

This transcript is reproduced with the kind permission of Sheila Train.

CLUNBURY 1896

A talk given in St Swithin's Church, Clunbury by Christopher Train of Holland House, Clunbury on the occasion of a Clunbury 1896 weekend from 14th - 16th June 1996 to celebrate the centenary of the publication of A.E. Housman's 'A Shropshire Lad'

1896 is not one of those years which sticks in the mind as of some significance in this island's history, like 1066, 1815, 1914, 1939 or, even, 1966. Indeed were we not now in 1996, a hundred years on I at least would have been quite hard pressed to name any event of world or national significance which happened in that year. With a bit of an effort I might have dredged up the fact that it was the year of the first modern Olympiad and, displaying my obsession, I could have told you that England beat the Australians by two Tests Matches to one, losing at Old Trafford despite one of the greatest test innings ever played, 154 not out by that well known man of Sussex, Prince Kumar Shri Ranjitsinji.

Yet much was going on in the wide world away from the South Shropshire Hills. The House of Windsor had one of its greatest successes in the Sport of Kings, when Persimmon won the Derby for the Prince of Wales - the first of Edward's three victories in that race. Long since recovered from the typhoid which so nearly took him to join his father in 1871, he may have felt some satisfaction that the new Poet Laureate in 1896 was Alfred Austin who, at the moment of crisis in His Royal Highness' illness, had penned the immortal verse "Across the wires the electric message came 'He is no better. He is much the same'" On August 17 George Washington McCormack struck gold at Bonanza Creek, in the Yukon Territory, Canada, and the Klondike Gold Rush was on its way. Gold of another sort was struck when H.J.Heinz adopted 57 Varieties as his advertising slogan. In Europe, more ominously for the future of the world, Antoine Henri Becquerell discovered radioactivity in uranium. Back home Alfred Harmsworth launched the Daily Mail, while closer to us the Snowdon Mountain Railway made its first run - and came off the track.

All of which brings me to the event which we have all come to know about this year - if we did not know it before - the publication sometime in the Spring of 1896 of "A Shropshire Lad" by the Professor of Latin at University College, London and former patent clerk, A. E. Housman. For the superscription to the fiftieth poem in that collection, as we all also know, he used a local jingle "Clunton and Clunbury, Clungunford and Clun are the quietest places under the sun". It was clearly more to his literary purpose to use that version rather than the one which substituted "drunkenest" for "quietest", and by 1896 it may have been truer, since Clunbury Village had lost its pub - The Raven or Pig and Whistle which is now Dutch Cottage - when James Harding, the last tenant, died in 1879, and the ale house at the Twitchen - a Royal Oak - was also gone by the 1880's.

With Housman's passing literary reference Clunbury walked for the moment on a wider stage - albeit in a minor role. The nearest which it had come to that before was when, in 1869 and 1870, a horse called The Colonel won the Grand National. An almost black entire, he was owned, in 1869, by John Weyman of Little Brampton, and trained by a man called Roberts on a farm at Bishop's Castle, where, so the story goes, the horse learned to jump through the risky process of the farm boys putting him at anything in sight. In 1869, as the race account tells us "Moving smoothly through the field at Becher's next time, The Colonel put in a terrific leap, going within four lengths of the leading pair Fortunatus and Gardener. With the positions unaltered coming over Valentine's, the race was developing into a thrilling contest. Excitement at the favourite heading the rest was dashed when Fortunatus was pulled up exhausted three from home, from which point Stevens sent The Colonel up to join Gardener. There was a good battle to the last, but on landing Stevens exerted his authority, sprinting clear with The Colonel to a comfortable three lengths win. The incomparable George Stevens had chalked up a record four wins in the race, again justifying his near faultless judgment in his choice of mounts." It may be that the celebrations of this victory in the ale houses of Purslow, Twitchen, Clunton and Clunbury gave rise to the reputation which the valley had for taking a glass or two of the reviving waters when occasion required it.

But those moments of glory soon passed and the Valley returned to its peaceful state.

The writer of the Clunbury entry in the Clun Valley parochial magazine in the last few years of the nineteenth century regularly laments the fact that he has nothing of significance to report. *July 1889* - seven years before "A Shropshire Lad" - "There are no stirring events to record as having happened in Clunbury last month. It has always had the name of being 'one of the quietest under the sun'. A stranger passing the other day on the road to Clun and looking down upon our little village enquired of the driver of the conveyance what happy looking, peaceful sunshiny place it was. What a contrast! a village with 'no news' for a month, and London that has more than 150 Daily and Weekly Newspapers!" .. And, we might have added, Alfred Harmsworth about to reach for his cheque book.

That is scarcely an encouragement to an amateur historian who has undertaken to talk on Clunbury in 1896. What will he have to say? Fortunately there is a variety of sources - maps, the 1891 Census, the 1896 Electoral Roll, the Clun Valley Parochial Magazine, Kelly's Directory for 1896, the School Log Book and some slightly later picture postcards. These make it possible to piece together a picture of the village in 1896, to sketch in the environment, the buildings, the people who lived here, and the main events which shaped their lives that year. I confine this talk and the exhibition this weekend, which the talk introduces, to what the census refers to as Clunbury Village - that is an area extending from Hill End on the Beambridge road, along the top road to Clunbury Hill Cottage, down to Tansy Cottage on the Twitchen Road, to 3 Brampton Bridge and along the Kemp to the cottage called The Meadows.

What differences would someone from 1896 see if he could be translated to some panoramic viewpoint today, to stand, perhaps, on the main road at Little Brampton and look down on the village? I think the answer is surprisingly little. There are some additional buildings now, but most are hidden in the trees of the village. There are the trappings of modern times, power lines and telephone wires but they are not very obtrusive. The roads are somewhat wider and better metalled and the footpaths across the fields to Purslow and over the Hill to Clungunford are less freely used than they were a hundred years ago, but the pattern of communications remains unchanged, as, to a

considerable extent, do the shapes of the fields. There has been some opening up of fields on the south side of the Clun towards the Twitchen/Purslow road but otherwise the field patterns remain as they have been for the last 150 years or more. Traces of the irrigation system, which was still working in 1896, may still be seen in the fields called Bridge Meadow and Rise going over to the Twitchen/Purslow road. The larch trees which clothed the whole of the top of Clunbury Hill and the side above Mossy Glen are gone, and the orchards round the village are less extensive. But, as we have seen in recent weeks, they still catch the eye when the trees are in blossom.

And as our visitor from the past crossed the bridge into the bottom of the village his feeling that he was in a familiar place would be further strengthened. The layout of the barns around Clunbury Hall farmyard has little changed. Harry Jones was there in 1896, farming the property as farm bailiff for the Morris' estate. And it was at the Hall that the first notable event of the year in Clunbury occurred. In the previous November Mr Deacon, the schoolmaster, reported in the school log book "Scarlet Fever seems in the air" with the "epidemic raging at Aston". When the school reopened after the holiday on Monday 6th January Mr Deacon wrote "Rumour says that Scarlet Fever has appeared at the Hall Farm House." By 10th January "Mr. Jones' daughters are both very ill, one with Scarlet Fever and the other with Diphtheria. Some six or seven children absented themselves yesterday and others today, the parents being afraid to send them into an infected area. The servant at the Hall is reported to be dangerously ill, making three cases in one house." That weekend the servant at the Hall, who was, I think, Jane Edwards from Obley, died, and on Tuesday 14th January there were very few present at the School. "The Revd. Wm. Jellicorse came in about 9.30 and explained to the children that Dr Browne had advised the closing of the School for this week and next. The children were at once sent home." School reopened on Monday 27th January with "no case of infection known to exist in the village" and "the school rooms having been washed with Condy's fluid during the closure."

This was one of twenty occasions during Mr Deacon's forty two years at the School that it had to be closed because of an epidemic. But this year the village escaped more lightly than it had done in the measles epidemic of 1886 when seven children died, including four

from one family, the Mellings of Clunton Coppice. Infant mortality rates were by 1896 starting to improve, although they were in modern terms still very high. In the 1850's of the 193 burials at Clunbury, 34 were of children under the age of one and a further 31 of children younger than five - that is over a third of all deaths in the village were of children under five. In the 1860's the proportion was still close to a third, dropping slightly in the 1870's and 1880's to about a quarter. In the 1890's came the first substantial drop in infant mortality, with twelve children under one being buried and only one other under five, that is just over ten percent of the 110 deaths in the parish in that decade.

Moving on from the entrance to the Hall farmyard we pass the place on the river's edge where Edward Dodd, the village carpenter and wheelwright, had his sawpit and his carpenter's shop, the building next to Mill House. Mill House itself is externally little changed. In those days Hubert Abbott, a retired Gentleman's gentleman, lived there with his wife Sarah, having as their lodger, the village doctor, an Irishman from Co. Monaghan, Dr Danby Browne, a man with something of a reputation for enjoying the wares of Mr Edward Smith, mine host at the Hundred House.

Over to the right beyond Mill House on the edge of the village the Chapel, which is now Chapel House, was by 1896 probably already disused. Built as a Wesleyan Chapel in 1836, it was finally sold in 1907, having fallen into such a state of disrepair that it was endangering stock in the neighbouring fields. On the small triangle of land opposite the Chapel was a tiny three room cottage, long since demolished, which belonged to the Clunbury Hall estate. It was the former school until it became grossly overcrowded and was closed in 1862. In 1896 James Brick, a farm labourer, lived there with his wife, Mary, and his family, which the 1891 census gives as six, ranging from 12 to eight months - that is eight people in a three room cottage.

Brook House, where the Seabury's now live, was owned by Mrs Mary Pardoe, who also owned Purslow Hall and the estate. Her land close to Clunbury Village was being farmed by Thomas Anthony, to whom we shall come later, but he lived up the village and Brook House was in 1896 occupied by George Arrowsmith, a coachman. Across the road Dutch Cottage, where the Merediths live, was a grocer's shop, run by Thomas Gittoes, a master

grocer, and his wife Hannah.

Little has changed inside or outside the church in the last hundred years. The churchyard is fuller and larger. The recently refurbished clock, which catches our visitor's eye as he enters the gate, replaced one which, he would tell us, was either slow or stopped in the late 1890's.

The Parochial Magazine of December 1899 reported "Our readers have noticed the erratic manner in which of late the Church Clock has been keeping time, or rather the consistent way in which it has been standing still. The best of efforts have been made, the clock has been cleaned, repaired, stopped, set going, and altered, but with much the same result; and this last stoppage is due to an important part having given way. In these circumstances we come reluctantly to the conclusion that a new clock is required." In the June 1900 edition we read "*Church Clock*. There now being somewhat over £40 in hand towards the new clock in the Church tower, the order has been given to Messrs. Smith and Sons, of Derby, the well known clock builders for its erection. They have promised to have it in position, at latest by July 14th, so that it can be started on that the eve of St Swithun's Day." They kept their promise, as the school log book records on July 16th 1900 "A holiday. Yesterday a new clock was set going in the church tower at 12 o'clock and today there is a parish tea and sports in the vicarage gardens."

Inside the church the memorial windows to the Jellicorse family at the south east corner of the nave, the doors to the vestry in memory of the Reverend A.D. Beavan, Vicar from 1913 to 1939, the pendant lighting, and the central heating would catch the eye of our visitor from 1896, but little else.

By that year the restoration of 1880, for which the Reverend William Jellicorse had been responsible, was losing its freshness. The screen, pulpit, pews, flooring and the rebuilt south porch date from then. The church wardens' minutes of 1880 and 1881 reveal that the restoration exposed the fine roof of the nave, which dates from the 1400s, took down a gallery from the west end of the church, and resealed the church - "all seats to be free other than those for Purslow Hall, Clunbury Hall and Coston Hall". They also record "On stripping off the internal plaster of the church it was found that the whole interior walls had been painted in fresco" - alas, now gone. A Shrewsbury builder, Birrell, did the work. His original estimate was for £1027 (the Architect, J. St. Aubyn of the Temple, London had assessed it at £1400) against estimates of £1867 from Fisher and Co. of Welshpool and

£1385 from Hewitt of Bromley's Mill. Additional work, which included repairing the tower and creating a vestry, brought the final cost to £1654. All of that has an ominously familiar ring to it, as, a hundred or so years on, we turn to our task of restoring the roof and raising the £70,000 which is the present estimated cost of doing so.

The Sexton (and Parish Clerk) since 1859 was Robert Husbands of Clunton Coppice, by now 77 years old but still walking a mile and a half to church twice each Sunday.

The Vicar, who had been here since 1856, was assisted by a curate, the Reverend John Miller, a graduate of Wadham College, Oxford, whose main responsibility was for St Mary's Clunton. Appointed in August 1895 he stayed only a year, leaving in August 1896 to get married (although not to one of the Jellicorse daughters) and to take up the Curacy of Hentland near Ross. The Reverend Miller had succeeded the Reverend Edgar Holland, who had come to the Parish as lay reader in 1891 and had been ordained priest in November 1892. He had left Clunbury for his honeymoon in Switzerland in June 1895 with his bride, the Reverend Jellicorse's second daughter Ellen, on his arm after the Clunbury wedding of the 1895 season, prior to taking up his appointment as Vicar of Handforth in Cheshire.

In 1896 Matins were said daily in the Parish Church at 10 o'clock and there were either two or three services each Sunday. The Sunday School met each Sunday at 10 o'clock, with a Children's Service once a month. A list of choir and bell ringers for 1896 does not survive, but both were certainly active. The list from February 1889 cannot have been very different from that in 1896. It records a choir of 10 men, 17 boys, and 5 women, with W. Whittal as organ blower and Mrs Jellicorse, the vicar's wife, as organist. There were eight bell ringers, belonging, as now, to the Hereford Diocese Church Guild of Bellringers.

The annual entertainment of the choir and bellringers was one of the events of the Clunbury year and 1896 was no exception. On Wednesday 22nd January, reported the Parochial Magazine, "The elder members of the choir and the bellringers were entertained at the Vicarage. Festivities began with a very substantial supper at 8 o'clock, followed by songs and duets of various descriptions. The men then dispersed to discuss tobacco and politics, and the ladies remained behind to settle the affairs of the nation. This annual gathering is looked forward to, I am sure, by hostess and guests alike, as a means of bringing together in a social evening all those who give their talents to render a hearty

service to Almighty God in their Parish Church. The younger members of the choir enjoyed an evening at the Clun Pantomime. The Managers of the Theatre (The Misses Creswell) kindly gave us the three front rows at a reduced price, thus allowing us to accommodate our party of 34. The acting was very good, and so were the buns provided for the party on their journey home after 10 o'clock."

The bellringers often performed at village entertainments with the handbells, acquired in 1889. The May 1889 Magazine records their arrival. "Our ringers being anxious to get a peal of Hand Bells presented the whole of their Christmas collection to the fund. A special effort was then made to collect a sum large enough to purchase a peal for Tune ringing. A few kind friends liberally responded and on the 20th of last month there arrived at the cost of £6: 15s a peal of 17 hand-bells, from Messrs Shaw Sons and Co. of Bradford." And there they are today.

I cannot resist quoting to you from the same magazine an account of a concert held to raise funds for the school that year, since it is a wonderfully cheerful piece of writing and gives a splendid picture of the home grown entertainment of the period. "The long-talked of Concert was given in the school-room on Easter Tuesday, and it may fairly be called in all senses of the word "A grand success". The weather all day filled the promoters of the Concert alternately with hope and fear, for dark clouds and heavy showers were varied by hours of bright sunshine. A very large audience assembled, the room being filled to overflowing, and great was the delight of all present at the very charming Entertainment. Whether the performance was that of the Misses La Touches on the violin and piano, who also were indefatigable in playing accompaniments, or of Mrs Buchanan, Miss Burd, Miss Mabbat and Miss Hamar, there was nothing left to be desired; and when we speak of Mr Grey, Mr Salmon and Mr Davis, and especially of Mr Buckley and his Banjo, words seem too poor to express the admiration and gratitude generally felt."

The bellringers and the choir were also much in evidence when in February 1896 the Bishop of Hereford visited the village for a Confirmation. "The Bishop came to Clunbury on Saturday 8th February", reports the Magazine, "and stayed at the Vicarage until

Monday morning. He very much appreciated the honour paid to him by the Bellringers, who had sent out 'spies' to warn them of his approach, and as he drove through the village he was greeted by a hearty peal from the belfry. On Sunday morning shortly before 11 o'clock the Churchwardens, and the Choir in their surplices met the Bishop at the Vicarage and the procession passed through the village to the Church, where they sang the processional hymn, "Onward Christian Soldiers". The Confirmation service was preceded by Matins. The Bishop gave two stirring addresses." There follows a synopsis of these and the entry concludes "The choir sang well, doing justice to themselves and their choirmaster."

The choirmaster was Mr. Deacon, the schoolmaster, and he records the Bishop's visit to the school on the Monday, before he left the village. "The Revd. W. Jellicorse brought the Bishop of Hereford, Dr Percival, to see the school. The arithmetic lesson had just commenced and his Lordship took great interest in the children. Standard IV were working problems with blackboard and for twenty minutes both visitors occasionally asked the children questions to test the value of the illustrations given by the master. Before leaving Dr Percival addressed a few words to the upper standards hoping they would work hard for the honour of the school."

Before leaving the church we should stop for a moment to look at the Registers for 1896.

I have already mentioned one burial. There were to be eight more that year - about the average for the decade - but none of people from the village itself. There were 31 baptisms, including those of E.J. Brunt, J. Davies, A. Marsh, and G.T. Owen. Why do I mention them? If those of you sitting towards the back of the church look up to your left you will see the names of men from Clunbury who gave their lives in the War of 1914 - 1918. Among them you will find E.C.Brunt, J.Davies, A.Marsh and G.T. Owen. You will also see E.H. Francis. He was Edward Herbert Francis, baptised on 4th April 1897, and the first child of Thomas Francis and Susan Jane Morris of Clunton who were married in this church on July 15th 1896, one of nine weddings during the year.

But we must move on. As we emerged from the church and turned towards the gate, we

would in 1896 have been faced by a range of farm buildings running the whole length of the churchyard wall in front of us, used as an abattoir and dairy. These belonged to what is now Church House, but which has been called The Bird's House, 5 Clunbury and Ivydene during the past eighty or so years. It was then occupied by Mrs Sarah Wolley, a member of the related families of Sankey and Wolley who had for many years been small landowners in and around Clunbury. She was a dairy keeper and her son, Thomas Sankey Wolley, was a butcher. He was then living across the road in the larger of the two cottages which now form Clunbury Cottage, and which used to be called Ivy Villa or Ivy Cottages, the smaller cottage being occupied by a charwoman, Alice Owen. So Church House was the village butcher's and dairy.

Next up the village street, which the 1891 census, called Broad Street, was the village blacksmith, Edward Mold. He was Ron Mold's grandfather and, I think, Albert Lloyd's great uncle. Mrs Peplow, who lived in the house until the 1970's, was the youngest of his nine children. It was only four years before that the Mold family had left what had been the village smithy for probably a century or more at the top of the village just below the Yews. The house, now Holland House as it was called at the time of its sale to Fred Mold in 1904, was owned by Richard Cooper, a member of a Clunbury family which had gone very much up in the world since his father, Henry Cooper, a vet who had lived in Clunbury in the 1860's and 1870's, had patented Cooper's Sheep Dip and made a fortune from its use in Australia to control sheep tick.

Beyond Holland House was Clunbury Cottage, now The Croft and White Cottage. This seems always to have been a gentleman's residence, as it were, having been owned and occupied for many years in the middle of the nineteenth century by Charles Meteyard, the village doctor before Danby Browne. It was now occupied by William Salt. Beyond it was Clunbury Farm, now Upper House. There was a farm building backing onto the road opposite the vicarage, but otherwise the buildings were very much as they are today. Here we would have found John Chester and his wife Susan, with his family of six children, a domestic servant, a stockman and a waggoner. The farm was still owned by John Rudd, whose father's name and the date 1826 is to be seen on the cottage. The Rudd family

had been in the village since the late eighteenth century and John Rudd, the younger, had become a fairly substantial land and property owner, owning not only Clunbury Farm, but also what are now Tansy Cottage, Clunbury Cottage, Dutch Cottage and a pair of cottages on the site of Cherry Bryn. He had retired from farming in the late 1880's and left the village in 1892, going to live first at Ludlow and then at Bayston Hill. He came back to the village in 1900 to live at number 1 Ivy Cottages with his second wife. He died in 1905 having sired in his late sixties and early seventies a second family, the youngest of whom was Elsie Wadsworth, who was born in 1901 and died last year. So Richard and Bernard Wadsworth represent a family tradition in the village which goes back for over two hundred years.

Across the road from Clunbury farm the Vicarage was to see a major change in 1896, for in August William Jellicorse's time as vicar of Clunbury came to its end after forty years here. The ceremonies which marked the occasion are fully reported in the September edition of the Parochial Magazine as follows:

"On Monday August 17th a very large number of people consisting of the school children and most of the women of the parish assembled together in the field adjoining the school. The occasion was a farewell tea given by the Vicar and Mrs Jellicorse on leaving Clunbury for Hope Bowdler. The tea was arranged on three long tables lent by Mr Smith, of Purslow, with his usual kindness, decorated with a profusion of beautiful berries, and ample justice was done to it, by between 500 and 600 people. The children were seated in a large circle on the grass. Many of the chief parishioners kindly assisted in pouring out the tea and supplying the wants of the other guests. The afternoon was spent in games, scrambles, etc., and the women found many useful household commodities growing in the hedges. Each school child received a small present, and later the party adjourned to the Schoolroom which was soon packed to overflowing. Sir Edward Ripley then addressed the Vicar and the company present in a very touching and eloquent speech in which he alluded in glowing terms to all that had been done in the Parish during Mr. Jellicorse's 40 years residence there. He specially mentioned the reverent character of the Services, the devout behaviour of the congregations, and the proficiency of the Choir under the able training of Mr Deacon, helped for so many years by the organist, Mrs Jellicorse. Sir

Edward then proceeded to present the Vicar with a very handsome Silver Salver on which was placed a purse containing 50 guineas.

The Vicar was deeply moved by this token of esteem, expressed his sincere gratitude to Sir Edward Ripley, the Parishioners, and other friends for their very kind thought of himself and his family, and for the appreciative words which had just been spoken."

It was the end of an era, since Jellicorse and his family had left an indelible print on the lives of all their parishioners and on the village.

Coming to Clunbury from Magdalene College, Cambridge in 1856, he immediately played a key part in having the present school and school house built which were opened in 1862. Less than ten years later he was involved in the construction of St Mary's Clunton and the infant school there, which both opened in 1871. Ten years after that it was he who saw through the restoration of Clunbury Church in 1880/1 and, a further dozen years on, the extension of Clunbury main school room to ease the overcrowding which had plagued the staff since the late 1870's.

His efforts to educate his parishioners did not end with the Schools and Sunday Schools. He was the instigator of a lending library for the village in the Vicarage, and of a reading room for the men and the young men in the Schools. An entry in the May 1896 edition of the Magazine gives a flavour of Mr Jellicorse's concerns for his flock: "The Reading Rooms were closed for the season at the end of March. It may be as well to state the objects for which they were provided.

1. To bring the men of the parish together, so that 'brotherly love' of which St Paul speaks in his Epistles may spring up and continue.
2. To show that true enjoyment rests not in noisy amusements, but in peace and quietness.
3. To show the clergy are their friends, and are interested in all honest and healthy games.
4. To provide some occupation after a hard day's work."

His wife was also fully involved with the parish, as organist, convenor of the Girls' Friendly Society and the Mothers' Meeting (Mothers' Union) and occasionally, in her earlier days, teacher at the School. And his elderly mother-in-law, Mrs Mièville regularly featured in the magazine as a generous contributor to good causes in the village.

The Girls' Friendly Society was a very active group in Clunbury. It was formed in 1875 and, according to the Parochial Magazine of May 1893, "has now on its list over 160,000 women and girls of all ages, of all ranks of society, in all parts of the world. Its motto "Bear ye one another's burdens " speaks for itself, and shows the principle on which the Society is worked. Through the aid of this Society the Church is enabled to keep an eye upon many who otherwise would pass unnoticed when amongst strangers in a new parish. Especially we recommend young girls to join who are going into service." There were premiums for good Service, bonuses on savings, help in sickness and an annual entertainment.

The Clunbury girls in June 1896 enjoyed a splendid outing. "It was indeed a great pleasure to spend some hours in the beautiful gardens of Linley, and to see the Rhododendrons and flowering shrubs, which were in a perfection of blossom. The drive to and from Linley in such lovely weather was most enjoyable, and for some distance our seven brakes followed each other and made an imposing procession. Six G.F.S. members from Clunbury Parish received premiums of 5/- for completing 2, 3 or 4 years in the same places and three girls had given to them the card for 7 years satisfactory membership. During the past year two members have had bonuses for savings and one girl has received a grant from the sick fund. We have 42 names on the Clunbury list."

Nor were the older women short of entertainment as the year moved into its second half. "On Friday July 10th the women belonging to the Mother's Union and the adult members of our Choir are hoping to spend nine hours at Aberystwyth. We shall start at 4 o'clock a.m., in order to meet the special train which leaves Montgomery at 7.30. A good many who are going have never seen the sea." Unfortunately the August issue of the magazine

is missing from the set which I have used, so one cannot say at what time or in what condition the ladies arrived home.

The counterpart for the men of the Girls' Friendly Society and the Mothers' Union was the Oddfellows, or, to give them their full and proper title, the Manchester Unity of the Independent Order of Oddfellows. By a happy chance for our weekend this year, 16th June 1896 was the day of the Oddfellows Anniversary. The Vale of Clun Lodge of the Society was founded in 1884. The Society - a Friendly or Benefit Society - existed to provide support for its members if they ran into any kind of financial difficulties because of illness, accident or other problem which might keep them off work. A volunteer member would act as sick visitor for a period. Membership was secured by subscription and the Lodge met every four weeks in the Lodge room, which was at The Hundred House. In 1888 the Anniversary days began. They occurred sometime in June or July and, not least because Mr Deacon was an active and founder member, the school had a day's holiday. Members assembled at the Hundred House and, led by their banner and often by the Clun Band, walked to Clunbury for a Service. After, in 1894 for example, "an admirable sermon preached by the Rev. J.H. Brown, on the subject of 'Thrift and Independence', which was listened to with marked attention" they returned to the Hundred House where Mr Smith, the landlord, provided a great spread for dinner - "our worthy host" again in 1894, "fully sustaining his reputation as an excellent entertainer of Oddfellows (judging at any rate by the long and eloquent silence which was only broken by the President, Mr Wolstein (late Grand Master of the Order) rising to propose the usual toasts.". The afternoon was spent in sports on the Hundred House field, "where all the world and his wife and children were gathered together. Music, sweet stalls, coconut shies, football contests etc. helped to amuse those who were tempted out by the beautiful day (how warm it was, especially for the football players)."

The year has passed its half way point and we are more than half way up the village as we leave the vicarage. Passing the two small cottages which successive generations of the Mold family had occupied for so long until George Mold's death in 1891 and their move down the village, we come to the crossroads and the house, now The Yews, which was

the Post Office in 1896. Here lived Thomas Anthony, his wife Jane and their daughter Jessie. Thomas Anthony, a Bedstone man, had been in the village since the 1850's and had done well for himself. He had started as a mason and grocer, but had gradually acquired some land and properties and was by now, towards the end of his life, a small farmer and the village post master - his daughter, Jessie, acting as Assistant Post Mistress. He owned the complex of houses and farm buildings on the corner of the village street and the Beambridge Road, which in those days were known as Anthony's Buildings.

Quite who lived where is difficult to tell from the existing records, but there were certainly six dwellings - what is now the Yews being the Post Office and the largest house; Jasmine Cottage at the side and back of that was two cottages; there were two cottages in the single house down the Beambridge Road, and a single cottage in the yard. An upstairs room in one of the buildings in the yard was still in use as a Primitive Methodist Chapel down to the turn of the century and beyond.

If we turned to the right at the Cross Roads, we would soon be out of the village (the Council Houses and Orchard Close dating from the 1950's and 1960's), coming soon to Tansy Park and the Pool House. Pool House was owned by Philip Matthews, who also owned the Meadows and what is now Clunbury Hill Cottage, and was farmed by John Whitefoot. James Meredith was at Tansy Park, a tied cottage owned by John Rudd. He had recently come to Clunbury from Clunton and was Laurie Meredith's grandfather. That means, I think, that the only family with unbroken residence in the village itself over the last hundred years are this branch of the Merediths, although a number of families have been in the Parish for all that time and longer - the Molds, the Collins, the Huffers, the Breretons, the Croxtons, and the Rudds and Wadsworths, apart, that is, from the eight year break in the 1890's which I mentioned previously.

Down the lane to the left at the Cross Roads we would have found William Griffiths and David Mantle at Ford Cottages, part of the Hall estate, Herbert Teague, a blacksmith, at Shelveswell and Richard Davies at Hill End. Shelveswell belonged to the Marston family of Oaker and Hill End to the Earl of Powis.

We turn now neither to right nor left but press ahead to the School and School House which our 1896 visitor would instantly recognise. As with the church little has changed other than through the acquisition of modern amenities. The layout of the school was more or less as it is now. It had one unpartitioned large room, the school room, which had been extended in 1892, and one smaller room, the class room. This was not quite as big in those days than it is now, having a raised gallery round it, which was removed when the room was enlarged in 1904. It was heated by open fires. The yard was unsurfaced and had only recently had a fence built round it after the Golden Jubilee in 1887; until then children had regularly fallen over the wall. Water came from a pump in the yard. This was a constant source of trouble, as Mr Deacon reports on 6th April "The plumbers were working all day Saturday last repairing the pump which has been useless for this last fortnight". It was replaced early this century by a tap in the passage which brought water from the Hill. The children used earth closets and latrines - referred to as "the offices" - and were to continue to do so until 1957.

The school was inspected three times in 1896, on 10th April by the Drawing Inspector, on 24th April for secular subjects by Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools, and on 30th April for religious instruction by the Diocesan Inspector, the Reverend E. Brown, Rector of Montgomery and formerly Curate of Clun, until he married Mary Jellicorse, the eldest of the Jellicorse sisters in 1893. After 1895 the annual set piece examination of each school, upon which central grant - and the master's salary - depended, was replaced by a less structured inspection, but the Diocese continued formally to examine the Church of England Schools. The Reverend Brown reported in May "This school has passed a very satisfactory examination in Religious Knowledge in all three Divisions. Infants and Standard I answered very nicely, and repeated Hymns and Texts intelligently. Nearly all the work on slates was very well done. The children in Division II answered the questions in Church History asked by the Master very well indeed and they did their papers in the other subjects for the most part very well." On 29th May "Received the mark 'Good' for the Drawing Exam.", and on 22nd June "The following is the annual Report of H.M.I. which was received this morning:- 'This school under Mr Deacon still maintains its usual high standard of efficiency. Singing, Needlework, class subjects are all deserving of

special commendation."

The school year saw ten days or so holiday at Christmas, a short break at Easter - until 1895 the only holiday was Good Friday. In 1896 a Bank Holiday was added on Easter Monday - and a long break in the summer. This still depended on the timing of the whinberries becoming ripe. In 1896, on 3rd July Mr Deacon reports "The attendance continues good though signs are not wanting that the whinberry season will soon set in." On 9 July "Several children away whinberrying. After prayers this afternoon the children were told there would be a holiday on the morrow and while the master was speaking a rap was heard. The keeper from the Cwm had hurriedly walked over to inform us that the Hill was to be thrown open at once. The Master and he walked down to the Vicar and stated the case when it was decided to break up for five weeks. Holidays from 9th July to 17th August." The Hill was, of course, Black Hill, not for another fifty years to be clothed with conifers, which was part of Mr Brettell-Vaughan's Cwm estate. This was the major source of whinberries for much of the Valley, providing a significant income for local families each year, as the berries were sent to Lancashire by train from Broome Station for dying cloth.

Apart from these formal breaks the children got days off for the Clun May Fair on 11th May each year, the Oddfellows' Day in June and the Clun Flower Show at the end of August. And there were absentees for the Craven Arms May Fair on 24th May, which had not yet got its status as a national holiday for Queen Victoria's birthday and subsequently for Empire Day. In October each year, and 1896 was no exception, potato picking took its toll on attendance, but absences tending rooks, leasing, picking bark or collecting acorns were becoming a thing of the past.

Otherwise the autumn of 1896 was uneventful in Clunbury apart from the School and the Church celebrating the fact that on 24th September Queen Victoria became the longest reigning British Monarch, surpassing George the Third's 59 years and 95 days. The weather, which had been remarkably good this year, turned rough and stormy towards the end of September, cutting attendance from its usual 100 down into the 80's as children

struggled on foot along the muddy roads from the Cwm and the Stepple. Fires were lit at the beginning of October and the winter's coal supply was brought a week or so later by Mr Chester of Clunbury Farm and Mr James-Moore of Coston. Snow in mid-December brought the school year to its end, as the children broke up on Christmas Eve with the "usual scrambles [for nuts and sweets] in the School, the weather being too unfavourable to hold them in the yard."

Our walk round the village and the year in 1896 is almost done. Coming down the steps we look up towards the Hill. Immediately beyond us is the pair of cottages, now Hill View, owned and occupied by Edward Dodd, the wheelwright. Beyond them, where the road forks, is another pair of small cottages, owned by John Rudd, and lived in by Eliza Chester, a charwoman, and by John Williams, a rabbit catcher. Up the lane to the right at Quarry Cottage - now Clunbury Hill Cottage - lived William and Jane Hartshorn, who were well into their seventies. He was a butcher and they had lived in Clunbury since the 1850's. Along the lane to the left lies John Whittall's cottage - now Mossy Glen - to be the home of the Misses Whittall, Margaret and Winifred, down to the late 1950's. Beyond that at the very end of the lane, where Dennis Cruxon now lives, was the home of Thomas Barrett.

It was his occupation, as recorded in the 1881 census, of steam thrashing machine proprietor (by 1891 he was in partnership with Edward Dodd) which signals to us as we look back over the last hundred years the most significant change to happen to this community in that time. That comes from the mechanisation of farming, still the staple business of our village, and from something which Clunbury folk one hundred years ago could not have foreseen - the universal availability of the motor car - although that was the year in which it ceased to be a requirement for a motor car to be preceded by someone carrying a red flag and the speed limit was increased to 14mph.

We can return to the school to see the change most dramatically portrayed. In 1896 school numbers were around the 100 mark (over the years they occasionally got as high as 140). The children came to school from aged five (some might start at 4) and stayed until they

were 13 or 14 (they could leave earlier if they had reached the necessary academic standard). It was not until 1958 that Clunbury ceased to be an all-age school. Those numbers reflect a difference between the village then and now, which, along with the absence of horses, would have struck our 1896 visitor long before he reached the school.

In Clunbury Village, as I have defined it, there were in 1891 (the year of the last detailed census records) 173 people, of whom 65 were children of school age or under, living in 35 houses. Now, by my rough calculation, there are 92 people, of whom 10 are of (the now increased) school age or under, living in 46 houses.

So there we have a sketch of Clunbury in 1896. It was, I am sure, more like Clunbury in 1796 or 1696, than Clunbury in 1996. But then that is true of most of the world. Yet, as Tennyson, a rather better Poet Laureate than Alfred Austin, wrote, "Though much is taken, much abides". Our village and the surrounding country side retain very many of the physical characteristics of a century ago - my time traveller from 1896 would have felt himself at home - and though its social characteristics have changed it remains a rural community regulated by and responding to the rhythms of the farmer's year.

If you walk down to the bridge on a still evening and stand for a moment you will hear the whispering of the leaves in the poplar just along the road. It is right to end this talk about our village in 1896 with "A Shropshire Lad":

Far in a western brookland

That bred me long ago

The poplars stand and tremble

By pools I used to know.

There, in the windless night-time

The wanderer, marvelling why,

Halts on the bridge to hearken

How soft the poplars sigh.

He hears: no more remembered

In fields where I was known,

Here I lie down in London

And turn to rest alone.

There, by the starlit fences,

The wanderer halts and hears

My soul that lingers sighing

About the glimmering weirs.