



THE EYNESHAM RECORD

Number 12 – 1995

NOTES

1. Images have been optimised throughout for online viewing.
2. Typographic errors in the printed edition, where identified, have been corrected in this digitised version.
3. Errors of fact or interpretation in the original which have since come to light are repeated but followed by an amendment in curly brackets { thus }
4. The pages are not available for printing “as is”, though you may copy/paste sections into another document.
5. Back numbers of the Eynsham Record are available in **print** for £1 plus p&p.
6. Contacts:
 - (a) the Editor Brian Atkins, 8 Thornbury Road tel 01865 881677 email brian@fbatkins.free-online.co.uk
 - (b) Fred Bennett, 68 Witney Road tel 01865 880659

Note on abbreviations

Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
Chambers, 1936	Chambers, E.K. <i>Eynsham under the Monks</i> . Oxfordshire Record Society, vol.18, 1936.
E.H.G.	Eynsham History Group.
<i>E.R.</i>	<i>Eynsham Record</i> .
<i>Eynsham Cart.</i>	<i>Cartulary of the Abbey of Eynsham</i> . Salter, H.E. (Ed.), (1 and 2) in 2 volumes, Oxford Historical Society, vol.49 (1907) & vol.51 (1908).
Gordon, 1990	Gordon, Eric. <i>Eynsham Abbey: 1005-1228</i> , Phillimore, 1990.
O.S.	Ordnance Survey.
Oxon. Archives	Oxfordshire Archives, (formerly Oxfordshire Record Office)
P.R.O.	Public Record Office.
<i>V.C.H. Oxon.</i>	<i>The Victoria History of the County of Oxford</i> .

FRONT COVER:

Ernest Edmund Harris (1872-1936), the last of the Eynsham Carriers, photographed in his front garden in the 1930s.

(See his great-grandson's article, pp.9-16.)



The
Eynsham
Record

Number 12: 1995

Journal of the Eynsham History Group

ISSN 0265-6779

© Published by the Eynsham History Group

All material in this publication is copyright

CONTENTS

Editorial	1
Obituaries	2
"Enisham ... was my birthplace": The life and career of a 16th century London printer by Judith K. Rogers	3
The Eynsham Carrier	9
by Martin J. Harris	17
Eynsham Feast Day: the early years of Eynsham Carnival by Pamela Richards.....	21
A Child's View of Mr Frank Pimm by Daisy Ainsley Grabsky	22/23
THEN and NOW.....	25
The Victorian Workhouse	32
by Edna Mason	33
More Eynsham Hauntings.....	33
What did you do in the Great War, Eynsham? by the Eynsham Junior History Group	41
Eynsham Fair	45
by Daisy Ainsley Grabsky.....	
St Leonard's Church: a letter from J.H.Parker to W.S. Bricknell	

EDITORIAL

This year's professional contribution comes all the way from the United States. Judith Rogers is an academic at Ohio State University and has taken a special interest in John Danter, a 16th century London printer who was born in Eynsham. Two articles come from Brighton, where Mrs Daisy Grabsky (née Ainsley) recalls fond memories of her Eynsham childhood (see pp. 21, 32 and 41). The children continue to do valuable research, and this year's contribution is from an older group at the Bartholomew School, organized by Pamela Richards, and calling themselves the Eynsham Junior History Group. It is producing its own journal. Competition? Yes, but healthy if it keeps us adults on our toes!

Thanks to these contributors, and to the others, Edna Mason, Pamela Richards and Martin Harris. Martin's article is based on an excellent talk he presented in January. (It has been, incidentally, an outstanding year for the quality and variety of talks, and attendances have been exceptionally high). Lilian Wright, unable this year to make her usual substantial offering, has provided the 1928 'snippets' on pages 8, 16 and 44.

In the autumn, the Oxfordshire Local History Association organized a week-long exhibition in the Westgate Library, where affiliated local history societies displayed their work. Our contribution was "A vanished railway". Although this involved little original research, it was by far and away the most visually attractive display, thanks not least to the items rescued from our railway station by the late William Beauchamp and kindly loaned by Mrs Beauchamp. Had there been prizes, we would have carried one off!

GWYNNETH GORDON, F.R.B.S

Gwynneth Gordon, widow of the late Bishop Eric Gordon, died last month in Eynsham, at the age of 86. She was a noted sculptor, known professionally by her maiden name of Gwynneth Holt. Although, I think, never a member of the History Group or active in local history, she supported Eric through the long years when he was researching his book on Eynsham Abbey. The last paragraph of his preface reads: "Last, but very far from least, there is my own wife. Without her constant stimulus, and sacrifice, and concern, nothing would have been completed. Her own lifelong calling and much-loved work, as the sculptor Gwynneth Holt, has suffered, and I am all the more grateful to her for her profound and sensitive contributions to this book of mine." Here he refers to her sculptures, drawings and chapter headings which illustrate the work. Gwynneth's lasting memorial in Eynsham is her beautiful carving of St Leonard which adorns the east end of the Parish Church.

[A more extensive obituary by Joan Weedon will appear in *Roundabout* shortly]

STUART BLANCH

The Most Reverend The Lord Stuart Yarworth Blanch, Archbishop of York from 1975 to 1983, died in the summer of 1994. He had been the Vicar of Eynsham from 1951 to 1956. He was much loved and respected in the village during those few years.

"ENISHAM ... WAS MY BIRTHPLACE"

The Life and Career of a Sixteenth-Century London Printer

by Judith K. Rogers

Within the *Eynsham Record* are many interesting articles detailing the lives of famous as well as infamous people who are connected in some way with the village: to name a few, Michael Sparke, the Puritan publisher¹; Jane Austen, the novelist²; and Frederick Guy Browne and William Henry Kennedy, the murderers³. Another who deserves recognition is John Danter who was born in Eynsham in 1565 and died in London in 1599.

Danter's father, also John, was a weaver. His administration letter (dated 1574)⁴ names John's mother, Alice, and three brothers, Abraham, Walter, and Robert. While at least one of the brothers, Abraham, followed in his father's trade, becoming a weaver in Woodstock, John chose to try his fortunes in the City of London. As was the customary practice, arrangements were probably made in advance for the seven-year apprenticeship. In 1582, at the age of 17, John Danter was apprenticed to John Day, the well-known London master printer. Although John Day died in 1584, Danter remained with the Day printing house, but transferred in 1588 to Robert Robinson for the remainder of his apprenticeship.

Upon obtaining his freedom on 30 September 1589, Danter entered into partnership with William Hoskins and Henry Chettle, living with Hoskins in Fetter Lane (near Ludgate Circus). By the end of 1592 Danter had moved to Duck Lane, near Smithfield, before finally settling in Hosier Lane, near Holborn Conduit, noting - perhaps with some pride - on his title page of *Greenes Funeralls* (1594) that it is 'his house'. As a householder (which accorded a particular status in society), Danter's living quarters would have probably been located above his print shop, the work being shared by wife and children. Unfortunately this ideal arrangement did not last long. John Danter died in 1599 at the age of 34, having done the majority of his printing in the 1590s. He had, however, succeeded in steadily progressing from the Eynsham weaver's son (1565-1582) to apprentice (1582-1589) to, finally, householder - a relatively high status in society - and master printer - a relatively high status in the powerful and prestigious Stationers' Company (1589-1599). Despite his brief life and even briefer career, Danter printed a vast quantity of interesting books.

Probably one of the most significant works issued from his London print shop was William Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* (1594), important not only because of its author, but also because it was the first of Shakespeare's plays to appear in print. In addition Danter printed the first half of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597) sharing the job with Edward Allde, shared work being quite common during this period. Danter printed Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* (1591) and Arthur Golding's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1593), as well as works by Richard Barnfield, Henry Chettle, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, Thomas Nashe, George Peele, and Robert Wilson. In addition to this literary canon, Danter printed many sermons, shorter contemporary news items, and how-to or advice manuals. The sermons include those by the popular Henry Smith, as well as some by John Calvin, Richard Johnson, and Thomas Playfere. The contemporary news items from Danter's print shop, while not of the calibre of subject matter as the sermons and literary works, were nevertheless probably quite popular in an age prior to newspapers and other mass media. For example, the content and format make *A Merrie pleasant and delectable Historie, betweene King Edward the fourth, and a Tanner of Tamworth* (1596) an easily read (six leaves) and interestingly illustrated text (containing three block prints).

Also of general interest are *The Famous Historie of Chinon of England* (1597) and *Strange Signes seen in the Aire, strange Monsters behelde on the Land and Sea, ouer, in, and about the Citie of Rosenberge in high Germany the nineteenth of Ianuare last past* (1594). Upon reading the details of this amazing occurrence, I am reminded of our current tabloids, having recently read about a woman giving birth to a pickle! Likewise, these 1594 wonders include, we are told, the birth of a male child who was 'without a head, hauing his eyes, eares, nose and mouth placed in his breast, his eyes especially being of meruailous bignes [marvellous bigness]' (A3r). Interesting 'news' indeed!

By contrast, the how-to and advice books teach how to play the lute, orpharion, and bandora in *A New Booke of Tabliture* (1596); or teach new needlework patterns in *A Booke of Curious and strange Inuentions, called the first part of Needleworkes* (1596); or even teach one to control that troublesome child in *The Schoole of Good Manners* (1595). Self-help is also available from Danter's print shop in the *Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1592). Likewise, there is help for those physically afflicted: see, for example, *Present Remedies against the Plague* (1592), an apparently popular book since Danter printed a second edition in 1594. Danter's output thus includes literature, sermons, contemporary news, and advice books, an impressive variety, much of which may have been lost to us if it were not for this particular master printer.

Despite his short career, Danter has managed to stimulate a fair amount of scholarly interest. Unfortunately (and, I believe, unfairly) this has been largely pejorative, owing to a series of critical commentaries which began in 1906 with Henry R. Plomer, who thought that Danter did a very poor job of printing *Romeo and Juliet* (Fig.1). Plomer⁵ claimed that Danter used worn type and that he even changed to another font 'before he had half finished the work', concluding that 'never was masterpiece ushered into the world in a worse manner' (p.153). This exaggerated commentary continues to the present decade in articles, books and reference sources. But Plomer was initially concerned only with the printing of *Romeo and Juliet*, and he may have overlooked the fact that the work was shared, and that Edward Alde was probably responsible for the change of font. I have seen four of the five extant copies of the play, and Danter's share of the job is actually quite acceptable. And we now have a better understanding about the frequency of shared printing, not realized in 1906. Furthermore, we need to remember that our literary priorities were not those of the Elizabethans. We regard *Romeo and Juliet* as a great piece of literature, and we get very upset about its not being printed absolutely perfectly. But Danter and his contemporaries (stationers and non-stationers alike) would have seen it quite differently. In 1622-63 in the Jaggard's print shop, for example, Shakespeare's First Folio was worked on only when there was not more 'important' work to do. Danter's other productions such as sermons, advice books, or news items would have been much more profitable than mere stage plays.

Moreover, the critics who tend to denounce Danter do so without substantial evidence, never examining more than a handful of his books nor more than a few aspects of his career. As a result they tend to cite each other. My rather lengthy argument attempting to redeem Danter will appear in the forthcoming volume, *British Literary Publishers to 1820*, in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*. (There, too, I include a brief account of Danter's very interesting and unique connection to London's literary world). Having examined at least one actual copy of 74 of the 79 editions attributed to John Danter in the *Revised Short-Title Catalogue*⁶, I have found Danter to be a competent printer. His books are nicely executed, the 'errors' being simply of the nature common for the hand-press period: some turned letters, some slipped letters, an upside-down factotum, and so on. Despite this evidence in the form of extant books, most reference sources repeat the notion (in one form or another) that Danter is 'a stationer of the worst reputation'⁷; and that 'everyone knows of the odor which attaches itself to the name of Danter'⁸. One must therefore use caution in using these sources.



AN
EXCELLENT
conceited Tragedie
OF
Romeo and Iuliet,

As it hath been often (with great applause)
plaid publicuely, by the right Ho-
nourable the L. of *Hunsdon*
his Servants.



LONDON,
Printed by Iohn Danter.

1597

Fig.1 The title page of *Romeo and Juliet*, published by John Danter in 1597.

Besides examining the physical aspect of each of the books, I carefully considered the content as well, which revealed not only the variety of Danter's output, but also provided a glimpse into his character through his dedications and addresses to the reader. For a printer to write a dedication is not in itself that unusual, as many printers did so; what is unusual is Danter's rhetorical flourish. After reading his writings, one senses that this is a man of some competence and intelligence. For example, he provides an address in *Greenes Funeralls* (1594) in which he states that one cup of pure wine will quicken fine wits, but many cups will dull them; likewise a little poetry will be good for the mind, whereas large volumes 'would but cloy and weary you' (A30). Danter's approach is particularly effective since he is trying to sell a small twelve-leaf quarto of poetry. He has provided a healthy reason to purchase the modest book, and he has shown not only a sense of humour but a sense for marketing as well.

Of especial interest is Danter's dedication 'To the right worshipfull Master *Edward Stanley Esquire*' (A20 in Christopher Middleton's *The Famous History of Chinon of England* which Danter printed for Cuthbert Burby in 1597. Edward Stanley was the Lord of the Manor of Eynsham, as is clear from the dedication which continues 'Enisham one of your Lordships [estates] was my birth-place; and as my Friends there pay dueties for the place they hue in, so tender I this here as part of my duteous loue' (A2r-A2v). Perhaps content with his success in the powerful and prestigious Stationers' Company, Danter nostalgically remembers the village of his youth. He no longer pays duties (as his old Eynsham friends do) because he no longer lives there, but he wishes to pay tribute with his dedication.

The more one learns about John Danter, the more interesting he becomes. Previous studies have excluded examination of most of his output (the physical evidence), as well as excluded examination of the content (the subject matter) of that output. Both aspects are necessary before judgement is made. This combined material suggests that the Eynsham weaver's son was not 'a printer of poor quality and dubious reputation'⁹. He was, instead, a competent, intelligent, and important sixteenth-century London printer who has much to teach us about the life and times of that era. The negative scholarly opinion of this century has minimised Danter's importance; he is a native of Eynsham who ought to be given serious consideration.

References and sources (see inside front cover for abbreviations)

1. *E.R.* no.7, 1990, pp.19-21.
2. *E.R.* no.8, 1991, pp. 37-41.
3. *E.R.* no.8, 1991, pp.30-36.
4. Oxon. Archives 164/1/12; Ark. XIII/1/2.
5. Plomer, Henry R. "The Printers of Shakespeare's Plays and Poems" *Library* 2nd ser. 7 (1906): pp.149-66.
6. Pollard, A.W., G.R.Redgrave, W.A.Jackson, F.S.Ferguson, Katharine F. Pantzer, and Philip R.Rider, eds.*A Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland & Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475-1640.* 2nd ed. 3 vols. Bibliographical Society, London, 1976-91.
7. Chambers, E.K. *Elizabethan Stage.* vol 3, p.187. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1923.
8. Carroll, D.Allen. "Who Wrote *Greenes Groats-worth of Witte (1592)?*" *Renaissance Papers* 1992, pp.69-77.
9. Halliday, F.E. *A Shakespeare Companion* 1952 (rpt.), p.127. Gerald Duckworth & Co. London, 1964.

Extract from the *Oxford Times*, May 25th, 1928.

Opening up the Upper Thames:

The stone laying ceremonies carried out by Lord Desborough at the new **Eynsham**, King's and Godstow locks did more than mark the completion of elaborate and costly improvements to the navigation. The Upper Thames had remained an almost deserted waterway with reedy banks and half forgotten locks and weirs.

THE EYNESHAM CARRIER

My Great-Grandfather Ernest Edmund Harris (1872-1936)

by Martin J Harris

Introduction

There were (and still are) different families living in Eynsham sharing the surname Harris. The family I am descended from are relative newcomers, having been in Eynsham for only just over one hundred years. My great-grandfather, Ernest Edmund Harris (not to be confused with his son, Ernest Edward Harris ¹) was the local carrier and so was well known to the villagers.

From Birmingham to Eynsham

Ernest senior was born one Wednesday on 13 November 1872 at Woodbine Cottage (No 30), Cattell's Grove, Aston, Birmingham, being the youngest of five children. His father, William, a builder, was born in Downton, Herefordshire (near Ludlow), and his mother was born Johanna Broad in Preston (near Cirencester), Gloucestershire'. In 1875 his father William gave up his building business probably owing to illness and the family moved to the Red Lion, Malmesbury, Wiltshire where he became an innkeeper (a common occupation for those not fully fit). He died of TB aged 36 in 1876 when Ernest was a mere 3 years old. As a result of this, the family moved yet again, this time to Cirencester (Cricklade Street) and then to Fairford where Johanna died of liver cancer in 1883.

Before her mother's death, Ernest's youngest sister, Alice, had moved away from home and by the early 1880s, was possibly in Eynsham where she was in service. Eynsham by train from Fairford was only an hour's journey away so such a move is not especially surprising.

In 1885, at Eynsham, Alice married Samuel Buckingham (known as Sam Buck) who was then a labourer at the mineral water factory. On the 1891 census, Alice's occupation was listed as being a dressmaker living at the greengrocer's, shop in High Street; and in the same year, Ernest, then 18 years old, was living in Poulton, Gloucestershire where he was employed as a baker.

However, shortly afterwards he came to join his sister at Eynsham. He became some sort of servant/errand boy for the Irish doctor, Dr Smallhorn, at the Shrubbery in High Street, and perhaps it was whilst here that he learnt about horses and carriages. He certainly picked up impeccable table manners from the

Smallhorns and was friends with the children, Amy, Ida, Nora and Cyril. He also spent some time working in Constable's bakery.

In the mid-1890s, Ernest bought the carrying business, possibly from Thomas Alder, a previous carrier, and as a result of his new job, also met his future wife, Phillis Elizabeth Kilby. Phillis was born in Chadlington, Oxfordshire, the eldest of seven children. She had been in service in the Burnham area, near Maidenhead, where her Uncle Jim (Kilby) also lived. Both lived and worked there for the Reverend Carpenter and his family, who at one time had lived in Charlbury. Phillis moved to Eynsham in the 1890s and was in service there, working for the Gallons in Newland House (now Beech Court Nursing Home) to where Ernest delivered goods.

Ernest and Phillis were married at Eynsham in 1899. The witnesses were Ernest's great friend and brother-in-law, Sam Buckingham (whom I assume would have been best man) and Phillis's sister, Rose Lainchbury. Their first child, my grandfather, George William, was born in 1900 at 21 Newland Street, where Ernest and Phillis were now living, followed by Ernest Edward (1901). By the time Phillis Gertrude (Gen) was born (1903), they had moved to Victoria Cottage in the Square (now called Llandaff recently lived in by the late Lottie Pimm). Thomas Frederick (1905) and Hilda Mary Annie (1906) were also born there. A few years later the family moved to Hill House at the corner of High Street and Queen Street where the youngest child, Clara Helen (1911) was born.

The Carrying Business

Being the Eynsham Carrier, Ernest's work included:

- the purchase of goods in Oxford/Witney for Eynsham villagers;
- taking produce (such as eggs and even figs) from Eynsham to Oxford/Witney to sell to merchants there;
- carrying passengers between Eynsham and Oxford/Witney;
- transporting various items to and from Eynsham Railway Station;
- any other transporting that was required.

Almost every village near Oxford would have access to a carrier.

The carrying business became quite successful. Originally Ernest used a two-wheeled van pulled by a horse, which was later replaced by a four-wheeled van. Carriers' carts/vans varied in design. It is believed that Ernest's four-wheeled van had two small wheels at the front, two larger ones at the back and was made of various types of wood (with a wooden not canvas roof). Inside would be basic seating (a plank of wood on each side). People would enter the van at the front

(some vans had rear entrances). As the driver, Ernest would be slightly protected from the elements by the front of the roof. Much writing and advertisements were put on carriers' vans. In one photo that shows part of the side of the Harris van, there are the words:

HARRIS. EYNESHAM
Oxford & Witney Carrier

There is also an advertisement on it that says:

FOSTER BROTHERS
CHEAPEST CLOTHIERS IN THE WORLD

As well as his carrier's van, Ernest had a brougham (a popular small carriage) which he used for transporting important Eynsham residents around (people like Major Oakeley). It was also used for weddings. Dr Smallhorn, too, had a brougham in which he visited patients living out of the village. Ernest's brougham was kept in a barn. There were two steps up to it and it was beautifully padded. It had a high seat in the front for the driver and two big lamps at the side where candles were placed during the winter and replaced by paper carnations in the summer.

Ernest took the carrier's van into Oxford on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays and to Witney every Thursday. In Oxford the cart was parked in the street by the Martyrs Memorial that leads into Broad Street (where coaches drop off and pick up passengers today). He would leave his dog there (one of the dogs he had then was called Tooter) to guard it and no-one would dare approach with the dog around. The horses were then taken to the Blue Anchor Inn in Ship Street/Cornmarket Street until 1911 when it closed. Afterwards, they were taken to the Crown in Cornmarket Street. The groom at the Crown was Joseph Harper. When he married my grandmother's aunt, Ethel Alice Castle in 1914 (at Cumnor), the carriers organized a collection and bought him a carriage clock.

Although Eynsham had its railway it was not easy for residents to travel to Oxford if they worked long hours during the week, and such a trip could be quite time-consuming. So Ernest would buy, on approval, items for Eynsham people such as shoes and shirts. High-class grocery items such as special coffees and different sorts of tea were purchased from Grimby Hughes which was to the right of the Crown in Cornmarket Street (in Cornmarket Street 1840-1961 and in Oxford's Queen Street 1961-1963). Many goods were delivered to the Crown's yard from Oxford shops for carriers' carts to pick up. If the vehicle was late

returning home, son George might walk along the road in Eynsham and put his ear to the ground to listen for the horses coming along.

Ernest looked after the horses very well (after all, they were his livelihood), and was very strict with his eldest son, George, if he had worked them too hard. Of the horses that the Harris family had over the years, those remembered by relatives include Nancy and Captain. Nancy was the heavy, cart-horse type. She was placid, whereas Captain was a bit more trouble and at times it was difficult to control him. There was also a horse called Jesus!

When younger, eldest son George's enjoyment of playing cricket at Bitterell (just off Queen Street), when it was a field, was often curtailed by his father calling him in to go and clean the brass on the harnesses. After leaving school at 13, George worked with his father for a year before becoming a carpentry apprentice at the Oxford firm of Wooldridge and Simpson Ltd. He often cycled to work with a colleague, Harvey Hill, who became a well-known Eynsham builder. Ernest junior also joined the carrying business full-time when he was old enough. Of course, all the family, however employed, spent some time helping out with the carrying.

As well as the routine carrying work, Ernest also undertook various haulage work. Coal would be carried from the railway station to people like Mrs Smallhorn and the well-to-do Eynsham villagers.

Ernest would employ a couple of men as labourers or have assistance from the family. Another job was to collect bones from the station and take them down the Hanborough road to the glue factory that used to be there. The odour from the glue factory was dreadful and remained on Ernest even after he had returned home.

When the children were younger, there were people working in the house as well. Granny Ayres was a villager who used to help out, although Phillis did the cooking.

The First World War

In 1915, probably whilst in his favourite pub, the Red Lion in Eynsham, Ernest joined the Army Veterinary Corps, leaving his wife Phillis and her children to run the business. It is believed that some of the horses were also taken to war.

In those days, the Old Gatehouse pub, near Oxford Railway Station was one of the putting down/picking up points along the way. On returning from Oxford to Eynsham, the horse pulling the carrier's cart would automatically cross over the

road to the pub where some old women would be drinking gin. If the women stayed there too long and son George was driving the vehicle, which he sometimes did on Saturdays after work, he would start the cart moving so that the old women would come running out of the pub to get on board in time.

It was no fun for Phillis or any of her family going round Eynsham at the end of the day, during the months when it was dark early, delivering goods. Temperance Hawtin (née Hanks) as a child of about eleven or twelve would sometimes pick up her items from the Harris's home. If the carrier's van had not yet returned on a Saturday night Temperance would wait outside Hill House until her Sunday meat arrived. There might also be shoes delivered as Temperance recalls:

"Mrs Harris would come back with three boxes of shoes done up in a parcel. Whichever fitted we had, and we had to take the money down to Mrs Harris and she would take the other pairs of shoes back to Freeman, Hardy and Willis".

Temperance also travelled on the carrier's cart, despite its being almost filled up with goods. She would be picked up in Oxford outside Coopers at the top of St Ebbes. *"It was a lovely treat for us to go to Oxford "*, she said.

With Ernest's absence, the remaining horses getting old and worn out and other factors, the business became very difficult to run. In 1917 Ernest briefly returned to Eynsham on leave and sorted matters out, with help from Mr Oliffe, the Witney carrier. From then on Ernest's eldest daughter, Gert, would go around the village taking the orders and then into Oxford with Mr Oliffe and his son, Les, on his motorised Napier van (no worry of horses now!) and pick up the goods. On returning home, the Eynsham goods would be unloaded at Hill House and Mr Oliffe and Les would go into the house, have a cup of tea with the Harris family and sort out any bits and pieces. Gert would then deliver the goods using a two-wheeled hand cart which had a canvas cover. She would also help the Oliffes around the Hailey area once a fortnight.

It was still very much a family affair - at times Gert's youngest sister Clara would help out and in the later 1920s/early 1930s even Gert's niece and nephew, Jean and Francis, as little children, would go around the village with her on some Saturdays.

At the end of the First World War, Ernest returned home, although by this time his eldest son George had joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve spending a lot of time in Cologne. He returned to Eynsham in 1920 to find a less prosperous family.

Between the Wars

Ernest now spent much time in a variety of work. He did sundry building and scaffolding jobs (when they used wooden posts). He spent a bit of time working for the Oxford building firm, Kingerlee Ltd, where his son Tom worked and where later his grandson, Francis (son of George) would work. Despite not always being fully employed, Ernest never gave up trying during the hard times and always kept up his appearances. Sometimes in the winter, he would clear snow for a few shillings a week. At Hill House itself, there was plenty to keep him busy as the stables were turned into pig sties where the pigs were now kept. At one time they also kept chickens in the field east of the Churchyard known as the 'back of Hunts'.

In the early 1920s, Phillis's uncle, Jim Kilby, who was now about seventy, left Burnham to live at Hill House following an accident in which he broke his hip.

Before eldest son George married Miriam Castle of Farmoor Farm, Farmoor at Cumnor in 1922, he would spend time in Hill House yard shed in the evenings making his furniture on the work bench. Youngest sister Clara would stand nearby holding a candle so that he could see. He lodged at Farmoor on three Saturday nights to avoid his banns being read at Eynsham! His sister Clara was one of the bridesmaids. His mother did not go as she was not keen on travelling and social events like weddings. Sister Gert was unable to go as she was out with the Oliffes doing the carrying work, although she did visit the newlyweds the next day (on the Sunday). Both George and Miriam were taken to Cumnor in cars provided by Humphris (who are now the local Nissan car dealers in Oxford). After the wedding, cricket was played at Farmoor Farm. The couple then cycled to their new home at Cutts End, Cumnor.

The other children married in the later 1920s and early 1930s. Ernest junior married Mildred (Mill) Simpson at Cassington in 1928 and Hilda married Bill Pimm³ at Eynsham in 1930. Ernest junior and Mill lived with Sam and his son Jack Buckingham in Crown Crescent when they first got married. (Ernest senior's sister Alice - Sam's wife - had died in 1917, aged 52). At one time, the Buckinghams had a fish shop there. Sam's brother, Bob, had the Railway Inn on the corner of Station Road and Acre End Street.

There was a double wedding in 1932 when the other two sisters Gert and Clara married Claude Hale and Reg Bloyce respectively. Reg had come to Eynsham from Colchester to work as an engineer at the sugar beet factory in Eynsham. After the factory went bust, he went to work as a Co-op insurance agent following a meeting with Fred Wastie on a bus. Reg would also help out with the carrying

business by delivering goods around Eynsham in his car when it was raining, to save Gert from getting too drenched.

Tom, the last to leave, got married in 1934 at Eynsham to Rose Neville.

So by 1935, all the children had married and left home. This meant that Hill House was now too large and was sold to a man called Hoskins. Ernest, Phillis and her uncle Jim moved to a house called Moorlands (previously owned by a man called O'Connor) on the Witney Road near the Evenlode Inn. Jim Kilby was frail and in his eighties by then, but a neighbour, Henry Goodwin managed to transport Jim to Moorlands. Their son Tom and his wife Rose lived at All Views, next door.

The last link with the carrying business was broken in 1935 when Gert finished working with the Oliffe family six weeks before her daughter Phillis was born.

Ernest died of throat cancer on Saturday 2 May 1936 aged 63 at the Oxford Infirmary (now the Radcliffe Infirmary). In his last letter to Phillis from the hospital he asked how the pigs and chickens were getting on. After he died, Eynsham villager Nellie Jefferies (who later married a Mott) continued to come to Moorlands to feed the animals and do some housework as she had done for a few years previously.

After Ernest's death, Phillis continued to get support from her family. Eldest son George would go up to Moorlands with his brother Tom and brother-in-law Claude Hale to cut the long grass with a scythe. The grass was grown long before cutting it so that it could be used for the animals. Phillis' nephew, Jack Buck(ingham) would also come up with his Hall's coal cart and use it like a big wheelbarrow to move the cut grass to an appropriate place. On his way home to Farmoor, George would catch up with Jack Buck who was also on his way home.

"Ah," said George to Jack, *"You can get a drink in now."*

"I already have," replied Jack, who had probably nipped into the Star.

Phillis died two years later, aged 62, at her son George's house in Farmoor. After her death, Tom and Rose moved into Moorlands and Gert and Claude moved from Pelican Place to All Views.

Conclusion

So Ernest Edmund Harris, despite having lost both his parents by the age of 10, came to Eynsham in his early twenties and made a success of the carrying business until interrupted by the First World War. During the depression years,

he kept his dignity, was never afraid of hard work, and kept up his appearances. His legacy to Eynsham has been descendants, many of whom still live in the village. As for myself, I do not live in Eynsham, but I work for the doctors here, just as my great-grandfather did.

Notes

1. Ernest Edward Harris's memories of Eynsham and the family are recounted in Mollie Harris's book *From Acre End*. Chatto & Windus, 1982, pp.54-58.
2. By coincidence, since her surname comes by marriage, the same Mollie Harris has a remote blood connection with the Harris family of this article. Her grandfather, Joseph Broad, and Ernest Edmund Harris's mother, Johanna Broad, were first cousins.
3. Son of Frank Pimm, Parish Clerk in the 1930s (see p. 21).

In the light of current repairs to the A.40, and its proposed realignment to the north of Eynsham, the following extract from the *Oxford Times* of 2nd March, 1928 is of some interest.

By-passes: Father Ronald Knox, in his amusing talk to the Luncheon Club upon "The Noises of Oxford", naturally passed on from the "grindings, rattlings and hooting of motors" to consider the the growth of Oxford and the possible by-pass roads.

For the north, he suggested the development for motor traffic of the old coaching road between Wheatley and Islip, by way of Forest Hill and Stanton St John, and so on to Bletchington and Chipping Norton; and as a supplement to catch the Henley traffic, a by-pass road from Nuneham Courtenay to Beckley.

Another proposal was a road from Abingdon to **Eynsham** and Woodstock, to catch the traffic for the north from Newbury, Portsmouth and Southampton. The Reading traffic would have an alternative route to the north by way of Steventon and Abingdon, and the London traffic for the west would come through Henley, Dorchester and Abingdon, striking the Cheltenham road at Eynsham.

[Lilian Wright, who supplied this snippet, comments:- "Intriguing to see that Ronald Knox had views about Oxford roads in 1928 and had in mind the A40 and A34 , but not quite in the way they were eventually made." Editor]

EYNESHAM FEAST DAY: THE EARLY YEARS OF EYNESHAM CARNIVAL

by Pamela Richards

Some time ago I had the idea of writing the history of the Eynsham Carnival. A simple matter I thought. However, my researches have proved more complicated and taken me back further in time than I had anticipated. Over the past hundred years or so the name of the event, the date, and the venue have gone through a number of changes before the current regular diary entry of 'Eynsham Carnival on the first Saturday in July to be held on the Oxford Road playing fields'.

During the 19th century the Eynsham Annual Sports took place during the Whitsun week. In the 1870s this was on the Wednesday but in the 1880s it seems to have moved to Whit Monday itself. At this time the Eynsham Whitsun Sports was a big local event on a par with the Witney Easter Sports. The venue varied. In 1872 the field was loaned by Messrs. Gibbons Bros., and in 1882 it was held in a field belonging to Mrs Druce. It was organised by a committee formed of 'the leading sporting gentlemen in Eynsham and its immediate vicinity'. In 1870 Mr W.Sawyer was nominated as the official Starter, while Mr W.Buckingham was Clerk of the Course. The events included both foot and horse races, and the Eynsham Brass Band was prominent.

The programme for 1871 was as follows:- '¼ mile hurdle foot race; 1 mile foot race (open to the County); 1 mile foot race (confined to competitors within 4 miles of Eynsham); 'A mile foot race for boys under 13; the high jump; 1 mile hurdle race for hunters; 1½ mile flat race for horses; 1 mile flat race for horses (open to competitors from within 4 miles of Eynsham); 1 mile pony race and a scurry (a short quick race); 1 mile flat for horses. Two silver cups (value 3 guineas each) were offered to the best competitors, other prizes were two bridles and a whip (all new) and several prizes in money of 5, 3, 2, 1½ guineas, 15s. 10s. 5s. and 2s.6d.

On the day, the Wednesday of Whitsun week, the weather proved 'all that could be desired', there was a large crowd and good sport, all of which did not seem to be spoilt by a 'sad accident'. In one of the races there was a collision involving three horses. One horse was killed and several riders injured. It was learned later that one of the more severely injured, a Mr Grant of Queen's College, had had to remain in Eynsham until he was sufficiently well to return to Oxford. However, this was 'the only drawback of an enjoyable day'. The eleven events were said to be 'capitally contested' with local athletes and owners of hunters, hacks, ponies etc. One Edward Druce of Witney, who had also been a successful competitor in

Witney at Easter, carried off one of the coveted silver cups. He was still winning prizes in 1874.

Sometimes there were greater problems. In May 1883 Mr Wall, a member of the Sports Committee, applied for a licence on behalf of Mr Juggins, landlord of The Talbot Inn, to sell refreshment on the ground of the Eynsham Athletic Sports on the Whit Monday and presented a petition to the Local Government Board signed by the chief ratepayers in favour of the granting of this licence. However, Police Superintendent Whadcoat objected to the licence, owing to the occurrence of a disturbance two years before, also claiming that a large force of police had had to be on the field the previous year. The licence was refused. As I read this I was reminded that when I served on the Carnival Committee a few years ago the police had made some objections to a beer tent and suggested that Eynsham was a rough sort of place where there might be trouble. In that year they were certainly proved wrong.

The disturbance referred to by Supt. Whadcoat had occurred at the Sports Day on June 6th 1881 when there had been what was described as a riot in which several policemen were hurt. The police force was still new and not very popular. It had all begun when the local man, P.C. Harrison had separated, apparently none too gently, two boys who were fighting.

The mother of one of them objected strongly and physically. Another constable, P.C. Nap, arrived on the scene and was also attacked by the woman, Mary Ann Fulbrook of Oxford. She scratched Harrison's face and threw a stone which hit him in the groin. P.C. Sorrell of Witney who was also on duty heard Mary shout "Let the police have it", which seemed to be the signal for a general affray. Mary and three other men were given prison sentences for their part in the 'riot'. In the same year there was a fatal accident. Richard Brooks, a farmer and dealer from Uxbridge, had come to the Sports Day while visiting his brother-in-law, Joseph Kearsley of Eynsham. While he was on the field at 'about 3 o'clock in the afternoon a pony driven by two Oxford students was started by the Witney Band. The trap was thrown over and the pony got loose'. Mr Brooks and a lady were knocked down by it. The lady had only slight injuries but Mr Brooks had 5 fractured ribs which penetrated the lung and his breast bone was broken. He died from his injuries at about 10 o'clock on the same night.

From the earlier mentioned objections made by Supt. Whadcoat I understood that there had been further trouble in 1882, but according to the newspaper report the sports 'passed off smoothly this year with the committee keeping the course and ... the services of the police were not called on'.

In 1886 the same event seemed to have been called the Eynsham Club Feast and the newspaper report describes it as a large fair.

My researches now have a large gap until the 1930's. In 1937 the Parish Council took steps to instigate the purchase of land belonging to the Trustees of Dr.Smallhorn which should become Eynsham recreation ground. At a meeting held on April 28th 1937 it was agreed that the ground would be acquired by a voluntary scheme and not via the rates. On the proposal of Mr W.T.Hanks a committee was formed with power to co-opt from every organisation in the town. Several ways to raise the £800 needed for the purchase of the land were suggested, and it was proposed to revive Eynsham Feast Day as a 'curtain raiser'.

The first Eynsham Playing Fields' Carnival took place on Saturday, August 26th, 1939. From the account book it can be seen that, as now, it was very much a village affair with familiar names placing advertisements and helping. The carnival secretary that year was Mr W.T.Hanks. The events of the day were reported in both the *Witney Gazette* and the *Oxford Times*.

The parade marched from Mr Coates's field (near The Star from where the Pram Race, the opening event of the modern Carnival starts), headed by Eynsham Scouts Band, to the playing fields where the fancy dress was judged. Various sports and side shows took place. There was a tug of war with teams of eight, a six-a-side football contest, bowling for a pig, and an Aunt Sally. It was reported that owing to the 'crisis' (the threat of war) some football teams had had to pull out. There was also a miniature passenger railway which was apparently a great success. Among the fancy dress winners were Stanley Green, Reginald Hanks, Joan Pimm and Mrs Hawtins. David Wastie won the Aunt Sally, F.James won the Bowling for a Pig, and Eynsham 'A' team won the football. The day ended with a dance in the Institute. It seemed that Eynsham Feast Day was well and truly launched. Unfortunately, the 'crisis' did more than prevent some football teams from getting to Eynsham that August. I hope to take up the story of Eynsham Carnival as it continued after the Second World War in the next issue of the Record.

Acknowledgements

My thanks to the Playing Field Managers for access to their records, to Mr Jack Green for his memories (which I am sure have not been fully tapped yet) and to Mr R. Hanks for climbing into his loft!

Sources

Witney Express/Witney Gazette, 1869-1900.

Witney Gazette, 1939.

Oxford Times, 1939.



Mr Frank Pimm, Parish Clerk,
outside the south door of St Leonard's Church in 1933.

A CHILD'S VIEW OF MR FRANK PIMM

by Daisy Ainsley Grabsky

One look at the photograph of Mr Frank Pimm might explain why, for all of my childhood in Eynsham, I was terrified of him. He looked as though he had stepped out of the pages of Dickens - like Mr Bumble the Beadle. Every Sunday we had to walk by him as we entered St Leonard's Church. As Parish Clerk he stood in the entrance leaning on his stick, and every Sunday I expected that stick to land on my shoulders as I passed by. He had a deep, resonant voice which he did not hesitate to raise at any child who was misbehaving. His star performance, however, was when he fell asleep during the sermon and started to snore. Now this snore was no gentle purring noise. This snore reached to the rafters of the church and rattled around there until the next one was sent to join it. We children did our best but we couldn't hold back our laughter. For we six Ainsley children this would mean another ticking off from our father when we got home. Then Mr Pimm, with his six chins resting on his chest, would open one eye and look around, the snoring having stopped. During the children's service, when our parents were not there, this one eye opening of Mr Pimm would be followed by a mighty roar to behave ourselves. He little realized that he was the cause of our merriment.

On one occasion my sister Winifred and I were going to the funeral of a school friend, Betty Bungay. We were both stopped by the said F.Pimm who bellowed at us "You can't come in 'ere; you ain't got 'ats on!". We said "Yes, we have got hats on". "No", he replied, "go 'ome and get 'ats". Now poor Frank did not know the fashion of the times which was to pin one's beret right on the back of the head, so we had to turn right around to show him our hats. Of course, by this time my sister and I were convulsed with laughter, and here we were going to a funeral.

Frank Pimm served his God and his Church faithfully. I am sure that if I had known him when I grew up I would have changed my childlike opinion of him.



Acre End Street, looking east, 1906. (photograph by Henry Taunt)



The same scene in 1995. Surprisingly few changes are apparent from this view point 89 years later. Perhaps the most obvious are the opening up of Janty's shop, the extra storey added to the cottages which now include the chemists, and the disappearance of the Railway Inn sign.

NOTE: the images opposite
have been re-sized to reduce the overall size
of this .pdf file.

Back numbers of the Eynsham Record are available in print for £1 plus p&p.

Contact the Editor Brian Atkins, 8 Thornbury Road tel 01865 881677 email

brian@fbatkins.free-online.co.uk

or Fred Bennett, 68 Witney Road tel 01865 880659



THE VICTORIAN WORKHOUSE

By Edna Mason

Many people today remember, perhaps from the days of their own childhood, perhaps from hearing their parents talk, how people used to dread the workhouse. In fact, the idea of stigma was deliberately fostered by the authorities to keep people out and cut costs. Some of the Unions were certainly appalling, but many were dreary rather than cruel, and some were probably no worse than later old people's homes.

The giant Union houses started to appear in the 1830s. Parishes were responsible for looking after their own poor from Tudor times, and by the end of the 18th century most, including Eynsham (see for example Renold P. *John Rusher of Eynsham. E.R.*, no.10, 1993, pp.24-32), had some kind of poor house or house of industry. Some of these were really a kind of primitive workhouse or factory where paupers were provided with work. Others provided living accommodation, either in a communal building or sometimes in cottages. During the first part of the 19th century the cost of maintaining the poor rose to what were regarded as unacceptable levels, and at the same time stories about the horrific conditions in which some of those 'on the parish' were expected to live were becoming too prevalent. So the small, widely varied workhouses were replaced by purpose built buildings - General Purpose Workhouses (sometimes known as 'Bastilles'), catering to a wide range of clientèle, and divided into wings for the different types of paupers.

Parishes were combined into groups or Poor Law Unions. Under the control firstly of the Poor Law Commissioners (PLC) from 1834 to 1847, then the Poor Law Board (PLB) until 1871, the Local Government Board until 1919, and finally the Ministry of Health, the Unions were ruled by the local boards of Guardians. They were made up originally of all J.P.s (ex officio) and of other local worthies elected by rate payers. But the local gentry were often unwilling to fulfil the increasing demands made on them, and by the end of the century the only qualification for a Guardian was 12 months' residence in the parish. By this time there were some working class Guardians, and indeed some who had once been inmates. A woman was elected at Kensington in 1875, and 20 years later there were more than 800 women Guardians nationally. As more women joined the boards they were influential in bringing about a more sympathetic approach.

Witney Union, which included Eynsham, contained about 42 parishes. The number varied from time to time as parishes were amalgamated or transferred from one Union to another. This was an unusually large number and must have led to administrative difficulties. The Union consisted of four districts, Witney, Eynsham, Burford and Bampton, and each had its own Medical Officer (MO) and Relieving Officer (RO). The position of Relieving Officer could be an unenviable one. It was he who had to give the orders for relief and he was often hated and sometimes physically assaulted by his clients, and he was criticised by the Board or the Poor Law Inspectors if he were too liberal or if there were complaints of his neglect of duty. The Medical Officers faced similar criticisms. If they had neglected to visit their patients quickly, which must have been easy enough in so scattered an area, they were reprimanded; and some, like the MO for Eynsham on a number of occasions, were criticised and even surcharged for spending too much on 'extra payments' for bread, meat and port or brandy for their patients.

In 1860 the PLB said that Eynsham, with over 16,000 acres, was too big for one Medical Officer, but the Guardians - who would have to pay the salaries-disagreed. Sometimes the strain became too much for the officers. At Wheatley, in the Headington Union, first the Relieving Officer and then (forty years later) the Medical Officer were eventually admitted to Littlemore Asylum. The Relieving Officers for both Eynsham and Witney were found guilty of embezzlement in the early years of this century.

The local boards, answerable to the central bodies, were advised or told what to do by inspectors who attended meetings several times a year and kept a close eye on quite small details of administration. The Guardians could also be surcharged at the annual audit if the auditor disapproved of the way they had spent their funds. On some issues, however, if the local board refused to be bound by the central authority there was very often little that the inspector could do, and a number of rules were ignored by Unions if they considered them inappropriate. Witney continued to admit one or two children from the large families of impoverished farm labourers during bad winters, although it was a strict rule that either the whole family or nobody was to be admitted. It also continued to pay outdoor relief regularly in the winter to a number of people who had been receiving it for some years - to the fury of Inspector Henley. In 1860 the local board was arguing in a very determined fashion with the Poor Law Board. The Witney Board wanted to grant outdoor relief to the fathers of two babies because it was 'averse to admission of infants as it is found a large proportion of those admitted die or suffer very much in heath, from what cause they are unable to say...'

In the north of the country some boards of Guardians utterly refused to be controlled by the central bodies, who eventually had to give way to local men. In the Oxfordshire Unions, apart from differences of opinion concerning out-door relief, the most usual arguments were caused by the refusal of the Guardians to carry out the repairs and alterations to the property which the central authority considered essential. Most workhouses were under-funded, shabby and inefficient.

The first thing that the pauper seeking help had to do was to get an order from the Relieving Officer either granting outdoor relief or admitting him or her to the house. In a scattered district such as those in the Witney Union this might involve a walk of several miles. Sometimes an order would be made by the Guardian if he could be contacted - or by the Master himself. One man in the Headington Union pushed his unfortunate children in a wheel barrow to the gates of the workhouse and left them there, so there was no alternative but to admit them. His action caused more anger when it was discovered that one of the children had smallpox. But the order was more usually given by the RO and ratified by the board.

Having obtained a provisional order from the RO, paupers would be admitted to the house and placed in a probationary ward until they had been examined by the MO. While there they would be cleaned and issued with workhouse dress. Their own clothes would be purified and sometimes used by other paupers, more often deposited and returned to them when they left. This could lead to difficulties with children who had outgrown them, a fact which was sometimes used as an excuse to stop parents taking their children away. Occasionally there are records of inmates' clothes going mouldy, something which happened at both Witney and Headington, although orders for compensation were made. It is difficult to know the kind of distinctive dress which was imposed on the inmates. In Headington in the 1890s cord jackets were replaced by tweed jackets. Print dresses for the women had been introduced earlier. There are also references to paupers employed in the infirmary wards being given different clothes. The idea of a pauper uniform seems horrific today, but there were numerous occasions when paupers absconded and were charged with the theft of Union clothes. Since any paupers, other than children and the certified insane, could discharge themselves whenever they liked - and even return the next day - it is difficult to see why they took the risk of committing this offence unless the Union clothes were in fact better than their own.

The paupers were placed in separate wards according to their category and theoretically they were strictly segregated. There were seven categories: 1. Aged and infirm. 2. Able-bodied men & boys over 13 (later 15).

3. Boys 7-13. 4. Aged or infirm women. 5. Able-bodied women & girls over 16 6. Girls 7-16. 7. Children under 7.

In practice, mothers were allowed to sleep with their children until they were three or sometimes seven years old; husbands and wives over sixty were entitled to double rooms, although workhouse masters did not always tell them of this; able-bodied women were employed around the house, and old men often supervised the boys. While conceding that the house should be a refuge for the elderly and infirm, public opinion was adamant that conditions for the able-bodied should not be easier in the house than out of it. So the men, particularly, were given work which was hard and unattractive. At Headington there was always a minority of able-bodied men, and those that were there tended to be short term. At Witney there were more, especially around 1850, probably reflecting a much higher level of unemployment. 'Ag labs' feature quite largely on the 1851 census for the House. These able-bodied inmates certainly were given hard manual work whenever possible, although it is very doubtful whether they were actually expected to do the full amount stated, and there were times when there was not enough for them to do.

The job of bone-crushing was introduced in earlier years after careful discussion, but this was forbidden in 1846 following the scandal when starving inmates of the Andover House were found to be gnawing rotten meat off the bones. Stone-breaking was common labour in workhouses, and the Guardians' minutes for May 1886 record that the quarry was exhausted and stone was bought, although there is some doubt as to whether this was to provide work for inmates or just for tramps who came under rather different rules. In September 1886 the Guardians were discussing building a shelter for tramps in the stone-breaking yard. They eventually decided against it. Surprisingly, both at Witney and at Headington, inmates' labour was very rarely used for maintenance, and tenders were put out for whitewashing the House.

Gardening was a common occupation in many workhouses. Witney had a fine garden and much work was done in it. Most of the crops were sold and the gardening account was quite profitable, although this was probably partly due to the fact that Witney kept its children in the workhouse and employed industrial teachers, often including a gardener, to instruct them. In the October quarter of 1860 the garden showed a profit of £3. 11s. 3d. Two months later the value of the House was £5. 12s., and the produce sold for £4 19s. 8d. In 1915, under wartime conditions, they reduced the area given to strawberries, other soft fruit, and asparagus. Other industrial teachers at Witney included cordwainers and tailors,

and quite large sums were spent on materials for them. For a number of years here are no references to the hated oakum picking common at many Houses.

Diet was usually adequate by the standards of the day, but noted for its dullness. Bread seems to have been the staple. Standard diets were mandatory, although here tended to be local variations. In the north-east, where the poor outside the workhouse tended to eat better than elsewhere in the country, the paupers' diet was better than prescribed. Occasionally, as at Andover, it was worse. There are no indications in the Oxfordshire Houses that it was below standard, although here are frequent instances of the Guardians complaining to the suppliers about the quality.

The Witney minutes record such items as:

October 1844: The Medical Officer was required to give lists of inmates requiring 'extra meat, wine and beer.

June 1851: The Guardians resolved that inmates employed as nurses and washer-women should receive tea, sugar, bread and butter as an extra allowance.

Petty restrictions, often hard work for the able-bodied, and a dull diet together with inadequate funding, poor maintenance and too few good staff must have made the workhouse a dreary place to be. But for a very long time it was never meant to be a pleasant place. For most of the period of the workhouses, strenuous efforts were made to keep able-bodied men and women out of the house. The 'eligibility' principle required that life inside should be less pleasant than life outside, and some unions went to horrifying lengths to ensure that it was so. Some of the large cities introduced 'test' houses, expressly for the able-bodied, where conditions were little if any better than those inside prisons. The women at Leeds were interminably employed on oakum picking, and at some of the larger Houses the nurseries were upstairs and the children never went into the fresh air. There were undoubtedly horror stories, but the scandals were exceptions and most ..cruelty was accidental or the result of neglect.

The drab surroundings and the poor maintenance of the buildings were probably among the worst hardships that local paupers had to bear. Attempts at improvement took a long time to implement. The Guardians were always conscious that costs had to be met from the local rates. In 1887 the Local Government Board inspector was worried that the new cesspit was too close to the well and would lead to pollution. The Inspector of Nuisances (appointed by the Guardians) disagreed and said that it was further away than the old pit. In the following year the November minutes record that diarrhoea was again prevalent and this problem seems to have continued until April. The water was analysed in December and found to be unsatisfactory. In 1899 the LGB inspector reported that

the condition of the House was unchanged. There was no hot water, WC or separate bathrooms in the sick wards and bathing arrangements throughout the house were bad. In 1900 hot water was piped to the sick wards but no action was taken about WCs. In April of the following year the inspector still found 'the sanitary arrangements for the sick very primitive'. In July, sewage was leaking onto Folly Hill. But Witney did have electric bells by 1887.

The squalor of the buildings was frequently matched by the poor quality of the staff. Workhouse staff were something of a race apart, tending to move from one House to another hoping to acquire promotion either by moving to a larger House or by moving up the scale with an experienced porter and his assistant matron wife gaining positions as master and matron. The character of the members of the staff, particularly of the master and matron, had enormous bearing on the morale of the whole institution. Some masters took their responsibilities very seriously and were well liked by the inmates. Some were drunkards and bullies. Porters too varied much. They did not have easy lives. Sometimes they also acted as assistant relieving officers responsible for admitting or refusing to admit possibly drunk and angry tramps. Some resigned, not being able to stand the abuse and occasional violence they encountered. Some were dismissed for neglecting their duties or unkindness to inmates. In 1886 the porter at Witney was sacked because of a complaint of indecency against an inmate. The police were involved but the Guardians considered the charge unfounded. They took a similar view of a complaint about the nurse and porter which an inmate had made in a letter direct to the Local Government Board. They protested that the house had been visited every week and no complaint had been made to them. The inmate concerned was deprived of all 'extra diet'.

As the 19th century advanced, public opinion placed much more emphasis on specialised institutional care. Children were increasingly sent to industrial schools, and the handicapped were sent to homes for the blind, the deaf or the crippled. Witney appears unusual in that it made less *use* of children's homes and other specialist institutions, and kept its children in the workhouse, sending them to local schools. As late as 1900 Witney Union was horrified to learn that it would have to pay £10 each for two girls to go to the Aston Training School, although it eventually agreed that they should go. Although it sent a number of lunatics to Littlemore Asylum, there appears to have been a larger than usual core of long term infirm in the workhouse. There was a group of women imbeciles who were there for as long as 20 years.

Workhouse life came to an end suddenly in Witney. The building was taken over by the military in October 1917. Surprisingly few details are given in the

Guardians' minutes. The inmates appear to have been divided between Faringdon, Woodstock and Oxford. By September 1919 the building was unoccupied and the Guardians asked the Ministry of Health for permission to sell it. At first the Ministry refused and it appears to have remained unused for the next two years when permission was finally given. By then there were no takers. The Ministry fixed a reserve of £3000 but the Guardians were ready to accept any offer. In February 1924 the clerk received a payment of £10 for the extra work involved in the sale, and in that year the balance was passed to the Trustees. No more details appear in the minutes. It must have been sold the year before, because the *Witney Gazette* for October 1923 reported that Bernard Frost had bought the workhouse with the intention of turning it into a bacon factory. Unfortunately for him, soon after buying it, he discovered that a similar factory was to be run by a consortium of farmers at Kidlington, so he abandoned the idea. Early in the second world war the buildings were taken over by Crawfords for their staff who had been evacuated. Crawfords still own them, but their history in the intervening years is obscure.

Other local workhouses were gradually reclassified as hospitals or old people's homes before being closed. Some Witney people were sent to these, but after the first world war increasing use was made of outdoor relief in the Witney Union. The Relieving Officers were still sometimes seen as bogeymen, but there appear to have been few local people who would have wished the Witney workhouse to re-open.

Sources (see inside front cover for abbreviations)

Witney Union Guardians' Minute Books. Oxon. Archives: PLU 6/G/1 A1/1/31
Headington Union Guardians' Minute Books. Oxon. Archives: OC Archives A.6.4-B7.5
Jackson's Oxford Journal, 1836, 1902, 1917
Oxford Journal Illustrated, 1928
Witney Gazette, 1922, 1923
Oxford Chronicle, 1905, 1926,
1928 *Oxford Times*, 1928
Oxfordshire Census Returns 1841-91
V.C.H. Oxon. vol.12
Crowther, M.A. *The Workhouse System 1834-1929*
Horn, Pamela (Ed.) *Oxfordshire Village Life: The Diaries of George James Dew (1846-1928)*, Relieving Officer Beacon Publications 1983
Gray. Frank *The Tramp* 1931

MORE EYNESHAM HAUNTINGS

During the summer I received a letter from Mrs Daisy Grabsky (née Ainsley) of Brighton, who was born in Eynsham in 1921. Her parents moved here from London during the first World War, and settled in the thatched cottage in Church Street, then known as Holly Cottage, 1, Abbey St. She adds to Joan Weedon's record of hauntings there (see *Eynsham Record*, no.11, p. 19).

The house "had a ghost. My mother saw it many times as also did various relatives. The ghost was a monk wearing a black cowl and robe. She said there was nothing frightening about him. When they had the floors dug up for the laying of pipes for water and drains several skeletons were found. The heads were lying in one corner and the bodies in another. The bones were taken to the churchyard and given a Christian burial as they were thought to be those of monks fleeing from the Abbey to the Church for sanctuary.

The house was blessed [exorcised] in the time of Revd. Owen and sometime afterwards electricity was installed. The ghost was never seen again so we could never be sure whether it was the blessing or the electricity which drove him away!".

Mrs Grabsky had also enjoyed Lilian Wright's article on the church bells (see *Eynsham Record*, no.10, pp.36-44). She and her sister were being taught to ring them by Mr Tom Bond during 1938-40, but were stopped by the war.

She adds that her father, H.W.Ainsley, was a churchwarden during the time of the Revd. Stuart Blanch, and her parents continued to live in the same house until their deaths in 1965. They are buried in St Leonard's churchyard.

Subsequently Mrs Grabsky has offered some childhood memories of the village in the 1930s (see pages 21-22, and 41-44). She also has a photograph of the Eynsham Brownie Pack at Sandown, Isle of Wight, on a week-long trip, led by Mary Oakeley (Brown Owl) in 1936. All the leaders and girls on this trip have now been identified, and this will form the basis of an article in next year's *Record*. [Editor]

WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE GREAT WAR, EYNHAM?

by Eynsham Junior History Group

On July 28th 1914 Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia one month after the murder of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo. A week later Germany invaded Belgium and provoked the British into a declaration of war.

Before the end of August, 17 National Reservists from Eynsham were inspected in the Market Square by Colonel Lord Saye & Sele. These were the first of the Eynsham men who volunteered or were later conscripted to fight for the defence of their country.

Soon news of the involvement of the Eynsham men in the conflict was reaching the local newspapers. Some of it was good, some tragic. It was good to hear that Albert Hall, son of Thomas Hall, baker, had been made Sergeant, and that G.Hall had been decorated. Lt.J.Empson Tindall managed to pay his parents a visit in March 1915, having had a narrow escape when the boat on which he was crossing the channel was just missed by a torpedo from a submarine outside Boulogne Harbour. Later that same year, as a Captain, he was mentioned in despatches and given a medal for gallantry in the field after having been involved in heavy fighting at Neuve Chapelle.

At the beginning of 1915 the marriage of Sgt.P.Rowland of the 8th Batt. East Surrey Regiment, youngest son of Albert Rowland of Home Farm, to Emmie,3rd daughter of J.G. Pimm of the Square was reported. In the Infant School Log Book of 23 April 1915 it is recorded that Mrs. Rowlands was given leave of absence because her husband was going to the front. He was reported missing in September 1916. Mrs. Rowlands must have received a letter like the one received by Mrs. Clifton (Fig.1).

In February 1916 Pt.John James (son of Mr.G.F.James) of the 1st Batt.O.B.L.I., who had gone with the Indian Expeditionary Force to the Persian Gulf at the outbreak of the war as a volunteer, was reported to have died of wounds, aged 23. In May of that same year F.Green, a basket maker, was killed at the front, leaving a wife and 10 children. By the second anniversary of the war, August 1916, 12 Eynsham men had died.

But, as we discovered when studying the 1939-45 war, it was not only the fighting men who became involved. On the 21st October, 1914, a committee was formed to arrange for the reception of Belgian refugees. The committee consisted of Mesdames Bricknell, Galton, Evans and Parker-Slate, the Misses Irving and Deane, Dr.Cruikshank and Messrs. Hinds, Tindall, F. Green, Hawkes, Biggers

Any further letter on this subject should be addressed to—
The Secretary,
War Office,
Successor House,
Kingway, London, W.C.,
and the number being quoted.
Note—Personal enquiries should be sent to the War Office, Whitehall.

WAR OFFICE,

LONDON, S.W.

2nd March 1916

C 2 Casualties
No. 192476

Madam

In reply to your enquiry of the 24th February 1916

I am commanded by the Army Council to inform you that

(Regimental No.) 10699 (Rank) _____

(Name) W. Clifton

(Regiment) Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry

has been reported in a casualty list which has resulted this officer as
missing since the 25th September 1915.

This is the latest information regarding this soldier which has been received, and it is regretted that no further particulars are at present available.

I am, however, to point out that, as stated in the public press, any further enquiry of this kind should be addressed to—

The Officer in Charge of Records.

Atlankey General D.E.C.
Old Barracks Warwick

who is in possession of the latest and fullest information obtainable respecting soldiers of this regiment.

Miss F. Clifton
12. Causeway Cottages
Northmoor
Eynsham
Oxford

I am,
Madam
Your obedient Servant.

R. Wade

FORM 117, 1914
1914 (11) 25,000 1915

Fig. 1 A 'reported missing' letter of 1916 from the War Office.

and C.Bekher. They organised promises of weekly subscriptions amounting to about £3.10s. together with vegetables, rabbits etc. Mr.T.Blake was contributing potatoes and Mr. Hinds of City Farm was providing rabbits. Three cottages were lent by Mr. Gallon of Newland House, and these were furnished by Mr.Alden. Mrs.Schmidt also lent a house. The first of these refugees arrived in Eynsham in November. There was a Mr. Joseph Bertens and his wife Rosalie and their daughters Victorine (14), and Rosalie (5). He was a chairmaker from Malines. There were also Maria and Hortense Mertens. In December two more Belgians arrived: Teresia du Neef with her two year old son Joseph. It was estimated that it would cost 5s.a week to keep them. (At the outbreak of the war, sugar had been 4½d. per lb., butter 1/6d., cheese 9½d. and bacon 1/4d).

At the end of December another family came. The report in the *Witney Gazette* of January 2nd 1915 states that "The weather was good and they came by the 2.40 pm. train. Mr.F.Green escorted them from Paddington. At Earl's Court Depot there were 2,000 refugees, men, women and children." This family consisted in Mr. Leonard Walthery, aged 51, an armourer, Marie his wife and their daughters, Marie (17), Germaine (6) and Annie (12). They were from Brussels and went to a house in the Cassington Road lent by Mrs.Marshall.

The refugees seemed to have been a hard working group of people, those who stayed settling into the community well. By May 1916 it was reported that they were nearly all self-supporting (one was working on a farm, one was charring and another in service) and by the end of the year they were all regularly employed, and further contributions were not needed.

The Walthery family did not stay in the village long. As an armourer Leonard was able to find employment in an armament factory in Sheffield. The family left Eynsham in July 1915.

Besides the refugee families, two wounded Belgian soldiers, Gustave Wasteels of Ghent and Fideli Bosteels of Brussels were taken into Newland House by Mr and Mrs Cameron Galton for a comfortable convalescence.

Eynsham also had its own 1914-18 version of Dad's army and a Son's army. The Eynsham National Training Corps had weekly drills in the National School Room. About 50 attended. Mr. J.F.Mason M.P. was the Commandant and a Capt. Cooper of Oxford was the Drill Instructor. A junior corps was also formed with about 30 members. They had flag signalling instruction and did a lot of marching. On Easter Monday 1915 they had a Field Day at Minster Lovell. "They took their own rations, carried rifles and ammunition bags and looked very smart. A mock battle was set up with Eynsham and Witney as the White Army and Oxford as the

Red. The Reds were annihilated and Mr. Mason congratulated the Whites on their success.

Recruiting meetings were held up and down the country and it was said that the response in Eynsham was as good as in any town in England. The line of the recruiters was 'Suppose they came to Eynsham' and 'There are plenty of their friends in our midst to betray us'. Sentiments which will be familiar to any who have lived through or studied the last war.

As we had found when studying Eynsham in the Second World War, the children did their part as well. They were encouraged at different times to collect acorns for pigs; horse chestnuts and rough grass; blackberries for jam making; as well as fruit stones and nutshells which were to be sent to the Gas Works at Southend-on-Sea. The jam was to be sent to the troops. The horse chestnuts, as well as some of the acorns were used to produce, by fermentation, acetone which was used for explosives and fuses. Nutshells and fruit stones, when fired, produced a high quality charcoal which was used as a filter in gas masks. Apricot stones could produce cyanide to be used as poison gas.

In 1918 there was also a national egg collection and it was reported that from February 21st to September 19th 528 were collected in Eynsham and sent to Witney depot for distribution among the sick and wounded in naval and military hospitals. There were several of the latter in Oxford, including the Littlemore hospital, then known as Ashhurst War Hospital. Somerville College was used as a hospital and a hole was made in the north wall to give direct access to the Radcliffe Infirmary. The Examination Schools which also served as a hospital still has in its basement a large lead tank which was used for the storage of corpses. There was a tented hospital in the gardens of New College for shell-shocked cases and at the Wingfield hospital an orthopaedic workshop and a convalescent home for soldiers who had lost limbs.

There were also collections of money and Eynsham showed itself generous as it did again in 1939-45. In June 1915, in association with a Red Cross Procession, a collection and sale of a pig, (which was presented by Mr Ralph Blake of The Elms and went for £5. 1s 6d.), raised a total of £20 8s. 4d . House to house collecting in 1916 produced £30, while earlier in the year a Whist Drive and Dance had raised £8 to be given to the Tobacco Fund for Eynsham Boys serving abroad. The collection from Eynsham and Freeland in War Weapons Week of July 1918 amounted to £3,726. 19s. 6d. (Fig.2). This generosity gave Eynsham and district the right to name a heavy gun. [For comparisons with 1939-45 see *E.R.* no.7, 1990, pp.31-38,].



War Weapons Week
begins on

MONDAY

£7,500 from Eynsham

The following week, on Monday, 10th, the National War Weapons Board will be holding its first public sale of War Weapons Week, a fortnight's special sale.

For Eynsham and Freeland, the target was £7,500.

It is a large sum, but other districts have achieved it. In fact, many districts have exceeded the target. Some have raised more than £10,000.

Help in the
Our Gun

A quantity of guns has been purchased and the Government will make a grant for the purchase of the guns. The price of the guns is £100 each. The Government will make a grant of £50 for each gun. The price of the guns is £100 each. The Government will make a grant of £50 for each gun.

Buy
National
War Bonds
and War Savings Certificates.

Fig. 2 Although the target was £7500, Eynsham and Freeland raised £3727, a very substantial sum in 1918.

Some women became nurses, (there was one mentioned in the Roll of Honour printed in the *Witney Gazette* of February 12th 1916:- Sister A.C.T. Stevens of the Red Cross), others were encouraged to help on the farms both as land girls and casual labour. At a meeting in Eynsham volunteers were invited and 37 names were put down. It was hoped that many women would get the Government Armlet for 30 days work on the land and we know that at least one Eynsham woman, Temperance Hawtin, did get her green armlet.

Towards the end of the war there were great shortages, and rationing was introduced. In May 1917 the local MP, Mr J.Mason was urging economy in food and recommending that there should always be a stockpot on the go for soups etc. In the December, sugar rationing was introduced and householders were warned that in the new year sugar would only be obtainable by the 'Household System'. It would be necessary to obtain a sugar card from your grocer with a ticket for each member of the household, or to go to a Post Office before December 15th for an application form and then a ration paper would be issued so that coupons could be obtained. The coupons were for those who might have joined the household after the initial registration had been made - surely an over-complicated piece of bureaucracy?. In March 1918 it was reported that there had been a deficit of 500 tons of potatoes in Oxfordshire and people were urged to plant more. People also had meat ration cards, and in April 1918 bacon was added to the rationed foodstuffs.

In June 1917 a School Dinner Kitchen, run by the War Savings Committee, was opened in Eynsham at the New Inn. It was reported that on the first day 20 children, each paying 2d, were given mashed potatoes, stewed peas and gravy. It was estimated that a saving of one loaf of bread per child per week could be made. The children also had to 'suffer' at school. In October 1917 two classes were put into one room to save heating costs, and in October 1918 'Winter Time' was introduced with the school opening at 1.15pm. and closing at 3.00pm, again to save on coal.

There were some unusual diversions. Apparently, at midday on a Sunday in February 1916, the inhabitants of Eynsham were alarmed by the appearance of a bi-plane which made a sudden dive but a safe landing in a field of Abbey Farm, close to the Railway Station. People came from far and wide on foot and on their bicycles to see what was happening and "gave the visitor a lusty cheer when, after repairing the machine, he departed". Only a few weeks later an aeroplane landed at Barnard Gate with engine trouble. Again, this was soon put right and the plane continued on its way.



The Committee, on behalf of all
The Inhabitants of Eynsham, thank you

for your services during the Great War,
and invite you to a
Dinner at the Railway Inn, April 23, 1919,
at 6 p.m.,
and to a Concert at the National Schools
at 8 p.m.,

where you may invite one relative or friend.

*The Band of the 1st Batt. Oxford & Bucks L.I.
(under the conductorship of Mr. E. Smith)
will play during the evening.*

Committee {REV. W. NASH BRICKNELL, Vicar.
 {M. PERCIVAL HARPER, County Councillor.
 {MR. J. TINDALL, Parish Councillor.

Fig. 3 The welcome home party for Eynsham's war veterans in 1919.

Just before Eynsham could rejoice at the end of the war it was attacked by the influenza epidemic which had swept the country at the beginning of November 1918. More than 100 Eynsham people were affected. One eight-year old child, Violet Ivy Harper, died.

The armistice with Germany was signed on November 11th and we are reminded every year of the men who made the supreme sacrifice. Having held a service of thanksgiving for the cessation of hostilities the previous week, a memorial service "commemorating the 42 brave soldiers who had given their lives in the noble cause of freedom" was held in the parish church with the Revd W. N. Bricknell preaching. A muffled peal of bells was rung. All the licensed houses were closed during the time of the service.

Those who came back were not forgotten either. On April 23rd, 1919 there was a dinner at the Railway Inn with a concert at the National Schools as a thank you for 'services during the Great War' (Fig.3). We also understand that those who returned founded the Eynsham Social Club in Swan Street in gratitude for their survival.

What did Eynsham do in the Great War? Enough to be proud of certainly. What we have discovered leaves us wanting to find out more. What happened to the Belgians after the war? Can we find out more of the foundation of the Social Club? Mollie Harris has told us about some of Eynsham's characters but we hope to fill in a few more details of some of those we have only noted as names.

Sources

Witney Gazette, 1914-1918.

Oxford Times, 1917-1918.

Eynsham Infant School Log, 1915-1918.

Hibbert, Christopher & Edward (Eds.) *The Encyclopaedia of Oxford*, Macmillan, 1988.

Privately owned documents of Mrs J. Cox and others.

Eynsham Junior History Group

Members from Bartholomew School:

F. Bryant, R. Bullard, H. Dearing, E. Holland, M. Winter.

Senior Research Assistants: P. Richards, E. Whelan

EYNESHAM FAIR

By Daisy Ainsley Grabsky

At some time between 1135 and 1140 King Stephen gave to Eynsham the right to hold a weekly market (on Sundays). Between 1154 and 1166 Henry II confirmed the market and added the privilege of a fair, twice a year, and lasting a week at a time, at Whitsun and the Assumption. Today the fair comes once a year to coincide with Eynsham Carnival (held on the first weekend in July) and is sited adjacent to the Carnival site in the Playing Fields. But every September, no matter in what part of the world I am, I remember Eynsham Fair as it was in the 1930s. It was one of the most exciting events of my childhood. It followed St Giles' Fair which came to Oxford on the first Monday and Tuesday in September after St Giles' Day (1st September). The fair then travelled to Eynsham for the Thursday, Friday and Saturday. It took place in the field, then called the Park, at the end of Abbey Street.

The showmen parked their caravans along Abbey Street and Church Street. These caravans were not like those we see today. Some of them were quite small and would be pulled by a single horse, while the larger ones were pulled in a row by the steam engines. Owing to the state of the roads and the risk of floods, the caravans stood high on large wooden wheels. The caravans were made of wood and were highly decorated both inside and outside.

One particular caravan used to park each year outside our side door in Church St. We got to know the occupants, Mr and Mrs Clark and their little girl, very well. The little girl would play games with us. This was quite rare as on the whole the showmen had little time for the local people or 'flattie^s' as they called us. One year Mrs Clark was quite ill so my mother offered to look after her while her husband was working. On several occasions I went into the caravan with my mother. It was so warm, dry and snug inside that I fell in love with it and determined that when I grew up I would have my own caravan and travel around England!

This caravan was divided into two separate rooms, one for sleeping in and one for living in. The living room had a large black enamelled stove with the chimney stack going out through the roof. It also had a sofa and plenty of cupboards. It was heated by a paraffin burner and the water was held in large cans. There were many pretty ornaments, and each time the Clarks moved on all these items had to be stored away. We were always sad to see them go, and looked

forward to them returning the next year. Also outside the front of our house was a man with donkeys, and a ride down Swan Street cost 1d.

Our great-uncle, Mr Walter Bekher of 1, Clover Place, would give the six of us children 2s.6d. each to spend at the fair. We felt like millionaires since each ride cost only 1d., 2d. or 3d. and our 2s.6d. went a long way.

The most magical part of those days was Saturday night. Then our parents accompanied us and I should think that the whole of Eynsham and the surrounding villages were there too. How we all loved it - the noise of the engines, the music from the organs, the voices of the people, the shouting of the showmen offering their wares, and the screaming of the village girls on the roundabouts. The lights, the steam and the smoke transformed the surrounding area.

There have been fairs in England for centuries, but the mechanical fair of my childhood was a product of the 19th century. The first recorded steam driven roundabout was in 1865. The steam traction engine mounted on a sprung truck was in the centre of the ride. In the wake of the big rides came the massive mechanical organs. Heavily carved, gilded and mirrored, they were an attraction in themselves.

In the late 19th century electricity produced by generators transformed the fairgrounds. They now became much safer, and thus increasingly popular as places of entertainment, and the fair eventually became the high spot of village life.

We children would go for the rides. As a very young girl my favourites were the Swings and Galloping Horses. The Swings were wooden boats hanging from a bar in which you pulled on a rope trying to get as high as possible. The Galloping Horses are the oldest of the established roundabouts and consisted of wooden horses, very ornately painted which went up and down as they circled round. These horses looked very fierce, champing at the bit, trying to 'get up speed'.

As I got older I became more daring and began to enjoy the more thrilling rides. In 1928 the Dodgems or Bumper Cars arrived from America and quickly became the most popular ride, remaining a firm favourite today. Others were the Chairplanes, suspended chairs swinging out as the ride turns and the Mont Blanc - a roundabout with cars travelling on an undulating track - which has now become obsolete.

The Caterpillar consisted of a series of seats forming a roundabout on an undulating track. All the sides were painted a bright green with the first car shaped like the head of a large caterpillar and the last car like its tail. During the

ride a green awning covered the riders so that it became completely dark. An occasional gust of wind was blown through the tunnel so that, with the speed, the dark and the gust of wind, it became a tunnel of fear.

One of my sisters loved the Waltzer. In this ride one sat in a tub-like car which rotated on its own axis as well as around the ride. The central spindle of each car had a clutch operated by the occupants which allowed the lateral movement of the car to be controlled. If you were with a bunch of girls, the fair lads or 'gaffers' would come to give your car a good spin.

My elder brother Bert enjoyed the Cakewalk which consisted of a number of moving platforms. The riders were challenged to stay upright as they walked along. There were gaps between the moving platforms which were fearsome to cross as the platforms moved in different directions at varying speeds. I hated this and was very afraid of the gaps.

My younger brother Cyril preferred the Slide or Helter-Skelter. This is one of the oldest features of the fairground. It was not considered a ride, having no mechanical components. One was given a mat, climbed the stairs, and slid down a spiral chute sitting on the mat.

We all loved the Ghost Train. Here you sat in a train-like seat which drove into a dark tunnel in which you experienced thunder, lightning, ghosts, skeletons, vampires and screams. You rode into cobwebs and dripping water, and an occasional dismembered hand appeared on one's knee - especially if you were a younger girl. A really scary ride in those days.

My parents did not go on these rides. My father tried his hand at the games of skill - darts, the shooting range and the coconut shy. Thankfully for his pride he usually came home with a coconut or two. Meanwhile my mother would try her luck on the games of chance, such as Housey-Housey (now called Bingo), or Hoopla, a game of throwing rubber rings over hooks and prizes, or Pick-a-Prize, much like the modern day Tombola. The prizes were usually tea services, kitchen ware or stuffed toys. My mother's favourite was the Spinning Wheel where you bought the names of towns. The wheel was spun and you hoped the needle would stop at one of your chosen towns. It never did for us!

There were also many freak shows such as 'the largest woman in the world', 'the smallest man', 'the two-headed monster' and 'the half man-half woman' which we children were never allowed to see. You can understand why our mother did not allow her innocent children to view these.

Lastly there was always a boxing match going on which did not interest any of us.

The only foods I remember buying were toffee apples and brandy snaps, although, of course, there were the usual cockles, mussels and whelks.

As we wended our way out of the fairground, we would use up any left over pennies on the Roll-a-Penny, consisting of a little chute down which you launched your penny, hoping that it would settle on a number. If it did you would get that many pennies back. Once in a while we got lucky and had more pennies to delay our going home.

On the following morning, as we left for Sunday School, most of the fair would have been dismantled, packed up, and would be on its way to the Witney Feast. After church we would walk up to the park and its emptiness. The magic had all gone, leaving worn grass, litter and desolation.

The old folk of Eynsham used to say "After Eynsham Fair you light the lamps and shut the shutters for winter is on its way". It always was.

Extract from the *Oxford Times*, June 29th, 1928.

Sugarbeet:

How the new De Vecchis method of drying sugar beet is expected to revolutionise sugar production in this country was demonstrated to a gathering of Pressmen at the Eynsham Sugar Beet Factory on Wednesday by Dr B.J.Owen who, on behalf of the Ministry of Health, conducted an investigation into the new process when it was first adopted in this country. The party were accompanied on their tour of the factory by Mr J.E.Hodgkin, the managing director, and followed the process from first to the final stages.

[Watch these pages for an article on the sugar beet factory, and Dr B.J.Owen, who ended up in jail, a convicted fraudster! Editor.]

ST LEONARD'S CHURCH

Among the late Bishop Eric Gordon's papers is a letter dated June 14th, 1855 from J.H.Parker to W.S.Bricknell, Vicar of Eynsham 1845-88, the first side of which is reproduced overleaf. A transcription of the entire letter follows.

Dear Sir,

The Chancel of your Church is in the early Decorated Style of the time of Edward I. The Nave is in the Perpendicular Style, a peculiar and uncommon specimen of the 15th century, probably of the early part of it. The South Aisle belongs to the same period as the Church, the Tower belongs to the Nave. These particulars will probably answer your purpose, but as I think you will like to have the pamphlet on the Oxfordshire Churches, I send it as you direct. I should have expected that your predecessor Mr. Symons [sic] would have ascertained more exactly the history of your Church from the Bishop's registers at Lincoln and have left some entry in the parish books, as he was a professed Antiquary. The information which the Bishop is collecting will be very useful if his clergy will second him by taking a little trouble to get the information he asks for.

Your obedient servant

J.H.Parker

The sender of the letter, John Henry Parker, was the nephew of Joseph Parker, the founder of Parker's bookshop, originally located on the corner of Broad St. and Turl St., Oxford. John Henry took the business over in 1832, and his son, James, became a partner in 1855.

The Bishop referred to was Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford.

Mr Symons [sic] was Thomas Symonds, Vicar of Eynsham 1826-45, who was indeed a dedicated antiquarian.

Eric Gordon's single page of notes (9.3.'90) concerning this letter conclude:

"What was the Bishop's enquiry?"

The presentation of the letter, as well as its general style, and the personalities of sender and recipient, would appear to afford material for a short article in the *Eynsham Record*".

OXFORD

June 16. 1855

Dear Sir

The chased of your book as in
the early Decorated Style of the time of
Edward I. The Head is in the
Perpendicular Style. A specimen and
measurements specimens of the 15th century,
probably of the early part of it.
The small book belongs to the same
period as the chased, the only other
belonging to the same - these
specimens will probably answer your
purpose. As I think you
will like to have the pamphlet
the copy of the book. I send it
as you direct. I should have

The first side of J.H.Parker's letter of June 14th 1855 to the Revd W.S.Bricknell. The whole is on a single sheet of black-edged 'mourning' stationery. The word OXFORD and its immediate surround at the top of the page is charmingly embossed on the original. See the previous page for a full transcription.

EYNESHAM HISTORY GROUP

Founded 1959

The E.H.G. exists primarily to encourage studies in, and to promote knowledge of the history of the village and parish of Eynsham, Oxfordshire, by means of regular meetings (normally at least ten), with invited speakers, during the winter and spring; and occasional outings in the summer.

New members are welcome.

The current subscription is £5 per annum (excluding the *Eynsham Record*).
Please apply to the Secretary for details.

Chairman:	Mr D.S. Richards, 6 Abbey St, Eynsham
Vice-Chairman:	Mrs J. Weedon, 2 Clover Place, Eynsham
Secretary	Miss C Foster, 2A Acre End St, Eynsham
Programme Secretary	Mrs E. Mason, 26 John Lopes Rd, Eynsham
Treasurer	Mrs P. Pimm, 65 Witney Rd, Eynsham
Editor:	Dr F.B. Atkins, 8 Thornbury Rd, Eynsham
Publications Manager:	Mrs P. E. Richards, 6 Abbey St, Eynsham
Librarian:	Mrs J. Weedon, 2 Clover Place, Eynsham
Committee members:	Mr S.G. Green Mr M. Harris Miss M. Oakeley Mrs J. Smith Mrs L. Wright

*Printed by Parchment (Oxford) Ltd, Printworks, Crescent Road, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2PB
from customers originals supplied*