaton Raleigh (where many of the local Quakers lived). He made a statement in 1701, when he was described as a tanner of Woodbury, that as long as he could remember the Quaker burial ground was in Pit Park in Greendale. This implies that he lived in that area of the parish, so perhaps his tannery was the one that several years later was occupied by Josias Force.

Accidents

Sadly, where there is machinery there are often accidents, the more serious of which were reported by the local newspapers:

In 1860 an inquest was held on Martin Alexander Duncan (aged 9) the son of James

Duncan, a labourer employed by Messrs Ware & Son, tanners of Woodbury. He was with his father, who was attending the Bark Mill, and by some, as yet unexplained means, became entangled in the gear work of the mill, and was immediately drawn into it. The injuries he sustained were frightful – one leg being nearly severed from the trunk and the back so much lacerated that the intestines were protruding through the apertures. He was attended by Mr Pratt, assistant to Dr Brent, and lingered in great pain until 8 pm.

In 1882 an inquest was held at the White Hart in Woodbury on the body of Thomas Saunders, a labourer in the employ of Ware & Sons, tanners. On Thursday about 12.30 the attention of Samuel Anning, engine driver at the tannery, was called to the machinery by an unusual rattling of a tin which was over the fly-wheel, and he went over to see what the matter was. He turned back the wheel and stopped the steam, and then saw the deceased in the pit of the fly-wheel with his left arm between the pulley by the side of the large wheel and the belt. He called for assistance and the deceased was released and laid on some tan. The only words the deceased said were "I shall die under it". As soon as possible he was taken home and a doctor was sent for. He had since asked the deceased how the accident had happened and he had said all that he remembered was that he was going for some coal when the belt caught his legging and he caught hold of the top belt with his left hand. According to witnesses there was a door which led from the engine to the yard, and just outside the door was a heap of coal which was used for feeding the engine. Inside the door and running across it were the belts, which were about three feet apart, and which were connected with the pulleys next the engine and a shaft in another part of the building. In going for coal the witness always went between these belts and this he considered the deceased was doing at the time of the accident. The witness did not think passing between these belts was dangerous. Samuel Marks, another labourer at the tannery, said he had known the deceased for some time. He had been suffering from a bone in the ankle, and was a little lame, but on the day of the accident the witness noticed that



Ridges - the saddlery in Woodbury Salterton

he walked much better than usual. On that day, just before one o'clock he was suddenly called for and on running to the engine he saw the deceased with his left arm between the belt and the pulley. He pulled the belt off, helped the deceased out of the

pit and a doctor was sent for immediately. Mr Henry Ware, managing partner of the firm, in answer to the coroner, said he did not think it was necessary to caution his men with regard to the machinery. The deceased was a steady and industrious man, but he had nothing to do with any machinery except the pump. The witness did not consider he was a man of ordinary intelligence, and should not have entrusted him with the care of an engine. The nearest way to the coal was through the belts and the witness Anning had always fetched coal this way. He had never cautioned anyone with respect to passing through these belts. The coroner remarked that it seemed to him that at any time a man might be caught in the belts. The surgeon, Mr Furnivall, said he was called to attend the deceased and found him suffering from such severe injuries that recovery was hopeless. Verdict: accidental death

Saddlery

There were three classes of saddlery: harness making, saddlery, and collar making. It took seven years to make a skilled saddler. Only three saddlers are recorded as living in the parish: in 1769 Michael Flay was described as a saddler in two Court cases concerning tithes. He was living in a cottage on Broadway, close by the tannery in Adams Tenement; another saddler, Richard Coombe also lived on Broadway in 1841. The third named man set up his business at Ridges (formerly known as Braddicks) in White Cross Road in Woodbury Salterton. It is recorded in a directory of 1914 that William Henry Dunsford lived in the dwelling-house and ran his business in saddlery from the premises. He lived there until the mid 1920s by which time he had moved to Farringdon.

Cordwainers and shoemakers

In such a large parish whose inhabitants worked mainly on the land there was always need for boots. Woodbury had over the years a large number of cordwainers and boot-makers to serve this need. We do not know at how early a date tanners in the parish were providing the leather for their craft, but by the early 18th century the tanneries were in full operation and there must have been plenty of leather for their use. The craft was passed down through families and the same names appear over many generations and in the same premises. A cordwainer was originally the maker of fine leather shoes, from Spain but by the late 19th century was recorded as a shoemaker, as opposed to a boot-maker who used coarser leather and repaired boots – known as a cobbler.

The earliest named shoemaker in the parish was John Beale who in 1598 stood surety before the Justices for his brother to keep the peace. In 1643 a father and son both called Leonard Melhuish are named as cordwainers in a case also before the Justices.

The Trapnell family first appears as cordwainers in 1690 when Henry was accused of stealing a gold ring and handkerchief and Arthur stood surety for him. The family is recorded as living in a cottage in Woodbury beside the lych-gate from at least 1705. Edward Trapnell mortgaged the cottage and its contents in 1773 and died two years later, ending the long shoemaking tradition in his family. The cottage may have been occupied by shoemakers, after the Trapnell family, but no documentary evidence of it has been discovered until 1861, when Henry Knowles was also plying his trade as a shoemaker there, with his wife and 11 year-old daughter contributing to the business as boot-binders – ten years later he moved to Broadway. The family lived in the 'Sexton's Cottage' and probably used the small building attached to it (opposite the White Hart) as a shop. John Cooke was a shoemaker, the sexton of the parish and village 'crier', and was recorded, at the age of 63, giving evidence in a tithe case before the Courts in 1699. His son Jon followed him into the trade as well as becoming the parish sexton. In 1765 a shoemaker of Woodbury who had been sexton

for many years inherited an immense fortune. The newspaper described him as an 'ancient man' who had gone up to London to collect his bequest, said to be above £100,000. The Cooke family left Woodbury about this time though there is no positive proof of the inheritance belonging to John.

The tenements, now pulled down, between the White Hart and the former antique shop in Church Road were the work place and homes of several shoemakers. John Sellick the son of William, who was also a cordwainer, lived there from 1830 until he was an old man - his son James worked with him for a time.

The men of the Green family were established shoemakers in a house, which has now been demolished, at the bottom of Globe Hill - the earliest recorded date for the family making shoes there is 1760 when Joseph bought the property he had been brought up in. In his will of 1819, Joseph left his shop to one of his sons, Simon (who was declared bankrupt in 1821). Simon continued to live in the cottage into old age, but there was no more shoemaking.

In Gilbrook, next to the Bamsey family who for many years were licensed hawkers was a succession of boot makers. In 1911 Daniel John Neal was the cobbler, followed by Sidney Marks who was still working at his trade there in 1939.

All the villages of the parish had their share of boot and shoemakers throughout the 19th century, but, as with the other crafts, the nearby towns could offer them a better living. Shoes were repaired in the village in the 20th century - one of the last shoemenders in the parish was Brian Sellick who did his repairs in the ancient Haydons Cottage, which was owned by his family.

Gill Selley

