

# *Living History.*

## *NEWSLETTER March 2010.*

### **Nature Notes**

Bullfinches were seen in the parish from late January this year. There have been numerous sightings of red kites from the top end of Green Lane, Yarpole. A single dunnock was seen in Yarpole in early March. Moorhens have been seen on the pool between Bircher Turn and Garbett Bank – unfortunately at least one has succumbed to road traffic. The great grey shrike, reported on in the newsletter of March 2009, has also been seen this year on Bircher Common.

### **Swans on Bicton Pool February 2010**

Bicton Pool reappeared after the winter rains and has attracted swans. The Living History Group understands that there are plans to reinstate the pool as a permanent feature and is very supportive of the idea.



Photograph by Ian Mortimer

### **Booklet records alterations of St Leonard's Church**

A booklet, *'The Yarpole Community Project'*, has been published which records the recent alterations to Yarpole church. It has superb photographs which chart all of the key changes to the building as its new role was developed. It is available from Ron Shaw priced £2.

## Articles

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

*Yarpole, Bircher, Lucton and Croft: The 1665 Hearth Tax Assessment* by Robert Hatton  
*Bus Shelters* by Ian Mortimer

## Opening of the new Community Building



Photographs by Ian Mortimer

## Archives Talk

Rhys Griffith, senior archivist at Hereford Record Office, has agreed to come and speak to us about, and show us some of, the documents they hold which are of relevance to the Parish. This is advance notice of his talk which will take place on Thursday May 13<sup>th</sup> at the Village Hall at 7.30p.m.

## Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2010 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. **If you have not yet paid your 2009 subscriptions (and some of you haven't!) please do so as soon as possible. If we do not receive sufficient subscriptions we will not be able to continue producing and distributing our articles and newsletters.**

## Copyright

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## Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held in the Committee room of the Village Hall on **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at 7.30pm.**

YARPOLE, BIRCHER, LUCTON AND CROFT: THE 1665  
HEARTH TAX ASSESSMENT:

On the Restoration in 1660, Parliament accepted that revenues were insufficient for Charles II to run the royal household in a satisfactory manner, and that a new source of income had to be found. After some debate the Hearth Tax Bill was passed in 1662. The idea was that while people might tend to fade away when the tax assessors arrived, making a poll tax problematic, hearths or chimneys were rather more difficult to hide. The main provision of the bill was to levy a tax of a shilling a year on the occupants (as opposed to the owner) for every hearth in the land, payable in twice a year on Lady Day and Michaelmas, for a total of two shillings per year for each hearth. In the case of vacant houses, the owner was liable for the tax. An attempt was made to exempt the poor. Those rated too poor to pay church and poor rates, those who occupied premises worth 20s. or less a year, and those who possessed real and personal property worth not above £10 could obtain a certificate of exemption from parish officials. In 1664 the act was amended so that anyone with two or more hearths was liable for the tax whether or not they paid church and poor rates. The hearth tax remained in effect until 1689. The surviving records include a wealth of information valuable to local, family, economic and social historians.

The Herefordshire Record Office has a typescript transcription of the Herefordshire hearth tax assessment for Michaelmas 1665, made by John Harnden in 1984. He also compared the entries with the Herefordshire Militia Assessment of 1663 and noted variant surname spellings and other additional information. The spelling presumably follows that of the 17<sup>th</sup> century originals, such as Ales for Alice.

Obviously there was some correlation between the status and wealth of the occupant and the number of hearths in a house. A rule of thumb has been proposed that a one hearth house was likely occupied by a labourer or less prosperous husbandman (tenant farmer), two to three hearths by craftsmen, tradesmen and yeomen, four to seven by the more prosperous of the latter category, and eight or more hearths by the gentry and nobility. A truly grand house could have many more. For example, Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire, home of the Duke of Newcastle, had 88 hearths in the 1674 assessment.

However there are many exceptions to this rule. A study in Derbyshire showed that many of the lesser gentry were living in houses with fewer than 8 hearths. Herefordshire seems to be a similar example. Robert Croft, Esquire, managed to do with four hearths at his house in Yarpole. Silvanus Taylor, described as a gentleman in the 1663 Militia Assessment, was in a house at Bircher with only one hearth. At nearby Lucton [not transcribed here], Thomas Harley, Esquire, was in a house with five hearths, and two others described as gentlemen were in houses of respectively six and four hearths there.

The following is taken from the transcription made by Harnden of the Michaelmas 1665 assessment. Material he added from the Militia Assessment is shown in brackets with an HMA notation. Other comments in brackets are by this compiler. The omission of a surname for the first entry under Bircher is presumably an omission in the original, but possibly an error in the 1984 transcription.

While some surviving Hearth Tax records record the names of occupiers of houses exempted from tax as well as those subject to the tax, it should be noted that the one here does not, and only records houses subject to tax. It has been estimated that perhaps as many as 40% of the total houses may thus be omitted in this list. However this is only a rough estimate, as it is known that practices in allowing exemptions from the tax varied considerably from area to area. Presumably the change in the law in 1664 mentioned previously means that all the exempt houses would have had only one hearth.

For comparison purposes, the value of a shilling in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century is estimated to be roughly equivalent to £50 in today's currency.

Much of the background information here is taken from the excellent introduction in Webster, W. J., ed. Nottinghamshire Hearth Tax 1664: 1674, Thoroton Society Record Series Vol. xxxvii, 1988.

[Compiled by R. W. Hatton]

## 1665 HEARTH TAX

### YARPOLL

Robert CROFT Esq.	4
Anne NASH widow	4
John ROSE	1
Thomas CORNE	3
Thomas BEDOFRD	
John BROWNE	3
Anne COLLINGS wid	2
[HMA - COLLINS]	
James ROSE	3
[HMA - ROSSE]	
John DANIELL	1
Ales RIDGLEY wid	1
Owen CROWTHER	1
Edward WEAVER	1
Elizabeth ALLCOCKS	1
[HMA - ALCOCKS]	
Robert BEDORD	1
Francis WEAVER	1
Richard PERKINS	1
[HMA - PEAKINS]	
William COSTON	1
George PHILLIPS	1
[HMA - PHILLIPPS]	
[Total 18 taxable houses with 32 hearths taxed at £1 12s]	

### LUCTON

Robert WIGMORE Esq.	12
Thomas PENNY	3
William BARBER	2
Peter MARSH & Thomas MARSH	2
John ELY	3
Ralph PERPOINT	3
John PRICE	1 1 stopt up
John WOOPER	1
Humprey EDWARDS	1
Silvanus TAYLOR	1
[HMA - gent]	
Morris DAVIS	2
John CARTER	1
John MAYO	1
[Total 13 taxable houses with 33 hearths taxed at £1 13s]	

\*Note where a name also appears in the 1663 Herefordshire Militia Assessment it has been included in brackets for reference - eg [HMA – Peakins].

## **BIRCHER**

[Includes north and east Yarpole]

James [surname omitted] 3

Thomas HIGGINS 3

Thomas DERRY 4

Richard GROWE 2

[HMA- GROVE]

Thomas VANNORE 3

[HMA - VENMORE]

Thomas VANNORE jun 3  
[HMA - VENMORE]

William DESWALL 1

Thomas WALL 2

George GOULD 1

[HMA - GOLD]

John WALL 1

John TAYLER 2

John PAINE 1

Anne WALL 2

Francis YEABINS 1

Thomas MARSH 1

William POWLE 1

Elizabeth WHELOR 1

John VANORE 1

[HMA - VENMORE]

William HOYLE 1

Richard WINDE 1

Edmund WALL 1

Thomas GOULD 1

[HMA - GOLD]

John COLLIER 3

[Total 23 taxable houses with 40  
hearths taxed at £2]

## **CROFT**

The Lord Bpp 15

[The Bishop of Hereford]

Henry PHILLEY cler 3  
[cleric]

[Total 2 taxable houses, including Croft  
Castle, with 18 hearths taxed at 18s.]

\*Note where a name also appears in  
the 1663 Herefordshire Militia  
Assessment it has been included in  
brackets for reference - e.g. [HMA -  
Gold].

### Bus Shelters:

The following notice, from the Parish Council, was published in the November 2009 edition of the Parish Newsletter.

#### **ANYONE USING THE BUS SHELTERS?**

The Parish Council has been responsible for the upkeep & maintenance of the 4 bus shelters in the parish (Bircher Village, Bircher Common, Cock Gate and the main road at the top of Red Oak Lane) since the mid 1970's. The Bircher Village bus shelter was damaged by passing traffic two years ago, and Councillor Grant is arranging for this to be replaced. Two of the remaining bus shelters, at the top of Red Oak Lane and at Cock Gate, are no longer used and falling into disrepair, so your Councillors are considering arranging for their demolition.

All four bus shelters in the Parish were built, of a concrete block construction, by a Mr. Bob Holder in the early 1960s, with the cost being paid by Mrs Elinor Parr\*.



The Opening of the Bus Shelter at the top of Red Oak Lane with Mrs. Elinor Parr in the front, and Parish Councillors - from the left are George Thomas, Rev Vivian (Headmaster of Lucton School), Tom Bayliss, Clive Barker, (unknown), Bill Richards, Tom Godding, (unknown).

All four shelters served the Primrose Bus Company's service bus from Shobdon to Leominster, via the B4362 to Lucton, Cock Gate, top of Red Oak Lane, Bircher Village, then turning right at the cross-roads (now known as 'Bircher Turn') down Turnpike Lane to The Square in Yarpole, then straight on, turning left up Yarpole Lane to Lucton and on to Leominster; twice a week (on Tuesdays and Fridays) the bus would turn up Welshman's Lane to Bircher Common. Two return journeys - six days a week - in the morning leaving here around 8.30am and in the afternoon leaving Leominster about 6pm. On Saturday evenings there was an additional bus service into Leominster, run by a Mr Worthington, leaving Yarpole at 6.30pm for the young folk to get to 'the pictures' and 'the dancing'.

There would have been another shelter in Yarpole Village if a suitable site could have been found; there has never been a bus shelter in Lucton.

The bus shelter on the Common, at the top of Welshman's Lane, was rebuilt some seven or eight years ago, after the original one had been misused by animals grazing on the Common and had fallen into disrepair.



The bus shelter in Bircher which incorporated a public notice-board, has had to be demolished having been damaged in an accident involving a caravan, and it is the intention of the Parish Council that it be rebuilt.

The shelter at the top of Red Oak Lane is no longer used and is to be demolished



Following representations, including one from the *Living History Group*, the Parish Council have decided to retain the bus shelter at Cock Gate.



\*Mrs. Elinor Parr was the sister of Sir James Croft whose trustees bought back, into 'Croft ownership', Croft Castle and a much reduced Croft Estate, at the Great Sale in 1923; and it was whilst she was living at the Old Rectory that Mrs. Parr had the four bus shelters built.