

Living History

NEWSLETTER December 2011

Nature Notes

This autumn has been particularly mild and open with temperatures in November above normal and only two ground frosts at the time of writing. As a result, many wild plants including primroses have been seen with some unseasonal blossom. Winter-flowering jasmine began flowering early and is almost over.

Wasps have been seen much later than usual, too, with many queen wasps still on the wing.

Remembrance

This year the bier in the church was beautifully decorated by Rita Shaw as part of the Remembrance activities.



Two articles scheduled for publication next year will record details from the Yarpole/Croft and Lucton war memorials.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2012 are now due. They can be paid to Audrey Bott either by leaving them at the shop addressed to her or sending them to Audrey at Horizons, Green Lane, Yarpole (tel:01568780489) Cheques should be made out to "Living History" for £6.50.

Articles

The following articles accompanies this edition of the *Newsletter*:

The Vestry Coat rack by Ian Mortimer

Report on the Visit to Croft Quarries by Sue Spencer

We have an expanding programme of articles for future issues and we always welcome proposals for articles. Please contact the *Newsletter* editor - John Turrell on 01568 780677 if you would like to discuss possible articles or if you have contributions for the Newsletter.

Newsletter Editor

This is the last Newsletter to be edited by John Turrell who has been editor for the last three years. If you would like to take on the position (and/or possibly that of website manager for the Living History's section of the parish website) please contact John Turrell or any member of the committee who will be very pleased to hear from you.

Copyright

To ensure that we conform to copyright conventions, Members and Friends are reminded that these *Living History* articles and newsletters may only be reproduced, by photocopying or 'scan and print', for the sole purpose of personal research.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in the Committee room of the Village Hall on **Thursday 26th January 2012 at 7.30pm.**

The Church of St. Leonard: The Old Coat rack:

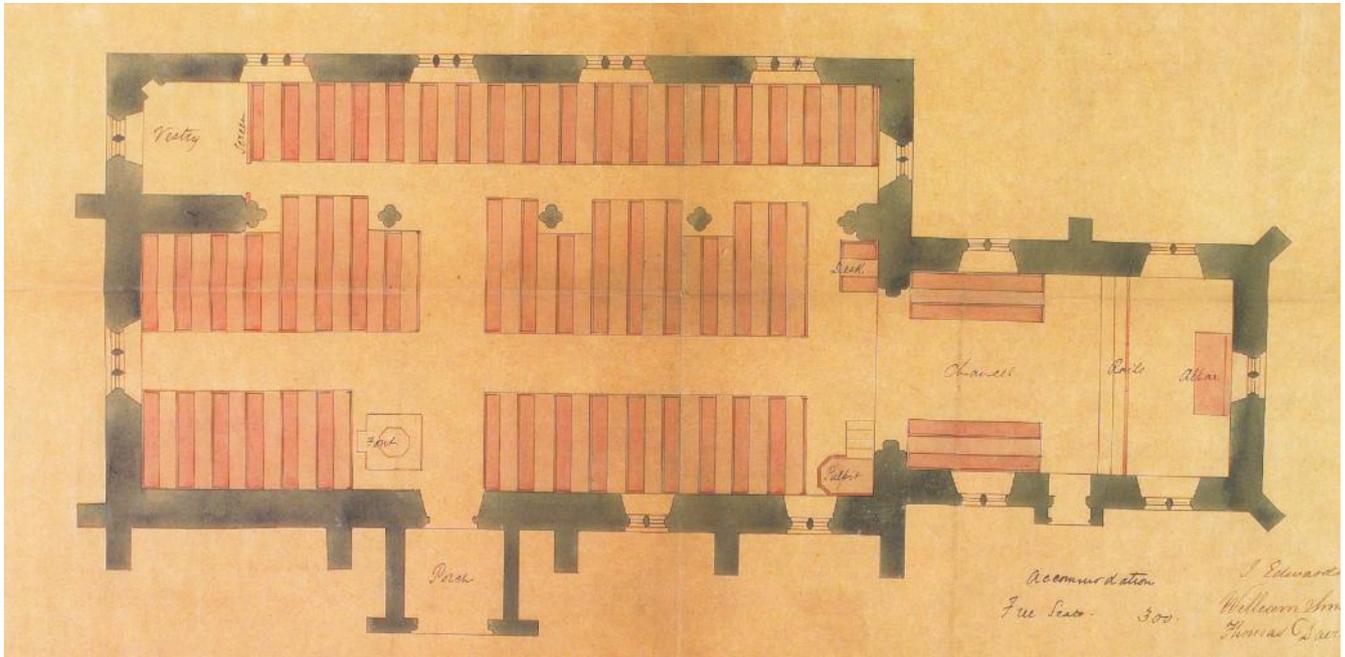
Before the clearance of the Bell Tower in 2004 when the Victorian wood paneling was removed, nailed-up on the wall facing the door was a coat rack with 13 rusted single hooks, screwed to a length of old pine with chamfered edges except for the left hand end which appeared to have been cut from a longer length of coat rack.



In the clearance of all the clutter in the Bell Tower, the coat rack was put aside as part of the memorabilia of the Bell Tower and it was only much later when it was being 'dusted down' that pencilled writing was noticed. On closer examination it looked as if there were 'names' written in pencil directly onto the wood.

In all, some 30 'names' were deciphered but some had only initials or 'nick-names' or were partially indistinct. Of the 20 'names' which were thought to be identifiable, (all were male names), two were recognised as having been killed in the 1914-18 War and this pointed to the time-frame in which to search. A search of the gravestone inscriptions in the churchyard and in the burial ground up to 1952, failed to identify any of the names but a search of the published censuses (1841-1911) identified nine names with dates of birth ranging between 1885 and 1898. Of the two men who were killed in the 14-18 War, one would have been 16 years of age and the other 24 years of age at the outbreak of the War and another identified name who had been born in Yarpole in 1891 was not living in Yarpole in 1911.

This suggests that these lads were teenagers or younger when they wrote their names on the coat rack. Standing apart from the rest, was the only 'name' with the title "Mr" - Mr William Thornton, who could not be traced. So why the names and why in the Bell Tower?



This floorplan of the Restoration of the church in 1864 shows the original 'vestry' to be in the north-west corner of the nave (where the new shop store is now situated); and it was the practice (in living memory) for the choirboys to don their cassocks in this vestry and then proceed across to the central aisle, down the north aisle to the choir-stalls.

And so, are the 'names' on the coat rack those of choirboys and was "Mr William Thornton" the choir-master, and could the coat rack have been part of the Victorian furnishings of the vestry of the restored church and could it be that the coat rack was transferred, possibly in the in the 1920s, to the Bell Tower and cut to size to fit the available space, for the benefit of the bell ringers?

List of deciphered 'names': Harry Williamson, R. J. Williamson, Sidney Powell*, George Thomas, Albert Morgan, Geoffrey Chamberlain, W. Atkins, Sidney Jones, J. Watkins, Albert Smith* or Snell or Small, Dickie Jones, H. Meredith, Ernest Payne*, Sidney Mills or Millar*, H. Thomas, Fred Powell, Percy Chamberlain**, R.J.W., Wm. Thomas, W. Harris* Mr William Thornton, Beaumont, Jim Barrett or Bassett*, Everall, Charles Meredith, Joseph Pinches**, Wally Pinches, Teddy Powell,* Sidney Williams.

* = identified names.

** = killed in 1914-18 War.

Compiled by Ian Mortimer with thanks to Frank Cotton and Tony Mears for deciphering the 'names'.

Parish History

Earth Heritage Trust - Croft Champions: Visit to Fishpool Valley and Croft Quarries

Saturday 26th March 2011 dawned cold and grey, but a group of about thirty interested people met at the car park at Croft Castle for the first event organised by the Croft Champions - a group who responded to an Earth Heritage Trust invitation to become involved in promoting two of the Croft Quarries to a wider public as a local site of geological interest. The Croft Quarries site, in Fishpool Valley, is just one of 20 sites across Herefordshire and Worcestershire which feature in a project set up by the EHT in 2009, each site having its volunteer group of 'Champions' to defend and promote it.

Since this event, the Quarries have been named *Lime Kiln Quarry* and *Highwood Bank Quarry*. These names are used throughout this report for clarity.

The visit addressed three aspects of the area: the picturesque movement, which the valley exemplifies; the formation, nature and use of the rock; and the development of geological understanding.

Robert Williams started by introducing us to the idea of the 'picturesque', an 18th century idea about nature and landscape design, which had its origins in the Marches and was, in some senses, a reaction to the ordered parkland landscapes of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown (1716-1783). The natural landscape of North Herefordshire inspired Uvedale Price of Foxley (1747-1829) and Richard Payne Knight of Downton (1751-1824) to take up the picturesque idea. Payne Knight was a nephew of Richard Knight, the iron-master at Downton. On the Croft estate, the principles of ruggedness in nature, so essential to the picturesque are to be found naturally in Fishpool Valley. Robert pointed out the steepness of the valley sides and commented that, after the damming of the stream to make a series of ponds in the late 18th century and the creation of walks alongside, we could see easily how the valley conformed to the ideals of that movement.

At Lime Kiln Quarry, alongside the impressive remains of the lime kiln, John Charles produced quite a bag of tricks to help us understand the chemistry associated with lime. Holding a glass of water from the Iapetus Ocean in which was dissolved calcium, John showed us how the limestone in the quarry was made by tiny sea creatures building their shells, using dissolved calcium and carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere. (John explained afterwards that all water on the planet was once part of the Iapetus Ocean.

Alex, the Champions Project Assistant from the EHT was then volunteered to blow into the water with a straw to add CO₂. Gradually, we saw the water getting cloudy as limestone (calcium carbonate) was precipitated.

We then witnessed the 'fizz' occurring as CO₂ is released from limestone when acid is added to it. John then repeated this with a snail shell, highlighting the link between shells and rock.

Finally, John spoke about how limestone was quarried and "burned" in kilns, using charcoal made from the surrounding trees. This process provided lime for a variety of uses including building stone, cement and concrete, limewash and lime for

agricultural purposes. John suggested that the latter use was probably more important in this quarry and showed a simple experiment involving an acid/alkali

indicator to demonstrate how lime can neutralise an acid soil - emphasising the importance to the local agricultural economy which this quarry and associated kiln could once have had.

Andrew Jenkinson, a well-known geologist and the editor of the Forestry Commission guide to the Mortimer Forest Geology Trail, helped us in both quarries to understand that the rock, known as Aymestry Limestone, and named after the village of Aymestrey, was formed in the Silurian geological period (about 421,000,000 years ago). Andrew drew our attention to the nodules (pebble-like formations) typical of Aymestry Limestone which are particularly visible in Highwood Bank Quarry. The quarries are part of the Ludlow Anticline and Andrew explained that, as a result of a period of mountain building in the later, Devonian period, the rock had been caused to tilt at an angle of about 6 degrees. Again, Highwood Bank Quarry shows this well. It was also in this quarry that many of the group became excited on finding examples of the large brachiopod fossil, *Kirkidium knightii* which, Andrew explained, is the characteristic fossil of Aymestry Limestone. Those who were determined to find more elusive, smaller fossils, were rewarded with many examples of crinoids, tiny circular cross-sections of the 'stems' of so-called 'sea lilies'. However, as Evelyn Miles, the Champions Project Manager reminded us, these fossils are actually sections of animals and not plants.



*In Highwood Bank Quarry both the beds of nodules and tilt of the rock are easily visible. The bed of *Kirkidium knightii* can be followed, low down, on adjacent rock faces.*