

Letters from Colin Shirley

Introduction

The Shirleys had been in Cropredy for three generations and Colin was known for his exceptional talents as a joiner and carpenter. His father William Albert Shirley was a mason and between them Cropredy and the surrounding area have benefited from their skills. Everyone spoke very highly of Colin as a fellow craftsman, cricketer, librarian, and neighbour. This book I hope will give others a little insight into the Cropredy, which he loved.

Not long after we arrived in Cropredy the Shirley's left for Fort Augustus. During their last year we often came home from Banbury on the same bus and laden with shopping walked down Newscut Lane and round to Creampot Lane together. If only we had talked about Cropredy in the past then. I have also regretted the fact that the Cropredy Historical Society was not started until after the Shirley's had left. Colin would have been such an asset to the meetings. There was so much more he would have mentioned. I will always be grateful for the time and trouble he went to in replying to my letters. Every one of these letters was written in his friendly and gentlemanly style. Take no notice of his apologies for his writing for they were so easy to read and full of interest in spite of his problems. I have got into the habit of writing fast. I try to slow down a bit but then I get back to the old way and it is as bad as ever.

Colin Shirley's letters begin in 1975. He was particularly helpful with information that can only come from someone born in Cropredy. In return I hoped that the manorial information I uncovered from the Brasenose College Oxford's archives and the parish chest records which at that time were kept in the Bodleian Library, gave him something fresh to think about. A small part of the history sent to the Shirleys about Old Yard follows this introduction.

From the letters printed in Chapter 10 you will find Colin busy in 1982 looking after Helen and the house. He was unable to write and say when she died in June and there was only his name on the Christmas card. Fortunately as a meticulous craftsman he was well enough to "do everything myself." And again later he was able to "do my own housework, cooking, washing, ironing etc. I still do a bit of woodwork."

In 1985 he wrote I must admit I was disappointed to hear you are leaving Cropredy. I feel I shall be losing a link with Cropredy. I don't get any news except what I see in the Guardian. Hearing we didn't know any Welsh he commented upon his Mother. Mother was a Gaelic speaker. I have heard her say she was in her teens before she could speak English. My Aunt, her sister, lived in Bloxham and when she used to come to us Mother and she spoke Gaelic. My sister and I used to be annoyed because we didn't know what they were saying. I expect that was why they were speaking in Gaelic so that we wouldn't.

Colin wrote twenty six replies until ill health prevented him from writing. At first it was thought possible just to print them as they stood. This would have been ideal if my questions had been in a logical order, but they were not. So the various subjects have been gathered together into short chapters 1-9 and illustrated by Colin's diagrams and photographs kindly lent for copying (for the purpose of this book only), by Colin's nephew John A. Taylor and his sister Betty Clementson.

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John contacted us at the beginning of 2002. It was fortunate that he did as the photographs made it possible to start this book. The rest of the material in Colin's letters has been gathered together in Chapter 10. They reveal something of their life in Fort Augustus, but Colin still needed to keep in touch and read the weekly Banbury Guardian, so his letters mention many properties by house name. A map has been placed at the very end of this book for anyone not familiar with these names.

In 1985 we met Colin's sister Mrs Christina Taylor and her son John when they were kind enough to call at Monkeytree House while visiting Cropredy. On the 30th of May 1986 Mrs Taylor wrote to me saying Colin had had a stroke on May the 4th. He had been in and out of hospital. There they had discovered he also had cancer of the bones. He sent a message to please keep writing. A very sad letter written on the 23rd of July 1986 by Colin's sister Christina Taylor informed us that her brother had just died. The cancer had spread very rapidly. He was 80 years old. We had lost a real friend. His letters are as fresh as if they were written yesterday and this book of letters is dedicated to the memory of Colin and Helen Shirley.

John A. Taylor has kindly written about Cropredy as he knew it in Chapter 11 and added plans and a map. A period not yet covered by any of the other Cropredy Books. The Taylors lived in Chapel House, Cropredy during the 1940's and 50's. Chapel House was, up to 1881, the first Wesleyan Chapel. It is now the Rolph's Post Office. John has also copied out some of the tributes sent to Colin in letters and a leaving book presented to him on retirement: and it seemed fitting to place them here.

Copy of letter from Lord Wardington: Sept. 15th 1968

Dear Mr Shirley.

Your skill in the making of the library bookshelves is beyond all words, and the result is going to give me most intense pleasure for all the years I hope to live at Wardington. I feel you ought to cut your name in the paneling somewhere so that future people would know that this was done by Mr Shirley.

If the idea appeals to you, I should love you to do it. In the mean time I must think of some way in which I can give you some pleasure to repay what you have done for me. Would you like some roses?

Yours sincerely

Wardington.

John adds: It's not known if Mr Shirley cut his name or not, or if he received any roses.

x

Letters on the fly leaf of a book called *England* presented to Mr Shirley upon his retirement.

1) *This book is presented to Mr Colin Shirley in appreciation of his services to our company or over 40 years as a carpenter and joiner. There is evidence of his superior craftsmanship in a number of parish churches and country houses within 15 miles of Cropredy. Also for his skill in restoring period furniture. Such a workman will be sadly missed in this area and we feel he will continue his good work in a smaller way on his retirement to Scotland.*

Signed on behalf of Cherry & Son Ltd *S.R.Cherry*

Cropredy *R.T.Cherry*

Banbury. *D.R.Cherry*

A loving heart and patient mind shall work

With joy to bless mankind *March 1973.*

1) *In 1620 Francis Bacon wrote:-*

"Never miss seeing anything Beautiful, for Beauty is God's handwriting."

I get such pleasure in looking at the many beautiful things you have done for me and my father at Wardington Manor. I wish I could repay this pleasure in some way, but thank you so much for everything.

24 February 1973 *Wardington.*

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1. The Shirley Family in Cropreddy



William Albert Shirley and Elizabeth Shirley nee McGillivray



Christina and Colin Shirley at No.1 Old yard.



Colin and Christina at No.1 Old yard.

THOMAS SHIRLEY m ANN _____ Lived in HEMPTON
 76 in 1851 72 in 1851
 Agricultural worker

JOHN _____ WILLIAM m Hannah. Hempton 1851
 43 in 1851 m ANN _____
 Agriculture 40 in 1851 Richd (12) Thos(10) Henry(8) Ann & Wm.

WILLIAM EDWARD THOMAS(16) JOHN(14) ANN(8) MARY(6) ?
 b 25.12.1831 Hempton 1851 Hempton census
 d 23.12.1917 Cropredy m SARAH Wilson
 Lived in CROPREDY b 25.09.1836
 Gardener | bp.13.11.1836
 1891 Lived in Chapel Row | d 19.07.1906

JOHN _____ WILLIAM ALBERT _____ ANN ELIZABETH
 b 20.10.1864 b 13.07.1867 b 7.02.1870
 bp 11.12.1864 Cropredy bp 11.09.1867 bp 26.03.1870
 d 5.12.1942 age 78 d 28.03.1936 d Aug. 1936
 banns 2.12.1890 m 4.06.1900
 Wheelwright m ELIZABETH Mason m ELIZABETH m H. Sharman
 G.527 | Cox G.530 | McGillivray
 d 27.02.1935 age 69 b 9.05.1865
 ARTHUR bp 13 Dec. 1891 d 28.02.1949 G.530
 Baker moved to Rugby Cook
 Died 1949 at Dunchurch.

CHRISTINA _____ WILLIAM _____ HARRY JOHN
 b 7.04.1902 Cropredy COLIN b 15.02.1908
 d 18.01.1995 b 15.02.1906 Cropredy d 18.02.1908
 m Alexander Murray d 23.07.1986 Fort Augustus
 Taylor b.27.12.1907 Carpenter m Helen Elizabeth Matheson
 | d 9.01.1983 b.25.02.1899
 | d.17.06.1982
 John Alexander Christina Beatrice
 1955 1939 m Peter Michael
 Clementson.

Family tree from Registers, Colin Shirley's Bible and from his nephew John A. Taylor.

Colin Shirley's Letters.

[Letter 1 dated: 6/01/1975] I am afraid I can't tell you much about my family. I just remember my grandfather. I understand from my father that he (my grandfather) came, in about 1860, from Hempton, a village near Deddington. He was born on Christmas day 1831 and died in 1917. If the name Shirley appears before 1831 perhaps I am mistaken and it was his ancestor that came from Hempton (*This was my mistake. A branch of the Shirley family had lived in Cropredy before 1792 when Ed snr, wheelwright left a will (Pec.15.145:Pec.52/2/108), on the site of the 1881 Chapel. Apparently these may not have been the direct ancestors of Colin Shirley. In Letter 2 Colin was replying to my wrong information. It was still a mystery to me why the Dews considered they were related to him*). My grandmother was Sarah Wilson born in 1836 and died in 1906. I was told she went out to the old school at Williamsote that stands on the left in the drive to *Williamsote House*, which I have been told was at one time a public road.

My father was Albert Shirley and my uncle John Shirley. He was a wheelwright and worked all his life in the yard where Mr Pettifer's blacksmith's shop is. (*In 2002 Mr.G.Wheeler's site now Agricultural Motors and General Engineer The Forge, High St*) I think when he started work it was for James Lambert, (*Clifford Lambert, son of William James Lambert, son of James Lambert (1834-1916) a wheelwright - Book 5 The Wheelwright's Apprentice by Arthur & Lucy Pettifer.*) then it was taken over by Sumner and Neal, and lastly by Mr Frank Sumner (*Mrs Constance Hollis's father: Book 5*).

My father was a mason. At one time he had some bullets from the battle of Cropredy Bridge, which he found in the river while working at the bridge. I am sorry to say I don't know where they are now, perhaps I fired them away with a catapult.

- [2L. 24/01/75] When I wrote last I quite forgot to say that there were two other Shirleys in Cropredy when I first remember. One a William Shirley, I remember well, lived down Creampot Lane. He lived in the bottom cottage of four, where Mrs Medcalf and Mrs Underdown live now (*William Shirley worked for Thomas Cooknell. Book 2 Cooknell's of Cropredy Green by Mabel Durrant. Mrs Medcalf Snr. Lived at Elderberry End the bottom 2 cottages. Mr & Mrs Underdown Jnr.in the 3 bays of building next door called Creampot Cottage*). I think I heard he had been a shoemaker.

The other was a Stephen Shirley who lived in a cottage at the top of Red Lion Street.

I remember the name, but not him. After he and his wife died, his wife's sister, Mrs Plumb, lived there (Mr Roland Plumb's grandmother). I didn't know they were related to us, but after studying the family tree you sent I see my grandfather had a brother Stephen and that his second wife was a Phoebe Dew. We used to have an old recipe book with the name Phoebe Dew written on the fly leaf. I remember too a good many years ago my mother having a letter from a Mrs or Miss Dew from

somewhere out Daventry way, but as she didn't know anything about her she didn't answer it. I have an idea that Mrs Plumb's maiden name was Dew. I know she had relations in the Daventry area. The cookery book with Pheobe Dew in was given us by Mrs Plumb.

[4L. 2/03/76] The other names in the family Bible are all Shirleys beginning with my grandfather born 1831, d. 1917, his wife Sarah b.1837 d. 1906, then my father and their sister. My uncle John married Elizabeth Cox. I think she came from Bishops Itchington. I know she had brothers there. They had one son Arthur W. Shirley, he was a baker with his aunt Mrs Godson at Great Bourton. After Mrs Godson gave up the business he moved to Rugby and eventually to Dunchurch where he died in 1949. He was married but had no family. Mrs Godson's daughter, Gertie, is Mrs Norman Smith who lives in Cropredy (*Mrs N.Smith lived at Holmleigh, Round Bottom. For Marie Godson see Book 1 The Baker and the Carrier's Daughter by Mrs Eddie Bassett & Mrs Marie Godson.*). Do you know the Mrs Marie Godson who lives in the bungalow near the Plantation? Her husband was Mrs Gertie Smith's cousin, their father's were brothers. One [William] had a bakers business at Cropredy and the other [John] at Great Bourton. The Bible is dated 1840.

[Colin Shirley's nephew John Taylor, son of his sister Christina, kindly added the following information]:

[1L. 4/03/2002] Colin's mother was born at Kilchoan, Knoydart but more correctly Kilchoan, Inverie, Knoydart as Kilchoan is (now) just a single dwelling. The Inverie area of Knoydart even now is not accessible by road, although there is about five miles of road in that area. The only regular access is by passenger ferry from Mallaig, which I took this last summer to have a look at the area. Whilst in Mallaig I discovered at the Heritage centre that Colin's mother's parents (from the 1861 census) both worked for a sheep farmer Mr MacDonald at Barrisdale, Knoydart. He was a ploughman and she was a dairymaid. This was before they were married. Although her surname was the same as the farmer I don't think there was a close relationship, if any at all, as they were both listed as servants. Barrisdale is an even more remote place, being six miles from the nearest road and I think with no buildings permanently occupied. There is a walker's bothie there as it showed it on T.V. programme "Wilderness Walks"!

[John's letter of the 25/03/2002 mentions Mrs Shirley's sister]. I cannot tell you much about Mrs Golby. She was of course an old lady when I knew her. She died in 1957, but cannot find any paperwork to verify where or when she was born. You will see from my mother's writing on the back of the mounted photograph that she lived in Bloxham at that time (She's the one standing, Colin's mother sitting) [Photo7]. I know that she was in private service and at one time worked for a Mr John Dewar-Harrison at Willaston near Fringford. She also lived at *Goodrest* in Cropredy for a while, but when? (*In 1897 H.Golby lived in Old Yard. Mr & Mrs Henry Golby lived at Goodrest from c1900 to c1909 (Rate Books). Mr Pratt took over R.O. post by 1910 (Sch log bk). Golby's next heard of in Bloxham in 1914. They moved back to 2 Chapel Row. Henry kept his donkey in stable behind. He died in 1923 His widow worked away but returned to No.2. Maria Adkins of No.3 said She liked to have a clean white cloth & things just so. She kept a small chair for me to sit on. Shared pump with No.3. Upstairs a partition but no doors. Windows leaded with thick green glass making it very dark in the bedrooms. Her sister lived with her: G.528 May*

McGillivray of Cropredy bur 28 Aug. 1948 aged 74 yrs Book 2 p55 and Book 3 Pettifers of Creampot Lane by D.Monk & G.Mold). Mr H.L.Golby was born 6/2/1866 and died 13/4/1923 and his wife Eliza died 26/12/1957 aged 86. Both are buried at Bloxham.

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2. Old Yard Farmhouse in Creampot Lane

At the northern edge of Cropredy there was an Allotment field directly behind *Old Yard Farm* in Creampot Lane. It is not known why this piece jutted out into the fields or if it was a late settlement of land. After the enclosure of the Open Fields in 1775 some of the Elkingtons moved out of *Old Yard* to build *Oathill Farm* on their newly purchased land, but Elkington's continued to rent the ancestral home and kept their Allotment. The family had been in the area since before the registers began in 1538, but they had not been responsible for the rebuilding in stone of *Old Yard Farmhouse*.

It is possible that it was the Kynd family who began the rebuilding. The earliest reference to the Kynds was when John and Alyce had their son Richard baptised in 1576. The father John had been able to release his son from farming to become a scholar at the Williamscothe public school. Both John and Alyce's executors were to have inventories made which reveal them to have been fairly substantial husbandmen (*Kynd John, husb., Cropredy, 1592. Will. Inv. Peculiar 1.28: Pec. 44/3/4. Kynd Alyce, widow, Cropredy, 1598. W. I. Pec.44/3/6*). Richard took over the lease and although he was in Cropredy at Easter 1613, married with at least six children and his mother-in-law to support, they departed that year and his name was erased from the baptism register. For some reason Richard and a few others had questioned the church and been excommunicated and unable to renew their leases, or was it due to some other crisis? The house now fell empty and Thomas Wyatt, who had a forge on the later *Brasenose Inn* site, seized the opportunity to combine farriering, smithing and farming by moving up to *Old Yard* where he greatly improved the property. In three generations his descendants who had also been educated at Williamscothe and elsewhere considered themselves to be gentlemen. They took up leases for the best farms in Cropredy.

In Kynd's time his farmyard was set in front of the house with the barn forming an east range and possibly the stables in front by the road. Thomas Wyatt must have retained the inglenook chimney but used it to provide two more fireplaces. Heat was important to this farrier. The kitchen was given a furnace and out the front he added the necessary chimney to his smithy, possibly extending the stables towards the well (*Wyatt, Thomas, Blacksmith, Cropredy, 1635. W. I. Pec.54/3/29*). This may have been the "barn" taken down in Colin Shirley's life time.

By 1669 Thomas's son John Wyatt had added a wing to the house according to the inventory made 8 years later (*Wyatt, John, farrier, Cropredy, 1677. W. (2) I.(2) Comm. Pec.55/1/6*). Having five hearths placed them third in the 1663 Cropredy list of taxable hearths (*4. Hearth Tax 1663 [E.179 255/4 P.R.O.] John Wyatt Snr 5 Hearths. 1669 Vicar's tithes MS dd Par Cropredy c25 f13 Widow Wyatt had 3 yardlands*). The hearths were surely built by his father Thomas who was ahead of local tradition having already advanced in the use he made of rooms. The hall was no longer the entertaining room, being kept for cooking and eating for Thomas and Ursula had a parlour to withdraw to. They had moved the joined bedstead upstairs to a chamber with a fireplace and wainscoting. The furnishings for his joined bed and room were priced at £17-10s-4d, which was an astonishingly high total for that time. There was also a loft over this chamber with two beds, perhaps for his apprentices. Other rooms included in his 1634 inventory (*Wyatt Thomas 1635 see 2. Also P.Keegan Town of Cropredy 1570-1640*) were the

usual buttery behind the parlour, a kitchen for preparation and a *darye* house. In addition they had two other chambers for the six sons and two daughters. All these sons stayed longer at home while they studied and learnt a trade or profession. When he died aged about 60 Thomas left his wife Ursula, a son aged ten, two teenage daughters and his twentysix year old married son John who was a farrier, all living at home. His other sons had taken over good leases in Cropredy.

1

John Wyatt the farrier's first wife had died and his new young wife Sarah had moved into the farmhouse. Most young couples fortunate enough to carry on the lease took up residence and now widow Ursula was easily accommodated within the larger than usual house. John was the father of five sons and three daughters. His family had continued to add and alter their house. By the time John died in 1669 (*Wyatt John's Will 1677 see note 3. His widow Wyatt, Sarah, Cropredy, 1683 Bd I. Acct. Pec.55/2/15*) he had built a new parlour with a parlour chamber above, as well as a chamber with another over that. There were now two butteries a brew house and a kill [kiln] house with room over so they were malting their own barley on their three yardlands (*An average Brasenose College Yardland came to 32 acres. Wyatts could have farmed around 96 acres*). The dairy was kept for the milk processing and had no loft over, though the cheese, since Thomas's time, had been maturing on racks in the loft over his bedroom next to the chimney breast.

The Allotment out the back showed that buildings had been built on it, but gave no surface clues of what lay beneath or who was responsible for them. The Allotment was projecting beyond the town's north boundary. The eastern field boundary had a definite bank dropping down to a close leased from the Brasenose College, but without a fence to define the freehold from the copyhold until in 1900 the College purchased the stack yard and Allotment for £200, but that was in the future. The small freehold stack yard to the east was next to Read's College farm down the Lane. The old wooden and thatched building with mangers, or one like it, may have been the one used by the Wyatts for cattle. They leased sufficient land to own 12 cows.

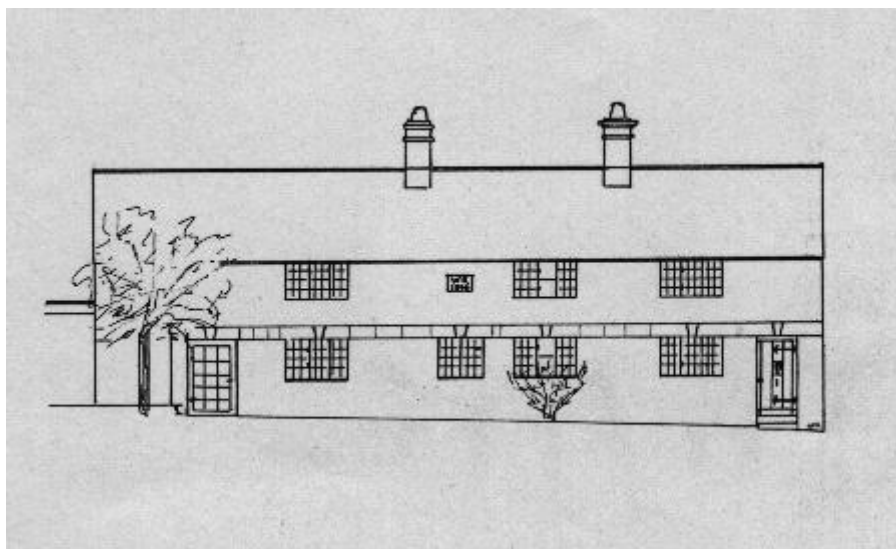
Although all the farmers are listed in the tithe accounts up to 1775 (*Vicar's Cropredy Tithe Accounts. MSdd Par Cropredy c25-c27: 1669-1675,1694-1784*) - (when their open strip land was enclosed), without manorial rent lists on the Boothby Estate it has not yet been possible to establish which farm belonged to which family. In 1775 the landlords for the two Cropredy manors allotted to their tenant farmers parcels of land. Some on the Boothby estate were able to buy their farms. Elkington's, as mentioned above, had *Oathill*, in the northern part of the parish, but continued to rent their ancestral home, now the property of John Chamberlin of *Cropredy Lawn Farm*, and take on land allotted to Read's farmland from the Brasenose College, Oxford (*Oxon Archives: S & F.Box 98 Sir Wm Boothby to Jn Chamberlin 1775 & Jn Chamberlin to Wm Hunt Chamberlin 22 Nov.1795. Also BNC. Archives: 18A*). Elkington was to turn Read's house into two cottages. By 1809 Chamberlin's son William Hunt Chamberlin sold *Old Yard* to Edward Elkington for £210 and at last it becomes a freehold property. The deed states that "*All that messuage tenement and old Farm House with home close orchard stack yard barns stables and buildings thereto belonging ...in occupation of Edward Elkington...*" (*Sale of Old Yard Farm Allotment & Stack yard*

BNC 18A Doc.2. 20/06/1809. Wm Chamberlin to Edward Elkington. & Doc.5 Wm Elkington recovers his half moiety from father's will & takes out a mortgage to buy off siblings).

The property passes down the family with a mortgage being taken out whenever the inheritance is divided amongst the widow and children. Edward son of Thomas, son of Edward had his moiety and in 1846 converted the farmhouse into three cottages.

2

Edward appears to have kept the parlour side of the main chimney and removed the fireplace in the hall. There is some evidence in the stonework that the rear wall may have had a oven projection removed, for there is a perpendicular line in the stone rows to the east of this chimney. The biggest cottage, was as Mr Shirley wrote, at the west end. The other two were narrower with their stairs and kitchen to the rear and lit by one light windows. The front rooms may have kept the original windows with their seats and shutters and perhaps a new surround. Mr Elkington had a brick wall dividing the two smaller cottages. In this was a new chimney with back to back fireplaces so that their layout upstairs and down was the reverse of the other, even to the position of their wooden front doors. The east cottage needed three stone steps to enter. All three cottages had south facing three light windows down and up on the front elevation and a stone lintel, which stretched the width of the cottages. *Springfield Farm* had a similar stone lintel of ashlar stone. It is not known if this was part of the original Thomas Wyatt wall, but the Boothby Estate did have more ashlar stonewalls than the Brasenose College properties. This more expensive stonework did not reach the rear wall or the gable ends. A date stone was let into the front wall just below two extra rows needed when the thatch was replaced by slate. The chimnies above the roof were built in stone.



**Fig. 1: Sketch of *The Hollies*, once *Old Yard Cottages*, in 1983.
Note the lintel above the doors and windows and the middle door replaced by a window.**

Edward's own cottage placed the kitchen at the west end with the stairs up to a landing. The main bedroom with the elm floor boards supported on joists set from front to back, with perhaps newly imported wood, and not on a traditional spine or later transverse beam? What happened to the wainscoting Thomas had added? His fireplace remains. A cupboard was made in front of the bricked up doorway blocking the entrance into the middle cottage. This was repeated downstairs. His cottage had an old two light window downstairs, near the fire, which looked out over the fields behind. This too had a window seat. Near by was a built in floor to ceiling corner cupboard. His second bedroom upstairs had a two light window facing west (*The Scamen family kindly allowed permission to make a rough sketch of Old Yard now The Hollies. and BNC: 18A Doc. 12*).

3

Mr Shirley explains about the garden on page 16. By 1910/11 each cottage was to have purpose built outside kitchens which Colin calls wash houses. The delicate subject of the toilets, which I asked about, he also kindly spoke about. Mrs Gwen Honey nee Thomas whose parents once lived in the middle cottage and Colin's nephew John A. Taylor from his time spent there with the Shirleys, have both added more information. The photographs John and his sister Betty have lent for copying also show parts of the building before it was again altered after 1973, when Mr and Mrs Bernard Coles retired from the *Red Lion* and opened a guest house there. They added an extension which replaced the Shirley's wash house and workshop. After the Coles had built a new bungalow at the west end of the garden they sold the rest to the Scamens who remodelled the west addition into part of Mrs. Scamen senior's home. The Coles had blocked off the middle cottage front doorway, but the Scamens added a new porch and made it their entrance along with other alterations.



Photo 2: The garden on the site of the barn once in front of *Old Yard* cottages.

The Stack Yard.

In the Brasenose College archives in Oxford are letters about *Old Yard* and the stack yard as well as the deeds providing information as far back as 1775. The barn in front remained after the 1846 alterations, but the east barn seems to have vanished, leaving a boundary wall that needed replacing in 1900. The stack yard still had an ancient timber building with a thatched roof and was used to farm Read's land. The College deeds occasionally mention who occupied the properties (*Deeds in 1860 BNC: 18A second schedule of Doc.8*). In 1860 living in *Old Yard* cottages were Mrs Elkington, George Haslewood, George Sumner and William Cherry. One of which must have been a sub tenant or lodger?

Elkington's stack yard was sold in 1877 to Edward Borton, farrier and farmer of *Monkeytree House*, and he also purchased the three *Old Yard* cottages in occupation of Edward Elkington and others. *Read's Farm* was now two cottages which were occupied by Thomas Haslewood and Daniel Wells, and the land (17 acres 1 rood and 29 perch) was then leased from the Brasenose College by Edward Borton (*1877 Purchase by Edward Borton, farrier. BNC: 18A Doc.11 from Wm Elkington*).

When Edward Borton died in 1900, the College took back the leasehold property and bought the freehold Allotment north of *Old Yard* with the stack yard and attached them to Andrew's Farm at the bottom of Creampot Lane (*1900 Sale of leasehold & freehold Stack yard and Allotment 18A Doc.12 to BNC. Bursar wrote to Wm Anker Jany 1901 Get Smith to tender for the needful repairs to the yard. B36.11 p64*). This is how the stack yard became known by the name of the farmer who was the tenant. The well and pump on the boundary between *Old Yard* and the stack yard became a shared responsibility and the

cause of long delays in getting it repaired. Both owners had to pay one "moiety of the expense of keeping said pump and well in repair." (*Letter dated 28/01/1901 A.J.Butler (BNC Bursar) to College Agent: Mr Alfred Smith B36 11 p96*).

4

The stack yard was now attached to twenty-one and a half acres of land. Several people wanted to lease this unit. Mr James Pargeter who lived at *Constone* on the Green offered the highest rent of £53 15s per annum which was accepted. He remained as tenant of *Andrew's Farm* until 1907 when Wm. Eagles took over (*Pargeter's Rent BNC: 217 no.23 dated 25/06/1900 plus schedule*). The College used Read's old rick yard to double the size of the stack yard for they lay side by side facing south onto *Creampot Lane*. Mr William Anker of *Beech House Farm* acted for the College and he contacted Mr Alfred Smith the Cropredy builder and farmer who did alterations for the College (*Letters in BNC: 210 Anker to College 14/01/1901*). Mr Smith then asked Mr John Allitt of *Home Farm* Cropredy, who had by then purchased *Old Yard* cottages, to inspect the pump. Apparently a new party wall was required and he proposes half a brick thick with supporting pillars and minor repairs to the pump (*Letter relating to the dividing brick wall dated 14/01/1901 and BNC Bursar's letter book B36.11 p88*). By January the College Bursar agrees. As to the suggested plan for the new shed he wanted something more substantial than wood and iron. Brick and slate would add permanent value to the property. The shed eventually came to £73 and the wall cost £14-10s, but the wall and the pump were shared with Mr Allitt (*Letter about Pump & shed dated 14/01/1901 and BNC Bursar's letter book B36.11 p74*). A year after the purchase the old cowshed received a hard brick floor for £3-12s-6d (*Letter about cowshed brick floor dated 15/11/1901 and Bursar's letter book B36.11 p89*).

In March 1910 Alfred Smith wrote to the College Bursar to say The Wardington Lodge of Oddfellows had purchased the three cottages at the late Mr Allitt's sale adjoining the Borton property, now used by Mr Eagles of *Andrews Farm*. "The trustees of the Lodge proposed to build kitchens for their tenants and utilise the boundary walls that we put up at the joint expense of the College and the late Mr Allitt." The Lodge secretary also wrote "The water in the well is not considered good for drinking or cooking purposes, but serves for washing and cleaning..." "We propose cleaning out the well, sinking it and if necessary putting in a new pump piece, to obtain good drinking water if possible." Will the College pay half? "Also until the works carried out, will you kindly allow the tenants to fetch water as hitherto" (*Letter Lodge going to provide Old Yard cottages with Kitchens 1910 BNC: 211 dated 18/03/1910 A.Smith to H.C.Wace, Bursar. & BNC:211 Lodge to A.J.Butler, Bursar 1910*) from the College tap.

One of the trustees told Mr Smith that the cottages paid 10s rent for using the College water tap, which was down the Lane at Read's cottages. As Mr Smith dealt with water rents as well as repairs he wrote to the college "If used for all purposes for the three cottages and Mr Eagle's yard, it would be a much greater strain on the supply." He meant the rent was insufficient. A plan was also requested by the Bursar for the little back kitchens and put before the Board, but it lacked enough information. In July a letter following a visit informed the Lodge secretary that they could not agree to the kitchens being built on the party wall and they should pay 10s per cottage for College water. In September 1911 the trustees asked to meet the Bursar about

the pump. "Residents of Cropredy state that the water from the pump, jointly used by the tenants of the college and our Lodge, was formerly of the best. Practical business men are of the opinion that the well requires cleaning out and the pump put in order and the water would in all probability be as good as ever it was." In October the trustees wrote "Mr Lambert - a practical business man in wells and pump work (whom you met as a trustee) - says he will arrange to have the well opened, and ascertain what is really required and approximate cost." He enclosed 30s for the water rent. Apparently Mr Lambert went with Sumner and Neal and "they gave an estimate of the cost: repairing pump pieces and bucket, cleaning out the well, refixing pump, new oak covering to well with bricks etc and labour £2-17-6d." In the end it was less troublesome than estimated and came to £2-10s. It was no wonder the well figured so large in everyone's memories (*Water Letters: Dated 1/07/1910 Bursar to Lodge B36.15 p334. Lodge to A.A.Aldridge Bursar dated 4/10/1911.Re. Visit of Sumner & Neal BNC: 211 dated 5/09/1911 Lodge to A.J.Butler. Estimate dated 9/10/1911 BNC: 211 Lodge to College. Final Bill 13/11/1911 Lodge to A.A.Aldridge Bursar*). While everyone debated the issue and wrote several letters the housewives staggered back up the Lane with bucket after bucket in all weathers.

5

Going back to the wall: The Lodge built the back kitchens for all three cottages and for the two by the wall they changed the plans and tied an inner wall to the four and a half inch thick brick wall and the College finally agreed, providing the eaves did not project beyond the middle of the wall and were properly spouted so as not to shoot water into the yard (*Eaves & water letter dated 11/08/1910 and Bursar's L.Bk. B36.15 p386*).

During a gap in the Brasenose College records dealing with these sites, the pump must once again have failed leaving the tenants to use the tap. It would seem that whenever there is a shortage of money the Lodge wishes to stop paying rent for College water. In January 1923 the Lodge decides to put a pump down the well and discontinue the cost of paying the annual 30s water rent, for their three cottages in *Old Yard*. Fred K. Pechover, their secretary, wrote to ask the College to pay their share of the cost of reinstating the pump. The College tenant Mr A.P.McDougall thought the College water sufficient for the yard, but it would be unwise to loose the right to the well. In March Mr Pechover sent an estimate from Mr Neal for supplying and fixing a pump in Creampot Lane to the College, but they declined to help with the costs and presumably lost their yards' right to it? In 1936 when a Sterilising House, costing £19-15s, was built in Read's old half of the yard the College took a pipe from their own water supply to the yard (*Letters re. pump BNC 214 29/01/1923 Lodge Pechover to H.C.Wace Bursar. BNC: 214 McDougall to H.C.Wace. Estimate dated 20/03/1923 Lodge to H.C.Wace. Letter of refusal dated 22/03/1923 College to Lodge. Sterilising House 1936 Specification & estimate + plan. BNC: 127*). Was this when a college water tap was finally installed by the south gable of the middle cottage's wash house, between two soft water tanks? This was by the shared water trough and well pump.

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3. School

[22L. 23/03/85] Now I will try and draw a rough plan of the school as I remember it. I hope you can read my writing. I never was a good writer and I certainly don't improve. P.S. I hope you can understand my plan. I am afraid it is not quite in proportion.

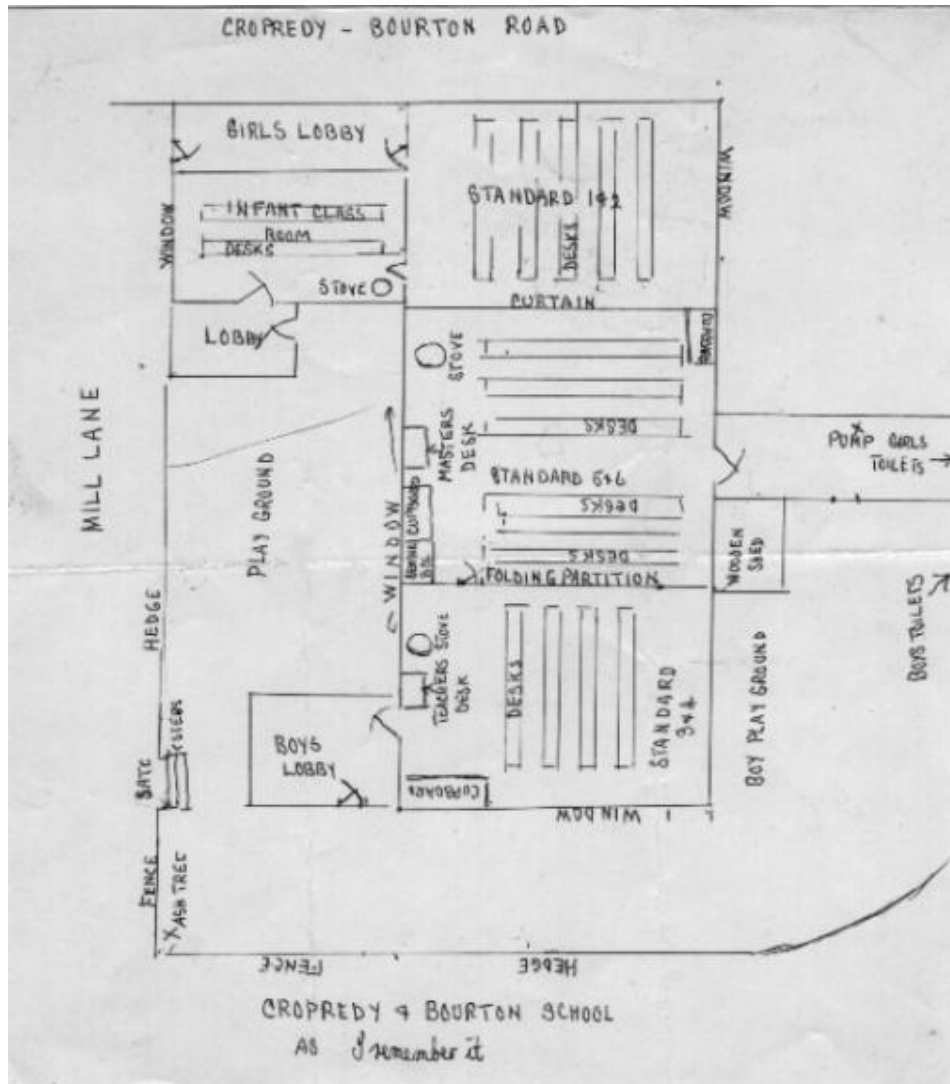


Fig 4. Cropredy and Bourton School

A rough plan of the school as it was when I was there. There were curtains dividing the three rooms in the main part of the school. I remember the surprise we got when we went back after one holiday to find the curtain dividing the two rooms at the canal end had gone and a folding wood and glass partition in its place. I think the other curtain was still there when I left. There was no ceiling then, it was open right up to the roof. The heating was by tortoise stoves.

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The Vicar of Bourton, Mr Standage used to come to the school for prayers. I think it was every fortnight he came. He used to wear a hat with a crown something like a bowler but not so high and flat on the top with a wide flat brim. There used to be a big box or chest stand by the wall, we called it the sewing box, I don't ever remember seeing inside it. One morning Mr Standage was there he laid his hat on the box, later on he went to sit down and sat on his hat. I remember that, but I don't remember anything he said to us. Yes we had gardening lessons, we had a plot in the allotments across the field at the back of the school. Are they still there?

[15L. 16/02/84] I have heard talk of prizes at the school and watches for perfect attendance, but that had stopped before I started school. I can just remember going to a prize giving at the school one night with my Father and Mother, but that would be before I started school. The only prize that was given in my time was the Bishop's prize for scripture. [Some were] completely wrong in saying no one who went to Chapel ever won it, because I won it in 1918 and I was going to Chapel then. I still have it. A prayer book. Then a year or so later another boy who went to Chapel won it, Arthur Smith, he lived in the second house from yours [1](#) in Chapel Row. I know he asked if he could have a Bible instead of a Prayer Book, and the one he had had the apocrypha in it. She was wrong too in saying Mr Standage from Bourton took the examination. I don't know where the examiner came from but it was a stranger. The year I won it, it was R.de M.Nixon, his signature is in the front of the Prayer Book.

[22L.23/03/85] The only one I can remember who took lodgers besides Miss West was a Mrs Bradley who lived in Red Lion Street at the first house past the opening [the Jitty] from what used to be the Co-op. She used to have a school teacher, Miss Jackson.

Did you see the photo of a class at Cropredy School, about 1930 in the Banbury Guardian last week? I think there are some mistakes in the names. The teacher is not Miss Tyrell, now Mrs Boddington who lives at Bourton. It is Miss Jackson. She came from Coventry. Reg. Charles is the sixth in the back row. The boy at the right hand end of the front row is I think Harold Cotterill who is still in Cropredy, and the Cotterill in the back row is his brother Harry. He was killed in the R.A.F. in the war.

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Photo 10: Mrs Christina Taylor nee Shirley's copy of 1907 School Photograph.

Rear: Mr Bonner.**Back Row:** Miss Cummings. Louie Howes. Annie Sumner. Lucy Pargeter? Ada Neal. Maggie Busby. Elsie Sumner. Cissy Pettifer? George Upton. ? ? ? Horace Busby. Miss Wall.

Middle Row: Fred Timms. Tom Watts. Cyril Timms. Ada Timms. H.Goode. -Eagles.Elsie Cherry. ? Kate Busby. Ivy Yates. Emily Cooknell. Florence Gardner. Lottie Pargeter. Christina Shirley.

Front Row: - Goode. Arthur Cherry. Bill Harris. ? Bert Cherry. Tom Upton. ? Norman Smith.Bill Eagles. ? Basil Harris. ? ? -- Allitt.

- [1](#) Monkeytree House, Creampot Lane.

4. Station

[21L. 18/02/85] If I remember rightly the chocolate in the machine at the station was Frys. I don't think there was anything but chocolate. I think there was only one machine. It was at the end of the booking office facing toward the village.

The last train from Banbury at night got in about 8 o'clock, as it came in on the far side any passengers had to cross the rails and Mr Miller the Station Master was always very alert as there was an express train to London due through just about that time.

Some of the time I was in school in Banbury I went on the first train in the morning about 7 o'clock. I always remember standing on the platform one morning and hearing the noise the frogs were making croaking in the watery ditch at the other side of the field at the back of the station Now-a-days you never see a frog. I never heard anything like it before or since.

At one time there were two porters at the station. Ted Stratford and a younger man named Hemmingway. We had a social for the Cricket Club one time and Hemmingway said a monologue entitled "*I'm always away when required.*" Ted said that was the truest words he ever spoke. Ted lodged with Miss West who used to live in your house.

There used to be three if not four trains each way every day at one time. They used to tell the tale of an old man who was just going up the station road one day as the train went out. Someone said "*Ah master you've missed it.*" He replied "*I'm not going for that one.*"

[16L. 23/03/84] There was a man in Cropredy, Sam he wasn't quite 100%. He worked at Prescote and once they had two new girls coming and he was sent to the station to meet them with the milk float and mule. I think they must have been a bit nervous because one said "*Is your horse quiet?*" Sam replied "*It ent a aws, it's a mewal.*"

After I stopped playing cricket I was going to Banbury on the bus. Sam was on it too. He said, "*Cropredy got any cricket on to-day?*" I said "*I think so.*" "*Don't play now do You?*" I said "*No.*" "*Ah! Got beyond it.*" he said. He was right too, but I hadn't thought of it like that before.

[10L. 19/01/81] Thank you very much for your letter and transcripts. We were very interested in reading them. I had heard Tom Bradley's story of Louis Lambert.(1) Another about him was when he went to see a girl one Sunday. I don't know where to, but somewhere the other side of Bloxham. He was walking home at night and he was coming through Bloxham it rained fast and he took shelter in the church porch. There was a service going on and he could hear them singing the hymn "*Lead kindly Light.*" He said he thought the lines "*The night is dark and I am far from home*" were very appropriate. He lived in a stone cottage that stood about where Mrs Tagg's bungalow is in the High Street.

- 1. Cropredy History Meeting November 1980.

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5. Saturday Jobs, Shopping and Home Cures

[17L 14/05/84] I can just remember the Policeman Havell. I think he went to Bloxham from Cropredy. I have heard my Mother say one of his boys did an errand for her once. She asked him if he would have a piece of cake or a penny. He said "The cake," and had it and ate it, then said "He would like the penny." I don't know whether he got it or not.

[16L. 23/03/84] You are quite right about knife cleaning being hated. I had to do it on Saturday mornings. It was a board and you put your knife on it. How I hated it.

It was quite an event if Mother and Father went to Banbury when we were children, we got most things in the village at the Co-op. Mrs Cave had a small shop half-way down Red Lion Street. Her son Archie used to come round with a pony and trap, on Saturdays I think. He died during the First World War. They said he got a chill when he went up for his medical and died of pneumonia. (*Cave family in Book 5: The Wheelwright's Apprentice A & L Pettifer*).

Mr Godson used to come round with bread and he did some butchering as well (*Book 2, The Baker's and the Carrier's Daughter E Bassett and M Godson*). Then a butcher Jarvis from Middleton Cheney came round too.

Home Cures: [22L. 23/03/85] Yes Mother used Zambuk ointment. She had the recipe and used to make it. I have been looking to see if it is still about, the recipe I mean, but I can't find it. My sister may have it. The only ingredient I can remember is oil of swallows. I knew of someone who went to Dr. Bartlett once, I can't remember what for. He said *What have you been putting on it?* They said *Zambuk*. He said *Ach, put that on your boots!*

[23L. 19/06/85] I was looking for something the other day and came across a very old piece of paper, when I looked at it, it was the recipe for Zambuk. What those amounts would be in today's values I have no idea.

Three pennyworth of Vaseline,

Two pennyworth of Spemaceti,

Two pennyworth of Oil of Eucalyptus,

Two pennyworth of Oil of Swallows.

Put into a jar and dissolve by the fire. Allow to cool.

[18L. 24/06/84] I have heard my Father talk about goose grease, also brimstone and treacle. I think they were the main remedies one time of day. The stock cure in those days. I am glad to say I never had any of them, they seemed to have gone out before my time.

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6. Apprenticeship



Photo 11: Colin Shirley.

[8L. 16/03/80] Thank you very much for sending me the account of the History group meeting. We were both very interested in reading it. In fact I have read it three or four times. I was always interested to hear anything of old times in Cropredy.

I was apprenticed under the apprenticeship scheme that was mentioned. I am enclosing my indentures for you to see. You can return them sometime. You will see all the conditions attached.

"This Indenture witnesseth that WILLIAM COLIN SHIRLEY (of the age of fifteen years) son of William Albert Shirley of Cropredy in the county of Oxford (with the consent of his said father) doth put himself apprentice to William Neal of Cropredy, carpenter and wheelwright, to learn his art and after him (after the manner of an apprentice) to serve from the first day of September [1921] until the full end and term of five years from thence next following to be fully completed and ended. During which term the said apprentice his master faithfully shall serve: He shall do no damage to his said master nor see it to be done to others but that he to his power shall let or forthwith give warning to his master of the same. He shall not play at

Cards, Dice, Tables or any other unlawful games whereby his said master may have any loss. With his own goods or others during the said term without licence of his said master he shall neither buy nor sell. He shall not haunt Taverns or Playhouses nor absent himself from his master's services day or night unlawfully. But in all things as a faithful apprentice he shall behave himself towards his master and all his during the said term. He shall give a true and just account of his master's goods, chattels and money committed to his charge or which shall come to his hands whenever required to do so by his said master,

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AND the said William Neal in consideration of the premises and the sum of TEN POUNDS of lawful money of Great Britain to him in hand paid at or before the execution of these presents by the President and Fellows of Trinity College, Oxford, being the Trustees of the Charity Fund left by the will of the Reverend Edward Bathurst B.D., sometime Rector of Chipping Warden and Vicar of Cropredy, and also in consideration of the further sum of TEN POUNDS to be paid to him in case the said apprentice should be in his service at the expiration of two and a half years from the said date, shall teach and instruct by the best means he can the said apprentice in the art of a carpenter and wheelwright which he useth or shall cause him to be taught and instructed. And the said William Neal shall pay to the said William Colin Shirley the sum of:

8/- a week for the first twelve months commencing 1st September 1921

9/- a week for the first twelve months commencing 1st September 1922

10/- a week for the first twelve months commencing 1st September 1923

12/- a week for the first twelve months commencing 1st September 1924

14/- a week for the first twelve months commencing 1st September 1925.

AND for the true performance of all the said covenants and agreements each of the said parties bindeth himself unto the other by these presents.

IN WITNESS whereof the parties above named to these INDENTURES have set their hands and seals this nineteenth day of September in the twelfth year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord George by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, and in the year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty One. (*Apprentice Indentures repeat old rules. See ch.10 p133 in TheTown of Cropredy1570-1640 Keegan.A.P.*).

I think at one time apprentices had to live in with their employer as in Lambert's time they slept up in the attics at the Woodyard. There was at least one other village in the scheme as well as Cropredy and Chipping Warden, but I don't know

what villages or villages they were (The other two villages were Hothorpe & Garsington. Bathurst charity established 1668. Organised by Trinity College, Oxford). The year I was apprenticed it was not Cropredy's turn, but the village whose turn it was had no boy for it. The Vicar of Cropredy at that time, the Rev. Barr (*Rev. Barr M.A. (c1852-1944) Vicar of Cropredy from c1917 to 1929. Grave 250a because his wife Charlotte Rebecca Barr was buried in Cropredy 1924 aged 72*) came to my parents and asked if they would take it. I remember him saying there was a boy waiting for it in the next village.

I was amused at Mr Bradley's remarks about Mr Lambert (*History Meeting 15 Jan 1980. William James Lambert (1861-1947)* owner of *Woodyard*, Book 5, but living at the *Wharf* when Tom Bradley worked for him.) and his wages. I remember once while I was apprenticed Mr Lambert brought a wagon to be repaired, among the repairs was a new front board. All the wagons then had the farmer's name in big letters on the front, so this had to have the name put on. Usually they had a sign writer from Banbury to do it. Someone suggested I should write it and Mr Lambert said, "*Perhaps you would like to do it free of charge for a bit of practice.*" I don't expect he got it free of charge because I was paid for it. I remember I did it in old English lettering.

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Photo 12: The wagon Colin made for Clifford Lambert

Only a year or two before I left Cropredy Mr Jack King (*The Kings lived in West part of Clifford Lambert's Home Farm next to the Village Hall*) asked me to make a model wagon for Mr Clifford Lambert and he brought me a book of Mr Lambert's to work from. It was *Farm Wagons of England and Wales*. By Arnold James, published in 1969 at £6.50. It was a limited edition of

1,800. There were coloured illustrations of the wagons of the different counties and the one of the Oxfordshire wagon was the very wagon I put the name on. I recognised my sign writing at once. I wonder if Clifford still has the wagon? At one time it was in the hovel opposite the *Brasenose*.

[9L. 27/12/80] About the *Woodyard*. (*Book 5: The Wheelwright's Apprentice A & L Pettifer*). When I first remember it was Sumner and Neal. They did building and undertaking as well as wheelwrighting. The carts and wagons etc were brought to the yard for repair. They also made wooden pumps for wells. Mr Sumner retired and it was just Mr Neal when I started there, his son had a building business at Retford. I was only there between one or two years when Mr Neal died. His son kept it on for another year and then Mr Sumner and son (Connie's father Frank) took it on again. At that time there was only my uncle John Shirley and myself there. Mr Sumner himself died soon after. In Frank Sumner's time there was my uncle, Henry Busby (Arthur Pettifer's uncle by marriage), Sid Watts and myself. Of course I was very much the junior. Sid Watts was a Wardington man but I think he lived at Williamscoote at that time, he afterwards moved to Chacombe. He was a very nice man, he had spent some years in Australia. I used to like to hear him talking about it.

There used to be a sawpit in the yard. I have done some pit sawing, not a great lot, but enough. I was always bottom sawyer. You can imagine the work there was sawing big trees up into 2", 3" and 4" planks and if it was into ¾" or 1" boards even more so. The trees were marked out with a line dipped in soot and water, it was held in position at both ends and pulled tight then lifted up in the middle and let slap down on the tree, it left a black line all along. That was done on both sides of the tree for a guide for the top and bottom sawyer.

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They used to tell a tale of a man and boy (not me) that was sawing a tree up. The man said "*This saw goes bad, boy, are you in line?*" The boy said "Yes" a pause then "*Not in the one I started in though!*" I never heard the man's comments.

You asked if I ever did any tree felling. I never did much, but I well remember the first time. It would be about 1926. The Council straightened the Cropredy to Claydon Road a bit, opposite the gate going down to Annismore bridge. (*Annismoor Field is crossed by the old road to Boddington (now a bridle-path) down to the Oxford Canal bridge just south of Oathill Farm*). There was a big elm on the corner, and Mr Sumner where I worked at the time, bought it. Mr Sumner, my uncle John Shirley and I went to fall it one afternoon. We didn't go until afternoon. I don't remember what time of year it was but I know it got dark early. We used to work till 4.30pm. We got the tree down at 4.30 straight across the road. Luckily there was not much traffic, very few cars in those days. All that came along were two bicycles, two brothers named Wyatt from Claydon, on their way home from work. I remember they stopped for a bit and gave us a hand. It was 8 o'clock before we had the road clear. That was my first experience of tree felling, not a very good start.

[13L. 13/12/83] Things didn't go any better when we went to bring the tree back to the yard. At that time *Cropredy Lawn Farm* and *Lambert's Barn* were all one and belonged to the Co-op. (*Banbury Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd, farmers. Cropredy Lawn. Directories 1924 & 1928*). Mr Sumner's brother-in-law was wagoner there (H.Dunn) and he came with the horses to load the tree on the timber carriage. They used to put skids on top of the wheels and have chains from the timber carriage under the tree and back over the carriage and attached to the horses, as the horses pulled the tree rolled up the skids onto the carriage. We got the tree onto the carriage but the horses wouldn't stop and it went right over and off the other side.

We had another try and got it onto the carriage but then it was too far forward we couldn't get the horses in the shafts. We had to borrow Mr Cherry's (*Thomas Cherry & Sons Builders, Painters, Decorators and Contractors T.N.9 (tel.no.9)*) timber carriage and draw it alongside and transfer it to that. I don't know how they got on sawing it up as I left and went to work in Banbury.



Photo 13:

Co-op Society, Cropredy Lawn Farm's wagon.

During the war we cut some oak trees down in the spinneys in the Big Ground (*I think Colin is referring to Great Middle Field's north hedge. Field once crossed by a lane running between Broadimoor bridge and Prescote's Upper Cherwell bridge. The lane is now a bridle path up to Wardington on the old route*), they were taken to Over's timber merchants at Byfield to be sawn up and we put some open hovels up at Upper and Lower Prescote with the timber.

[9L. 27/12/80] There were blacksmiths in the village as far back as I can remember. One blacksmiths shop was on the Green, where the bungalow next to *Constone* is. Another in what is Bott's (*Bott's Coal yard south of the Williamscoote Road. Monkeytree House old smithy now taken into house 2001*) coal yard and one by your house, but I can't remember that in use.

[10L. 19/01/81] I don't remember any blacksmith working at the shop in front of your house. I always understood the building was the blacksmith's shop. I can remember an oak post standing in the ground on the left hand side of the doorway and being told that the blacksmith used to have a vice on it. I have heard people talk of farrier Borton who used to live there.

[9L. 27/12/80] There was an old blacksmith named George King. (*For George King see Book 2 page 56. John Shirley used to assist George to ring changes and play pieces on the handbells*). I can just remember him as an old man. He used to pull teeth too. His son once showed me his instrument. It was about 7" or 8" long as far as I can remember with a T handle at one end and a kind of hook on a pin at the other. I will draw it if I can.

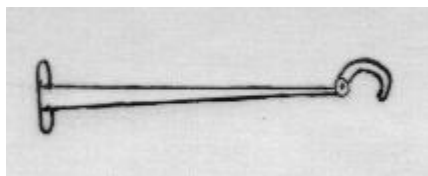


Fig 5. Tooth Extractor

He must have put the hook part round the tooth and twisted it out. I should think the cure was worse than the disease.

When Sumner and Neals were in business they employed quite a number of men. My uncle John Shirley worked in the *Woodyard* all his life. When I first started there, there was a carpenter named Ernest Allitt (*Ernest Frederick Allitt (1876-1947 G.34 at Gt.B.) Prize at school 1884. A carpenter whom. Sarah Ann (1873-1959). 6 sons 2 daug. Musical family*) from Great Bourton there. I afterwards worked with him for years at Cherry's. He was an excellent craftsman, and he and I got on well together. His son Reg still lives at Bourton. There was also an old wheelwright from Wardington named Harry Lines.

When Sumner and Neals were in business they had the blacksmith's shop on the Green and a big barn that stood where the bungalows and the grocers shop are now. The blacksmith's name was Robinson. He lived at Bourton. When Sumners took over again they did not have the buildings on the Green, the blacksmith was on his own. (*See Book 5*).

[3L. 28/01/76] Perhaps when George King's family no longer played the handbells the church had their own set. I am sorry I can't tell you where the handbells came from, but I think I must have known at one time. Mr Norman Smith (*Norman Smith (1903-1961) Builder in Cropredy, Holmleigh, Round Bottom. Married Gertrude Godson in 1928. Father of Gordon. Norman son of Robert, son of Alfred, son of Robert who started the business in 1850. In 1928 Smith Bros. 1939 Smith & Sons, Builders*) used to be in charge of the ringers at the time they got them about 1927. We were working together in Banbury

then and he got me to write *Cropredy Church Handbells* on the box they were in. It was a light grained box I remember. I am sure he would have told me at the time where they came from but I forget now.

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[16L. 23/03/84] You ask if there was a handout from the builders at Christmas. The only one I ever got from a builder was 5/- from the one in London when I was on bomb damage. Far from getting any handouts we were worse off at Christmas as we often closed down for a week and until holiday pay was made compulsory we got no wages for that week.

[11L. 31/05/81] There is one bit in Roland Cherry's book [*Life of an Oxfordshire Countryman* 1981](page 24) not quite right. I had to go to London on bomb damage but I didn't make any furniture for the boss. I was at work at his house for a few days but that was all. I was out on bomb damage too, and for sometime I and another man from Tysoe were in the shop making doors for houses that had been damaged, and the council were taking over and putting people into who had been bombed out.

Also on page 20 Roland refers to working on a wine cellar and the butler had orders to watch them closely. I was the one working in the wine cellar at *Wardington Manor*. The cook, Mr Cherry refers to was a Miss Kerr, she came from Lochinver that is quite a bit further north than we are here. I got on well with her, I expect because she knew I was half Scots. I remember she was very indignant with the butler watching me. She knew what he was. He would be drunk a lot of the time the family were away.

I don't know who made the bier, it was about ever since I can remember. The wheels are not the original ones, they had wire spokes and sometimes with a heavy coffin and on a rough ground they would buckle. I remember the present wheels being fitted. My uncle, John Shirley fitted them on. I think it was in Mr Sumner's time. They sent it away somewhere for the wheels. They were not made at the yard.

[12L. 28/07/82] I knew John French quite well, but I never heard of any brothers or sisters. When I started work at Neal and son he worked there and when I started at Cherrys he was there. He was a very nice man, very little and bent. We used to like to get him to tell us about the time he was summoned for swearing at the policeman, it was something over some cattle on the road. At that time (before I could remember) John lived at *Upper Prescote* (then two houses). The policeman took the summons up to John. It seems you can make them read it to you. John waited till the policeman started back across the fields and he thought he was just within hearing then he shouted at him to come back and read it to him.

The day he had to go to court his wife asked how much he wanted, he said *he better have plenty as it was a serious offence*. She gave him £2, a lot in those days. I forget whether it was 5/- or 10/- he was fined. He used to chuckle and say, "*They tell*

me Tom Cooknell (*Life of an Oxfordshire Countryman by Roland Cherry 1981*) brought me home." So you can guess how the rest of the money was spent.

[4L .2/03/76] I will start on the Gardners. To start with the Jennings are not related to the Gardners, they only bought the house (*2 Red Lion Street*), when Eddie Gardner gave up the business and sold it (*See Book 5 p119 for details of family*). I remember both Mrs Gardners but I don't know who they were. I know Mrs Charlie Gardner had relatives in Somerset, but I don't know if she came from there. Eddie Gardner had one daughter Yvonne and when he retired they moved to Leamington. The daughter died some years ago. Charlie Gardner lived where the Post Office is now and had one daughter Florence. She is a widow, Mrs Sewell, and lives in Warwick. She is a friend of my sister's.

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When I first remember Gardners had the field where the Council houses by the Chapel are. Their stables etc were by the wall close to Mr Gough's house. (*Mr Gough lived at Charles Cottage, Chapel Green*). I think there was still a shed there when we left. At that time the hedge followed the path round from Mr Gough's to where it finishes now at Mr Fred Smith's (*Mr F. Smith at Waller Cottage, Chapel Green opposite Home Farm*). From there to the top of Red Lion Street was a stone wall.

[18L. 24/06/84] About the *Chapel Green Council Houses* I don't remember hearing who they were intended for. The same type of houses were built in several villages around at that time. Cropredy, Mollington, Bourton, Wardington, and I think Bloxham. There was a lot of opposition to them being built on Chapel Green. At that time it was a field with a wall and hedge around. I can remember there was a protest meeting about it. I wasn't at it, but remember hearing that one man at it (no names) said if they started to build he would pull down at night what was built in the day. When they were actually built his own family were involved in it. I think it was a firm "Henry Boot" that had the contract, but they sublet then to other firms.



Photo 14:

**L. to R. Albert Shirley, mason. Will (Bill) Day, trainee. Will (Wag) French, labourer. George Bates, carpenter. Mr Davis, plasterer. Ben Townsend, labourer. Bert Turrell, carpenter. Mr Lamb, plasterer.
Building the *Chapel Green Houses*.**

[19L. 9/08/84] I don't remember any outcry about *Creampot Houses* being built. I think it was a firm from Banbury, Messengers that built them, but I can't remember who built the *Cup and Saucer* ones.

[23L. 19/06/85] I did some work at the *Red Lion*. I remember finding part of a prayer book under some steps going from one bedroom to another. From what there was of it I thought it was of George 3rd reign. I showed it to Mr Edwards the vicar we had then and he took it.

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7. Some things Colin Shirley wrote about



Photo 15:
Colin with his telescope outside his hovel.

[1L. 6/01/75] I know the stone stile you mention on the way to Cropredy Lawn. (*1. From the Stone Stile Field into Job's Oxhay on the footpath from the Mollington Rd Railway bridge up to Cropredy Lawn Farm and Clattercote Reservoir*). I remember once going for a walk up there and just before I got to the stile an owl flew up from it. At the time it was in bad repair. When I got to the stile I could see a hole in the stonework and looked and saw several young owls.

[20L. 13/09/84] I remember the gooseberry bush in the hedge by the stone stile. I never heard of the hovel (*2. Once two fields on north side of Mollington Road taken from Oxhay Common 1775. 59 Lower Job's Oxey 12.440 acres with stone hovel & yard. 60 Far Job's Oxey 14.688 acres freehold sold first to Job Andrews. Cows milked here between the wars. Now part of Cropredy Lawn Farm*) being used for milking. [1L.6/01/75] And I didn't know before that used to be common land.

[10L 19/01/81] I heard about Mr Pinniger's Cropredy Lawn Farm (*3. Wilkinson Pinniger a bachelor from Hungerford. With uncle Richard A.Chesterman (d.26/03/1908) then took over tenancy in 1908. Pinniger was a gentleman, yes, but he worked with the men. R. Cherry. By 1919 Copes Estate sold Lawn to Banbury Co-op Ind. Soc. Mr R.Hewitson was manager of Lawn & Mollington Manor farms & Harry Dunn bailiff at Lawn*) before, how the men were sent into the fields to dig out the squitch and when they couldn't find any in the fields they would get some out of the hedges to have something to show for their work. I

have heard too, whether it was true or not, that at one time the farmer at *Cropredy Lawn* had the Sunday dinner baked in the *Bakehouse* at Cropredy and two of the men had to fetch it. One Sunday when they were going up the fields with it they went into a hovel on the way up and eat the lot. After that they had an oven built at the *Lawn*.

[13L. 13/12/83] I am like you I don't like seeing trees cut down. It must have been very interesting going round all the hedges. There used to be an Acacia tree on the right hand side of the gate going out of *Cropredy Lawn Farm* rickyard towards Clattercote Pool. It may not be there now as it looked old when I saw it years ago. It was the only acacia I remember seeing. Clattercote Pool was almost empty once in the 1940's. There used to be a bush of guelder rose in the hedge by the little stream running from the watering to the corner by Mr Prestidges field (4. *Mr Prestidges Field: Possibly south end of Binn Furlong below Lambert's Barn at west end of Watering? Map in Pt.3 of Town of Cropredy Keegan A.P.*). I don't remember ever seeing a spindle tree.

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[5L 15/12/76] The crab tree is, or was at the gate beside the main road at the turn into Smalley's. (5. *Cropredy Hill Farm*). It used to be said that it was just a mile from the *Brasenose Inn* to the crab tree.

[1L. 15/12/76] Have you noticed at the top of Oxhay Hill on the left hand side how the hedge is nearer to the road than the hedges of the fields above and below it?-----_____----- . Also down the Claydon Road on the right. I have been told that had been pinched from the side of the road at some time.

I can remember when there was a row of big elms where Prescote Gardens and Mr Corradi's house are.(6. *Westward*). They were several yards back from the present hedge. I always understood that was the original line of the hedge and that had been taken off the roadside too.

[2L. 24/01/75] There used to be allotments on the left hand side of Oxhay Hill, in the third field from the railway (7. *Once 1) Anker's ground, 2) Town Leys (disappeared when ditch culverted), 3) Glebe Fields (turned into allotments) & 4) Poor Allotment from 1775*) and at one time the fourth, marked on the map as Poors Land (8. *Poor's land in lieu of gathering fuel off Common for cottages with rights to graze a cow*). I always understood that was the real allotment land although the third field was let out as allotments. (9. *The vicar let all his Glebe farm except for 3.278acres next to Poor Land for Oxhay Poor Plots getting £14-4s rent in 1852 later rent fell to £12-8s. Still higher than farm land!. Msdd Par Cropredy c29. Glebe sold 1922 to BNC*). The fourth field went out of use as allotments years before the third field.

The second field on the left past Bourton (10. *Railway bridge by the school*) bridge used to be allotments too, but it is in Bourton parish. I think the farm Mr Eriksen (11. *Mr Eriksen at School Farm once Bourton Glebe land*) has up Mill Lane (before

you get to Major Donner's) (*12. Bourton House, Mill Lane. Built by Hadland's who rebuilt Lower Cropredy Mill*) was the Glebe farm at one time.

[3L. 28/01/76] My father used to speak of what we called Claydon Road as Moorstone Road, but I never heard it called that of later years. I wonder if there was a standing stone called Moorstone at one time. I don't remember ever hearing of Moorstone ground. (*13. Moorstone or The Moor: the allotment freehold and College leasehold behind Old Yard Farm & stack yard*) There is no name on the field map you sent me.

I always understood that Warkworth Hill was from Appletree turn to the top. (*14. The top of the hill going towards Claydon*). I wonder why Warkworth? There is a village of Warkworth on the road from Banbury to Overthorpe. I never knew whether it was Warkworth or Walkworth. I have never heard of Kite's Nest before. (*15. Kite's Nest an old Cropredy site but became attached to a small allotment opposite former Poplar Farm entrance in the corner of Town Hill field*). I wonder if that goes back to the days when kites were more common birds than nowadays.

[19L. 9/08/84] When I first remember there was a gate at the village end of the drive to Prescote. I think the plank walk went along the side of the stone parapet of the bridge. I have often been over the stile from the towpath you mentioned. The plank across the bridge was raised up a bit higher than the road.

[18L. 24/6/84] I used to go fishing up there and I remember it [plank walk] was getting bad in those days. There used to be raised planks up the left hand side to walk on when it was flooded up there. There used to be another wooden bridge over the Cherwell just past where the stream (*16. High Furlong Brook*) comes down from Appletree and joins the main stream. It was washed away in a flood. (*17. Bridge over mill stream which led to the original mill race island in Prescote. The river was filled in leaving the mill race only for the Cherwell river*).

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8. The Library, The Ex-servicemen's Hall and The Village Club

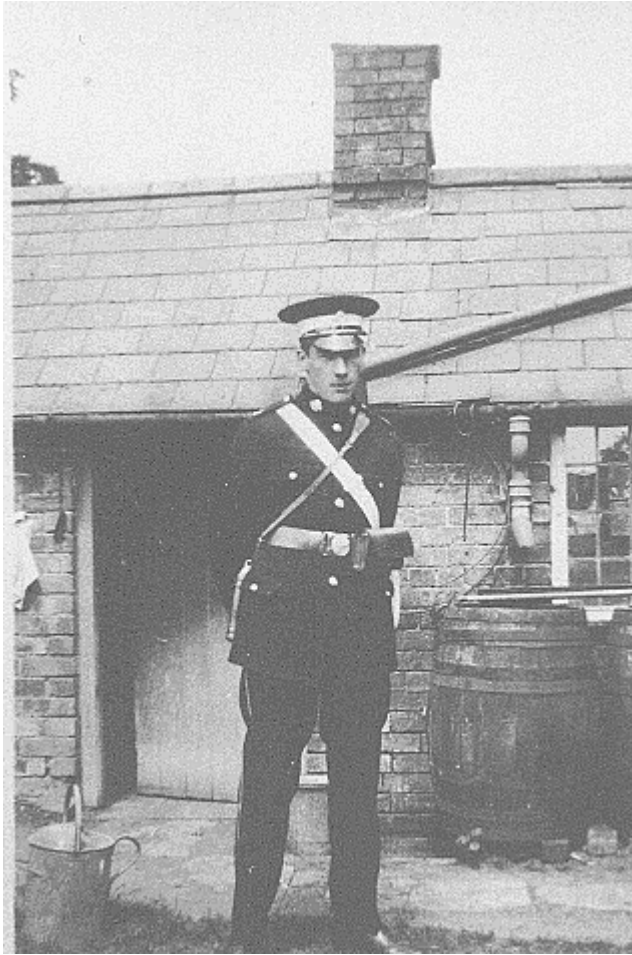


Photo 16:

Colin in St. John's Ambulance Service.

[1L. 6/01/75] It must be very interesting seeing all the old registers and records, it almost makes me wish I was back to see them. I am very interested in anything like that.

[6L.16/12/77] We had the library in the Hall every Monday night, from 6.30 to 7.30. I looked after it from 1929 until I gave it up in 1944 when I had to go to London on war work. Mrs Jones (Mrs Roland Plumbs mother) was my assistant. She would do it any time I could not. She did it while I was in London. *[16L. 23/03/84]* I can't remember what happened after I came back

from London, I don't think I did it again. At one time after that there was a school mistress, a Mrs Aspin and her husband did it for a time in the school. I don't remember when the mobile library started.

[6L. 16/12/77] The books came from the county Library at Oxford. We had about 300 at a time and they were changed every three months. They came in boxes and every Monday night I had to put them out on a table and pack them away afterwards. When the time came for them to be changed I often had to go chasing round the village for some of them. There was only one lost in that time and that wasn't my fault. There were some lectures on Agriculture and one of the lecturers brought some books bearing on the lectures and whoever gave the books out never kept a record with the result that no-one knew who had the books, they all turned up but one. A van from Oxford used to bring the new boxes and take the others back.

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[16L. 23/03/84] I remember Miss Mary Smith's library at the chapel. We used to get the books after the afternoon Sunday school. I remember one popular book was *The Rover Caravan* by Gordon Stables. Miss Mary Smith (*Mary Smith School Mistress & Nonconformist Vol. 1 Autobiography. Pub. The Wordsworth Press, 75 Scotch Street, Carlisle. MDCCCXC11. Books kept in Chapel*) was a relation of Mrs Godson. Mrs Marie Godson lent me a book of her life once. Part of her life was spent near Carlisle. I think the books were kept upstairs in the room over the vestry. One of the teachers gave them out.

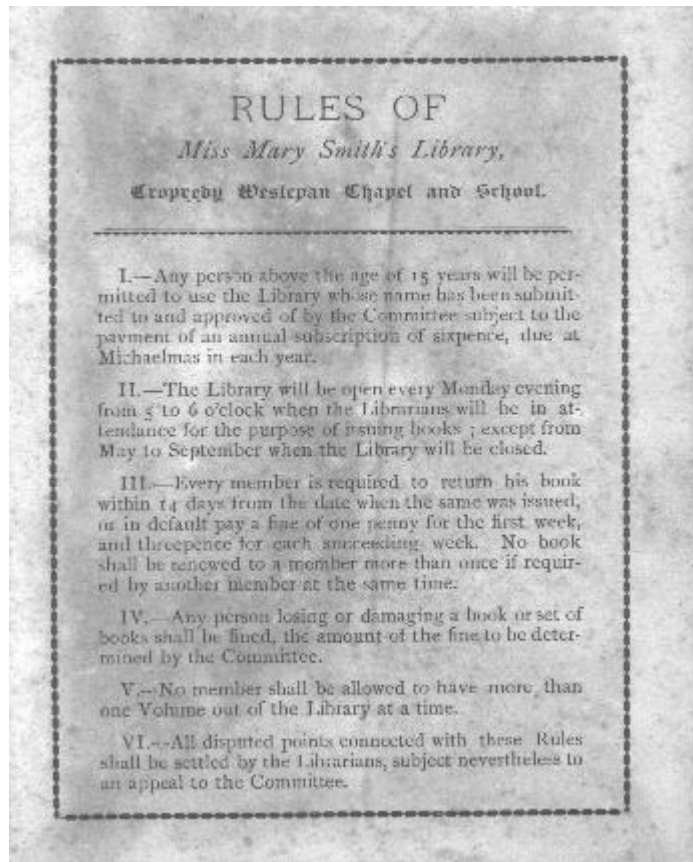


Fig. 6: Rules of Mary Smith Library

[6L. 16/12/77] Now I will try and answer your questions. The Exservice Men's Hall first. After the 1914-18 War the demobbed Exservicemen were paid a gratuity. If I remember right I think it came from what was called Lord Byng's Fund.

The Croppedby men put theirs together and bought an army hut and erected it on the site of the present Hall. It was only sold and pulled down when the present hall was put up.

It was quite a big hall and they later added a small room at the far end and cloakrooms at the road end. The door into the small room at the far end, was in the middle of the end wall of the big hall. They had a permanent platform across the end of the hall with a gangway left in the middle. When the platform was in use they had a loose piece to lay in to complete the platform. As the door at the back of the platform opened into the small room, when this piece was in there was a gap of about 4 or 5 inches, between it and the door.

One year about Christmas time a Mr Gossage (*Mr Harry Gossage Co-op manager lived with his family above the shop at 9 Red Lion St. Later as widower in Chapel Row. Fought in World War 1. Founder member of Ex Servicemen's Club at least from 1922*) that used to live in Cropredy arranged a carol concert. He got together a choir and they had it in the Hall. The choir were sitting on the platform on chairs. One of the items was a duet, the lady taking part went to move along to stand by the piano so one of the gentlemen in the back row politely pushed his chair back to let her pass, the result was the back legs of the chair went into the gap, the door couldn't have been properly fastened and gentleman, chair and all disappeared backwards into the other room. Fortunately he wasn't hurt, but it caused some amusement.

The Village Club rented the Hall from the Exservice men every night it was not wanted for anything else.

The lectures were arranged through the Village Club. They were on all sorts of subjects and were very popular and interesting. The Lecturers came from Oxford. One who often came and was very popular was a Mr Griffiths.

I was treasurer of the Village Club from about 1930 till some years after the war. I can't remember just which year I gave it up. Mr Roland Cherry was secretary for years and his father was Chairman. The Club was very popular at one time. We had a $\frac{3}{4}$ size billiard table, table tennis, darts, cards etc, etc.

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9. Monkey Tree House, Creampot Lane

[1L. 6/01/75 & 10L. 19/01/81] The first people I can remember living in your house was a brother and sister named Brand. I don't remember ever seeing them. At that time there was an orchard (now *Ashlawn* and *Wedgewood*) and there was a high thick hedge round the side of the road right down to where Woodfield's garden joins what was Mr Storrie's (*Ashlawn and Wedgewood built on Monkeytree House orchard*) and as children we used to wonder what was it like the other side, as it was too high and thick to see through or over. Before that there was a Mr Borton living there (*Woodfields Creampot Crescent along Creampot Lane to Wedgewood*). I have heard him spoken of as farrier Borton. At that time a farrier was a vet and blacksmith combined.

I remember once being in the kitchen and seeing a big cupboard all fitted with small drawers. Someone said he used to keep his medicines in them, I don't expect it is there now (*The vets cabinet of drawers was still on the site in 1985 but moved to the loft over the forge in front*).

[5L. 15/12/76] I remember William Eagles. I was in school with some of his family. They lived in *Monkeytree House* after the Brands. I can just remember them moving from where Mr Medcalf is (*Medcalfs Jnr. lived at Andrews Farm House*). They moved in the night, why I don't know.

Miss West (*Miss West always had lodgers first at Monkeytree then in the middle cottage of 3 on the north side of Church Lane*) came to Cropredy during the first World War. She was one of a lot of ladies who went round the district buying hay for the army. I expect it was like the Women's Land Army of the last War. One of them lodged with us. She was the Hon. Mrs Scott but more than that I don't know. I can remember she was very nice and I still have a cigarette card album she gave me.



Photo 17:

Old Yard to Monkeytree House Pigsties.

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[4L. 2/03/76] Monkeytree House pigsties were about where Mr Bartlett's house (*Ashlawn*) is now. They were brick with corrugated iron rooves. They faced to the yard with the back to the orchard. I am enclosing a photo that was taken from our door. You can see the back of the buildings. The big tree in the middle of the photo was a pear tree. There was a well with an iron pump in the middle of the yard and there was another building in front of the north gable of the main barn, it had brick piers at each corner, and was boarded in between and had a timber loft over it. There was a doorway out of the loft into the north gable. You can see where it was built up.

From your garage by the road (*The garage was originally a three bay stone barn built on the verge. Later it became a stable and forge with the south bay removed and a brick south gable. Still a garage in 1985, now part of the house*) there was a few feet of stone wall, then a pair of paled gates and then a boarded fence with laurel bushes inside up to about in line with the

pigsties. The pigsties didn't come up to the fence by several feet. The fence at the far end of the pigsties dividing the orchard, were iron railings with lilac bushes etc.

The Green's (*Greens snr & junr kept 2 pigs in the sties. Belonged to Pig Club in 1942*) kept pigs when they were there. There used to be a Pig Club years ago but I don't know who any of the officials were (*The Pig Club records begin in 1907 & amongst early members were John Shirley to 1935, Thos Hawkes to 1926 & Wm Hawkes to 1922, Albert Shirley to 1916. 17 members in 1930. 64 or more members during the war when several other villages joined because of pig food rationing. Supplied by Godsons in Church Lane. Last entry 1955 [Cropredy Parish Council archives]*). A Mr Stevens who lived in that row of cottages by Cherry's yard (*Mr Stevens lived in a stone row of cottages set back at the north end of Station Road*) was the pig killer as long back as I can remember, after he gave up Mr Marlow Cherry did it for a bit. Of course at one time nearly everyone kept a pig now only farmers do.

[26L. 2/12/85] I remember Mr Hill (*Mr Hill built the wall before 1971*) building the wall outside your house, the stone came from the old Vicarage. I was surprised he was allowed to build it, especially on the corner as it partly blocked the view along the road.

[2L. 24/01/75] [*A signed board found in a shut off cupboard, between the front door and living room window. Inside the Hills found a 1900 penny & "Relief of Mafking" on a piece of paper. Hills took off the door with the inscription on it and plastered over the old candle opening. "This cupboard was closed on July 9.1900/ by John Shirley, Carpenter/ in the presence of/ Thomas Cross, Painter./ Frederick E. Gardner, Painter./ Evan Hill, Painter./ Tenant/ J.W.Borton Esq./ Amen/ Examined/ and found correct."*]. The John Shirley standing by the cart in the photograph was my uncle and also the John Shirley whose name was on the bit of wood found in the cupboard. I don't remember the Frederick Gardner, but I knew his sons Charlie and Eddie, they had a plumbing and painting business where Jennings are in Red Lion Street. Eddie lived there and Charles where the Post Office is now. The Thomas Cross worked for them and lived at Gt. Bourton. I just remember seeing him. I have no idea who Evan Hill was.

[4L 2/3/76] A John Smith had the post office in Chapel Row [No. 3]. You may be interested to know that I think the Post Office was next to Monkeytree House at one time. I never heard anyone say so, but years ago I noticed the paint on the lintel over the far window was rough and raised in places and I could make out the words "Post Office" by following the raised places. It has since been cleaned off and repainted. [William Smith or his son George, who used this room as an office, may have run a Post Office from this house, then No. 10].

[15L.16/02/84] I remember the ash tree down the Lane that Mrs Mold spoke of. There was a small brick hovel backing onto the road in the corner nearest where Mr Storrie lived. It had a thatched roof and was open towards the field. I think it had a loft over. There was a small rick yard too. Mr Lambert (*Home Farm. Mr James Lambert purchased Monkeytree House and*

Calves Close behind in Oct 1900 from Ed. Borton's Exors. Cattle hovel and sometimes a hay rick in Calves Close) had a rick there sometimes.

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I nearly forgot to tell you when your house was first put up for sale there were some people looking round one day when I came by, there was a man standing outside and I recognised him as Seton Gordon a very prominent Scottish author on natural history, and all things Scottish. I had seen him a few times at Highland Games when we were here on holiday. Another man that looked at it too was a Mr Bartlett from Grimsbury who used to come round with paraffin. My wife and I were amused one day he came, he asked us if we knew if it was haunted. I don't know what gave him that idea. Have you seen any ghosts? [No! Hills sold it to Keegans in Dec. 1971].

[17L. 14/5/84] I always understood that the man who was drowned skating on Clattercote Pool was named [James Watts] Borton. I wondered if he was anything to do with the Bortons that lived in your house. I think his tombstone is near the top of the churchyard [No. 42 is in the north west corner part of a row of Borton stones].

I have heard it said that it had been thawing for some time and when he went through the *Lawn Farm* rickyard on his way to the Pool some of the men working there warned him that it was not safe, but he said *If he went in he could get out*. As he didn't come back after sometime someone went to the Pool and could see his cap floating on the water.

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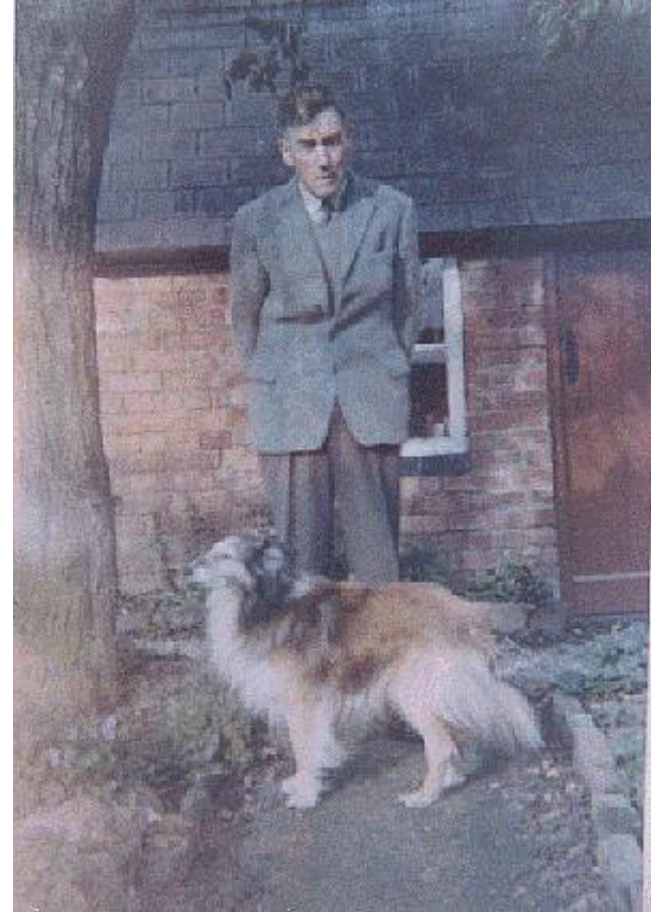
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10. Mr William Colin Shirley's Letters

The following extracts from his letters cover his opening paragraphs and something about their life at 8 Lovat Terrace, Fort Augustus. I make no apology for repeating his wish that he had asked more questions before it was too late. His interest in Croprey was made more so by living so far away. He was not alone in that.



18. Mrs Helen Shirley.



19. Mr Colin Shirley in 1 Old Yard garden.

Letter 1

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.
6/1/75.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) We were very pleased to get your interesting letter with your good wishes for the new year, we send our best wishes to you and your family.

I hope you are having better weather than we are, it seems to be nothing but rain, but it is not cold. We had about 3" of snow a fortnight before Christmas but it only lasted two days. We often see snow on the tops of the hills. We are in a valley. "The Great Glen" with hills on each side. The Caledonian Canal runs through the village, a lot of fishing boats go through and in the summer a lot of yachts. It is very busy here in the summer but quiet in the winter.

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p2) I have a leaflet of the Coronation Fete of June 27 1902. I will enclose it in case you are interested. When I first remember a Mr Griffin lived in the house on the corner opposite the Chapel. I think he might be the one whose name is on the leaflet, but I don't know which the field was.

p4) We are always interested to hear news of Croprey. We hear from Mrs Storrie (*1. Wedgewood*) occasionally and Mrs Underdown (*2. Mrs Underdown Snr. at Woodview in 1979. Mr & Mrs L. Underdown at Creampot Cottage*). We were sorry to hear about Mrs Bartlett (*3. Ashlawn*) and hope she is getting on alright now. We hope your back will improve too. Helen had a fall at the end of September. We had been to a friends to tea and coming out of the door she tripped and fell down two steps. She broke a bone in her right wrist and cracked a bone in her left leg, she was in bed for five or six weeks, but is well now though her wrist is still weak. The ulcer on her leg is almost healed. Now I will stop. I hope you can read my writing. I shall be pleased if you can tell me anything about my ancestors especially if it is anything to their credit.

Yours truly
Colin Shirley.

[Subjects covered] Grandparents. Wilscothe School. Father and John Shirley. Bullets from Croprey Battle. 1902 coronation fete. Brands and Bortons in Monkeytree House. Stone stile and owls. Encroachments on verges.

Letter 2

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.
24/1/75.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you very much for your two letters and all the enclosed records. It was very good of you to go to all the trouble of copying them out. They are very interesting. I had heard some of the field names before but a lot of them are quite new to me.

p4) Now I will stop. I hope this will be of interest to you. We will be pleased to hear from you and I will be pleased to tell you anything else you would like to know if I can. Thanking you again for the trouble you have taken. With our best regards.

Yours truly
Colin Shirley

I wish I was a better writer.

P.S. The Mr Golby was registrar.

[Subjects covered] Wm Shirley, shoemaker. Stephen Shirley, Plumbs and Dews. Gardners: Plumbers. Old yard. Oxhay and Bourton Allotments. Elkington Old Yard.

Letter 3

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.
28/1/76.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) We were pleased to get your letter, thank you for your good wishes. We hope you will all have a happy and healthy New Year too. We are interested to hear that you are still delving into Cropredy's past. It almost makes me wish I was back to hear more of it. I wish now that I had asked more questions when I was young (although I was always told I was always asking questions), but when you are young you are not so interested in the past as you are when you get older. At least I was not.

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Tell Luke that we are right in the middle of Prince Charlie country here. There is a Benedictine Monastery here on the site of the old fort that was captured by the Highlanders during the 45 rebellion, parts of the fort are built into the monastery. A few miles from here, up Glen Moriston, there is a cairn at the roadside to commemorate a man McKenzie who was killed there after Colloden when they were searching for the Prince. He resembled Prince Charlie and was captured there, and led them to believe he was the Prince and was killed there. Now I had better get back to Cropredy. I have often wondered how Creampot Lane got its name; it sounds as though it was anything but a Creampot at one time.

p3) We don't get Carol singers round here, there was a midnight service on Christmas eve, the church was full. The Church of Scotland is only 50 yds from our house. There is only one bell. They have chimes at the Roman Catholic Abbey, but we seldom hear them here except when the wind is right.

We had a letter from Mrs Storrie this week but we never hear from Jennie although we saw plenty of her when we were there. If you have occasion to write again we would be interested to hear if there is anyone in the houses that were built in Whitaker's orchard (*4. Then part of Poplar Farm, now built on*). My niece who lives near Carlisle was on holiday with friends at Farthinghoe last summer, she was in Cropredy one day and Mr Coles let her see the changes he had made in our old home.

p4) Cropredy is getting up to date with road signs. We get the Banbury Guardian from a friend, in the one we got today we saw the report of an accident to someone whose address was 16 Claydon Lane, Cropredy, also a burglary at *Blackwood*, Cropredy. I can guess where Claydon Lane is, but wonder where *Blackwood* is [*Near the school*]. I didn't hear from Mr Plumb. I will stop now and fill your gravestone forms. We are always pleased to get your very interesting letters. My writing doesn't improve either.

C. Shirley.

P.S. I have just got out an old family Bible that has some of the particulars you wanted in it. Written on the fly leaf is "Ann Golby/ Cropredy" and "John Golby died April 10 1861" they may have been my uncles grandparents.

[Subjects] Golbys. Moorstone Road. Warkworth Hill. Handbells and box.

Letter 4

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.
2/3/76.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

Thank you for your letter and your fresh information. You are going to a lot of trouble over my ancestors.

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I think I have answered all your queries that I can so I will stop. My wife sends her regards. We hope you are all well, there is a lot of flu here but we have all escaped so far.

Yours truly
Colin Shirley

I hope you can read my poor writing.

[Subjects] Shirleys. Godsons. Gardners and Jennings Gardner's field, stable, wall and hedge round Chapel Green. Townsends. John Smith and P.O. P.O next to Monkeytree, pigsties, well, garage, fence and Green's pigs. Mr Stevens. Hawkes , Plumbs and Shirley.

Letter 5

8 Lovat Terrace
Fort Augustus.
15/12/76.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) We were pleased to get your interesting letter and to get the news about Cropredy. We hope you are all keeping well, as we are. We have had a cold spell the last week or so, one or two very sharp frosts and a covering of snow has gone now except on the hilltops. We had a lovely summer but no shortage of water. Our water comes from a loch up in the hills, Loch Tarf. Tarf is the Gaelic for Bull, according to legend most of the lochs contained water bulls or water horses in the past. The canal here is closed at present for repairs. I suppose the canal at Cropredy is open again. I never saw it empty except for repairs. Clattercote Pool was almost empty once in the 1940's.

It must have been very interesting for you indexing the stones in the churchyard. I always think what a shame it is when these old things are done away with, but some people want everything modern and have no time for anything old.

What a comparison between the old churches and buildings and the modern concrete monstrosities. Mentioning tombstones. We went to see my sister in October. She p2) lives at Gt. Salkeld about 16 miles from Carlisle, I saw an unusual tombstone in the churchyard there, it was just like a big table in stone, it stood about 2'6" to 3' high on 4 turned stone legs, I had never seen one like it before. It is all red sandstone near there. There are also some standing stones near there called "Long Meg and her daughters."

I know the Gertrude Pettifer you met, she is a Mrs Mold. A sister of hers was Mr Sam Hollis' mother (*5. For Pettifer family see Book 3 The Pettifers of Creampot Lane*).

The John Allitt you mention was a butcher. I heard my father say he worked for him as a boy. I think his shop was in the buildings between Mr Rolph's and Mr Clifford Lambert's yard doors. I have heard it said that he had the church rooms built and given to the village.

When I first remember Daniel Wells, the hurdle maker, he lived in the nearer of the two [tide] cottages at the bottom of Creampot lane, and my uncle John Shirley lived in the other one. I don't remember anyone called Gilbert in Cropredy [basket maker on the Green]. I have heard my father and uncle talk of Major Slack but I am not sure where he lived [*Andrew's Farm House, then on the Green*].

p3) We had a letter from Mrs Townsend (*6. Mrs Townsend of 15 Red Lion Street*) about a week ago. We hear that Mr & Mrs Albert Bradley (*7. Wharf House by the Oxford canal*) are leaving Cropredy, also Mr Turnock. (*8. The Turnocks kept the grocer's shop on the south side of the Green*). Has Mr Bartlett sold his house yet? (*9. Bartlett's of Ashlawn, sold to Cullimore's from Oathill Farm. Mrs Cullimore sold to Tapleys*). There seems to be a lot of changes going on. We never hear from Jenny. I expect she is busy with her riding school. We hear occasionally from Mrs Underdown, Mrs Storrie and Mrs Godson (*10. Mrs Godson lived in The Bungalow, Plantation Road*).

It is very quiet here in the winter but very busy in the summer, full of visitors of all nationalities and dozens of yachts and launches going through the canal. Now I had better stop and go to post. Wishing you all a Very Happy Christmas and New Year from us both.

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] Smalley's Crab tree. John Allitt. Wm Eagles.

Letter 6

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.
16 / 12 / 77.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) We were very pleased to get your letter and to hear news of Cropredy. We are always interested in news of the village. We hear occasionally from Mrs Underdown senr, so she gives us some. Mr & Mrs Underdown junr called on us in the summer. They were on a camping holiday in Scotland so they told us a lot of the village news, of course after they were gone we kept thinking of more things we wanted to ask.

You will miss Mr & Mrs Storrie. My sister called and saw them in the summer, they were thinking of moving then, but I don't think anything was settled then. Now I will answer your questions:

p4) When you are young you are not interested in these sort of things and when you get older and are, there is no-one to ask that knows. I wish there was a group like you have started when we were there.

Jenny seems to have forgotten us though we were quite useful to her when we were at Cropredy, we have heard from her once since we came here, she promised then to send us a snap of the girls, but they will have altered since she promised it. I don't suppose we will ever get it. We were pleased to hear your family are getting on so well. Luke would be excited finding the axe head, perhaps it was a relic of the battle.

p5) We are having quite mild weather just now. We had a lot of rain in the autumn and two or three light falls of snow in November, we can still see snow on the hills in the distance.

We are both keeping very well and getting about. I still do some jobs, some friends have moved into a house close to and I have been down there several days putting in cupboards etc. Then in Sept some more friends moved from here to Inverness, they were in a hurry to get their house in Inverness ready (2 nights) as he was going abroad o work so I was down there helping them getting home here at 1.30 in the morning. Now I had better stop. Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Yours sincerely
C. Shirley.

I hope you can read my writing.

[Subjects] Ex service Mens' Hall. Library and lectures. Village Club. Old Yard. Brass bell.

Letter 7

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.
6 / 2 / 79.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) We were very pleased to get your interesting letter at Christmas. I am sorry I have been so long in answering it. You seem to have had snow at Christmas, but we didn't. We had 2" to 3" in November but it was all gone in two or three days. We didn't have any more until New Years Day and we haven't been without it since, with hard frosts. Twice we had about 9". It thaws a bit and then comes more. I hope we will soon finish with it.

We were sorry to hear about Jenny, we had heard they had parted. What was the matter with her leg? We always liked Jenny she came along to us a lot. We heard from her once after we left Cropredy but that was all.

We were glad to hear you are keeping better. We had a rather disturbed year last year. I went into hospital in Inverness late in March for a hernia operation, expecting to be 10 days, instead I was in 26. The wound was a bit inflamed and they wouldn't let me out. I felt as well as anything and was up and about all the time. It was really quite interesting in there. Then in June Helen tripped and fell in the house and broke her leg above the knee, she was in hospital about six weeks. She was just beginning to get about fairly well when she had lumbago and when that got a bit better she had her foot bad, it still is, so she is still using the walking aid. One of the days she was in hospital I was waiting in Inverness for the bus up to the hospital when another man came to wait for the bus. I thought he was a man who used to live at Gt. Bourton, but thought it can't be. However I spoke to him and it was. He and his wife were on holiday in Elgen and she had a stroke and was in the same hospital as Helen, but another ward. She wasn't too bad and was able to travel back to Banbury where they live now.

p2) I never heard of Raven's well or Ramsbault (*11. Ramsbault an old furlong just east of Cropredy Lawn Farm*). I wish there had been a History Group when we were at Cropredy, but there didn't seem to be anyone interested in anything like that. I have always been told that I am always asking questions but I wish now that I had asked more while there were people who could answer them. When you are young these things don't interest you the same as they do when you are older and then there is no one to tell you.

The Mr Laver you mentioned who died suddenly was that the one who married Mr Cole's sister? (*12. Mr F.C.M.Laver, Church Lane (north side). He married Mr Bernard Cole's sister*). I knew him and his brother. They used to live at Williamscothe House when Gen. Courage lived there. We hear from Mrs Storrie occasionally. Now I had better stop. Hoping you all keep well throughout 1979.

C.Shirley.

[Subjects] Apple trees in Old Yard garden, old barn, well, pump and water.

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Letter 8

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

16 / 8 / 80.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you very much for sending me the account of the History Group meeting (*13. Thomas Bradley and S.Roland Cherry talk 15 Jany 1980*). We were both very interested in reading it, in fact I have read it three or four times. What a job you must have had copying it out. I am always interested to hear anything of old times in Cropreddy.

p3) I remember the manoeuvres that were mentioned that was in 1912 or 1913, they were all round the district. I think that King George 5th reviewed some of the troops at Eydon. I remember too seeing an airship going over at that time. It was a brown one. I think it was called the Delta, but I never remember ever hearing of any German Zeppelins being seen in the area. I think it was at night they came over, we used to see searchlights somewhere the other side of Banbury.

We have had a very good winter, three lots of snow, the most only an inch, very little rain and some lovely sunny days, the last two or three days have been rather dull and colder.

Remember me to Eric Prescott if you see him he often used to come to the workshop p4) when I was working. They used to come to Scotland on camping holidays. I remember him telling me they had been camping at Invergarry, that's only seven miles from here. Do you ever hear anything of Bishop Loveday's nephew? The Mr Loveday that was at Williamscoote House for a time before it was sold. We had a postcard from him from north of the Arctic Circle since we came here, it was forwarded from Cropreddy, but we have heard nothing from him since. Do you see or hear anything of Jenny now? You say your writing is not copper plate, what about mine. I wish it was better, and I have no excuse of arthritis either. Now I had better stop. Hoping you are all keeping well, we are both well.

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] Apprenticeship and conditions. Bathurst Charity. Mr Bradley. Mr Lambert's wages and wagons. Arnold's book. Wagon hovel.

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Letter 9

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus

27 / 12 / 80.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) We were very pleased to get your letter and card, and to get some Cropredy news. I would like a copy of Roland's Memoirs, if you will let me know how much the paper back is I will send it. Did you know his younger brother who lived in Banbury died early in November? I used to hear from him regularly. I shall miss his letters very much.

p6) You mention the *Navigation Inn* in your letter I had never heard of it before. Where was it? (*14. The coal wharf on the north side of the Williamscoote Road*). I am afraid I can't tell you anything about the Church gates. They were the same all the time I remember. I have often wondered what the two arched recesses were for in the inside of the wall of the south aisle. We used to sit by them and I often wondered why they were there. There was also a narrow arched opening built up in the wall above the back of the pulpit. I wondered if that was to get to the Rood loft when there was one there. [Yes]. Now I am asking you questions.

There seems to have been a lot of illness and mishaps in Cropredy. I am glad to say p7) we are both keeping very well. We heard of Mr Cole's death (*15. In 1979 Mr & Mrs A. Bernard & Gladys Cole sold the Old Yard (they had renamed The Hollies) and built a bungalow, Eastways Drive, at the west end of the garden. Mr Cole died 1980*). He didn't enjoy the bungalow very long. Is the bungalow at the top of the garden? [Yes] and is our old home still a guest House? [No]. Do you ever hear anything of Jennie now? We had a white Christmas but only enough snow to cover the ground and it has gone now. We have had a lot of rain this winter. Now I will stop. Hoping you are all well and Wishing you a Good New Year. We are always pleased to hear from you.

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] Woodyard, Sumner and Neal and staff. Sawpit tale and Claydon road tree (see also L.13) Blacksmiths and George King and teeth.

Letter 10

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

19 / 1 / 81.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you very much for your interesting letter and transcript. We were both very interested in reading them. Incidentally we never heard from the Storries this Christmas, that is the first time we haven't heard since we left Cropreddy.

I can't just remember what the corner opposite Annismore gate was like before it was altered. I think it was only made less sharp (*16. Going north up Claydon Rd Annismore gate is on the right past the drive to Lambert's Barn. Start of old road to Boddington*).

p3) I can hardly think that the recesses in the south wall of the church were windows, if so the ground inside and out must have been much lower at one time, though I have noticed that the churchyard of a few churches round the district seem to be higher than the ground round them.

We were sorry to hear of Jennie's troubles, but we weren't surprised. We were very fond of Jenny. Susie was often along with us she was a nice little thing. Remember us to Jenny when you see her.

p4) I can remember the election posters Roland spoke of, there was one on the wall of the house Bob Jones lives in, (*17. 4 Copes Cottages, Station Road*) the remains of it was there for years. There was a loaf of bread on a shelf and a hand reaching out to take it. Free Trade or Protection was the issue at that election. That was the Conservative committee rooms then.

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We didn't have any floods round here, the river Oich that runs through the village was very high, they were having to let water go from some of the Hydro Electric dams, it goes down the river into Loch Ness. We have had some snow showers on and off for a few days but it soon melts.

p5) I think the Scottish student that was at Prescote in Mr Bradley's time was named Robinson. (*18. Prescote Manor took farming students*).

Now I had better stop before I think of any more tales. Thank you for the stamps but you should not have sent them.

C. Shirley.

[Subjects] Blacksmiths at Monkeytree and orchard hedge. Miss West and army hay. Louis Lambert's tale. Pinniger's Sunday joint.

Letter 11

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

31 / 5 / 81.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you very much for sending me the book. I was very pleased to get it and very interested reading it. I would like to keep it. I will enclose P.O's (*19. An Oxfordshire Gentleman by Roland Cherry (out of print). A copy was deposited in Oxford Reference Library, Local History Floor*).

p3) I wish there was a group like you have now when we were in Cropredy, there was nothing like that then. We were sorry to hear about Mrs Adkins we hope she will go on alright (*20. 3 Chapel Row*). Are the Quants still next to the Chapel? (*21. The Homestead, 1 Chapel Row. Mr & Mrs H.B. Quant there until early 1983?*). I don't think I told you that Sue and Rob Cherry called to see us last summer. We were pleased to see them and get the Cropredy news. Do you ever hear anything of Jenny now? Is Mrs Godson still in Cropredy? (*22. Yes Marie Godson nee Askew (1892-1988)*). We usually heard from her at Christmas but we didn't hear last year. We were pleased today we had a little rain. We have had it very dry for weeks and weeks the heaviest rain has only been very light showers, the ground is very dry, when you had had the heavy snow last month we had none at all, we had very little snow all winter.

We had some excitement here last Wednesday the school p4) is just over the fence at the back of our houses and there is a big playing field. There was a naval helicopter landing commandos, they were sliding down from it down a cable. There are quite a few visitors about already and a lot of cabin cruisers and yachts going through. I see you can hire a boat now on Loch Ness, fitted with all the latest sonar and underwater television equipment to look for the monster, its only £400 for a week. I don't think I'll hire it.

Now I will stop. Hoping you are all keeping well, we are both very well

Yours truly

Colin Shirley

I hope you can read my writing.

[Subjects] Roland's book. Furniture and London. Wine cellar tale. Bier's wheels.

49

Letter 12

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

28 / 1 / 82.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) I am sorry to have been so long in answering your card at Christmas. We have had a very busy time. My wife has been laid up with phlebitis she is still not clear of it, but it is improving, so I am busy with housework and cooking etc. On top of that we had the extreme weather. We did not have much snow here but extreme frosts. We had three bursts in the bathroom, one we could see and mended and then another two in a pipe behind the bath, so that meant having the bath out and taking the bath panel and a cupboard out to get at it. Fortunately a friend who was a plumber lives next door but one and he repaired it for us, he did well, he is 85. I have been waiting for it to dry p2) out before I put the panel etc back. I hope to start on it next week.

I am afraid I can't help you with the man in Australia. I seem to remember the name George Golby but I don't know who he was (*23. George Golby*). When I first remember there was a widow Mrs French (I seem to remember hearing her spoken of as

Mrs Sam French) living in the row of cottages by the Plantations. p3) There was also another Mrs Fench a widow living in Chapel Row in the cottage Mr Handley made into a Garage [No.6]

p4) There was a Will (wagoneer) French lived in one of the row where Miss Leman lives, (*24. Miss Dorothy Leman, 3 Station Cottages*). I don't think he was married. I never heard of him having any relations.

How is Miss Leman? I called to see her before we left but couldn't make her hear. Do you hear anything of Jenny? Remember us to her if you see her. We were very sorry to hear about Mrs Adkins. Now I will stop I am sorry I can't help you more. Hoping you are all well

C. Shirley.

[Subject] John French and summons for swearing.

A Christmas card arrived in 1982 signed only by C. Shirley It had been too difficult to ask Mr Shirley how his wife had died. Their nephew John Taylor wrote in May 2002 that Helen passed away on the 17th of June 1982. From her death certificate the causes of death were - "Coronary thrombosis, arterio sclerosis and congestive cardiac failure." Colin and Helen have a Grave stone in the new Cemetery at Fort Augustus. They attended the Church of Scotland in Fort Augustus.

Letter 13

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

13 / 12 / 83.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) I was very pleased to get your letter and sketch of my old home [[Fig 1, page 3](#)]. I see the pear tree is still there. I wonder if the holly bush is still opposite the door, it always had a lot of blossom but never any berries. The big tree up the garden used to be full of berries and looked lovely.

p4) I would like to read Mrs Basset's and Mrs Mold's talks (*25. Mrs Eddie Bassett nee Tasker and Mrs Gertrude Mold nee Pettifer's talk 20th April 1983*). I saw in the Banbury Guardian that they had been giving talks. I get the Guardian every week there are often houses for sale in Cropredy, some I recognise and some I can't place at all. p5) There was one in the Guardian I thought looked like the one next to you where the Bartletts lived (*9. Bartlett's of Ashlawn, sold to Cullimore's from Oathill Farm. Mrs Cullimore sold to Tapleys*). It is a job to tell when it just shows the house and no surroundings.

We had a very dry summer, but not hot all the time, we had very cool winds at times, October was very wet but it has been quite good since, quite mild at times. There was snow on the tops of the hills yesterday but it has gone today. I am glad to say I am keeping very well. I do every thing myself. I still do some woodwork. I have made a copy of a sixteenth century joint stool for a friend for Christmas. I was at my sisters near Carlisle in June, my nephew suggested going to Cropredy for the day but I thought it too far for one day 260 miles each way. You will be sorry to hear my sister lost her husband quite suddenly last January, he had suffered with his heart for some p6) years. Do you hear anything of Jenny Whittaker? Remember me to her if you do, I often think of her. Now I will stop. Hoping you are all well and that you can read my poor writing.

Best wishes for Christmas

C. Shirley.

[Subjects] Old Yard Holly trees. Straightening Claydon road.hovels in Prescote. Acacia tree.

Letter 14

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

4 / 1 / 84.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you very much for the copy of Mrs Bassett's talk, but when I said I would like it I didn't realise you would have to write it all out by hand. I must apologise for giving you so much trouble. It was very interesting. [Bk 1] Edie [Tasker] was often up at our house when my Mother was alive. She was quite a character. One thing she didn't tell was the time she and her sister Nellie took Mr Bott's father up Williamscombe road in an invalid chair. I don't know what was wrong with him but he used to be taken about in a chair. They let the chair run away with him, I don't know if he was tipped out or not but he had a bad turn that night. I can remember Edie telling Mother and I about it and saying p2) "*Our Nellie says You know if he dies*

we shall be murderers." He didn't die, at least not then. I remember how amused we were (26. *Book 1 Mrs Bassett nee Tasker*).

I don't think the kitchen at Beech House was in the main part of the house. I think it was in that part that joins the main house at the back. I will try and draw a plan of where I think it was [In rear extension]. I remember being sent there to fetch a tea urn for the Peace Celebrations in 1919. p3) It was a copper urn and I still remember the shock I got when I went to pick it up. I could hardly lift it, it was so heavy, then someone took the top off and took a long round iron weight out of a tube in the centre of the urn, that made it lighter. I have often wondered since what it was for. I found out quite recently. It was in one of Arthur Negus's programmes on Antiques, it seems they heated the weight in the fire and then put it in the tube in the urn to keep the contents hot. An early form of storage heater. Who lives in that house now? Edwards went away didn't he? (27. *1978 Sold to Mr & Mrs Pearce-Burton Jnr*).

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I was glad to hear of Jenny, we always liked Jenny. I had a letter from Mrs Bradley that used to be at the Wharf at Christmas and she said that Major Donner had died.(28. *Bourton House*). I was sorry to hear that. I always thought what a nice man he was. I never saw it in the Guardian.

p4) We had a terrible stormy night here last Monday night the wind was terrible and a little snow, there was more snow last night, the ground is just covered. We are lucky here it is very bad in some places. The power was off from 3 o'clock Tuesday morning till 5 o'clock at night, from the news to night it is still off in 17,00 homes. I managed alright I had the fire and an oil stove and my sister in law next door has gas. I started this last night. I will try and finish it tonight. The snow has gone now. We can still see it on the tops of the hills. The news tonight said some parts are still without electricity. We are lucky here.

It is funny the new Vicar comes from where your cousins live [Nr Liverpool]. I wonder who will buy the Vicarage.(29. *Vicarage site for 1st and 3rd Vicarages. 4th Vicarage built on site of Cedar Bungalow in High St.*). I could never understand them building a place p5) like that by the old stone church, it seemed to make a farce of planning regulations. There seems to be houses for sale quite often in Cropredy according to the Guardian, and what a price too. I hope you will like the shortbread. I hope it will travel alright. I felt I must send you something for all your trouble writing all that out. I will stop now. Wishing you all a very Good New Year.

Colin Shirley

P.S. Do you want me to return Mrs Bassett's talk?

Letter 15

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.

16 / 2 / 84.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you for sending me Mrs Mold's talk [Book 3]. It was very interesting. A few of the things she mentioned were before I could remember. She must be about 10 years older than I am. I don't remember anything about the Chapel Band for one thing.

I don't remember ever hearing of Jimmy or Hannah Pargeter. I remember two sisters Emily and Betsy Pargeter who lived in Creampot Lane. At that time there was just the two stone cottages half way down the Lane and towards the bottom four more. I think Mrs Medcalf sen. lived in what used to be the third and fourth when we left Cropredy. The two sisters Pargeter lived in the third one down. I can just remember hearing of a brother dying, but I think he was away somewhere. Betsy was a little bit simple I hope you won't be shocked at the next bit, but it is history. At that time of course they were all outside toilets, pits, not buckets. When the pit needed emptying they used to dig a big hole in the garden and empty it into the hole. Once when that was being done Betsy fell into the hole. I remember the talk about it at the time and them saying Betsy was crying "*I fell in Job, I fell in Job.*" That is enough of that isn't it?

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p4) The Mr Bott that was in the wheelchair that ran away was Mr Frank Bott's father, Tony's grandfather. Tony was driving Smith & Webbers lorry when we left. Frank Bott himself had a bad accident down Williamscoote road one time. The lorry hit a tree.

I expect you heard of all the snow in Scotland. We didn't really hurt here, we had nearly a foot but it has gone now. The only inconvenience we had was one very p5) rough night before the snow, the power was off from 3 in the morning till 5 the next evening and one night from 9 till 11. There was no electric blanket that night, and two days we didn't get the Daily Express. Our edition is printed in Manchester. We really had nothing to grumble about compared with some people.

I think the airship that Arthur Pettifer and Roland Cave saw was the R100. I remember we were playing cricket at Claydon one Saturday and we could see this airship to the north of Claydon. We could still see it when we got back to Cropredy. There were the two airships at that time the R100 and the R101. It was the R101 that crashed in France on its way to India. That would

be in the early 1930's I think. I know it was the Harvest Festival at Cropredy Church and Canon Jones from Banbury was taking the service and he told us about the crash. That was the first we heard of it.

I am glad you liked the shortbread. I hope it didn't get broken in the post. Thank you for sending me the copies of the talks.

p7) I had better stop. I wish I was a better writer, but I don't expect I will improve now. I am always pleased to hear from you.

Yours sincerely

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] Pargete's. Prizes at school. Ash tree and Hovel in Creampot Lane. Monkeytree House for sale.

Letter 16

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

23 / 3 / 84

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) I was pleased to get your letter. I will try and answer you queries.

.p4) Is Mrs Durrant Mabel or Gladys Cooknell? (*30. Mrs Mabel Durrant nee Cooknell: Book 2 Cooknell's of Cropredy Green*). There was an older sister a Mrs Hickman.

Now I will stop. I must apologise again for the poor writing. I hope you can read it. I am always pleased to hear from you.

Yours sincerely Colin Shirley.53

P.S. I often wonder how Creampot Lane got its name.

Subjects] Old Yard toilets. Monkeytree. Library. Knife cleaning. An event. Mother and Father shop in Banbury. Mr Cave's army medical. No wages over Christmas. Who had staff. Tale of mule. Mrs Bradley's lodger.

Letter 17

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.

14 / 5 / 84.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) I think it is time I answered your letter. I am sorry I have been so long. I was very pleased to get it. The 1935 film you mentioned with the photo of the lorry with Herbert Hawkins on it. A Leonard Hawkins had the wharf, where Albert Bradley was, for a time. He had a coal and Builders Merchants business there. I think it was really a branch of his brother Herbert's in Oxford really. I don't think it was very successful. I think the Dunn milk float would be Mrs Roland Cherry's brothers. He had part of what is Whitaker's farm for a time. Mentioning that farm I saw Mrs Griffins death in last weeks Guardian. They had that farm before Whitaker's. They were very nice people. They lived in the house opposite the Chapel. Dr. Bartlett lived in the farmhouse. The Mr Phillips came from Bloxham and was a blacksmith who worked for Mr Sumner (*31. Mr Wm Griffin lived at Lyndhurst. His wife died in 1909 and he died aged 91 on the 23 June 1921. Wm Griffin Jnr's eldest son Jarvis came to farm and also lived at Lyndhurst, bringing with him Mr & Mrs Walter Underdown in 1937. The Griffins moved away. Mrs Jarvis Griffin died in 1984*).

p2) I don't remember ever hearing of a library at the Church Rooms. I can remember Mabel Cooknell's grandmother. They lived near where the telephone exchange is now. A Mrs Savory was living there when we left. She lived with Mrs Tom Bradley and her father (Mrs Bradley's father) (*32. Mrs Emily Bradley nee Cooknell. Cleveland Cottage, Chapel Green*). They later moved up into the house in the corner of the Woodyard. Remember me to Miss Leman (*33. Miss Leman, 3 Station Cottages*) when you see her. Tell her I called to see her before we left Cropredy but I couldn't make her hear when I rapped the door.

p3) I saw in the Guardian recently a planning application for a porch and inside alterations to our old home.

I had my sister and nephew for Easter and I am going to them for a week on the 26th. My nephew will fetch me. We have had it very dry here for some time. We want rain badly. We have had quite a lot of sun but cool winds if you get out of the sun.

How is Mrs Hollis? Which of the uncles is it that is living with them. When Sam and his father lived down the Lane they had Sam's uncle living with them. He was a semi -invalid, he used to walk with a stick. He was Harry. I thought he died years ago. (*34. Uncle visiting, not living in Cropredy*).

p4) I am enclosing a cutting out of the newspaper. I thought you might be interested after our recent letters. "An antique upper class loo with three side-by-side seats is being saved for the nation at a cost of £14,000." I will stop now. I wish I was a better writer. I hope you are able to read it. I am looking forward to your next letter. Do you hear anything of Jenny now?

Regards

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] MrJ.W. Borton and Clattercote Pool.

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Letter 18

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

24 / 6 / 84.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) I was pleased to get your letter, it was waiting for me when I got back from my sisters. The week soon went. The weather was rather dull. We went round the Lake District one day. We didn't have any rain until the Friday night before I came home. It has been dull and quite cold here this last week, a little sun now and again, but very little rain. The gardens are like dust.

When you see Miss Leman again tell her Mr Gillies is still alive, he retired about four or five years ago and now lives in Inverness. He was minister here over forty years and was very popular. When he retired he was presented with a valuable gold watch and a cheque for nearly £2,000. Mr Gillies was in the village here just over a week ago at the funeral of a neighbour of ours. The funeral was at the Abbey. p2) My sister in law saw him but couldn't get to speak to him. I didn't even see him there was such a lot there. I wonder if Miss Leman remembers a row of houses facing the Manse it is in one of them that I live.

p3) I think from your letter that Mrs Mold (Gertie Pettifer) must be living in Cropredy now. Where does she live? (*35. Vicarage Flats*). I was sorry to hear about Mrs Hollis. Mrs Hollis was born while I was working for her father (*36. Mrs Constance Hollis nee Sumner. Book 5 The Wheelwright's Apprentice, A & L. Pettifer*). I saw Mrs Cyril Lambert's death in the Guardian the other week (*37. Mrs Cyril Lambert had lived at Brasenose Manor Farm, then Leustona in High St. Mr Cyril Lambert died 3/04/1976*).

p4) Now I will stop. I hope you can read my writing. I try to slow down a bit, I think it improves a bit then I get back to the old way and it is as bad as ever. I hope you are all keeping well. I am glad to say I am. I do my own housework, cooking, washing, ironing etc. I still do a bit of woodwork.

Kind regards

C. Shirley.

[Subjects] Water for washing Chapel Green Houses. Hedge and wall. Brimstone and treacle Prescote's raised walk and bridge.

Letter 19

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

9 / 8 / 84.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) I was pleased to get your long letter. I have had visits from friends from Cropredy and Banbury the last two weeks. A fortnight last Monday Mrs Malcolm Smith (*38. Mrs Elsie Smith 6 Cup & Saucer*) and her brother called to see me, they were on a bus tour and were based at Fort William, 34 miles from here, they had a free day and came to see me. I was pleased to see them and to hear about Cropredy. Unfortunately they weren't here very long, they got here about 12.30 and had to leave at 4. Then last week on Wednesday I had Mr & Mrs Fraser from Banbury. Margaret (Mrs Fraser) used to live at the other end house when she was a child and was a great favourite of ours. Her father [Mr Dunn] lives at Gt. Bourton, he is Mrs Roland Cherry's brother. They were on the same tour as Mrs Smith but a week later. Margaret told me of Connie Hollis's death. I was very sorry to hear it, also of Mr Bradleys (*39. Mr Tom Bradley, Cleveland Cottage, Chapel Green*).

55

p2) Writing about the old home it came to me that I don't know where my grandparents lived. Where my father's home was before he married. I must ask my sister if she knows. When you are young those things don't interest you but when you get older and would like to know there is no one to ask (*40. In 1871 the Shirley's were at 5 Chapel Row (only not called that*

then). In 1881 they had moved to part of Allitt's Home Farm? Were they working there? In 1891 they are at 1 or 2 Chapel Row).

p4) We have had some rain the last week or two but not much. I heard today the next village from here, Invergarry, was getting short of water. We are alright at present, we are on a different supply. The gardens look quite well considering the dry weather.

Regards

C. Shirley.

[Subjects] Old Yard: Larder and downstairs. Creampot Crescent houses Prescote drive gate. Plan of Old Yard

Letter 20

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

13 / 9 / 84.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you for your letter and all the trouble you went to finding out where my father's home had been. I had no idea where it was. I had my sister for a week at the end of August she was very interested in your letter. She had no idea where my father's home had been either.

p2) Since we came here our nurse's husband ran over a pine martin with his car. The police sergeant's wife had it stuffed and I made a case for it. They are like a weasel but very much bigger. I think they are getting more common than they were.

Fort Augustus is at the south end of Loch Ness. Loch Ness is about 24 miles long, 1 ½ miles wide at the widest part and supposed to be 800 or 900 feet deep. I expect you have heard of the Loch Ness Monster. Some people, I think the leader comes from

p3) somewhere in Lancashire, have been building a big fibre glass trap, 80 ft long, to try and catch it. They are sponsored by a Vodka company. It was built only 2 or 3 hundred yards from us. It was taken and lowered into the loch by helicopter we saw it going over. The idea was to sink it 30 ft down and leave it for a fortnight and then bait it with live salmon. If the monster goes in it, it will be sprung and lifted to the surface and photographed and then released. It said in the paper yesterday that it (the trap) had come to the surface a cable had been cut 80ft down. Whether they think the monster bit it in two or not. I wonder if there is a monster, there has been talk of one for hundreds of years right back to St. Columbus's time. My brother-in-law was fishing Loch Ness all his life and he never said he saw it, though I don't think he would have told any one if he did.

I saw a photo of a house for sale in Cropredy in the Guardian, I am wondering if it is Mr Adkins' in Chapel Row. If it is there appears to have been a doorway made onto the street from the house next door p4) where Mr & Mrs Quant lived when we left (*41. In 1984 Mr & Mrs Roger & Jean Horn at Homestead*).

Now I will stop. Thanking you again for all the trouble you went. I always look forward to your letters. I hope you can understand my plan.

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] Golbys. Plan of gardens for Old Yard. Hounds and Fox Gooseberry bush.

Letter 21

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus,
18 / 2 / 85.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you very much for sending me John Bonham's talk (*42. John Bonham's talk 15/01/1985. His field was in the south part of Coxes Butts on the Claydon Rd*), but you need not have sent a stamp. It was very interesting but he left a bit out. After his father finished with Slat Mill he had that little field on the right just past the watering down Claydon road.

p4) We had a replica of Sir Francis Drakes ship the "Goldern Hinde" go through the canal here recently. It was originally built for a film. It is supposed to be the only gallon in the world. It was a lovely sight, painted black and picked out in red and yellow.

We really haven't hurt so far this winter. We had 4" or 5" of snow about a month ago and some hard frosts, if we don't get any worse we can't grumble. We heard on the T.V. and Radio that Banbury was cut off.

I was sorry to hear of Mrs Bradley's death. I think the Mrs Tapley you mentioned must have come to Cropredy after we left. Where did she live? (*43. Mrs Emily Bradley of Chapel Green. Mrs Gloria Tapley of Ashlawn next to Monkeytree House*).

I hope your knee is better by now. I had three weeks in hospital in Inverness at the end of October. Prostate trouble, but I am glad to say I am very well now.

p5) I do everything for myself. Cooking, washing, ironing etc. I still do some woodwork. I made a corner chair for a friend at Christmas. I was 79 last Friday. There was an Indian doctor in the hospital, I was talking to him one day and happened to say I used to live near Banbury. As soon as I said Banbury he said "The Horton." I think he applied for a post there at some time.

Do you ever hear anything of Jenny now? If you do, remember me to her. We always liked Jenny. Now I will stop. Hoping you are all well. My writing doesn't improve I hope you can read it.

Kind Regards

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] John Bonham's talk Chocolate machine. Trains, Mr Miller and porters. Frogs. Man who missed the train. Cricket.

Letter 22

8 Lovat Terrace

Fort Augustus.

23 / 3 / 85.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you for your letter.

p4) I hear from Mrs Storrie each Christmas. I saw Mrs Harrison's sister's death in the Guardian. Is her brother Mr Allitt still alive?(*44. ? Margaret Kezia Allitt born 1915*). Do you watch the Terry Wogan show on the T.V? Did you see it is produced by Francis Whitaker?(*45. Francis A. Whitaker daughter of Mr & Mrs John H. Whitaker of Poplar Farm. (now called Eagles)*).

Have you had any more snow? We can't really grumble about the winter. We had 4 or 5 inches of snow some weeks ago and just enough to cover the ground last weekend, we have had p5) some sharp frosts, but we have had some lovely sunny days too.

Thank you for my birthday wishes. So you are an Aquarian too. A great friend in Inverness is too. I always read my horoscope in the newspaper but a few minutes after I have forgotten what it was so you can tell I haven't much faith in it.

There are quite a lot of Catholics in this village. There is an Abbey here, St Benedicts, it is on the site of the old fort. Parts of the fort are incorporated in it. That is why the village is called Fort Augustus after the Duke of Cumberland. The old Gaelic name is Kilchuimen. The Cill of St Cummin. There used to be a lot of priests and lay brothers at the Abbey but there are not many now. They had quite a big boarding school but we hear it is likely to close in July. p6) Church going seems to be on the decline. I go to the Church of Scotland but most of the congregation are pensioners, not many young folk. I hope you can read my writing. I never was a good writer and I certainly don't improve. I am always pleased to hear from you.

Yours sincerely

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] Zambuk and remedies. Dr. Bartlett. School and plan.

Letter 23

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

19 / 6 / 85.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) I am very sorry I have been so long in answering your letter. I was at my sisters at Great Salkeld for a week at the end of May. Great Salkeld is about 4 miles from Penrith. There is a prehistoric stone circle at Salkeld called " Long Meg and her daughters." It is quite close to the Lake District. We were round the Lakes, Windermere, Ullswater and Thirlmere and over Kirkstone Pass. It is lovely country, not quite as wild as parts of Scotland. I am sorry I have no old photographs of Croppedy.

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pp2 & 3) Speaking of finds I had an interesting find in my garden recently, perhaps you know there was a fort here in the 17th & 18th centuries, parts of it are still to be seen incorporated in St Benedicts Abbey. I was told our gardens were part of the fort grounds. I was in the garden one day and noticed something flat partly over a root of potatoes that was just coming through. I thought it was a stone but as soon as I picked it up I could tell it was too heavy for a stone, it was a piece of lead 2. 5/8" long and 1 1/4" wide with raised letters and figures and letters on it. When I cleaned it there were two rows of raised figures and letters, they are backwards so it must have been a stamp of some kind. It is 6th A.C.C.

7871473

p4) The letters and figures are about 1/2" high and very raised. I think it was a stamp for marking military equipment. Sometime when I am in Inverness I will take it to the museum and see if they can tell me what it is.

June hasn't been a very good month so far, we haven't had much rain and not much sun either, it has been cloudy and quite cold. I had a good week when I was on holiday apart from the Saturday I went, my nephew fetched me, it wasn't so bad from here till we got through Glencoe, from then till we got near Carlisle it was ever so thick and black.

I don't know what happened to the Banbury Guardian I usually get it on Saturday but last week I didn't get it till Thursday and I haven't got it this week yet.

p5) Mrs Elsie Smith (*38. Mrs Elsie Smith 6 Cup & Saucer*) called to see me while I was away at my sisters. I was sorry I missed her. She was on a bus tour. They weren't supposed to stop at Fort Augustus but she persuaded the driver to stop for

twenty minutes. My sister in law next door saw her. I was very sorry I had missed her but there would not have been time to get much Cropredy news anyway. Now I had better stop. I hope you are all keeping well. I am glad to say I am very well.

Kind Regards

Colin Shirley.

[Subjects] Zambuk recipe. Prayer Book at Red Lion.

Letter 24

8 Lovat Terrace,

Fort Augustus.

23 / 7 / 85.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you for your letter which I received yesterday. Although I saw the Cropredy news in the Guardian, which I get on Saturdays, I must admit I was disappointed to hear that you are leaving Cropredy. I feel I shall be losing a link with Cropredy. I don't get any news except what I see in the Guardian. I hope you will all get on well and be very happy in Wales. A friend lent me a book a year or two ago it was written by a man who bought a farm in Wales. From your description of your place I should think it was a very similar place. He described the house and buildings and the alterations he did to it. It was very interesting, but I have forgotten p2) the title of the book and the authors name. I wonder if Welsh is difficult to learn.

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We went to Aberyswyth on a trip once and were struck how the people in the street were speaking Welsh, even asking for things in the shops in Welsh. My Mother was a Gaelic speaker. I have heard her say she was in her teens before she could speak English. My aunt, her sister, lived in Bloxham and when she used to come to us Mother and her spoke Gaelic. My sister and I used to be annoyed because we didn't know what they were saying. I expect that was why they were speaking in Gaelic so that we wouldn't. I started to learn it 3 or 4 winters but when the nights got light again I was out side and by the time the dark nights came round again I had forgotten much of it. p3) I know quite a few words and simple phases but that is all. I should have started much younger.

When are you moving? Moving is a bit of an upheaval. I know what it was like when we moved. I hope you will let me have your new address, I would not like to lose contact with you. Although we didn't have a lot of contact in Cropredy we have had a lot of contact through letters. I learned a lot about Cropredy from you that I didn't know before. I wish there was a Historical Society while we were there.

We are having a very poor summer here, not a lot of heavy rain, but a lot of drizzle and wind, not much sun. Now I will stop. With every best wish for the future. I hope I will hear from you sometime.

Colin Shirley.

26 / 8 / 85

3 Long Croft,

Great Salkeld.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

I have just heard from my brother Colin, he sent on the 'snap' which we think very good, thank you. I'm sorry to hear of your non sale. So much of this sort of thing goes on now a days. We hope it won't be long till you get another offer.

Now Colin says you would like to know names of some of the people on the school photo. I've named as many as I can remember. I recognise the faces but can't put a name to them. Some children came from Great Bourton others from Williamscoate etc. I see Bill Harris is on it also his brother Basil. Maybe Bill could put a name to those I've forgotten. John has printed them out for me with appropriate numbers. I hope you can make it out [[Photo 10](#)].

It was very nice to meet you. Colin was interested in any news I could give him when we saw him the next week.

John hasn't finished the spool on his camera but I'll send on your 'snap' when he does. Meanwhile we hope all goes well and you get your 'sale' settled satisfactorily.

Kind Regards

Yrs Christina Taylor.

Letter 25

8 Lovat Terrace,
Fort Augustus.

20 / 10 / 85.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) I am sorry I have been so long in replying to your letter but I wasn't sure whether you were still in Cropredy or not. When I got the last Guardian and I saw the bit about the Historical Society I thought you must be still there. I hope you will get things settled satisfactorily and that you didn't loose your place in Wales.

I have found out the title of the book I mentioned, it was "*I Bought a Mountain*" but I don't know the authors name.

I was pleased my sister and nephew called to see you in the summer. They were with me for a few days at the beginning of August and I had my niece and her husband last p2) week end.

We have had a very poor summer here the gardens were a failure. The only things that did well were the late potatoes and broad beans. We didn't have such a lot of rain but it was dull and drizzly and cold. It has been dry for the last three weeks, some nice days and some dull and misty. We had some rain today.

Thank you for the snap you took of my sister and John. I am enclosing the one they took of you. I thought you would like it. I would like to have kept it myself.



Photo 20:

Mrs C.Taylor nee Shirley and son John Taylor at *Monkeytree House* 1985

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I expect you saw in the papers and on the T.V. about the Wellington that was in Loch Ness. That was down the other end of the loch from here. We never hear the monster mentioned now.

p3) I hope you are all well and that everything goes well when you move. I wouldn't like to move again, you don't realise how much stuff there is until you begin to move it. I hope you will let me know how you get on. Now I will stop.

Best Wishes

Colin Shirley.

Fort Augustus.

2 / 12 / 85.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

p1) Thank you for your letter and for letting me have the photo. I am enclosing the most flattering snap of myself I can find. It was taken while we were at Cropredy. The few more recent ones I have I wouldn't like to send. You will recognise my wife on my left, the other is a friend from Jersey who was staying with us at the time. She belongs to Fort Augustus but has been living in Jersey over 20 years [Somehow this was separated from his letters].

[*Colin enclosed three postcards*]. I am sorry I couldn't get a card showing the whole village, there used to be ones taken from the top of a hill showing the whole village but I couldn't see any about now. The bridge you see p2) over the canal is a swing bridge carrying the main road from Fort Augustus to Inverness. The building in the right hand end of the one of the Abbey is the Roman Catholic Church, a fairly recent building, the rest of the buildings are older, two corners of the old fort are incorporated in it, they lay to the left of the card. Was your son near Fort Augustus last summer? I would like to have seen him if he was. If any of your family are this way again tell them to call.

It has been quite mild here the last day or two, but last week was very cold with just enough snow to cover the ground. I hope we don't get more. I am wondering if you are still in Cropredy, but I am sure Mrs Rolph will forward this if you are not.

p3) I hope you will be very happy in Wales. Moving is an upheaval though. I only had it once that was enough. I am enclosing your Christmas card, it is a bit early but it is the only envelope I have big enough to take the post cards. I was sorry to hear about your Mother (*46. Mrs Nan Pilkington of Sulgrave at Monkeytree with both arms in splints after tendon transfer op*). I hope she is going on alright, also Mrs Gardner (*47. Mrs Olive Gardner of 5 Orchard View*). Now I will stop. Wishing you all a Happy Christmas and New Year and a good move.

Yours Colin Shirley

[*Subject*] *Monkeytree House front wall*

30 / 5 / 86

3 Long Croft.

Dear Mrs Keegan

p1) I am writing for my brother Colin. He had your letter but unfortunately can't answer it. He had a slight stroke on May 4th & was taken to hospital in Inverness, and has been very ill ever since. He doesn't know yet that cancer has developed over the last 4 years since he had the prostate operation and it is now creeping through his bones. He has gone very thin its distressing to see him. My son & I went up when he was first taken ill and again this last Monday to Thursday. It's a long way to go 4-5 hours journey each way, but we shall go as often as we can as long as its necessary. We feel so helpless so far away. His sister in law lives next door to his home but is herself well over 70 & doesn't feel able to do much herself. Fort Augustus is 33 miles from Inverness & bus service is poor.

p2) He says 'Thank you' for your letter & hopes all goes well with you & your animals etc. He asked me to write to you and I'm sure he would appreciate a short note from you. I'll enclose his address (or John will!!)

ROOM 21 / WARD 6C / RAIGMORE HOSPITAL / INVERNESS

Hope you can read this my writing is not a strong point.

Regards to you & your husband.

Christina Taylor

Cropredy will miss you & all your informative recordings.

23 / 7 / 86

3 Long Croft.

Dear Mrs Keegan.

This is just a note to tell you that my brother Colin Shirley died today in hospital in Inverness he had been in hospital on and off for a week or so. He had a slight stroke & when he was examined they found he had cancer of the bones, which was spreading rapidly, he lost a lot of weight & couldn't eat, so it's really a relief for him. We had been up several times since he first was taken ill & he did want me to write & tell you he was in hospital. Alas I didn't need to. I can't write more. The funeral is on Saturday. Regards

Christina Taylor.

[Christmas card 1986]

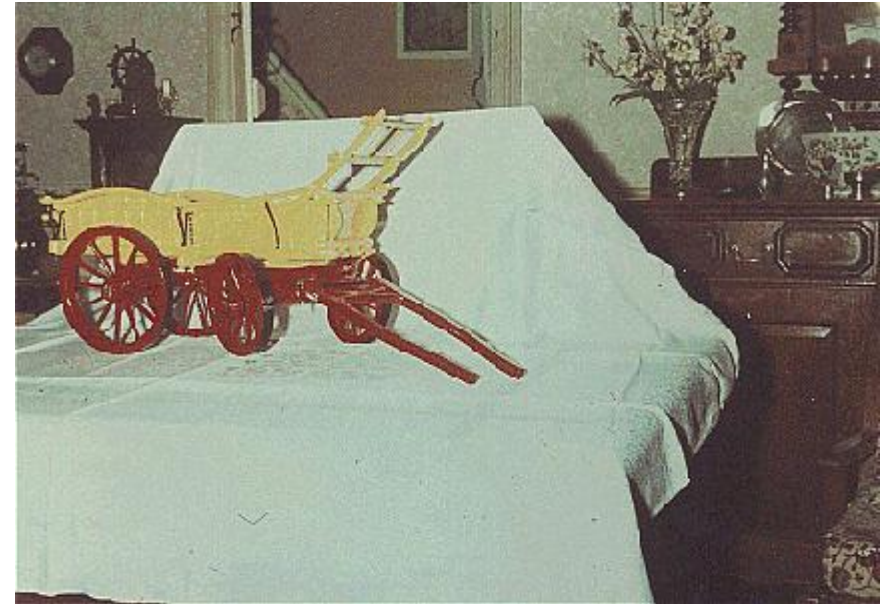
3 Long Croft.

Dear Mrs Keegan

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I should have answered your letter some time ago, but alas time goes so quickly these days and letter writing gets left. I hope you have had a good summer & your farm has prospered. We haven't been to Cropredy this year, went to Oban for a week. Went one day to where my brother used to live. My son did the RAC Rally last month & I think only went into N.Wales. On rereading your letter you ask if I knew what happened to the library after Colin gave up. I'm afraid I don't. I left home at 17 yrs & didn't return till I married. I missed a lot of Cropredy. I'm sorry I can't be much help & since Colin died I've heard very little news. Actually theres few people there I know now. I do hope you will have a good Xmas & New Year.

C.Taylor & John



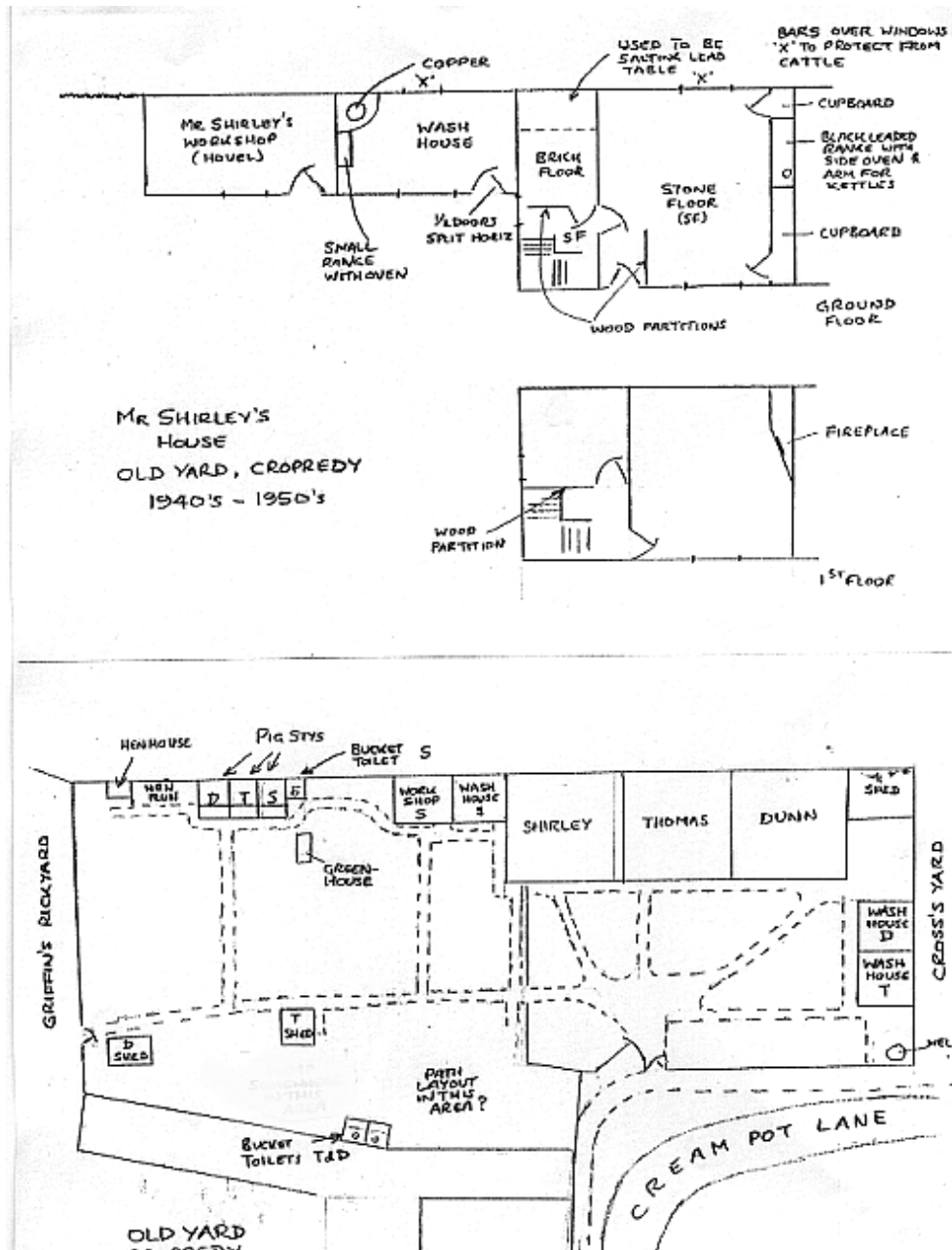
Photo's 21 & 22:

A model cart and a second picture of Clifford's wagon with door to stairs behind.

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11. 1940's to 1956



Figs. 7 & 8:

Old Yard 1940's-1950's by John A. Taylor

John Alexander Taylor son of Alexander Murray Taylor and Christina nee Shirley kindly agreed to contribute his memories of a childhood spent in Croppedy. He has also added his plans of Old Yard as he recalls it and made a sketch of Croppedy to show where people lived.

We were short of photographs and on his Sunday visits to his sister Christina Beatrice Taylor (Betty), the wife of Peter Michael Clementson (Mike), they managed to loan for retaking most of the photographs for this book.

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Photo 23:

John Taylor, Helen Shirley, Christina Taylor, Colin Shirley, Betty Taylor, Alex.M.Taylor, at Fort William with Britannia in the background. The day the Queen was there. Aug.1958. Taken by Margaret Dunn.

The material is not used in letter form. The letters were dated 4/03/02, 25/03/02, 17/04/02, 24/04/02, 12/05/02. First John introduces his family before going back to his childhood.

Father, Alexander Murray Taylor, before the war was in private service starting off as the hall boy at the big house in the village (Kirkoswald) where he was born; (and where Betty lives now), and finishing up as butler at Boxted Hall in Essex. After the war he took up gardening and worked for Mr John Cheney (of the Banbury Printing firm) at Wykham near Bloxham. He carried on gardening after moving up here in December 1956 until retirement. He was born on the 27th of December 1907 in Kirkoswald, Cumberland and died on the 9th of January 1983, at Great Salkeld, Cumbria. He married Christina Shirley on the 23rd June 1934 in London.

Mother, Christina Shirley, after initially starting work in Banbury as a seamstress went into private service as lady's maid to several ladies until marriage in 1934. She was born on the 7th of April 1902 in Cropredy and died on the 18th of January 1995 at Great Salkeld, Cumbria.

John was born on the 5th of June 1935 at Banbury Oxon. I was a draughtsman all my working life, starting with six years at Switchgear & Equipment Ltd, Banbury making high voltage outdoor switchgear. The first 5 years being an apprenticeship. First weeks wages £1-12s-5 1/2d. My parents and Betty moved to the Penrith area in December 1956; I stayed at Cropredy with Colin and Helen Shirley until July 1957 expecting to have to do National Service, but at a medical a suspect appendix operation scar stopped that. I then moved up here and started work with Rolls-Royce Ltd. On the intermediate Range Ballistic Rocket Project which later became The Blue Stream Rocket Project. This lasted until 1973 when the project was abandoned. I then went to work for Cowans Sheldon Ltd cranemakers in Carlisle, working mainly on railway breakdown cranes. This lasted until the cut-backs in 1985 when I again was made redundant. However having left there on Friday 29th March I was lucky enough to start straight away on Monday 1st April at ASE Ltd, again in Carlisle, this time making car safety belts. ASE (American Safety Equipment) had been Kangol Ltd and has since gone through several ownerships, all American, and is now Breed (UK) Ltd.



Photo 24:

John A. Taylor outside Aunt Golby's at 2 Chapel Row in 1936.

Betty, born the 5th April 1939 at Colchester, Essex, after going to Cropredy school went to Miss Mellors School in Banbury, firstly in Marlborough Road then at Springfields, Bloxham Road, From there to Grimsbury County Secondary School and finally to the Tech at Woodgreen. She worked as a tracer at Aluminium Laboratories before moving north. She continued as a tracer at Cowans Sheldon for about 2 ½ years before starting her family: Shirley Denise born 26/10/1962 and William Alastair 8/2/1966. *Betty lives just three miles away from John.*

My nephew, Alastair, now has Colin's tools which I expect includes the Golby tools [p15]. He, with his father Mike and mother Betty, have their own Building and Decorating business (Just the 3 of them). It's mainly repair work (glazing, building, plumbing, woodwork & decorating). Betty did most of the decorating but has reduced the amount considerably this last 2 years and Mike doesn't do any heavy work now since having a hip replacement op 2 years ago.

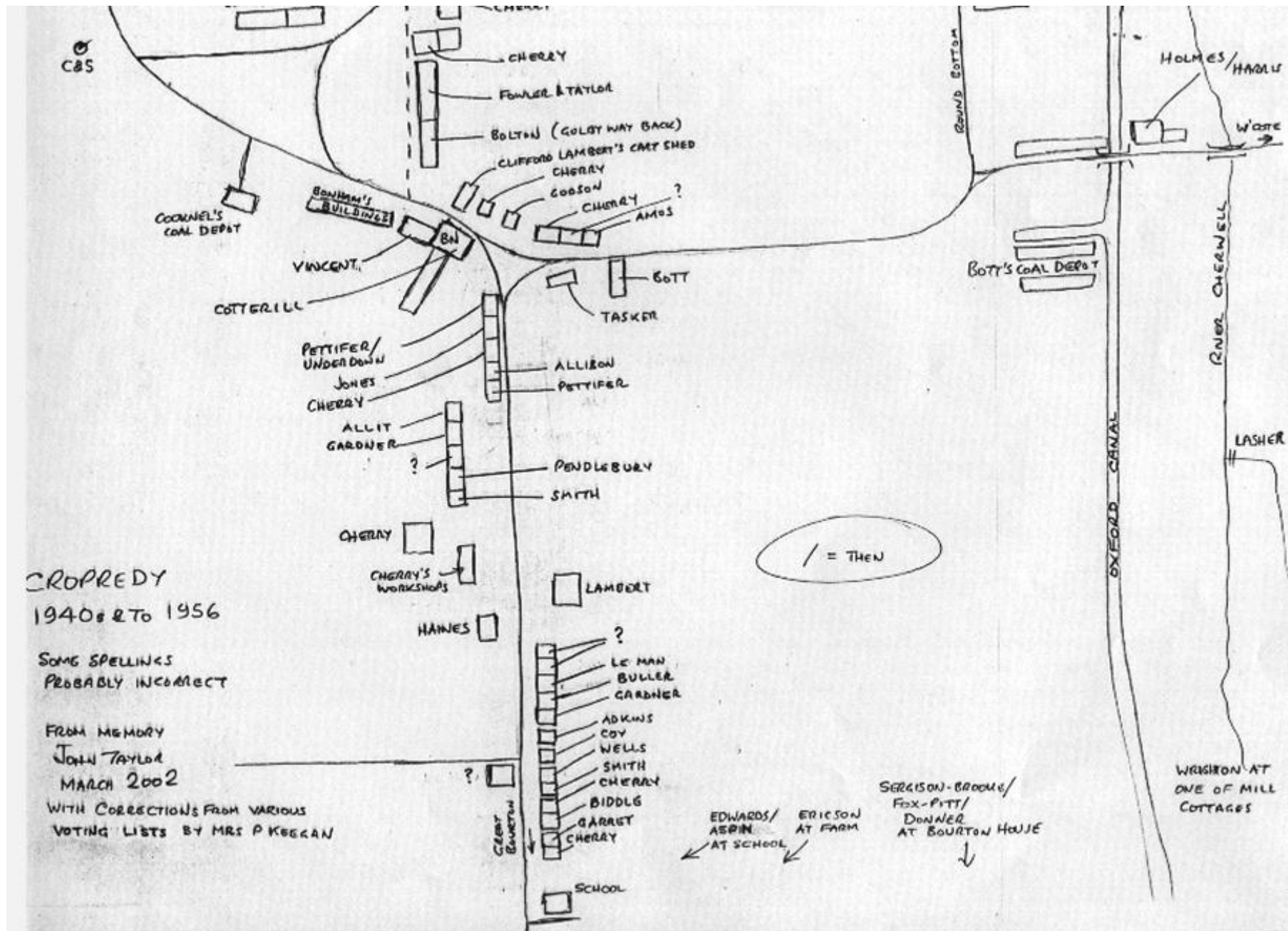


Fig.9: Plan of Croppedy

I don't know if you were aware of the fact that Colin and his wife Helen were cousins. Their mothers being sisters. Helen Elizabeth Matheson was born on the 25th of February 1899 at Culrain, Kincardine and died on the 17th of June 1982 at Fort Augustus. She was the daughter of Catherine McGillivray and Hugh Matheson and married William Colin Shirley on the 30th of August 1939 in Inverness. Colin's mother was Elizabeth McGillivray born the 9th of May 1865 at Kilchorn, Inverie Knoydart and died the 28th of February 1949 at Cropredy [*For Colin's father see p 10*].

From the photographs you will see that Colin must have been in St. John Ambulance at some time. I don't know when or for how long. He was in the Homeguard during the war. The Homeguard's hut near the top of the Oxhay Road was made from the back of a Carter Paterson lorry.

Towards the end of the war or soon afterwards Colin amongst others were ordered by the Government to go to London (Lewisham) to help in the reconstruction. He hadn't served in the armed forces because the Building Trade was considered what I think was called a "Reserved Occupation."

I am sending a copy of how I remember Cropredy. There may be some small errors in the Cropredy details, but my sister and I think it to be substantially correct. Memory can get distorted after about 50 years (45 years in July 2002) since I left Cropredy [see Fig.9 p.69].

Now for a few of my recollections: 1940's

The metal railings being cut down for the war effort. Many were still stacked up in Banbury after the war was over. At Monkeytree House I cannot recall the wire fence. I had thought that there were iron railings before being cut down for the war effort but I may be mistaken. There was a privet hedge there.

"TINS ONLY" collection points in the village. There must have been nearly a dozen of them. They were triangular. Three sheets of corrugated iron fixed to three posts with "TINS ONLY" painted on them. Unfortunately some people didn't wash the tins before dumping them and this attracted many flies and wasps.



Fig. 10

Moveable barriers were put across roads into the village to stop the enemy (wouldn't have much). A tree trunk with a wheel on one end and the other end rotating on a metal pole. There was one just the village side of Claydon/ Mollington road junction, one just Williamscoote side of the river bridge and I think the third one was by the school.

I can remember seeing a German plane dropping the bomb which blew a rail out of the loop line of the railway to the back of Erikson's farm (*School Farm*). A bomb was dropped on another occasion in the field "Oathill" on your field plan (*Oathill Field by Lambert's Barn on the road to Claydon*).

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There were quite a number of plane crashes in the area. The one I most remember is the one referred to in Book 5. (*The Wheelwright's Apprentice, A & L Pettifer. p13*). My sister and I had been walking with my aunt Mrs Golby down Oxhey Road about ½ an hour before it happened. A scar is still visible on the oak tree in Mr C. Whitaker's field from when a wing was torn off the Wellington bomber. The thing to do after crashes was to try to get some "aeroplane glass," perspex. From this we used to make brooches (horse shoes, crosses etc) and rings.

I think it may have been D-Day. There was great excitement and confusion early one morning when parachutists landed in the village, their plane having been in difficulties and they had been ordered to bail out. One landed in the big copper beech tree that stands in the Vicarage grounds (*Now Vicarage Gardens*). The parachute was hanging there for quite a while. I think the parachutist managed to get down without injury. Another landed near Mr Eriksens farm and when confronted by Mr Eriksen he thought he was on the continent as Mr Eriksen spoke with a Danish accent. Others tried to get onto the workmen's bus for Banbury and were taken off by the Home Guard. The latter two incidents I believe to be correct but would not be absolutely sure.

I seem to recall that the Chapel Sunday School room was used as a "Rest Centre," but what that was I'm not sure unless it was a reception centre for the evacuees that came to the village.

The Church Rooms were initially used for the Evacuees school until they became integrated with the village school. The older pupils were taught there by Mr Dicky Larby. We enjoyed being next to Mr Godson's Bakehouse. At morning break we would buy a small loaf which was steaming hot straight from the oven and have it cut in four to share. There were several lots of four that used to do this.

As an indication of hard times for some folk then in 1946 three of us at Cropredy School, Gillian Cherry nee Coy, M----- G----- (from Claydon) and myself passed the scholarship (later 11+) for Banbury County School (later Grammar School, now Banbury School), but M----- never went as her parents couldn't afford to pay for the school uniform.

On and around the Top Green, by the Chapel, we used to play rounders, dodge ball, french cricket, skipping, ball games against the chapel wall, "Tin can Tommy" (kick the tin), hide and seek, hop scotch on the concrete by the chapel gate, whip and top in the roadway at the chapel cross roads and hoops, the favourite being bicycle wheel rims although some boys resorted to car tyres.

The top Green used to be a good and easy place to find multi-leaved clover. I say multi leaved as four was quite common as up to seven leaves have been found.

When I was still going to Cropredy school, that would be pre August 1946, we used to collect rose hips for a National War Effort scheme; sometimes even going out in school lesson time.

We boys had some strange ideas of enjoyment, watching graves being dug and going to watch pig killings. The latter being for when they cut the pig open, after burning off the bristles, for the bladder to blow up to use as a football when it had dried out. The pigs then were killed with a knife to the throat.

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Photo 25:

John Shirley by Richard W. Cross's wagon from Andrew's Farm

At hay time we used to ride in Mr Cross's Oxfordshire wagons down to the hayfield then walk back for another ride in the next empty one. Yes, boys and girls played the games together and also rode the hay wagon. I expect Mr Cross's daughter's Sylvia, Barbara and Margaret did too, although I cannot specifically remember them doing so.

At thrashing time we used to wait until the ricks were nearly finished to try and kill the mice and rats as they fled the stack. Similarly at harvest time when the binder was getting towards the middle of the field we would try to hit the rabbits as they escaped. Both of the above with sticks of course.

My sister has reminded me that a man used to visit Cropredy once a year, with three or four donkeys to give the younger children rides, backwards and forwards, between the Exservicemen's Hall and the Chapel crossroads. Also that evangelists used to come to the Chapel for a few weeks each year and hold "Sunshine Corner" meetings for the children.

Clifford Lambert's mother sold skimmed milk at 8am and 4pm on weekdays to about a dozen locals. Sometimes sneaking a bit of butter into the can so that no one else would know. By the way the skimmed milk Mrs Lambert sold was 2d a pint. My sister recalls this because once she was given 6d to go for the milk and got into trouble with mother for bringing back three pints instead of one. Talking money, the bus fare on the early bus was for a child 2 1/2d single, 3d return and for adults 5d single 6d return. In them days there used to be four bus routes through Cropredy. The No.513 to Mollington, No. 514 to Claydon, No.516 to Chipping Warden via Williamsote and No. 529 to Marlborough Farm Camp (The Ammunition Depot near Kineton).

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In the 1940's the buses, due to a shortage of petrol, for a while used gas, which was produced by a sort of boiler affair on a trailer behind the bus. It was such a poor fuel that the buses struggled on an incline, so much so that often passengers had to get off to get the bus up Hardwick Hill (coming up from Aluminium Works towards Little Bourton).

Coal was still brought south by narrow boat (barge) on the canal. While being taken to Banbury, some was off loaded at Bradley's and Bott's wharves at Cropredy. I can remember the canal used to get frozen over most winters then with the ice being thick enough for skating and for the impact of a sledge going down the access path to the towpath and off the edge onto the ice. Mr McDougall's field up Williamsote Road used to be another favourite place for skating as most winters it would flood then freeze over.

In the severe 1947 winter the men of the village were organised (I think by Roland Cherry) to hand dig out Williamsote Road and Mollington Road. There were no mechanical diggers then. Bread was delivered on horseback from Mr Godson's to Williamsote.

Another thing some of us did was to go up the Church tower to watch the clock being wound. I think it was Mr Buller that used to do it. Occasionally he would take us up on to the top of the tower, but me, not having a head for heights wouldn't venture near the side. You will see from the Cropredy sketch that Mr Buller lived in one of the Brazenose College houses opposite the station.

What other recollections? Mr Bernard Pargeter cut my hair with hand clippers, many a yelp as he accidentally pulled a hair. His hair cutting clippers were not shears but worked by more of a scissor action. The cutting teeth reciprocating similar to a hedge trimmer (Fig. 11).

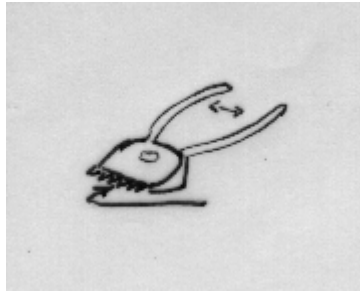


Fig.11

Most of the village with no mains water, only Brasenose properties had a private supply. The rest of the village relied on the many pumps and wells plus the collection of rainwater. [*The college allowed and charged several properties from 1893 to have water. 16 cottages on Cope's estate (2 taps), Brazenose Inn, Constone, Vicarage, Co-op and cottages in New Place & a few others. BNC Water records*].

Toilets were either pit or chemical (Elsan). After the war when father got a car and there was still petrol rationing he got extra coupons for taking "nightsoil" up to Harry Dunn's allotment, by Oxhay Road railway bridge, for burial.

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During the war there was often army manoeuvres in the area and on one occasion they set up camp on the bottom Green and they took over Mr Bonham's building nearest "Constone" as their cookhouse.

I mentioned "Constone"; that's where I first saw television. Mr Vincent called some of us children in to see the Victory Parade in London. I believe it must have been that shown on June 8th 1946. The room was in total darkness and the screen was about 9 inch. Mr Vincent was I believe a radio electrician.

There used to be "Pictures" nights in the Exservicemen's Hall. I think they were monthly. Albert Boot from Banbury used to show them. I don't know how they were synchronised but the sound track was on records not on the film in those days.

One more recollection from the 40's and 50's: Betty reminded me that there used to be a mobile Fish and Chip van call round the village. We don't know whose it was or from where it came.

[*The dogs in the photographs?*] Colin's first dog was "Mac"; brother of our dog "Don" which father brought with him, as puppies, on leave from the army on 1st January 1944. The dogs were black and white terrier type mongrels. Colin later had a small sheltie, "Rory." The dog in the early group photograph must have been the Golby's.



Photo 26. High Street to Creampot Lane.

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- 10) This 1907 Cropredy and Bourton C.of E. School provided by the late Mrs Christina Taylor nee Shirley (died 18/1/1995). Mrs Taylor provided the names and allowed a copy to be made. 21
- 11) John did not know why this photograph of his uncle Colin in overalls had been cut down [JAT]. 24
- 12) Colin with his Model of an Oxfordshire wagon on *No.1 Old Yard's* dining table [JAT]. 26
- 13) The Co-op Farm wagon outside the brick barn at *Cropredy Lawn*. The late Connie Hollis nee Sumner's album, from which she had kindly allowed me to make copies [CHS]. 27
- 14) Building the *Chapel Green Houses* in 1921. The late S.R.Cherry kindly allowed me to copy [CHS]. 30
- 15) "*Colin is holding a telescope with which he used to enjoy viewing the countryside to the rear of the Old Yard, and to take with him when holidaying in Scotland. What you thought was a bird bath is actually a sundial; the upright part being edgewise on to the camera is difficult to see*" See photo 6 [JAT]. 32
- 16) Colin was in St John's Ambulance service according to S.R.Cherry's Book. [JAT]. 35
- 17) *Old Yard* front garden towards *Monketree House's* orchard and showing the pigsty block built in red/orange bricks. Pulled down and two houses built. Note St. Mary's church tower. [JAT] 38
- 18) Mrs Helen Shirley with Rory near the workshop [JAT]. 41
- 19) Mr Colin Shirley and Rory also at *No.1 Old Yard* [JAT]. 41
- 20) Mrs C.Taylor and son John A.Taylor visited *Monkeytree House* , Creampot Lane in 1985[Keegan]. 61
- 21) "*I don't know who the two wheeled cart was made for. It is a general purpose cart. I do not recognise the background of the photograph. Betty has a similar one painted in the Oxfordshire colours. That one was Colin's own. He also made several models of wheelbarrows as presents.*"[JAT]. 64
- 22) "*The photograph of the model Oxfordshire wagon was taken at No.1 Old Yard. Colin made it for Clifford Lambert [photo 12]. The doorway in the background is through to the kitchen and stairs. The stairs bannister can be seen in the far background. You can also see the sneck door latches on both the living room and kitchen doors. The brick floored part of the*

house was used as the kitchen by the Shirleys and the window as you correctly thought was for both kitchen and stairs [JAT].

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23)[On the back] *Fort William with Britannia in background. The day the Queen was there Aug. 1958. Taken by Margaret. The group is myself (John Taylor), Helen Shirley, Mother (Christina Taylor nee Shirley), Colin Shirley, Sister Betty (Christina Beatrice Taylor) and Father (Alexander Murray Taylor). Margaret referred to on the back of the photograph was Margaret Dunn who was on holiday with Colin and Helen” [JAT].*

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24) John A. Taylor in his pram outside 2 *Chapel Row* where his aunt Mrs Golby lived. The monkey puzzle tree in the background. Dated 1936 [JAT].

68

25) Uncle John Shirley, wheelwright, opposite the *Woodyard*[Sumner album photo CHS].

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26) High Street looking north. Donald Cherry walking past *Charles Cottage*, Chapel Green. On the right the 1881 Methodist Chapel, Chapel Row and *Monkeytree House* at the start of Creampot Lane [JAT].

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