

Newsletter Number 7 for October 2015



In this the final newsletter for 2015 we have three tasks. The first to introduce and show the value of the many pages of personal reflections held in the museum. The second to record the fascinating extra information that has emerged as the result of an earlier newsletter that mentioned the Old Abbey School and finally to have a look at the spelling of the word Winchcombe, or is it Winchcomb?

Part One: Letters, diaries and the papers we leave behind us

When researchers set out to understand someone from history three of their key sources are letters, diaries and papers. People have written letters through the ages. One wonders what will happen now that we communicate more regularly by email and other social media. Why do so many people keep a diary? Few of these diaries will form the basis of some learned biography. Despite this each January 1st many hands, young and old, set out to tell the story of their days. The internet has some 140 million sites that try to answer these questions about diary keeping and letters.

Museums and libraries are ready to hold diaries and letters partly for the pleasure others gain from reading them but also because they are valuable windows for looking into the past. They are personal, telling a story, sometimes inspiring, challenging, candid and less formal than official documents.

Winchcombe Museum holds a number of valuable documents that come in the form of letters, diaries and personal documents. Here are just a few to whet your appetite:

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|-----------------|--|------------------------|
| John Oaksey | Reminiscences of Winchcombe | 1936-37 |
| Jillian Mann | A School in the Country | 1818-2001 |
| George Timbrell | Memoirs of a rural childhood in the North Cotswolds | 1930 – 1941 |
| | Winchcombe & the Great War: letters to Harold | 1914 – 1918 |
| | Memoirs & Memories: George & Harold Greening | 1958 |
| Frank Green | Littleworth, Greet & Winchcombe | 1930 - 1940s |
| Dora Wigg | Winchcombe Church of England Infants School | 1960s |
| John Rand | Winchcombe's First Secondary School | 1953-62-1977 |
| | Box of letters from Eliza Wedgwood | 1914 - 1918 |
| | Letters of the prisoners of war | 1914-18 & 1939 - 45 |
| | Letters to Jane Ewing | 1919 – 39 |
| | Letters and reports about Winchcombe Men off to war | 1914 – 1918 |
| | Letters to Harold by serving soldiers to Harold Greening | 1914 - 1918 |

Sample letter number one

From Eliza Wedgwood, who ran the VAD hospital, to nurse Ewins.

This letter was probably written in the summer of 1917. Eliza Wedgwood had clearly been offered a break by her friend, Lady Weymss, and had gone to stay on the Weymss' Scottish estate at Gosford near Edinburgh. It is one of a number of affectionate letters written by Eliza Wedgwood to Nurse Ewins. The letter is held at Sudeley Castle.

Miss Wedgwood had left her dog, 'Boots', in the care of the nurses. Nurse Strickland is Lady Mary Strickland, the youngest daughter of the Weymss family, who had married Tom Strickland not long

before he was taken prisoner at Quatia with the local A Squadron of the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars in Egypt on April 23, 1916.

Telegrams
Aberlady

Gosford
Longniddy NB

Dear Nurse, How good of you to spare time to write and tell me about 'Boots'. I do love to hear of him so happy with you all. I leave here Thursday night and hope to get back to Winchcombe in time for dinner Friday by the 1.45. Nurse Strickland is looking so well and has had two letters from her husband - both unluckily written before the one she got at Winchcombe dated June 17th. She comes on night duty Sept. 12th. I am sure Sister Lomas will like having her.

I am leading such an idle life - not getting up till 9.30 and not taking any exertion at all - generally I lie out on the terrace. Tomorrow we're are going to visit the Grand Fleet which is quite near. From the window of the sitting room in which I am writing now I look across the sea to the Forth Bridge - My love and grateful thanks dear Nurse

Yrs. Affecttely

E Wedgwood

Eliza Wedgwood was one of the five daughters of the Rev Robert Wedgwood - vicar of Dumbleton. She was born in Dumbleton - there were also connections with Stanton Didbrook. She moved with her widowed mother to Stanton Court and stayed there until 1912 or 13 when her mother died and Philip Stott moved in. She then lived in the house, which was called Above Town, in Stanton near the pub until she died. She was best friends with Mary Elcho (Lady Wemyss). The Grand Fleet was based on the Forth, and was probably at Rosyth on the other side of the Forth Bridge.

Barbara Edward has emailed with additional information. Eliza Wedgwood's was Robert, grandson of Josiah the potter. Barbara's research on him shows he was vicar of Dumbleton (his grave is in Dumbleton churchyard) and he was very well loved locally. His portrait is in Winchcombe Museum, given to the Town Trust by the Guardians of the Workhouse when it finally closed down. He had been an esteemed member of the Guardians and they had his portrait hanging in their Board Room. His daughter Eliza carried on with his involvement in the community.

Sample letter number 2

There's been times of joy and sorrow,
That I've never forgot,
But the time of my life was spent
In this pretty spot.

Thanking Nurse Hyatt for her kindness and
attention to me during my stay at Winchcombe
V.A. Hospital
No. 21469 Cpl Butterworth 12th Suffolk Bantam
Battalion 17/8/1916

Butterworth was one of two Suffolks admitted together from the Somme early in July - the other was Albert Chesterman who became a keen member of the amateur dramatic group. The 12th Suffolks - Bantams - were all very small men, under 5.3", too small for regular battalions. The recruitment for such small men was generally discontinued as they were too small to manage the equipment.

Sample letter number 3

For the long nights you lay awake
And watched for my unworthy sake.
For all the story books you read,
For all the pains you comforted,
Take Nurse this little book you hold,

And grant it, Heaven, that all who read,
May find so dear a Nurse at need.

With best wishes to Nurse Hyatt
Yours most gratefully A V Turner Sgt. Royal
Garrison Artillery
Winchcombe V A Hospital 17.Sept. 1916

Both men survived the war.

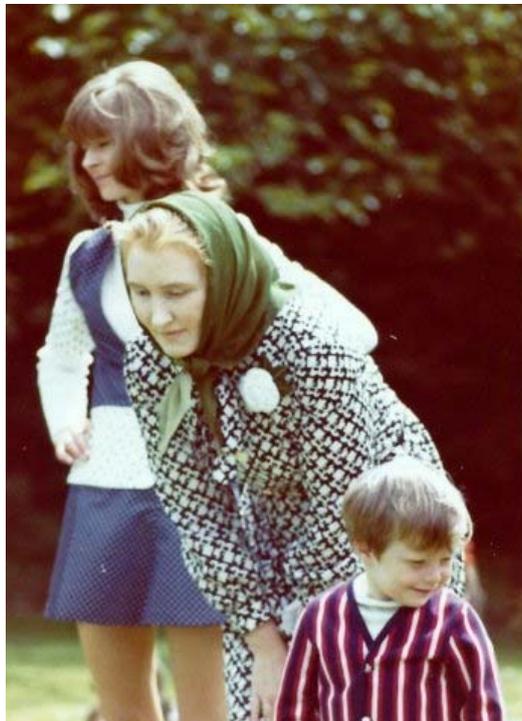
Bessie Hyatt was the daughter of a local farmer. Her sister Lucy also worked as a nurse. Their brother George was in the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars and by the time these letters were written George was a POW in Turkey, having been captured with many local men at the disastrous battle at Quatia in Egypt on Easter Sunday 1916. She never married, worked all her life with the Red Cross and WVS.

Part Two: The Old House School

In Newsletter 3 we mentioned the Old House School and a lack of knowledge of its history. Stewart Aylward contacted us as he had worked with Pat Quinn who was linked to the school. After some exchange of emails Stewart met with Pat Quinn and invited Anne Crow to join them. As a result Pat has provided the museum with a mass of information about the school that ran from 1964 to 1974. The documents include:

- several photographs of teachers and children
- a full listing of all those who attended the school
- a booklet written by John Stevinson in 2006 about the history of the Abbey site
- an air photograph of the site that includes some parts of central Winchcombe.

Pat Quinn has written 'I can find quite a lot of interesting things about our time in Winchcombe to make up a folder. We did a lot of work to alter the Old Abbey Hotel. I have several before and after photos of the house and grounds which will have changed yet again now, so the record is of interest. It will take me a while and I will try to get round to it soon'. We must thank Stewart for his initiative in following up this lead and also Pat Quinn for having the energy to respond with such enthusiasm. Every day we create history that others will search and study to understand our times. The story of the rediscovery of the Old House School will one day reward a researcher delving in the Winchcombe Museum archives as well as being evocative for those former pupils who hear about it today.



Sheila Hood with two children at Old House School

Part Three: Now about the spelling of our town Winchcomb(e)

Recently I was reading the diary of Lady Cynthia Asquith for 1915-18 and noticed that she spelt the town she grew up near as Winchcomb. Later in another book of she wrote in the 1950s she used the spelling Winchcombe. The puzzle continued in that Winchcomb(e) Street in Cheltenham appears as below.



The Cheltenham street nameplate "Winchcomb Street", which is fixed on the wall, is old and has an original spelling. Emma Dent always added a final 'e', but the two spellings existed for a time together. The town's 19th century notices on display in the Museum (concerning street lighting, fire engine, post services) all have no final 'e' because that was the spelling used by the Bailiffs on Borough documents.

When the Borough was terminated in the 1880s by Victorian government edict in favour of an elected local Rural District Council the Town Trust was created to take over responsibility for some old Borough functions. The Town Trust original documents all had no final 'e'.

Most of the Museum's collection of 19th century notices advertising town meetings has no final "e", but the 2 spellings seem to have always been used.

Barbara Edward, when researching Winchcombe history went through the Winchcombe Town Trust's minutes and found, for 27th November 1939, a date just after start of war that they discussed the question of fixing the spelling for all Town Trust business. The original founding documents of the Trust had no final 'e'. One of the Trustees, a Mrs. Lishman, spoke very favourably for using the final 'e' and she proposed official recognition that in future they should use the final 'e' on all the Trust's documents. Mr. George Greening was against it. It was put to the vote, but no one seconded Mr. Greening's spelling, so from then on the Town Trust have used the 'e', which has, of course, become the standard spelling.

Subsequently Harold Greening in his extensive writing always made a point of not adding the final 'e'.

Alan Thomas, Winchcombe Town Trustee, emailed to report that Mr. Wherry (Newsletter 5) and George Greening were members of the trustees when he became Clerk.

Pat Smith's Garage

John Silcock has been in touch with some interesting material about Pat Smith and the 'Anchor' garage on the corner of Gretton and Greet Roads. John writes 'Before Pat took it on, it was run (perhaps owned?) by Mr and Mrs Bessant (not 100% sure of the spelling, but I think it's right) who used to re-charge liquid battery jars in addition to their motor servicing business. There was another motor-oriented business run by a Mr Harding, next to (just south of) the George Hotel which also sold petrol. It had a petrol nozzle mounted on a long gantry which swung out from against the wall and I think I recall that the pump itself was one of those old-fashioned half-rotary hand pumps. Then of course there was Jim's Garage on the north side of Queen's Square which also sold petrol.

John also believes that 'Pat Smith was one of the engineers on the Jaguar motor racing team, along with John Lea (or Lee?) who for many years ran the garage in Gretton (on the left hand side going into the village, just past the bungalows) which is now a private dwelling.

Barbara Edward has pointed out that the folder in the museum called "Changing Traders" has several nice contemporary adverts for Harding's at the Cross, Jim's Garage & Pat Smith's too.

We would welcome any further news to develop this story.

Haywards Store

The store was mentioned in a couple of earlier newsletters. John Silcock has emailed to state 'Before they moved into the premises on the north side of High Street, Haywards occupied the shop next to the chemist, which is now Pritchards antique shop. The gift shop next door was run by a Mr and Mrs Wiseman.' Alan Thomas emailed to describe how Haywards used the undercroft of the Town Hall as a storage area.

And finally about a volunteer for the museum

One of the pleasing surprises of volunteering to help at Winchcombe museum happened the other day. Up the stairs and into the museum reception came this fit, energetic and tanned South African farmer. He was on a Rugby World Cup vacation in England & Wales. His wife was following an art course in the area for the day and there was no rugby. So Ron Dunwoody, that was his name, visited St Peter's Church and then the museum. He farms in an area of South Africa called Nicholson's Nek (pronounced 'nick' with a strong Afrikaans accent). During his visit to the church he had spotted the Boer War memorial and to his surprise read that a Winchcombe man had been a casualty at Nicholson's Nek. Just one of those pieces of history that united two volunteers and Ron from the 'Nek' for a few special moments.

I must get to see the memorial though I gather it is in need of some funds to restore its quality.

So that is it for 2015. Thank you readers for your support and emails. I am also very grateful to Stewart Aylward, John Silcock, Anne Crow, Carol Harris, Barbara Edward, Alan Thomas and Heather Holt for the important help they have given me with this edition of the newsletter. I have also had a very pleasing email from the secretary to the Town Trustees expressing their thanks to all the volunteers and those involved in running the museum for their hard work.

I look forward to bringing more news of Winchcombe Folk & Police Museum in 2016. Possible ideas in the pipeline include: the controversy over the moving of the horse drinking trough (we gather Harold Greening collected very many cuttings from the Echo following all the latest details of the saga which are in the museum); the enlistment book for the 14-18 war; a look at the sports teams in the town.