

Stonehouse History Group Journal



Issue 8

May 2019

ISSN 2050-0858

Published by Stonehouse History Group

www.stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk

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May 2019

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Printed by Zeta Printing

Front cover photograph - *BR steam locomotive crossing Skew Bridge while pulling a train to Dudbridge, 21st May 1965.* ©Ben Ashworth

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Editorial Team

Vicki Walker Jim Dickson Janet Hudson Shirley Dicker

Why not become a member of our group?

We provide a programme of talks and events on a wide range of historical topics.

We hold meetings on the second Wednesday of each month

7:30pm at Park Junior School Hall

Meeting fee £1 members; £2 non-members.

Annual membership £5 due in May.

Our Aims

- To promote interest in the local history of Stonehouse in all its aspects and through all periods of history.
- To hold talks and meetings devoted to this aim and to visit places of historic interest.
- To encourage members to work on research projects on local history.
- To cooperate with other societies and bodies having similar interests.
- To try to ensure that any material related to the history of Stonehouse is collected and preserved and made available for future use.

Do you have any interesting historical photographs of Stonehouse (from 1860 to today)?

We would like to scan them so that they can be added to our collection. Please contact us if you can help.

May we record your memories?

If you have memories of life in Stonehouse many years ago we would like to talk with you.

If you think you could help please phone Vicki Walker on (01453) 826 334 or contact us via our website. Email info@stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk

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Issue 7 2017

Correction. P13 caption for top right photo should read - *Kathlyn with her brother Henry outside the house c.1934 (not her father as stated)*

Welcome to Issue 8

We have produced a number of displays on the history of Standish Hospital in its early days, which can be accessed on our website. This Journal records some of its subsequent history as a TB Sanatorium between 1920 and 1948. We also include personal stories from Tony Daffurn, who was a patient at the hospital during WW2, and Rich White, who managed Standish Hospital Radio from late 1999 until the hospital closed in 2004.

We include several articles on industrial history, including two very different railway bridges and an update on research on the Kemmett Canal. An interview with Stan Paskey gives an insight into what it was like to work at Ryeford Sawmill during the 1960s - before "Health and Safety" was taken seriously!

New committee member, Jane Gulliford, has contributed a short history of Stonehouse County School. There are many more interesting stories to be found in the school logbooks which are available for research at Gloucestershire Archives. We will be adding to her research in order to produce a display on "Education in Stonehouse" for the GLHA Local History Day in 2020.

Janet Hudson was inspired to write about clockmakers in Stonehouse after seeing a special clock, made in Stonehouse, featured on the BBC TV programme "Bargain Hunt". If anyone has a clock made by a Stonehouse clockmaker we would love to hear about it. The same goes for anything else made here in our town. There must be a Stonehouse Brick and Tile Co. Ltd. fireplace out there somewhere.

Several of the residents whose memories we have featured in our Journal have died recently. We know that Irene Adey and Tom Shiers were very pleased to see their stories in our last issue and we are sorry that Stan Paskey died before his memories were published in this issue. We are always interested in hearing people's memories and we still have quite a few to publish in due course.

As always, we would be glad to hear from you if you have information to add to the topics covered in this Journal.

The editorial team May 2019



Members of Stonehouse History Group Committee gathered with Lin Webb by the new Heritage Information board, at the Upper Queen's Road entrance to Burdett Road railway station. The board was sponsored by the Webb family in memory of Darrell.

Left to right:

Janet Hudson, Jane Gulliford, Rich White, Lin Webb, Andrew Walker, Shirley Dicker, Paul Dicker, Vicki Walker, Jim Dickson.

Standish House Sanatorium

by Shirley Dicker and Caroline Dicker

Standish House

The King family had rented Standish House from 1884 to 1897. Before the First World War, Mary King, the eldest daughter of the family, was involved in organising a Red Cross Nursing Association and the training of Red Cross nurses. In 1914 Mary asked the owner of the House, Lord Sherborne, if it could be used as a hospital. He agreed to loan the House and to have it decorated, fitted with electric lights, additional baths and toilet facilities.

Standish House Red Cross Hospital was opened on May 13th 1915, managed by Mary King. There were 100 beds within the House and 8 fully-trained nursing sisters. The rest of the staff were all local volunteers. Patients were wounded soldiers from all over the country. A total of 2292 sick and wounded soldiers were treated at the hospital during the War.

After the War living conditions were poor which led to a rise in diseases such as tuberculosis. Mary King recognised the need for a local sanatorium and the Standish site appeared to her to be the perfect place. The Government and Local Authorities had a duty to try to improve people's health and so it was proposed that Standish House should be opened as a tuberculosis institution. In 1921 Lord Sherborne agreed to sell the whole of the Standish Estate to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries which sold the house and 136 acres, including Moreton Hill Farm, to a Joint Committee of Gloucestershire County Council and City Council for £14,071, for use as a TB institution.



Dr William Arnott Dickson and Dr John Middleton Martin visited Standish House to check if it would be suitable. In their report they noted the importance of encouraging patients to spend practically all their time in the open air, which would have a wholesome effect on their mental condition. Fresh air and open spaces were abundant within the estate and beyond, with over 2000 acres of farmland and woods being retained by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

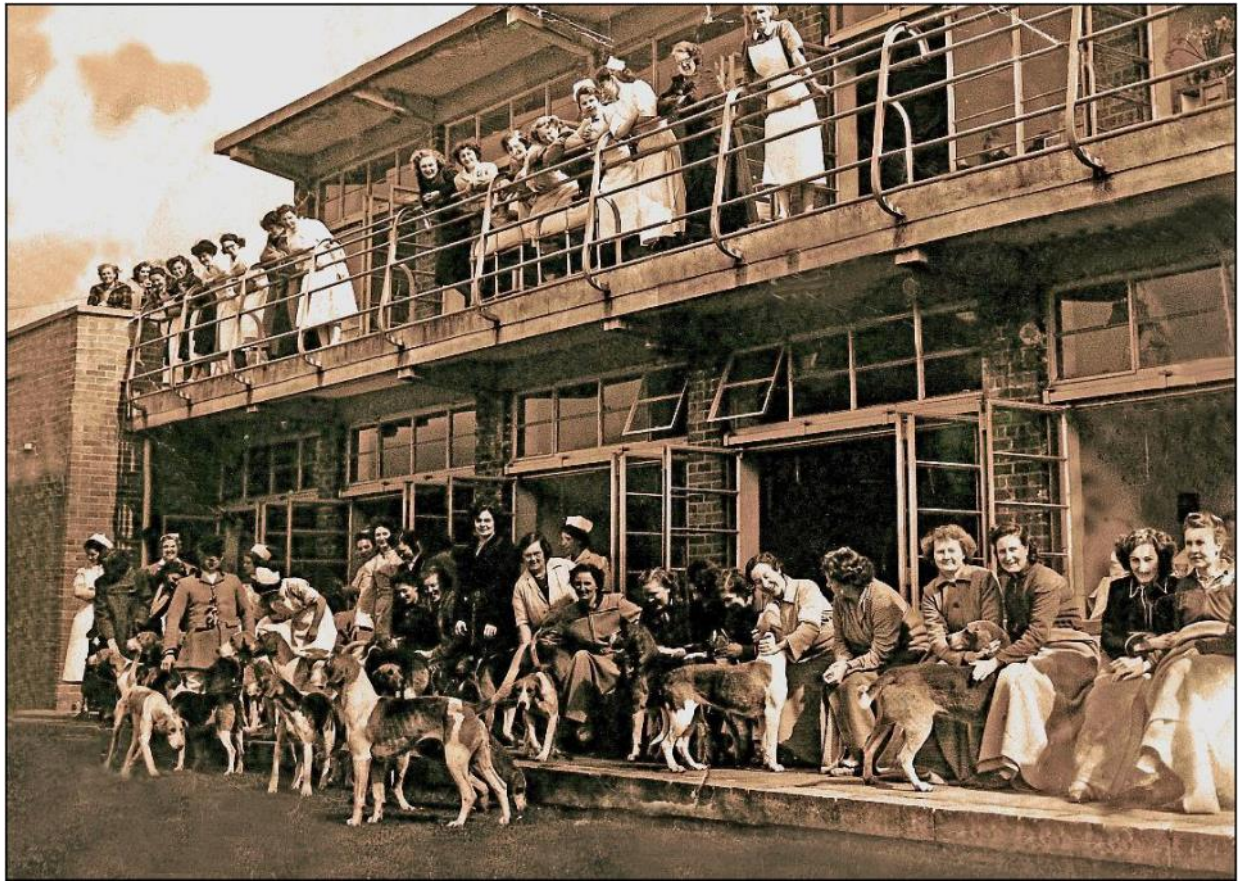
Sanatorium

Standish House met their requirements and the Ministry of Health agreed that Standish should be a sanatorium where ex-servicemen were to be given priority. All that was needed was to raise the money. Fund raising started with the Red Cross and the Order of St John's giving £10,000 and Gloucester City and County Councils providing further contributions. It was a positive start and Standish House began to be re-fitted. The original plan was for 100 adult beds and 200 children's beds but funding fell short due to the 1920s depression, and only 140 beds in total could be opened - 100 adult beds and 40 for children. On 6th July 1922 Standish Sanatorium, which included a recreation hall in one of the outside blocks, was opened by the Duchess of Beaufort.



The Recreation Room looks as if it might have been adapted from an old hangar purchased from an auction at Minchinhampton in 1920.

The Sanatorium provided three wards in the main house for the most chronically sick. Outside there were blocks which were reclaimed wooden huts from local aerodromes abandoned after the First World War. These were made into the men's, women's and children's wards and one was a recreation hall. Once the men had improved, they could be transferred to one of the three men's chalets outside. Each chalet had four beds and an isolation room for infectious patients. In the third stage, when they were well enough to be up and about all day, they went to the men's block. The men had nick-names for this, "*the Monkey House*" and "*the Kennels*". Each block housed 30 beds, divided into 3-bed cubicles. Similarly, the women went to a women's ward in the house, then to the women's block when they were well enough to be up and about.



Treatment

Tuberculosis (TB), or “Consumption” as it was often called due to its wasting effect, is an infection caused by bacteria. It often appears as a lung infection but can affect other organs in the body. Patients often suffer with a persistent cough.

Patients with TB of the lung could be given Artificial Pneumothorax treatment which involved collapsing the lung. Alternatively, they might be given gold salt injections which also made the lung collapse. If the TB was in the limbs or the spine, they could be encased in plaster, which ensured complete rest.

It was considered an important part of the healing treatment that all the wards had plenty of cold fresh air flowing through. The only warming permitted was by hot water bottles, if needed by the patient, otherwise as much fresh air as possible was required. Patients would be outside most of the day regardless of the time of year. Their beds could be put outside and if able they could sit in chairs outside. The provision of a protective awning that could be lowered enabled them to stay outside during periods of rain or snow. Coping with the infectious disease in this way was a major safeguard for the nurses’ health as well.

Patients had regular X-rays and were seen by the house doctor to assess their progress. Once they were getting better, they started on light duties, to build up their strength. These were domestic tasks such as light dusting, washing, sweeping and cleaning windows. Once deemed fit enough to do light outdoor duties patients were moved on to weeding, hoeing the paths or working in the carpentry shop, making stalls for fetes or props and scenery for the concerts. This was to rehabilitate the patients for when they were well enough to go home. As they improved they could join in the recreations, such as playing billiards, croquet or bowls, and be allowed some leave to visit home.



Discipline

While the doctors arranged the patients' treatment, it was matron who ran the hospital. She was in charge of the appointment and welfare of staff, and made daily visits to the wards to check that general hygiene was kept up to standard. The sisters were in charge of the everyday running of their wards, supervising the staff and ensuring the treatment was carried out. The nurses, gardeners and cleaners had an X-ray every year to make sure they were well and, because of the high standards kept in the hospital, very few ever got TB.

Standish had very strict rules. The matron and sisters made sure that the rules were kept. Self-discipline and sobriety were considered essential to getting well. The men and women were not allowed to associate and had to stay in their own wards, and boundaries were set up where they could walk. The women had access to the South Road and Hill Farm Road, while the men used the main Standish drive to the lodge but were not allowed onto the main road.

Leave was granted after 8 weeks of treatment, should recovery and rehabilitation be progressing well, and patients were allowed home for Easter, Christmas and Bank holidays.

Patients were not allowed visitors until they had left the main house as, until then, they were considered too contagious and might spread the disease to other members of the family. The family could visit only on Saturday or Sunday afternoons unless there were special circumstances.

Recreation

The Recreation Hall, with a billiard table, card tables, a skittle table, wireless and a cinema, was situated opposite the main house. The staff and committee members made great efforts to support the patients during treatment and recovery by providing facilities and entertainment. There was even a small shop on site, where patients could buy things. Many regular events, such as fetes and plays, were held to raise money. The funds from their first fete in 1923 paid for the film facilities to be converted from silent to sound, which cost £350. The money raised also paid for Christmas presents and even fireworks.

A small section of the hall was screened off for the women, allowing them to participate in whist drives. There was a stage with a piano used when they put on shows and concerts, with both the nurses and patients taking part. As in many such communities, there were many talented staff and patients from singers to comedians and even a resident jazz band. Patients who were too ill to participate were lined up in their beds to see the shows.



PATIENTS' TIME TABLE.

7.45 a.m.	When considered fit : Rise, strip beds ; turn mattresses.
8.30 a.m.	Breakfast.
9. 0 a.m.	Make beds.
10. 0 a.m.	Exercise commences.
11.45 a.m.	Exercise ceases.
12. 0 noon	Rest on beds.
12.45 p.m.	Get ready for dinner.
1. 0 p.m.	Dinner.
2.15 p.m.	Work resumed ; patients on walks rest on beds.
3. 0 p.m.	Walks commence.
4. 0 p.m.	Exercise ceases.
4.30 p.m.	Tea.
6.20 p.m.	Rest on beds till temperatures taken.
7. 0 p.m.	Supper.
8. 0 p.m.	Bed, except for patients in Men's Block.
8.30 p.m.	Bed for patients in Men's Block. Patients on treatment should report at 8.0 p.m.

NOTE. CONCERTS, WHIST DRIVES, ETC.—
On these evenings there will be a meal at 5.15 p.m., and all patients rest on beds at 4.30 p.m.

N.B. It is essential that patients be punctual at meals. **All meals** must be taken in the Dining Room, unless when exempted.

Visiting Day is Saturday from 2 to 5 p.m.

(In exceptional circumstances visiting is allowed, by ticket only, on Sunday afternoons).

No patient is allowed, on any day, more than four visitors.

Expansion

Initially a single mixed block for children had been established. In 1923 a new block was added, creating a further 40 beds which permitted accommodation for girls and toddlers, so that the original children's block became solely for the boys. It was possible for children to stay for anything up to two years. As it was a legal requirement for children of school age to receive an education, a school room was provided, which was staffed by four teachers and funded by the local education authority. If children were too ill to leave their beds the school



The School, Standish Hospital.

work came to them. Every effort was made for a child's stay to be as pleasant as possible. Every child was encouraged to join in all the activities that were put on for them. For many of the children it was the first time they had enjoyed good food and fresh air in a countryside setting. In 1933 the Standish Girl Guides was set up followed, in 1934, by the Boy Scouts and Cubs, which were run by Derek Yardley Wright, a master from Wycliffe College.

The extension of children's facilities was just one part of the overall hospital development programme at this time, and the additional construction gives an idea of the size and importance of Standish as a centre for treatment and expertise. By 1928 a new plaster room and two staff blocks had been added, with on-site accommodation for the Medical Superintendent having been constructed. Additional bed space was created, bringing the total available to 178, and, by 1930, 250 patients could be accommodated. In 1939 E block was opened and a further 80 men's beds became available, at a total cost of £30,000, but the outbreak of the Second World War saw a pause in development until after hostilities had ceased. In 1947 C block was opened and a new sisters' home was provided on site.

In 1948 the hospital became part of the National Health Service and a new X-Ray Department was opened. As tuberculosis became less common the range of conditions treated at the hospital grew. It specialised in Orthopaedics, Rheumatology and Respiratory Care. In 1953 the name was changed to Standish House Chest Hospital. Many nurses were trained there.

The League of Friends for Standish Hospital was formed in 1956, which organised fund raising and additional amenities for patients and visitors. The hospital continued to develop its service including Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy.

In 1974 the NHS had a major reorganisation. Standish came under the Gloucestershire Area Health Authority. A new theatre was opened and the X-Ray Department modernised. During the 1980s more management changes were made and services began to be transferred to Gloucestershire Royal Hospital. Despite new facilities having been built, in 1992 proposals were made to close the hospital. Protests were made and the hospital stayed open until 2004 when the last patients were transferred to Gloucester.

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Minutes of Gloucester Joint Committee for TB 1912 -1920, GA Ref. HO36/1/1

Minutes of Standish House Sub-Committee May 1920 - Dec 1922, GA Ref. HO36/3/1

Standish House Sanatorium c1944-1945

by Tony Daffurn

The first inkling I had that something was amiss was when my mother kept me home from school one day in order to take me to Doctor Goldfoot, our family doctor in Cheltenham. My only memory of this visit was that he gave me a thorough health check and, some time later, the news was broken to me gently that I would be going away for a while, to stay with some other nice children in the country. I later got to understand that, because my father had contracted tuberculosis in 1940, I was to be taken into Standish Sanatorium for observation. This was not surprising, when you take into account that I was so skinny, and had little interest in eating. I remember my father saying I was so thin that, if I stood sideways, I would be counted as absent!

My arrival at Standish as an eight year old was not without some emotion. I was taken there on the bus by my mother and my father's stepmother. I was received in the empty canteen just after lunch. I was made much fuss of by the kindly canteen ladies who gave me rice pudding with jam on it. This no doubt was to distract me in order to help my mother and step-gran make a less stressful departure. There were however still lots of tears on both sides, and not a memory that I choose to dwell on to this day.

From the canteen I was taken down to the boys' ward in the children's block. This consisted of a temporary wooden army hut, which seemed to be coated in dark creosote on the outside. I have only recently discovered these were old RAF buildings from the First World War. I am not sure how many boys were in that hut, but I would guess fifteen to twenty. Adjacent to this hut was another where there were about as many girls. Two of the staff here were Sister Danks and Nurse Harding. Both were hardened professionals from the old school of nursing. That is not to say they were unkind to us, but they did expect you to toe the line and were firm in their duties regarding those in their care.

In the ward itself any mode of entertainment was scarce, I never once heard a radio in my thirteen months there apart from in the hospital school. There were a few board games such as Ludo or Snakes and Ladders, and a pack of playing cards. But we did have an old wind-up gramophone and a few old 78 rpm records. We were not allowed to have or play any records of popular music at that time, and were more or less confined to a few hymn tunes and a well worn record of "*Bless This House*". This was Sister Danks' favourite tune, and every time we played it she used to go into ecstasy. I can't be certain but I believe it was the version sung by Gracie Fields, and, on the other side, was "*The Lord's Prayer*". One of the lads somehow managed to get hold of an old hand-cranked Pathé 9.5 ciné projector and, with a few blankets off the beds, we managed to make an area dark enough to show a few old short silent films.

In general the behaviour among the boys was quite good; I never saw any fights or squabbles. This may have been due to rumours that anyone causing trouble would be dealt with by a doctor, who would administer punishment with a rubber strap. Whether this was true or false I never knew, but it never happened while I was there. The only breach of the peace I was to witness happened very early one morning before the day staff arrived. Two of the lads started a pillow fight which quickly spread until it became a pitched battle involving all of the boys, including me. When it was over the ward looked like a war zone, there were sheets blankets and pillows strewn around the floor, and not a bed untouched. When the day staff arrived they read the riot act, and warned that any future incidents would result in severe punishment.



This is the skinny boy that was sent to Standish House Sanatorium for 13 months observation.

We had a small school close to our block and, on my arrival, I well remember the head teacher being shown some of my previous work and saying, "Very good! this is the sort of work we like to see". I do not know of course if the work was good or not, or whether she was just trying to make this new boy feel at ease on his first day in a new school. History was one of my favourite lessons as it always included a radio programme that was called "How Things Began". This consisted of a man called Uncle George taking his two young charges (a boy and girl) on a journey into the past. He would start with an introduction, and then pretend he was actually there and describing what he could see and hear. While we were listening to this, we were of course not allowed to sit idle and twiddle our fingers - we were taught to knit dishcloths out of string, but who they were for I never found out. Maybe they were used within the hospital in order to save money. My best friend Ian said to me one day, that, when we were knitting, we were really only pushing the stitches off one needle and on to the other. Why did we not just do that? Accordingly for one lesson we just pushed the stitches from one needle and onto the other, and it was not until the lesson ended that we realised that our dishcloths had not got any longer.

At the rear of the school was a beautiful, large pond surrounded by trees. This area was out-of-bounds to us for fear of mishaps with the pond, but we did make occasional visits to that area under the supervision of teachers from the school. Close by the pond was an ancient oak tree that we were told by our teacher had been there since the time of William the Conqueror. I believe this may have been a rather optimistic date but, without doubt, it was hundreds of years old. The oak was hollow and you could squeeze about six to eight young children into the cavity. I paid a visit to this old tree in 2004, and it was still standing and in good condition. Sadly the pond had become choked with weed and water lilies and was much neglected.

I remember Christmas 1944 at the school being quite beautiful. We made angels from coloured tissue paper that were put up in the windows and made the school look so wonderful, as, when the sun shone through the windows, they looked like stained glass. We also made all of our own paper chains and other Christmas decorations.



Standish Hospital Children's Block c1940s

It was decided that we would have our own Nativity play, and I was chosen to be one of the three kings. This was not the first time that I had "walked the boards" for, at my infants school, I had played the part of a water snail. That had involved me making myself as small as possible, and my lines were "Bubble-bubble, bubble-bubble" and that was all. This new dramatic venture involved me in a solo singing role, where I had to sing one of the verses of "We Three Kings". Since I was the second of the Kings, I sang the second verse: "Born a King on Bethlehem's plain". I had quite a good voice as a young lad and was told that I had sung it well. In spite of a large audience of school friends, teachers and nursing staff I have no recollection of nervousness or stage fright. This surprises me for I was always a very shy and retiring boy and hated being picked on to read in front of a class at school.

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I remember my own personal Christmas as something of a disappointment. I remember waking in the dark very early on Christmas morning before any of the other boys were awake, then fumbling about at the bottom of my bed and finding very little there. Since it was wartime, there was not a lot of choice in the way of toys, but this was of little consolation to a boy of eight in hospital on Christmas morning. Two things stand out in my memory: one was finding an obviously second hand toy gyroscope and the second was lying back in my bed and crying myself to sleep. I have no recollections at all of how we spent Christmas day but presume it must have been a reasonably happy one as I think I would have remembered had it been otherwise. No doubt we would all be sharing each other's toys being in such close proximity.

Every Sunday evening we were marched to a quaint little church set up in a wooden hut. The vicar was a portly man, and I remember him telling us we should endeavour to read the bible. He said he had read the bible from cover to cover, and it had taken him three years. Even from a young age I was never very taken with religion, but I used to enjoy going to this little church, as the evening sun always seemed to be shining while we were there. Much of my time was spent looking out of the windows at the country outside while the shadows of the trees gradually crept across the fields. On occasions, even now, when I sit alone in my garden and watch a sunset, I find myself back in that little church looking out of the window, and there is that old familiar yearning to return to my youth.

At the front of our ward there was a large green open space and an open-sided barn that we were allowed to play in. We also had two pet rabbits called Punch and Judy and, needless to say, to our amazement there were frequent litters of baby rabbits. I presume they were given away as I do not remember us keeping more than two rabbits. We also had a tethered tortoise called George because, I was informed, he was born or acquired on the same day that King George VI was crowned. There was also a small cinema at the hospital and on occasions we were allowed to see films that were considered suitable for children.

Bath night was a once a week big ritual overseen by the no-nonsense Nurse Harding. It went like this - all the boys had to strip naked with only a towel to protect their dignity. We then had to queue up in the steam-filled bathroom where there was only one bath, albeit a rather large one as I remember. Then one at a time we had to step into the near end of the bath and sacrifice the protection of the towel which was placed on a chair at the far end of the bath. While you were standing there naked, Nurse Harding would vigorously wash you all over with the sloppiest soapy flannel that I was ever to encounter in my life. When this operation was complete you had to retire to sit in the other end of the bath to rinse yourself off, while the next boy was being soaped at the first end. The next stage of the process was that you got out of the bath and dried yourself with the towel on the chair, and so on ad infinitum; it was a bathing production line that worked with Nurse Harding's super efficiency. When you consider most of us were there because we were thin and wan, to the casual observer it would have looked like a scene from Belsen concentration camp.

At night younger nurses took over. They were probably only in their late teens or early twenties and were different altogether from the day staff. In particular I remember a Nurse Fox who was very kind to me; she was very excited one evening because there was going to be a dance at the school just behind the ward. I can only presume there were probably going to be Americans there as she said she might be able to get me some chocolate. Later in the evening she came in to the ward and woke me, gave me a kiss and a few squares of chocolate. Apart from my parents it was the first time I felt I had met someone that I loved and I thought loved me. This particular nurse brought me cake and sweets at night on several occasions. The other person who would come and amuse us was a kind elderly gentleman known to us as Colonel Despard Davies who lived nearby. He would usually visit early evenings or weekends and regale us with stories of his exploits, and tell us how the war was going, and sometimes bring little gifts. As I had shown some interest in the progress of the war he arrived one day with a wonderful atlas book in which he had inscribed "*To Tony from Colonel Despard Davies*". I treasured that book for many years but, when I married and left home, it vanished along with all my other books.



I had my ninth birthday at Standish on Thursday 29th March 1945. I have little memory of the event apart from the fact that I had a chocolate birthday cake. This, I presume, had been made by my mother who used to make some wonderful cakes.

When I first arrived at Standish we frequently had delicious rice puddings in the canteen but, as the war rolled on, the rice disappeared and tapioca took its place. I hated the stuff as did many of the other boys. We used to call it frog spawn for that is what it looked like, and what it felt like when you put it into your mouth. The nicest thing to ever come out of that canteen was roast potatoes and they were delicious. We all looked forward to Sundays and the roasters. This I believe was also the day that we usually had our ration of one egg a week. Fish, which was frequently on the menu, was usually just poached in water; I have no idea what sort of fish it was but remember it being almost tasteless. On one occasion a boy was sick at the table when trying to eat it. Still, as they used to say, there was a war on, and you should be grateful you have any food at all. There was one little consolation to meal times which was that every boy had a personal tin of goodies that had been brought by parents and other visitors. These could be opened once a day and one item could be taken out. But what I remember most was the delicious aroma that pervaded the atmosphere in the canteen when all these tins were opened. I can smell it to this day; there was an instant interfusion of apples, biscuits, chocolate and cake. It was ambrosia to hungry young boys.

On May 8th 1945 we were told the War in Europe was now over and there was great celebration around the hospital. The school decided that there would be a children's celebration march around the hospital grounds. We first had to learn the words to Elgar's tune of "*Land of Hope and Glory*". As soon as we had learned the words, the parade was arranged. The whole school was involved and we were to march around the hospital grounds singing. I joined in the throng but, before we marched off, the headmistress pulled me out from among the ranks, led me to the front and gave me a Union Jack. The signal was then given for us to march off and start singing. It seems that I was being a bit limp-wristed in my handling of the flag as the headmistress shouted to me, "*Hold it up boy! Hold it up! Aren't you proud of it?*" I have never seen any photographs of this motley little parade, and was not aware of anyone taking any. But I can't believe that not one of the hundreds of people in this hospital took a photograph of this singing band of children celebrating Victory in Europe.

Having never known anything other than a state of war I found myself somewhat disappointed to find that it was now finished. No more hiding under the stairs or down the Air Raid Warden's cellar when the air-raid sirens went, no more bombers passing over on their way to the north, no more anti-aircraft gun fire or barrage balloons. And no more cheering when a Spitfire went over our school playground. It was going to be such a dull life without a war.

Time has worn my memories a little thin at the edges, but I trust you have enjoyed my reminiscences of thirteen months in Standish Sanatorium. On returning home I really missed the company of the other children, both boys and girls, as we all used to play very happily together. In my time there I never saw any fights or squabbles. My eternal thanks go to Sister Danks and Nurse Harding who, though they would have no nonsense, looked after us well and returned us safely to our parents. Sadly time has forgotten those who gave their time to caring for sick children during the war. I hope my small contribution has shed some light on this.

*Childhood is like a flight of stairs,
We spend our youth to struggle upwards to see what is at the top,
Only to find we have then lost the most valuable thing in life,
Our childhood.*

Anthony L. Daffurn



Tony Daffurn 2016.



*Tony on his return
from Standish with
his brother Robin
c1945.*

A Brief History of Standish Hospital Radio

by Rich White

When I joined Standish Hospital Radio in 1999, little did I know that I would be writing a brief history of the station twenty years later. At first I found it very difficult to find any documented information and have since been told that this may well be the first article written about the radio station. Armed with only the information I gathered during my time at the station, I contacted several past presenters for their first-hand knowledge.

The idea of a radio service at Standish Hospital came about after staff in the Occupational Therapy Department suggested that it would be a good idea to provide musical entertainment for the long-stay patients on E Block. So in 1950 a radio service was introduced in Standish Hospital using a Rediffusion relay system, a trade name for the Broadcast Relay Service Ltd. The radio signals were carried by cable to the hospital as part of the subscription service and included the BBC stations: the Light Programme, the Home Service and the Third Programme. The Rediffusion equipment received and relayed the signal to the wards, with the patients receiving the programmes on their ear phones.

In April 1957, a voluntary organisation called The League of Friends for Standish Hospital was formed to provide a service and amenities for the patients and staff of the hospital. That same year the junior section of The League of Friends took over part-running of the radio service. After hearing patients' wishes for more music in the evenings, they added a domestic record player to the system and started to play music to the patients from a small room, known as "the broom cupboard", which was situated to the side of the large Recreation Hall. These broadcasts proved to be very popular and, within a few months, a microphone was added and a small studio was established.



In 1958 the radio station became a member of the National Association of Hospital Broadcasting Organisations (NAHBO) and became known as Standish Hospital Radio, with a call sign of Radio Standish. The station continued to broadcast for several evenings a week throughout the 1960s, being staffed by volunteers from within the hospital and from the local villages.

At the beginning of the 1970s the junior section of The League of Friends was disbanded due to the lack of volunteers, and the much-loved hospital radio service ceased operating. In 1972 the League of Friends started to recruit volunteers in an attempt to get the radio service operational again. Two of the first to offer their services were David Ford and Julie Feltham both from the Hospital's General Office. New equipment was purchased by The League of Friends including a Westrex distribution system, a small mixer and two record turntables. Begging letters were sent to record companies in an attempt to increase the radio station's record library, with well-wishers and patients also donating records to the station.

Initially broadcasting was limited to one or two evenings a week, playing an assortment of music including requests from the patients. Gradually more volunteers became involved, including students from Wycliffe College, which enabled broadcasts to become more frequent. The relayed BBC stations were still being piped to the hospital, but with a flick of a switch the presenters could relay Radio Standish to all the wards. Patients tended to be in hospital for longer in those days, and became familiar with the weekly radio routine.



The Radio Standish studio.

The Citizen newspaper was taken around the wards every evening and, at the same time, forms advertising Radio Standish that included space for a record request were handed out to patients and collected on the day of the broadcast.

Standish Hospital was served by three volunteer chaplains, and four religious services a year were held in the Recreation Hall. A brass cross and candlesticks were placed on a temporary altar. An organ would be wheeled out and the organist would be accompanied by members of St Cyr's Church choir. The congregation consisted of patients, including those transferred to the hall in wheelchairs and beds. The service was relayed live by Radio Standish to patients on the wards. In 1980 a Sunday morning programme was started which included

members of the ecumenical chaplainry team. Quite often the Reverend Niall Morrison from Randwick would cycle down and present the show himself. Around this time the radio room was transferred to its own separate building located between Ward D and E Block.

In 1983, Ann Hampton, who had joined the station in 1978, took over the role of Station Manager when David Ford left after 11 years running the station. The radio station had become an integral part of the social activity within the hospital and, in 1989, The League of Friends provided money for a new mixing desk, two record turntables, an amplifier, a tuner and a tape recorder to replace the original Radio Room equipment. By now the radio station had sufficient volunteers to broadcast eighteen hours per week comprising mainly of patients' requests. In addition church services and the hospital fete were covered every year.

As well as the radio station raising money for Standish Hospital, it also looked at good causes outside the hospital. Several hundred pounds were raised for appeals such as Red Nose Day, Comic Relief and Children in Need, with much fun being had in the fund-raising process.

In 1992, the Gloucestershire Health Authority started formal consultation on the proposed closure of Standish Hospital and the subsequent relocation of its services to Gloucester Royal Hospital. Then, on 16th April 1993, the South West Regional Health Authority finally rubber-stamped the closure, despite a petition presented to the Health Minister at the Houses of Parliament by the "Save Our Standish Group". Despite the fear of closure, life at the hospital and radio station carried on.

In 1997, Ann Hampton retired. She had been one of the main driving forces behind the station and was sadly missed.

In July 1998, Radio Standish entertained the patients with a 50 hour non-stop broadcast to coincide with the hospital fete and to celebrate 50 years of the National Health Service. Presenters over the 50 hours were new manager Andrew Smith, James Marchington, Andy Biddell, Sarah Mercer, John Cantwell, Fred Garrott, Mariella Dexter, Christine Rice and Hilarie Smith.



The Radio Standish record library.

With much of the radio equipment now over 10 years old, the mixing desk finally failed and was temporarily replaced by a small second-hand disco mixer. Sadly, with the pending closure of the hospital and the failing equipment, morale started to drop. By mid 1999, the radio volunteers comprised of only three presenters with broadcasting eventually dropping down to six hours a week. However, in August 1999, a recruiting campaign was launched for more volunteers within the hospital, which included the radio station, and that was when I became involved in Radio Standish. The volunteering process entailed having a CRB (police record check) and being screened for tuberculosis, the whole process taking about 3 months.



Rich White presenting the Sunday Request Show.

I was allocated Sunday evenings and did my first show at the beginning of December 1999. The recruiting campaign had proved a success, with new volunteers enabling the radio station to broadcast seven days a week to all wards between 8 pm and 10 pm (official broadcast times) although many broadcasts continued well past 10 pm to include all the patient requests.

In May 2000, I was asked if I would take over the role of Station Manager and also to become a committee member for The League of Friends for Standish Hospital.

With regular broadcasting, Radio Standish was again proving popular with the patients and staff. Later that year it received a new

mixing desk purchased by The League of Friends, when the outdated temporary mixer started to cause problems with the sound quality of the broadcasts. Radio Standish was also given its own budget and, within a short time, had purchased a Mini Disc Recorder which enabled jingles and promotions for events at the hospital to be recorded and included within the broadcasts.

Christmas 2000 saw the re-instatement of broadcasting of the religious services which were now held in the X-Ray Department. However due to health and safety requirements, cables between the radio studio and the X-Ray Department were not allowed, so the services were recorded and broadcast to the wards the following Sunday. A new five-minute religious programme was introduced and broadcast on the first Sunday of each month before the Sunday Request Show, and featured the three hospital chaplains who would take it in turns to give their "Thought for the Month".

Radio Standish also resumed daytime broadcasts during the hospital fete although, in 2001, the fete was cancelled due to foot-and-mouth disease in the area. Fund-raising activities for the hospital included a successful Radio Standish Quiz Night hosted by presenter Mike Manning.

Broadcasting at Standish was a real pleasure, especially in the summer evenings when the door would be wide open, and many visitors and hospital staff would poke their heads around the door and say hello. We also had a male nurse who had a great voice and would sometimes pop in and sing a song live on air. On one occasion I was presenting my show when a peacock came into the studio and appeared to sing along with the music!

September 2003 saw the first signs of impending closure when Ward D was closed, later to be followed by the occasional weekend closure of Ward C2. On December 28th 2004, the last patients would be transferred from Standish to Gloucester Royal. On Christmas Eve 2004, Radio Standish closed for the last time with a special two-hour broadcast presented by all the available presenters: Andrew & Hilarie Smith, Mike Manning, Martin James & Jill Daniels, Andy Myers, Rich White & Hannah Cook with farewell messages from Pam Paradise, Tony Thomas and John Perry who could not attend.

Just after 10 pm, surrounded by fellow presenters and many thank-you cards from patients, I had the sad duty as Station Manager of thanking all the listeners and all those associated with the radio station over the years, before closing Radio Standish for the last time with the song “*The Party’s Over*” by Shirley Bassey. As the song faded away, no-one said a word, but we all knew we had lost something special.

Over the years the radio station had increased its mainly donated record collection to more than six thousand vinyl records including LPs and singles and over three hundred CDs giving the patients an exceptionally wide variety of entertainment from Jim Reeves to Tony Hancock and Beethoven to the Beatles.

Work started to dismantle the studio and box up all the vinyl records and CDs. At that time there was hope that the hospital would return in a different form and the radio station would be needed again. The studio equipment and wiring were carefully dismantled and marked up to facilitate easy re-assembly should the time come. Everything was packed up and put into storage. Unfortunately as time passed it became evident that a return was looking more and more unlikely. To save further storage costs the ageing equipment was donated to Stroud FM, the new local community radio station, for use as a production studio.



The dismantled studio after closedown.



All the records packed away.

For me Radio Standish was more than a radio station - it was a friend at the patients’ bedside. Many of them looked forward to the presenters’ visits to the wards for a laugh and chat while collecting their requests. It was this personal contact with patients that I missed most about Radio Standish, and knowing that you were helping to make them feel better during their stay in hospital. Radio Standish was not a plush equipped radio station like many others, but it had heart. It was loved by all: patients, presenters and hospital staff alike. The whole hospital and site was a jewel in a crown, and the radio station was part of that jewel.

**This article is dedicated to all the volunteers of Standish Hospital Radio
who gave their time for the benefit of others.**

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Past presenters of Standish Hospital Radio, with special thanks to Ann Hampton and David Ford.

Standish Hospital Radio nurse cartoon, Steve Grant, 1989

Photographs ©Rich White

Beard's Mill viaduct

by Stephen Mills

Introduction

Although largely unknown outside our immediate area, in its heyday, the relatively isolated little settlement known as Beard's Mill was once a busy place. In the 19th century, it largely comprised Beard's Mill House, a handful of workers' cottages, and the woollen cloth mill itself. However, life changed dramatically, at least for a time, when the first of several impressive viaducts was built to carry the Gloucester to Bristol main railway line high above the mill. The viaduct in its current form continues to carry out this function to this day.

This is a story of not one, but two, striking (but often overlooked) marvels of 19th century engineering - one replaced the other. Because of its location, the viaduct is not visible from any major roads or centres of habitation. Likewise, most rail passengers are blissfully unaware of its existence as they are whisked high above the rooftops of the hamlet. Apart from occasional walkers or local inhabitants, few outsiders would ever know that it exists. And yet, it is an impressive structure that over the years, has witnessed major feats of civil engineering.

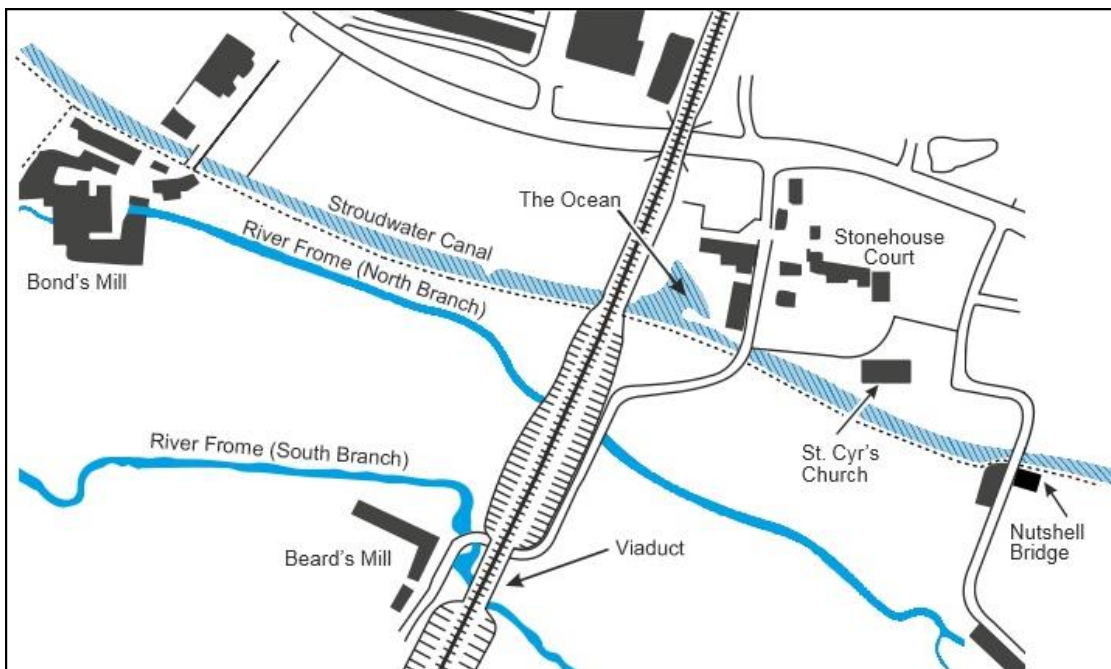


Diagram showing the location of Beard's Mill viaduct.

The first (Brunel) viaduct

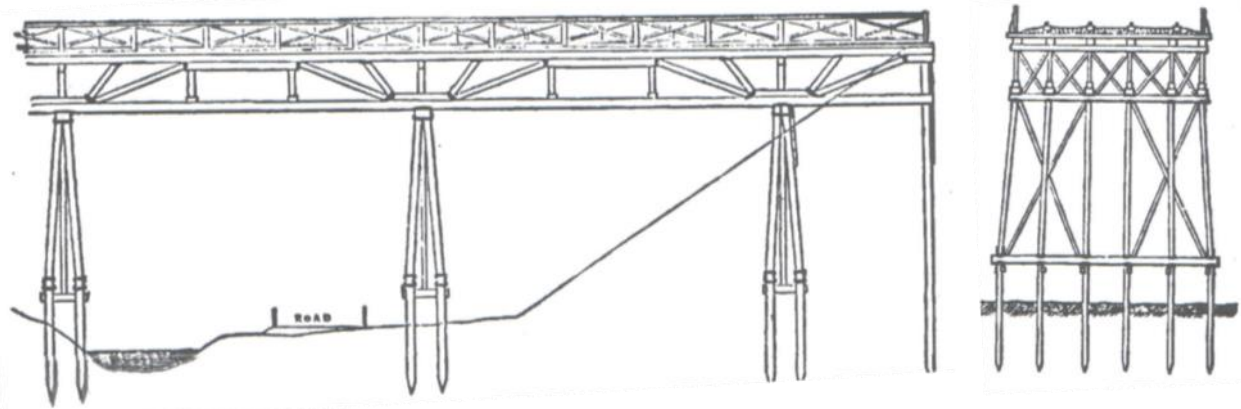
The viaduct, in its initial form, was designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. He was responsible for the design and much of the construction work. Cost and practical considerations dictated that he would build Beard's Mill viaduct largely of wood, a material with which he was very familiar; in fact, Brunel has been described as the greatest timber engineer in the country's history. In 1841, as work on the construction of the Bristol and Gloucester Railway continued, Brunel was able to report to the company's directors:

"the next contract which extends into the valley of Frocester is nearly completed and all the earthworks will certainly be finished before the winter. The embankment beyond this and over the remainder of the valley is also being completed, and the short viaduct [Beard's Mill] connecting these two embankments is now proceeding well (1)."

The design and construction of the viaduct was quite complicated and called on all of Brunel's skill and experience in using wood for large load-bearing structures. The distance between the supporting piers of typical railway bridges and viaducts of the time was usually too great to allow the superstructure to be constructed of simple wooden beams. To overcome this, Brunel adopted forms of framing that were similar to those commonly found in the construction of roofs (2).

A report from the Railway Department to the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade in 1846 (3) noted that the viaduct was 28 miles 10 chains (45.3 km) from Bristol, then proceeded to give a lengthy and very detailed description of its make-up (see Figs. 1 and 2). The following extract from the Railway Department's report gives some indication of the viaduct's construction:

"The piers of this viaduct consist of a framework of timber of two transverse sills, 3 feet apart at the bottom, bearing six pairs of posts, which meet at the top, and are crowned by 5 transverse double caps, each formed of two pieces of timber bolted together, side by side, on which 6 strong longitudinal trusses are placed over the heads of the posts. The above framework of every pier is supported by 6 pairs of piles, 12 in all, driven into the ground at clear intervals of 3 feet apart, as seen in the longitudinal elevation, not equidistant in transverse section, but so distributed as to be immediately under the rails and the parapets. The piles, sills and posts of the last of which the two centre pairs only are vertical, as well as each of the double caps, are all of timber, 13 or 14 inches square."



Figures 1 & 2.

It was built using suitably hefty timber, strengthened where necessary with iron components. It was around 540 ft (165 m) in length and consisted of 10 bays of 50 ft (15 m) span, and 2 bays of 20 ft (6 m) span, one at each end of the former. The shorter bays were almost entirely buried in the ends of the embankment. The viaduct's highest point was around 43 ft (13 m) above the ground. Two of the longer bays spanned the small access road and a branch of the River Frome that supplied water to the mill.

Thus, Brunel's design comprised fans of five struts incorporated into a larger girder arrangement that ran the full length of the viaduct. The entire structure was supported on ten wooden piers of three fans each. Unsurprisingly, the construction of the embankments and viaduct resulted in some changes to the water courses in the immediate area. For example, the adjacent loop of the river was cut off, diverted, and re-directed over a new weir in front of the main mill - the tail-end of the old loop survives as part of the pool below the weir. A range of mill buildings of unknown function was also obliterated by the new viaduct (4). The bulk of construction took place between 1841 and 1843, with the Bristol and Gloucester Railway opening to traffic on 6th July 1844. In 1845, the Railway effectively became part of the Midland Railway.

Although Brunel went on to build a number of other wooden railway viaducts - for example, in Devon and Cornwall - the Beard's Mill viaduct differed significantly. For a structure built largely of wood, it lasted remarkably well. However, wood has a finite life and after around 40 years of service, the Midland Railway decided it was time to replace it.



Figure 3. The gradual replacement of the wooden viaduct in the early 1880s, with part of Brunel's structure still visible.

Such longevity may have been due partly to Brunel's use of creosote to pre-treat the wood. Creosote had been discovered by the Bristol-born chemist John Bethell in 1838, produced by the distillation of coal tar. Brunel quickly realised the importance of Bethell's discovery as a preservation treatment for structural timber and railway sleepers. After taking out a licence to use Bethell's patent, he was instrumental in the building of a facility in Bristol to distil coal tar obtained from the Bristol Gas Works (5).

The second (Midland Railway) viaduct

Brunel's wooden viaduct gave sterling service for the best part of four decades, and it was not until the 1880s that a replacement was deemed necessary. Remarkably, the old viaduct continued to function even as the new one rose gradually beneath it (Fig. 4). Given the local topography and rail layout, there was little option for rerouting trains during the construction period, hence building work was carried out in such a way that traffic continued unhindered. Essentially, the new viaduct was built beneath and between the existing wooden piers. A contemporary local source (6) heralded its completion and opening on 30th July 1884:

"For the past 2 years the company's engineers have been preparing its [the wooden viaduct] removal and the substitution of a more permanent structure of brick and iron. At the close of July this work was brought to a successful completion, and it is very satisfactory to know that it has been accomplished without the slightest accident. It has moreover, been done without interruption to the traffic, though clear passage had to be daily provided for over a hundred trains."

It seems likely that responsibility for the project fell to John Underwood who, between 1875 and 1883, was the Joint Engineer for the Midland Railway (MR) responsible for New Works (7). It was reported that the new viaduct's massive piers contained about three quarters of a million bricks, weighing about 2000 tons. The new pier foundations went down between 15 and 20 ft (4.5 and 6 m) and rested on 2000 tons of concrete. The latter was reportedly (8): *"made up of portions of the hills of Leicestershire, Minchinhampton, Thornbury and Mangotsfield Common."*

The deck structure consisted of 30 wrought iron (Palmer's) girders weighing 200 tons, comprising three spans of 50 ft (15 m) and two of 30 ft (9 m), at a height of 35 ft (11 m) from the ground. The deck sides were in the form of an iron lattice, a configuration used widely at the time for bridges and various other structures. Capping the entire structure were around 60 tons of "Yate's" wood, and above that was the permanent way, comprising steel rails and wooden sleepers (8). This was edged with iron railings (Figures 4 and 5).

Exactly where the viaduct's ironwork came from is not clear - supply was usually put out to tender and in this case, the MR sought bids via newspaper advertisements in, for instance, the Gloucester Journal (9). These were replicated elsewhere in newspapers such as the Derbyshire Advertiser and Journal. Potential suppliers were directed to contact James Williams, the MR's secretary based in Derby. Who won the contract is not known. A Mr Niblett of Amberley supplied the stone for the viaduct. However, it is not clear where the huge number of bricks were sourced

from, although large MR projects such as this often sourced bricks produced locally, assuming suitable materials were available (7).

The replacement viaduct took around 2½ years (on and off) to complete, although the final stage of replacing the superstructure was carried out over six consecutive Sundays, presumably as there was less traffic. To say it was a delicate operation would be something of an understatement, as it involved dismantling one half/track at a time, and diverting all traffic to the remaining side.



Figure 4. One of the 'official' MR photographs showing the nearly-completed viaduct. (courtesy MR Research Centre)

Work involved constructing four piers that supported large girder bed stones weighing 4 tons each. Thirty 7 ton girders were then attached to them. On the final working day, workers laid two hundred and twenty 28 ft (8.5 m) long timbers, and replaced the two permanent ways. Although there were variations, an average of 60 workmen had been employed during construction. While the work was being carried out, trains were temporarily worked on a single line system from a purpose-built signal box.

The opening ceremony

When the project was finally completed, the last stone was laid by Major and Mrs Chapman of Stonehouse Court who had *"taken a lively interest throughout the project"*. During the opening ceremony, an ivory mallet and silver trowel were presented by the workmen to the couple - it was inscribed:

"Presented to Major Frederick Barclay and Mrs Augusta Chapman of Stonehouse Court, Gloucestershire, by the workmen rebuilding Stonehouse Viaduct of the Midland Railway, on laying of the coping stone completing its re-construction, July 20th 1884, as a token of respect and appreciation of the great interest shown in their work and welfare."

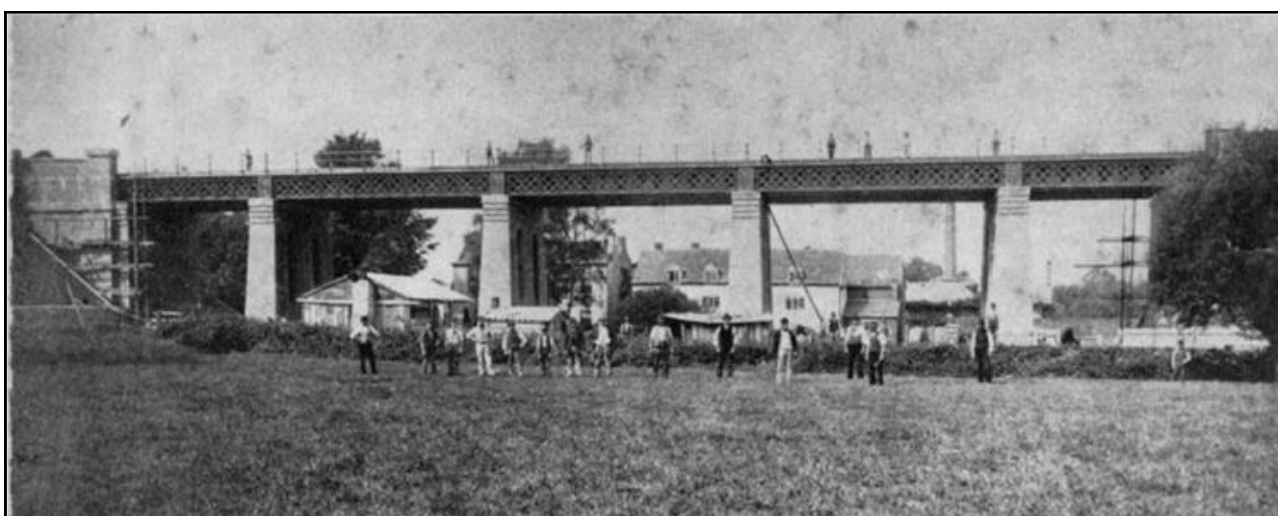


Figure 5. The new MR viaduct nearing completion. Its wooden predecessor has now gone. Beard's Mill is visible through the viaduct.

Major Chapman, along with other local gentlemen, arranged a celebratory dinner for the workmen at the Crown & Anchor in Stonehouse. During the dinner there were innumerable speeches and toasts to all involved. Praise was heaped upon the workers for their skill and behaviour. Local magistrate Mr J T Stanton was delighted to report that not a single case or man had been brought before the Whitminster Bench in connection with the viaduct - this was *"a grand compliment to them all"*. It was suggested that if there was a member of the press present, he should make a note of the fact that there were British workmen to be found who were an honour to their country, and they were thanked most sincerely for the careful way in which they had carried out the difficult work of rebuilding the viaduct without a single accident to life or damage to property. Towards the close of the proceedings, the Chairman asked the men to (7):

"Go to their hard earned rest that night, and next day go to their respective places of worship and thank their Creator that they had got through a very difficult six Sundays' work without so much as pinching their little fingers."

Brunel's earlier wooden viaduct also received praise when it was described as of slender design but of excellent design and construction. Again, the workmen were complimented in that they had dealt with the old structure in a *"very gentle manner, and had taken nearly 3 years to entirely relieve it of its tenacious life"*.

During the course of the rebuild, it was estimated that the work had been accomplished without serious delay to the 30 passenger trains and around 90 other trains accommodated daily. Around 30,000 passengers had passed over the viaduct without a single mishap and without an accident of any kind. A fitting finale to what had clearly been a tricky piece of planning and engineering.

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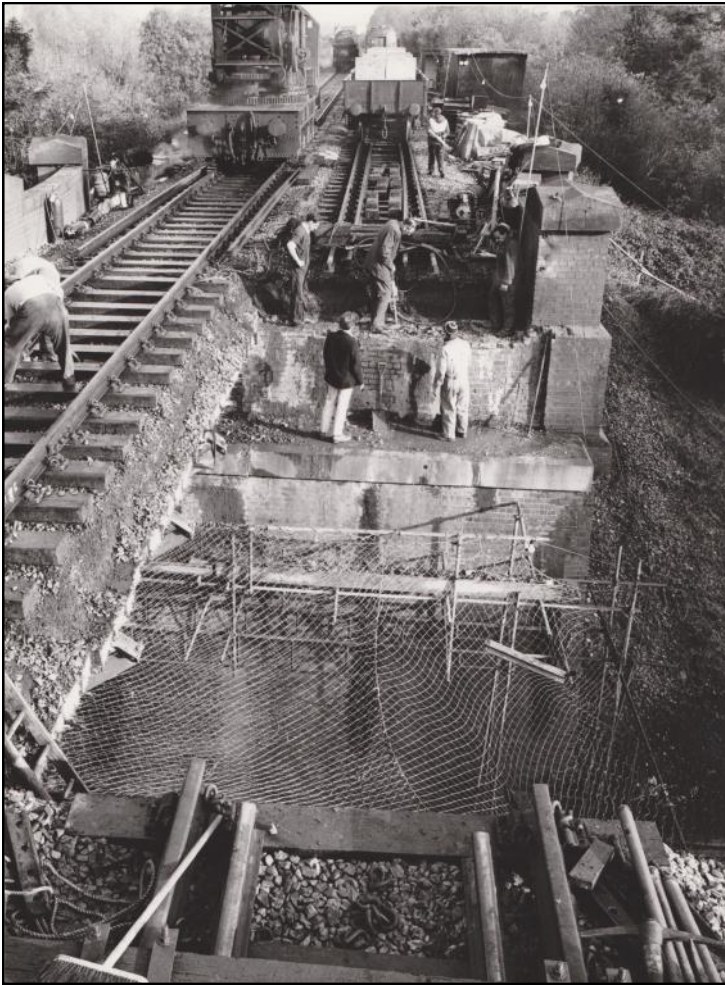
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An ongoing story

The viaduct is still an important link in the railway network and is used daily by dozens of trains. But like any industrial structure, it needs regular repair, maintenance and upgrading - over the years, this has been undertaken by the railway authorities. Perhaps the biggest change came in 1971, when the upper deck, originally installed in 1884 by the Midland Railway, was carefully swapped to a new one of sturdier configuration (Fig. 6). Like the process adopted during the 1884 rebuild, one half of the deck and its rail track was replaced whilst the other half was kept open, allowing trains to continue passing (Figs. 7 and 8). Once completed, the process was repeated for the other side, with trains now switching to the upgraded section. In 2017, further significant maintenance work was carried out (Fig. 9), a process that will undoubtedly continue. As long as trains continue to run, Beard's Mill viaduct will continue to fulfil its vital, ongoing role, one that started no less than 175 years ago.



Figure 6. Two rail-mounted cranes removing part of the 1884 deck in 1971.



1971

*Figure 7. Left:
One half of the deck has been removed.
Note the rudimentary Health and Safety
arrangements!*

*Figure 8. Below:
A section of the lattice that formed part
of the 1884 deck side being removed.*



2017

Figure 9. Left:

*Maintenance work underway, with the
1971 deck structure clearly visible.
The original 1884 pillars look as strong
as the day they were built.*

Skew Railway Bridge over the Stroudwater Canal

by Cathy Glen and Jim Dickson

The Stonehouse - Nailsworth Branch Railway Line

Largely due to poor transport, during the mid-19th century the price of coal to manufacturers in the Stroud Valleys was twice that to competitors in the north of England. In 1862, a proposal was made to construct a branch railway line from Nailsworth to connect with the Midland Railway (MR) line at Stonehouse's Bristol Road Station – mainly for the benefit of the considerable cloth industry in Nailsworth Valley at that time. An unusual feature was that the line would serve factories with individual sidings. A committee was set up in January 1863 to pursue the proposal.

At a meeting on 10th February 1863 the Committee of the Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation (the Canal Company) agreed to oppose the proposal since the railway line would run parallel with the canal for much of its length and would therefore threaten its business. A month later, a Special General Meeting of the Canal Company resolved that “*serious injury*” would be likely to arise to the Canal Proprietors if the Bill for the proposed railway were to be passed by Parliament. They therefore opposed the proposal – noting that there would be “*general injury to the canal, and particularly to Stonehouse Wharf*”. On 24th March, a group of directors who had attended a Parliamentary hearing reported that a preliminary stage of the Bill had been passed in spite of their best efforts.

Within a month, the Canal Company had decided to avoid further opposition in Parliament to the proposed railway line. The key reason for this was that the local railway committee had offered to construct, and give to the Canal Company, a lie-by (where boats could be moored without impeding the passage of passing boats i.e. serving the same purpose as a layby at the side of a road for motor vehicles) of not less than 200 ft (61 m), and a siding in connection with the proposed railway, and to maintain it. Also to give the Canal Company at least double the quantity of land taken from the then-present wharf, on the south side of the siding. These works were to be done at the expense of the railway company, as compensation for trains passing through the Wharf. In return, the Canal Company would afford the railway company facilities for constructing the lie-by and wharf.



Stonehouse Wharf c.1900. Note the railway wagons on the siding to the left of the boats.

On 13th July 1863, the Stonehouse & Nailsworth Railway (S&NR) was authorised by Parliament to construct a line from the MR main line at Stonehouse to Nailsworth, a distance of 5.7 miles (9.2 km). Powers were granted to make arrangements with the MR to maintain, manage and work the line.

From the outset, the Board of Directors planned a much larger railway company than the one authorised. They had a vision of an extension from Dudbridge to Stroud and a route heading south-east across the Cotswolds from Stroud to Chippenham via Tetbury and Malmesbury to join GWR's Bristol line. There was even a grand scheme to connect Southampton with the Forest of Dean coalfields. None of these came to anything.

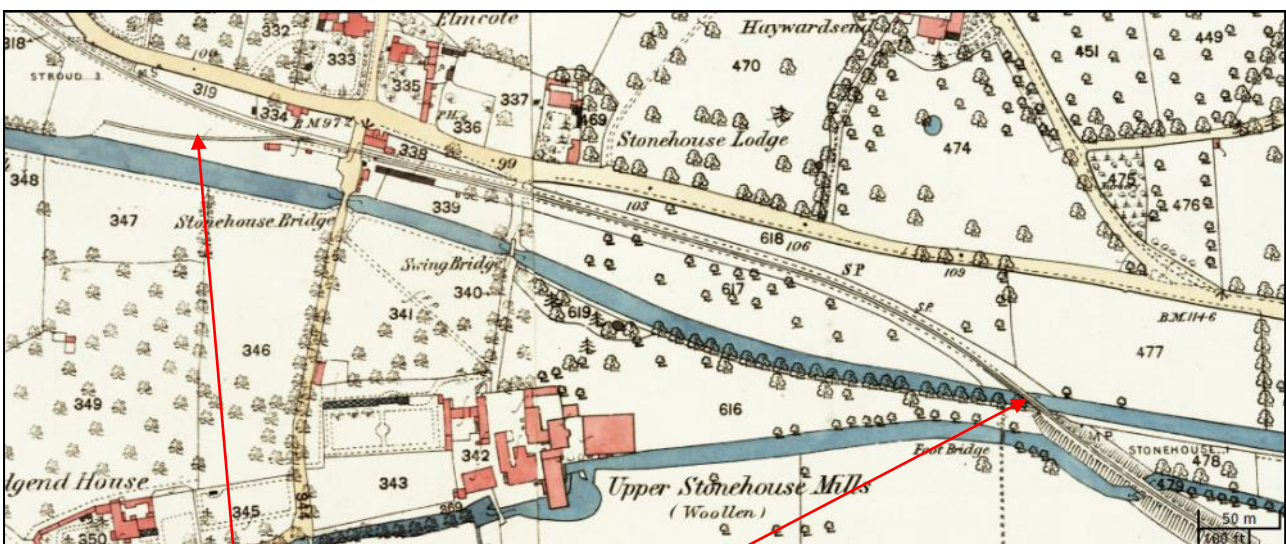
The first meeting of the S&NR was held in October 1863. The contract for constructing the line was let to Messrs. Watson, Overend & Co. By the end of August 1864, S&NR shareholders were told that the contractors had pushed forward the work "*with utmost vigour*" and it was anticipated that the line would be completed in mid-1865.

Skew Bridge

On 17th May 1864, representatives of the S&NR requested that members of the Canal Company meet with their engineer to discuss the width of the towpath and the erection of the railway bridge over the canal. A sub-committee was appointed to meet Mr Baker, the Canal Company's Surveyor. A week later, the sub-committee reported agreement on key dimensions at the site of the bridge's construction:

- the canal should be 22 ft (6.7 m) wide;
- the towpath 6 ft (1.8 m) wide;
- the bottom of the canal of uniform depth of 6 ft (1.8 m) under the bridge and for 70 ft (21 m) on each side of it.

These dimensions agreed between the two companies were chosen to ensure reasonable clearance for vessels sailing past the site. The minutes of early meetings of the Canal Company (on 16th February 1775 and 11th June 1776) recorded that vessels which had been used on the River Severn and other locations in this area were up to 17 ft 6 in (5.3 m) wide.



Railway siding on Stonehouse Wharf

Skew Bridge

Reproduced from 1885 Ordnance Survey map with the permission of the Ordnance Survey.

The branch railway line crosses the canal via Skew Bridge (so-called, presumably, since it is set at an acute angle - approximately 25 degrees - relative to the line of the canal). It was designed by James Ferrabee who had founded Phoenix Ironworks at Thrupp Mill in 1828. The bridge, which has a span of 56 ft (17 m), was designed to carry a single railway track over the canal. It was constructed from wrought iron, supported on an inter-connected group of three cast iron pillars on the northern bank of the canal, and on a lengthy brick retaining wall on the southern bank (since the line ran close to the canal for some distance).



Steam locomotive crossing Skew Bridge on 23rd August 1965. The brick retaining wall and the towpath on the southern bank are clearly visible.

Unfortunately for the railway company, the contractor encountered difficulties with subsidence of the supporting pillars, which resulted in severe disruption of the canal traffic. In May 1865 this resulted in Mr Peyton, the Canal Company's surveyor, reporting that he could not pass under the newly erected railway bridge because the available width did not comply with that agreed between the companies. The Canal Company appointed an engineer (Mr Harrison of Frocester Court) to inspect the railway bridge and report on the extent to which the bridge had prevented boats from passing freely along the canal.

The Act of Parliament which sanctioned construction of the Branch Railway Line stated that, if the passage of boats on the canal was impaired by the bridge, then the Canal Company was entitled to £30 for every 24 hours delay. The Act also stated that the bridge should be not less than 8 ft (2.4 m) above the towpath and 12 ft (3.6 m) above the surface of the canal – neither of these constraints were met. These violations resulted in the S&NR being fined. The money was not paid until 1878 by which time it amounted to a sum, including interest, equivalent to about £167,000 today.

In early December 1866, when construction of the line was finished, it was inspected by Colonel W. Yolland on behalf of the Board of Trade. Concerning Skew Bridge, Yolland reported that "*transoms (strengthening cross-bars) and cross ties are required between the longitudinals that carry the rails and some of the girders require to be bolted down to the top of the cast iron columns.*" To an engineer, it is clear that the structural design – as built – was deficient and, indeed, Colonel Yolland reported that the line could not be opened until these and deficiencies in other parts of the Branch Line had been rectified.

[This was some 13 years before the disastrous collapse of a section of the Railway Bridge across the Tay Estuary while carrying a passenger train. A key reason for that disaster was the faulty manufacture of its cast iron pillars].



Steam locomotive crossing Skew Bridge while pulling a train to Dudbridge, 21st May 1965.

Colonel Yolland carried out a repeat inspection of the Line a month after his earlier - critical - report and stated that the Line could be opened for traffic without delay (a remarkably rapid rectification by the constructor of Yolland's earlier criticisms).

The Line opened for goods traffic on 1st February 1867 and for passengers three days later. The S&NR company was never successful and was taken over by the MR in 1878. As Peter Smith put it bluntly, "*The line was fully absorbed into the MR in 1878, having taken them that long to sort out the local company's finances!*"

An Act was passed by Parliament in August 1880 to allow the construction of a railway line from Dudbridge (on the Stonehouse-Nailsworth line) to Stroud. It opened for goods in November 1885 and for passengers in July 1886.

The end

Passenger traffic was withdrawn in June 1947 to comply with Government instructions arising from shortage of fuel after the Second World War. On 8th June 1949 it was announced that the closure of the line (from Stonehouse to both Nailsworth and Stroud) to passengers was to be permanent. There was a timber approach section to the bridge at its northern end. This was set alight shortly before the final closure of the line and temporary metal trestles had to be put in place. These were replaced by a simple concrete structure which, together with the bridge, is still in regular use by pedestrians and cyclists. The last freight train ran on both branches on 1st June 1966.

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Both photos of trains crossing the bridge ©Ben Ashworth.

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*Skew Bridge, 19th January 2007.
The cast iron support pillars and their
cross ties are clearly visible.*



*The Canals Trust workboat, Goliath,
passing under Skew Bridge on 6th January 2016.*

Revisiting the Kemmett Canal in the light of new findings

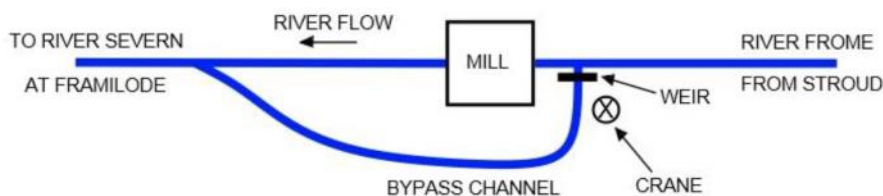
by Jim Dickson

This article revisits one published in Issue 2 of this journal in December 2012.

The Kemmett Canal scheme

In the late 1750s, John Kemmett (an ironmaster), and Thomas Bridge (an engineer), supported by two other (non-technical) Tewkesbury men devised a novel scheme to create a navigable River Frome between Stroud and the River Severn at Framilode. Bridge had the idea of using a crane to transfer loads from a boat at one level on the river, over a weir, to a boat at a higher – or lower - level. The reason for adopting such an arrangement was to avoid the use of locks for change of level (since there is considerable loss of water each time a lock is operated). This was of great concern to local mill owners, worried that they could lose the steady supply of water from the Frome used to power their mills. The use of cranes and weirs (rather than locks) would avoid the loss of water, yet still allow cargo to be moved progressively upstream (or downstream).

Typical arrangement at mills on the Kemmett Canal



Note: Crane to lift cargo containers from a boat on one level to a boat on the other.

Other key features of the Kemmett scheme:

1. straightening and deepening parts of the River Frome;
2. transporting the cargo in containers to simplify its transfer between boats.

This is the only known example of a waterway that operated in this manner and represents a key advance in the development of modern containerised transport.

The scheme was sanctioned by an Act of Parliament in April 1759, and work started later that year. However, it stopped in 1761 and the works were abandoned in 1763.

I will begin this review with an examination of the straightening of sections of the River Frome between Framilode and Stroud.

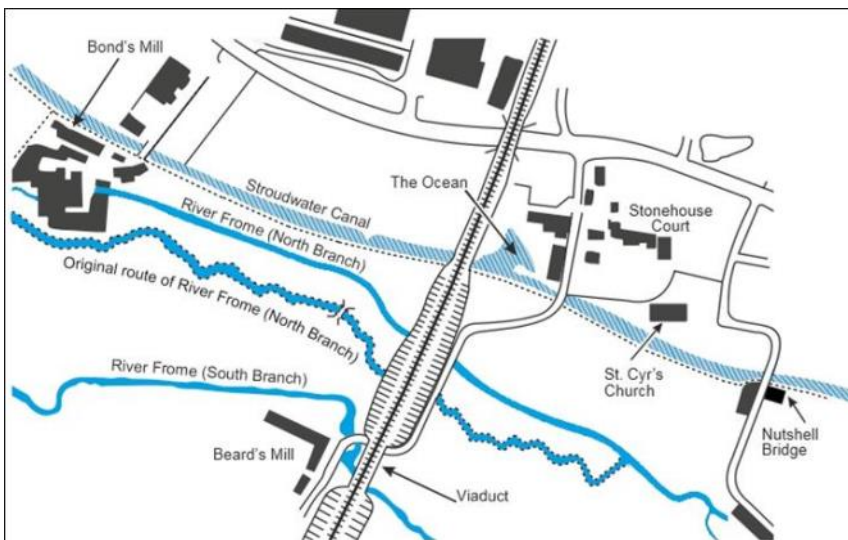
The Levi Ball Map

Until recently, it was believed that the river had been straightened by the Kemmett team between Framilode to just south of Stonehouse Court. Levi Ball inherited Stonehouse Manor in 1729. As he lived in London, a large map was created c.1730 by Stephen Jefferys of Minchinhampton to show him the extent of the property he had inherited. Unfortunately, during a serious fire in the manor house (Stonehouse Court) on 30th May 1908, the original map was destroyed. Fortunately, Arthur Winterbotham, the last Lord of the Manor, had a photograph of the map and subsequently had three full-sized copies made, one of which hangs in Stonehouse Court Hotel. Another is in Gloucestershire Archives.

The Levi Ball map shows clearly that the river to the east of Bond's Mill had been straightened at least 30 years before the Kemmett project reached the mill - as with many other local mills, this would have been done to improve the flow of water used to power various types of mill machinery. At this time, applications along this stretch of the river included woollen cloth manufacture and corn milling. For mill owners, it was crucial to retain and maximise the available water power.



Copy of a portion of "A Map of Y. Manor of Stonehouse In the County of Gloucester Belonging to Levi Ball Esq". Surveyed by Stephen Jefferys of Minchin Hampton, c1730.



The original winding route of the River Frome (North Branch) alongside the straightened stretch of that section.

Also shown is a partially straightened stretch of the Frome (South Branch) which flows past Beard's Mill.

At the time, mills were almost entirely reliant on water power – the first steam engines were not installed in Gloucestershire until post-1800 (mainly in the 1820s) and even then, they remained relatively uncommon. Until well into the 19th century, many mill owners in this area continued to rely heavily on water power, rather than steam, since steam engines were costly and coal was expensive. Supply could also be erratic. Consequently, it became common practice to operate mills using water power, but with a steam engine available for back-up if water was in short supply or additional power was needed. Stonehouse Upper Mills was one of the last mills in this area to be rebuilt (in 1875). Even at that late date, water wheels were installed for normal operation with a steam engine for back-up.

At other local mills, water courses were often straightened to improve flow, and deepened and sometimes embanked, enabling them to store water and work almost as linear millponds. The Kemmett team would undoubtedly have known that the section of the Frome supplying water to Bond's Mill had been straightened (pre-1730) in this manner, and that this would save them a great deal of work.

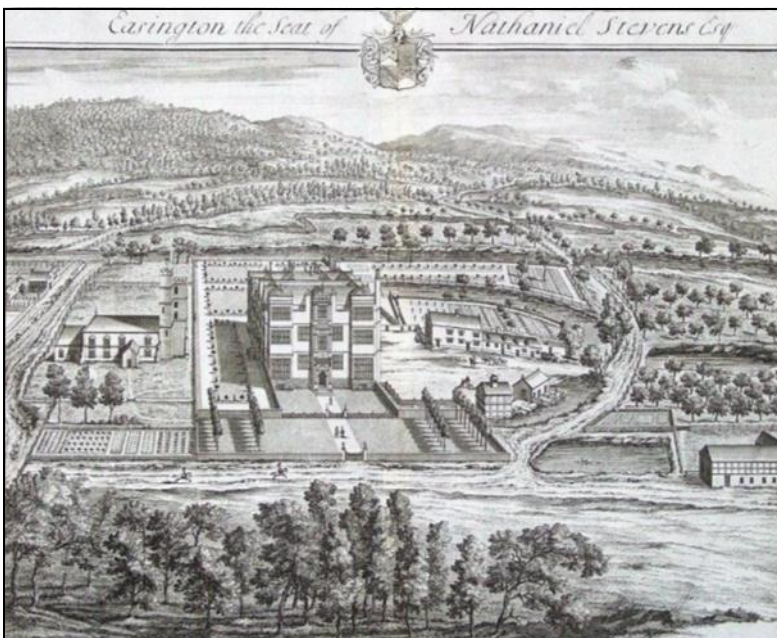
Had other lengths of the River Frome been straightened?

Since discovering the information on the Levi Ball map, Stephen Mills has determined that at least two stretches of the South Branch of the River Frome that flows past Beard's Mill had been straightened by 1804 to improve the flow of water.

In the 1740s, the newly wed Richard Owen Cambridge and his bride settled in the family seat at Whitminster. He spent a great deal of his time improving his estate and that included an attempt to make the Frome capable of accommodating small boats between the River Severn at Framilode up to the Bristol Road (now the A38), a distance of 3 miles. Cambridge left Whitminster in 1751 for London where he lived until his death in 1802. He let his estates at Whitminster but allowed the house to fall into ruins. Between 1755 and 1757, Thomas Bridge, one of the key partners on the Kemmett team, acted as surveyor for a project known as the Dallaway scheme - which aimed to improve the lower section of the Frome in order to make it navigable. So Bridge would have been well aware of the improvements already made by Cambridge, and this doubtless provided encouragement to Kemmett and his partners.

Straightening the Frome would have created a useful artery for the transport of goods. However, it could also provide further benefits. In the archives of the Company of Proprietors of the Stroudwater Navigation (the Company), the minutes of the directors' meeting of 28th December 1775 record that a landowner, Mr Stephens (of Eastington Manor), had praised the value of the straightening of the River Frome by Kemmett as a "*great service to the mills in preventing frequent flooding*". The tone of the minutes makes clear that the directors were pleasantly surprised that an unexpected benefit of straightening the river had been to reduce flooding of the water meadows.

At a further meeting on 11th January 1776, the directors interviewed people about their experiences of the benefits indicated by Mr Stephens. Orders were then given that "*a paper be sent to be signed by the land owners through whose property the new cut is made declaring that their lands are in much better condition this winter than formerly, being prevented from the floods and winter tides*". Presumably this was to help offset the opposition to the construction of the Stroudwater Canal by a number of powerful local landowners including Ellis James of Eastington Park and Mary Ball of Stonehouse Court.



*Engraving of Eastington Manor House.
Note the straightened and the unstraightened streams
behind the Manor House and Church.*

This engraving of 1712 shows the Eastington manor house as built around 1578 by Edward Stephens, Lord of the Manor. The engraving was by Johannes Kip, a Dutch draughtsman, engraver and print dealer. He specialised in making engraved views of English country houses and he was known to sometimes take liberties with scale and background. According to this engraving of Eastington Manor the house dwarfed the church. Although its position in the landscape looks a bit suspicious, nonetheless, his detailed views of the buildings themselves provide a fascinating snapshot of times long gone (the house was demolished in 1778). It is noteworthy that there are two streams behind the two buildings – one appears to have been straightened, the other meanders in a natural way.

Presumably the straightened one is associated with Churchend Mill, the other with Millend Mill (which had not been built by 1712). In spite of Kip's reputation for "adjusting" scale and background, there is no obvious reason why he would show one of the streams as straightened if that had not been done by 1712.

Other matters related to the Kemmett Canal

At their meeting on 31st March 1777, the Directors of the Company ordered that the crane at Churchend Mill be removed at the first opportunity. It was known to have been the furthest from the Severn to have been used. It is not known if a crane was installed by the weir at Bond's Mill (1100 yards/1 km east of the weir at Churchend and the next mill along the route from the River Severn) but it seems unlikely from this evidence. In Michael Handford's view, ".....it seems probable that the navigation never operated successfully beyond Churchend and that the work at Bond's Mill was merely preparatory." That seems most likely.



Weir at Churchend Mill looking north east, August 2017.

Weir at Churchend Mill looking south east, August 2017.

Acknowledgements

Steve Mills provided considerable assistance, including the supply of a copy of the engraving of Eastington Manor House. Rich White created the schematic diagram and the map of the area between Bond's Mill and Nutshell Bridge.

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Working at Ryeford Sawmill: Stan Paskey's memories

edited by Vicki Walker

Introduction

In the mid 19th century, Ryeford Mill, on the southern bank of the Stroudwater Canal at Stonehouse, ceased to be a cloth mill and became a corn mill owned by the Ford family. By 1871 the Fords were also involved in the timber business and were running a sawmill at Ryeford. After the Fords ceased trading in the 1880s, the sawmill was run by various different firms until 1913 when the Workman family, who were already established timber merchants at Woodchester, took over.

In 1954 Stroud Journal reported that the Ryeford Sawmills Company had been established in 1913 and became a limited company in 1950. Principal products were home-grown hardwood in planks, boards and scantlings (beams), coffin sets, turned wood goods, and packing case and crate timber. It was about this time that Eastington resident, Stan Paskey, started work there. We interviewed him about his time working at the sawmill from 1955 to 1979.

Stan Paskey

I was born in 1939. I went to Eastington Primary School and then on to Stonehouse Secondary Modern which was in huts on the Stonehouse Primary School site. I left school at 15 before the new secondary school (Maidenhill) was finished.

I spent the first two months of my working life at Cam cloth mill. I was an apprentice loom tuner which meant I was a fitter on the looms. I didn't like the cloth mill much and the cloth mill didn't like me. So we parted company amicably and my father said, "Well, you'd better come up the sawmill with me until you can find something better." And I was still looking for something better 25 years later! I loved every minute there.



Stan, aged about 20, (centre) with two friends from Army Cadets. He and his mates were advised to join the cadets to keep them out of trouble - they really enjoyed the activities run by ex-soldiers.

I went to the Ryeford Sawmills Home-grown Timber Company to give it its full name. Dad worked on a saw there. I started as a labourer which meant standing by a saw and, as the guy cut the timber, I stacked it into bundles, wrapped it round with wire and it was ready to be shipped out. I didn't like that too much – I wanted to get outside. Eventually an opening came up in the yard and for about a year I was stacking timber out in the yard which I loved, being in the open air. I used to have my lunch with the guy who drove the mobile crane and we'd have lunch up in the cab. During our lunchtime he taught me how to drive the crane. When he left the company he said, "Well you drive it." That was it - you were qualified! As a spin-off from that they taught me to drive the big derrick crane. She was a monster, the jib was 115 ft (35 m) long and it was a strange thing to drive. When I started there were about 8 or 9 of us younger men. The sawyers were mainly experienced men and the boys laboured. If there was something they thought you were ready for they pushed you on.

The managing director was Mr Workman who lived in the white bungalow just opposite the Horsetrough at the bottom of Brown's Lane. There was Mr Venables who lived at Selsley. The transport manager was Mr MacPherson. They were all right. Mr Geoffrey Workman was a real old time guv'nor. He was fair. A lot of the time he had leggings on because he'd been measuring timber. You called him "Sir" or Mr Geoffrey – anything else and you were in dead trouble. In those days everybody was known by name. At the peak, counting outworkers, there would have been over 100 people employed. It was a big outfit, and when we came through with a load of timber people used to look round as it could be quite spectacular.

The sawmill land stretched from the Ryeford to King's Stanley road, where the main entrance and office were located, along towards Ebley. It was bordered on the North by the canal and on the South by the railway branch line. The railway came from Gloucester to Bristol Road station, then along the branch line to Stroud and Nailsworth. There was a train that went to Stroud and Nailsworth known as the Dudbridge Donkey. Ryeford Station was manned by a wonderful man called Marlow Simpson - he lived in the station house with his mum – she must have been pretty old. The train used to come in and drop off a couple of 50 ton vans full of animal feed for the farms. Marlow would roll them into his shed and unload the animal feed. Then he would roll them on through to the remains of the old platform where we would load on the coffin boards to go up to Manchester. Now and then they would drop off an empty coal wagon which we had to fill with timber for the South Wales mines. Sometimes they would send trucks to be filled with sawdust which was a horrible job. There was a track behind the station so that our trucks could drive over the railway line, turn right behind the station and along to join the King's Stanley road.



Ryeford Station on the Nailsworth branch line. It closed in 1964 and the line closed in 1966. Ryeford Sawmill buildings and timber can be seen to the left. © Duncan Chandler

There was a big bandsaw with a smaller one alongside it, and another one in a tin shed attached to the mill. There were about six circular bench saws. They were big saws. The men would put through the fresh logs and cut them into planks. What was left over was cut into logs. There were no apprenticeships. You started as the sawyer's mate and if he left you took over the running of it. You learned by watching. One thing I remember was sometimes when the bandsaw cut into a tree you could hear a screech and it was a nail that had grown right into the tree. Or we had iron fences or chains that had grown right through the tree. Most interesting was a line of machine gun bullets where an aircraft had strafed it!!

The bulk of the production was coffin board. If a man was going to cut coffin board he'd run the log through first and take off a "slab" which was the bark and the lumps on one side of the log. He then had a flat face to work with. He would bring the log back and set a dial – coffin board was $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (19 mm) thick – and when he pushed a button the "dogs" or "grabs" on the trailer pushed the log forward $\frac{3}{4}$ inch so he pushed the log through over and over until he'd cut it into boards. From there the boards went to the trimming saw which took the bark off the sides, and then out into the drying yard. We had to stack them in drying racks. The wood was dried on the outside racks and brought back in after about eight or nine months.

The coffin boards were then put through the planer. The old planer they had - you've never heard a noise like it. I've been outside Woolworth's (in Stroud) on a Saturday when I've had a half day off and if the wind was in the right direction I could hear the planer going and tell what sort of wood was being planed!

Once that was finished the wood went through a sander. That was a big machine with three big rollers wrapped in sandpaper. The first one was coarse, the second one was finer and the third one was like a polisher. When the wood came out of there it went to the coffin shop where it was packed. Sometimes it needed extra finishing and the man would sand out any flaws in the wood. He had some sandpaper on a bench and a heavy iron to sand them out. The worst quality timber was used for coffin sides and better quality for the lids. The sides went over a "curving saw" which had six blades in it to create a curve on both sides of the coffin where the shoulders of the body would go. The blades just cut into the wood so that the undertaker could bend it. We had a coffin maker (Arthur) who made coffins there. I saw him do it 100 times. When Arthur wanted to bend a side, he'd boil his kettle, and outside over an old tank of water, he'd hold the coffin side in his hand and pour the boiling water on to the curves. Then he'd put that on his knee and bend it into shape. He was an expert at doing that.

Then I got my heavy goods licence, so I went on to transporting the goods. That was a wonderful job. You went out and got the timber from the woods where it had been felled. We went all over the country. A lot of the wood was around Oxford because we had a standing contract with Oxford University which owned a lot of land. We went as far as Reading and all round the Cotswolds. We had a wood to clear at Radstock. We hadn't progressed to articulated lorries. We used to pull a six-wheeled carriage behind a four-wheel drive tractor. When we were fully loaded it took us an hour to get down the hill from Radstock into Bath because the brakes weren't that good. Sometimes I sat on the back of the carriage and if it started to run away I would turn the taps off on the brake lines and that would jam the brakes on! It would take us quarter of an hour to get through Bath and another hour to get up the hill this side. That was elm wood. Most of the time I was working was at the height of Dutch Elm disease and they were felling ancient elms that would never have been felled otherwise.



One of the lads tightening the chains.

Later companies got rough-terrain forklifts. We had one of those but we were basically using ropes and winches and we could handle stuff that others wouldn't look at because it was too big. The firm bought the wood from the landowner or the estate. That used to cause a lot of trouble. I've been chased off land with shotguns – because if the farmer was a tenant and the landowner was not very thoughtful he might say, "You've bought that wood over there" but you might have to storm through the farmer's corn to get to it. He would come out waving his shotgun. It was fun!

We took the timber back to the sawmill where it was unloaded by the big derrick crane. The logs they were going to use were lifted up, swung round and dumped by the door of the mill where a gang cut them to the length specified by the foreman, William Nash, who'd have been out there. The butt, the big end of the log, was rolled into the mill on a trolley on rails. The trolley was powered, there was no way you could push it, there could be 4 or 5 tons of timber on it. Then it



Lifting the logs in the fields.

went on to the big band mill. This was an impressive machine. The operator had a lever which engaged with the trolley and drew it into the saw. He had to be very careful because if he pushed it in too quickly it would push the saw off course. Also the wheels were slightly humped. When the operator went home at night he had to push the wheels apart to slacken off the saw. When he came to work, in the morning the saw could not be just started with the press of a button.

It was a huge thing with teeth bigger than your thumb. He had a step starter which was like a vertical tin full of insulating oil and on the top was a handle - each notch on the handle increased the motor's speed another few revs. His mate would get on the motor, stand by the wheel and tighten it up just a tiny bit to make sure the saw didn't fly off. He would shout, "*Right oh George, give her a bundle*". Couple of notches and the wheels would gently start to turn. He'd watch it very carefully, another turn on the wheel - "*Go on George give her a bit more - two more notches.*" Now she would start to revolve fairly quickly - you had to be an expert for the next bit. He turned that wheel until the whole bandsaw was on it except the teeth because they didn't have to run on the steel wheel or it would blunt them - and he'd get that wheel spot on. "*Right on lads, we're right to go*".



Stan unloading logs.

Sometimes the logs were too big for the bandsaw and they were sent to me to cut on a steam saw! It was a cracker. The blade was 12 ft (3.7 m) long. The steam came from the boiler house. The log was fed into the blade and the steam increased as the log went in. A few years ago I went to a steam show and they had the steam saw there, running it off a traction engine. I told them I was the last person to use it at work. He asked me all about it and we had quite a chat.

It was a dangerous job. I know of three fatalities. Two were killed when a timber carriage overturned up near Tetbury. Another was a lad from Nupend. He was unloading under the crane. The procedure was to tie a rope round the logs and then get the crane to take the weight which pulled it tight round the logs. Then they were lifted on to the lorry and the chains loosened. One day they were in a bit of a rush and loosened the chain too soon. One of the logs rolled off and hit the lad on the ground. One chap had his finger cut off by the saw. They took it to hospital but they couldn't sew it back. So for months this finger was in the workshop nailed to a piece of wood labelled Wilkes's finger! They had a gruesome sense of humour!

The thing that frightened me was when the saws needed to be sharpened they called in the "saw doctors". One of them had a piece of emery wheel and while the saw was still running he would feed it into the teeth to sharpen it! It frightened the life out of me. There were sparks flying in all directions. I never saw an accident from it though. The idea was to keep the saw round so that when it was taken off to the workshop to finish the sharpening it would stay round.

I was the last driver of the crane. Some of the logs that came in were too big even for the crane to lift. What we used to do was stick a big hook into the log and roll it off the truck. When it fell down the hook would come out of the log. However if the hook hadn't come out then the crane could have toppled over so I was always ready to jump out if need be!



By the end of the 1970s the old managers had retired and neither Mr Workman's nor MacPherson's sons wanted to run the sawmill, so it was sold. It was bought by a building supply firm TW Smith from Cheltenham. They didn't know much about the timber industry and tried to cut short the old ways of drying the logs. They ended up with half the wood being unusable. The firm closed in about 1979.

Stan spent the rest of his working life as a lorry driver delivering goods all round the country, but he retained fond memories of his time at Ryeford Sawmill.

Thanks to Stan for the use of his personal photographs.
 Thanks to Duncan Chandler for the use of the Ryeford Station photograph.
Photo shows Stan at his home in Eastington in 2015. He died on 10th October 2016.

Stonehouse School 1832 - 1928

by Jane Gulliford

Before the 19th century there was no national system of education and only a small number of children received any schooling. Where schools existed at all, they were often established through the initiative of wealthy local benefactors.

By the 1860s the annual fund allocated for schools by Parliament exceeded £800,000. But there was a growing pressure for the state to provide schools in areas where none existed. One of the stumbling blocks was the vested interest of religious societies and there was a conflict of opinion as to whether the state should pay for schools run by religious denominations. Matters moved forwards in 1869 when the recently-formed National Education League campaigned for free, compulsory and non-religious education for all children. This was quickly followed by the 1870 Education Act which was the first legislation to deal specifically with the provision of education in Britain. It allowed voluntary schools to continue but established a system of "school boards" to build and manage schools in areas where they were needed. Unlike the voluntary schools, the teaching in board schools had to be non-denominational.

Early Days

There have been schools in Stonehouse for at least 300 years. By 1720 there was a charity school teaching twelve poor children, possibly in the old Vicarage.

In 1774 a group of local gentlemen and clothiers funded charity schools in Stonehouse and Ebley to the amount of £722, most of the Stonehouse money being used to buy Orchard House plus the land behind it. A list of benefactors can be seen on a large tablet above the north door inside St. Cyr's church.

The first schoolmaster was Stephen Jenner and the school offered a limited curriculum based on "*good pious and useful books and The Catechism*". John Elliot, who was also a surveyor, taught at the school from 1789, living at the house from 1832 until 1848. He advertised locally for more pupils, including girls, and boarders who paid £12 per annum.

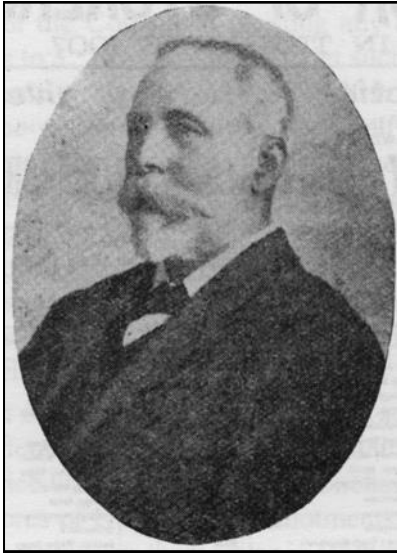
Stonehouse National School

The Charity School was still operating in 1830 when the Trustees applied for a union with The National Society. At this stage pupils attended school for three years, leaving at the age of eight. Many children in Stonehouse went on to work in local mills or helped with weaving at home.

The union was accepted in May 1830 and the Trustees applied for financial aid to fund a school for 68 girls and 60 boys aged 7 to 13. They soon realised that they had underestimated the funding needed and re-applied to fund a new school for 246 children. Consequently, in 1832, Stonehouse became one of the first villages in the country to build a National School to provide elementary education for the children of the poor, according to the principles of the Church of England. Children used sand trays to trace letters, slates for writing and learned facts from cards. They were not encouraged to discuss or question anything. By 1847 there were 113 pupils at the National School, taught by a master, a mistress and monitors.



This plaque on the belltower records that the school was erected in 1832 and enlarged in 1873.



*John Westacott,
headmaster 1880 - 1911.*

1873 to 1911

In 1873 John Westacott was appointed a master at the school. Edwin Boucher was headmaster at this time and his wife Jane also taught there. In 1880 Westacott became head of the Mixed School which was a term for a school with separate Infant and Junior Schools on the same site. The Junior School Head (usually a man) was in overall charge, with a separate Head (usually a woman) overseeing the Infant School. Miss Annie Egerton was the Infant School Head.

The detailed log books of the time give a wonderful insight into school life as well as reflecting life in general. They show that the staff and pupils of the school not only took interest in their immediate community but were made aware of the world beyond; for example, in 1889, the school sent flowers to London to mark a terrible rail accident in Armagh, where many children on a Sunday School outing had been killed.

Absences from school were common, often due to epidemics of smallpox, mumps and measles. In 1901, the school was closed by the Ministry of Health due to a measles epidemic. Children were also recorded as being absent in July 1873 due to the appearance of a travelling mountebank (a person who sold patent medicines in public, often charming people into buying fake products). Punishments were regularly handed out for such things as loitering, truancy and falsehood. George Dowding appears to have been one of the worst offenders, receiving punishments for, amongst other things, "playing cricket on the Green at 2.20 pm"!

The school was regularly visited by governors, who checked for truancy, progress and quality of curriculum. During this time, Reverend Farren White, the Vicar of St. Cyr's, was Chairman of Governors. The school was also inspected by H.M.I. and a report from 1875 states, "*this is a good school, pleasantly handled and produces highly satisfactory results in all subjects*". It goes on to say that, "*singing is well attended but is somewhat lacking in sweetness and softness*".

Schools received funding according to curriculum provision and the children's achievements in regular tests, so good reports were vital to the success of the school. The children were motivated by the promise of half-day holidays for good attendance and results. By 1897 the school curriculum had expanded to include a wide range of subjects including: history, geography, poetry and cooking. However, a report from this time suggests that full funding could not be awarded due to "*a lack of drill*". Mr Westacott swiftly added two drill sessions a week to the curriculum and received his extra funding.



Children outside the school at around the time Gloucestershire County Council took it over in 1906.

On January 22nd, 1901, Mr. Westacott records the death of Queen Victoria. His log entry gives us an insight into the esteem in which Victoria was held and a flavour of the language of the day. *"This has been a very sad week in the history of the British Empire, for ...our most Gracious Majesty, The Queen, passed out of this sublunary world to appear before The Great Architect of the Universe"*.

During the first week of June 1902 the log records the end of the Boer War. In celebration, the children were given buns, oranges and sweets at a gathering on the village Green. A few weeks later, the new King (Edward VII) asked that all school children had a week's holiday for his Coronation on 26th June. Unfortunately, the Coronation had to be postponed as Edward had appendicitis, but the children still got their holiday! He recovered fully and the Coronation went ahead on August 9th. In 1904 there were 314 pupils in the school, although the closure of Davies' Cloth Mills at Bridgend meant the loss of several children as families had to move to find work.

In 1905 Gloucestershire County Council took over the running of the school from the National Society and, on 1st April 1906, the school officially became known as Stonehouse Council School.

October 1911 saw the end of an era when headmaster John Westacott retired after being at the school for 38 years. His log tells us that there was an average of 87 children attending the school in his first week at work. During his time there, 2232 children had been admitted, with 210 on the books in 1911. He tells us that *"a better class of children cannot be found in any parish or county"*. His log entries during this time show a head who was firm but fair and who truly loved his work and pupils. Following his retirement, Mr. Westacott maintained his association with the school as a governor.

1911 to 1928

Benjamin Dooley Parkin became headmaster of the Council School in October 1911. Martha Max oversaw the Infant School until her untimely death in 1914 while at a summer school. Hilda Price took over until August 1918, and was followed by Mrs. Deacon, who left after a year. She was succeeded by Edith Randall.

In 1914, Mr. Parkin volunteered for military service but was turned down on health grounds, having been ill with scarlet fever for several weeks. However, in 1916, he was accepted into the Army and went to war.

The First World War resulted in some lengthening of holidays, changes to school opening hours and some temporary closures, mainly due to the need to conserve coal. The school was also closed several times during the war due to outbreaks of whooping cough, chickenpox, ringworm and measles.



*B. D. Parkin,
headmaster 1911 - 1939.*



Junior class c. 1915. Thanks to Ann Gearon for the photo.

In 1914 the log book records that *"the children of the school have undertaken to feed and clothe the child of a Belgian refugee"*. This was 12 year old Josaphine Purnelle, who attended the school while she was in Stonehouse. By 1916 there were two further Purnelle children mentioned in the log books: Emile and Cotavie.



Class 1. 1920s. The teacher may be Mrs Randall.

In October 1916, the school received 3 lb of khaki wool from Fisher and Fisher of Gloucester at a value of 14 shillings and 9 pence. This was possibly to knit balaclavas for soldiers. The children were given a half day holiday on Armistice Day on November 11th 1918 and, the following year, they observed the first two minutes silence as requested by the King. In July 1919 B. D. Parkin resumed his duties at the school after service in the war; returning as Captain.

According to the school log book, the Infant School became a model of excellence after the war and was visited by staff from other schools. A report tells us *"The (Infant) Headmistress not only makes a study of infant management and instruction but also studies the children as individuals, consequently, the work of this department reaches a very high level"*. Mrs Randall must have been a very forward-thinking teacher!

The children's health became more important and regular health and dental examinations became part of school life. The children had their own vegetable plot and received a talk about the values of milk from The National League for Health.

In 1921, the infant school was highly praised again in a report by Dr. Prout (a local doctor and official correspondent) *"The school is abreast of modern ideas and is effective and sympathetic..... the children converse happily and freely with their teachers."*

There were celebrations in June 1921 as the school won the Challenge Cup in The Stroud and District Schools Football League. The children must have been very happy as they were awarded a half day holiday in recognition of the win.



The school football team. Headmaster B. D. Parkin centre back, ex-headmaster John Westacott seated left.



Governors were very supportive of the school and visited often, not just in their official capacity. There are several mentions of Dr. Prout and Mr. Jenner Davies handing out fruit from their gardens to the children.

A significant change in the life of the school came in 1928. On April 17th Mrs. Randall records that Mr. Household, the Secretary for County Education visited to inform the school that Mrs. Randall's services would no longer be required after September. The school managers (governors) were unhappy about this and wrote to The County Education Department "*The managers had not the least idea (this was about to happen).....and wish to register their most emphatic protests*". An apology was sent explaining that, for economy reasons, the two schools would be combined, with Mr. Parkin being Headmaster of the new Primary School. Mrs. Randall resigned on 28th September and staff and pupils assembled to make a presentation to her. Dr. Prout and Mr. Parkin paid tribute to her excellent work during the nine years she had been Head of the Infant School.

The re-organised school opened on 1st October 1928. It had six classes with a total of 172 pupils, aged 5 to 11.

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GA = Gloucestershire Archives

Background research www.ancestry.co.uk

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Stonehouse Council School, juniors, log books 1916-28, GA Ref. S316/1/2/1/2

Walker V. and Dickson J., *Benjamin Dooley Parkin (1879 - 1962)*, Stonehouse History Group Journal no. 4, pp.14-18 <http://stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk/journal-issue-4>

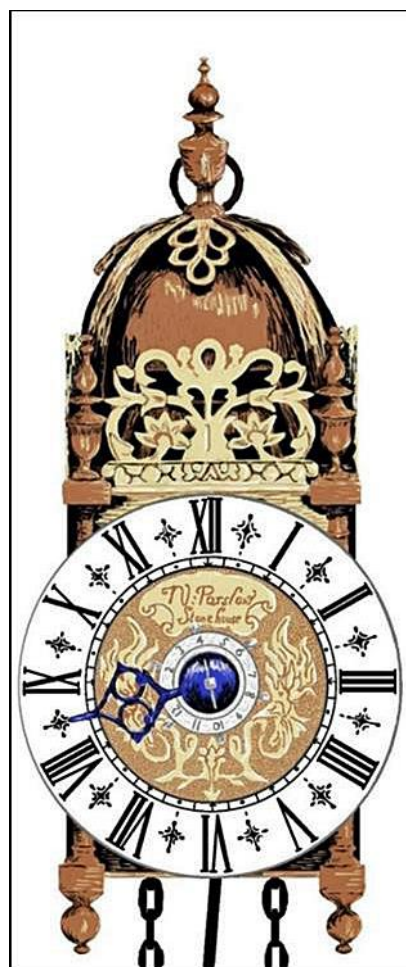
Marking time: some Stonehouse clocks and clockmakers

by Janet Hudson

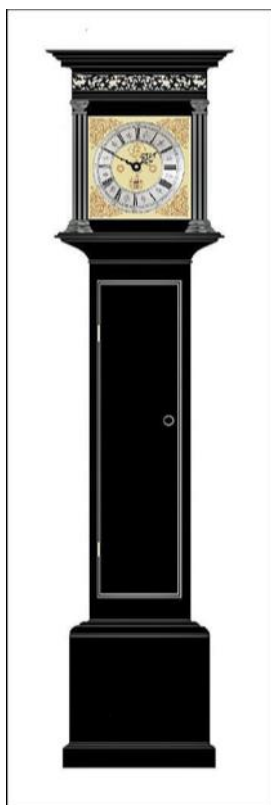
Clocks and clockmakers have been significant in Stonehouse, playing a considerable part in the development of the High Street.

The earliest clocks simply rang a bell (French 'cloche'), to time services in a monastery or church. Faces and hands came later. Lantern clocks, which were introduced into England from Germany from about 1600, may have been so called after their shape, or possibly from 'latten', an old name for brass, the main metal used. At first, they did not keep time well, and only ran for half a day, but, by the late 17th century, the pendulum and improved mechanisms had been added. They spread throughout England in the 17th and 18th centuries. Some were small travelling clocks with an alarm, but no striking, called 'alarum' or 'larum' timepieces. However, by about 1700, the majority of lantern clocks had a brass case about 16 inches (41 cm) high, ran for 30 hours, had striking and an alarm, and were designed to hang on a wall. (Lantern)

In December 2015, an episode of the BBC programme "Bargain Hunt" featured a lantern clock by William Parslow of Stonehouse. It was assessed as made in about 1710, small for its type, but genuine and of high quality. The design of its single hand, and the attached cartouche with the maker's name, are unusual features, which suggest that it was individually designed as a complete small wall clock. The will of William Parslow of Stonehouse, Gloucestershire, blacksmith, was proved in 1723, not in Gloucestershire, but in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, as he was a prosperous man, who owned and bequeathed land and houses in Stonehouse. He left the tools 'used in or belonging to my trade' to his son Thomas, but 'my clock' to his eldest surviving child, his daughter Jane Hitch. She and her husband Thomas Hitch had already been granted rights to William's house after his death. It is tempting to think that 'my clock' was this individual lantern clock, of which he was personally proud, and which he hoped would continue to hang on his wall. (Parslow will)



Lantern clock by William Parslow, c1710, based on broadcast images.



However, there is another possibility, the only other known clock by Parslow. This is a 30-hour longcase clock, sold in 2005 to Michael Grange at Mallams of Cheltenham. It was acquired by the British Museum with his collection in 2010. Such clocks are thought to have developed from lantern clocks after the introduction of the long pendulum. They were luxury items at first, mainly made in London, but after 1700 they became less expensive and more widespread. William Parslow's 30-hour clock is simple in style, but has some unusual features, including a slot above the date aperture to enable manual date changing, which may be unique. It seems to be an individual design again, and one trying to look grander than it really was. No information has yet been found on the paths followed by either of these two clocks between William Parslow's death and the present day. (Parslow longcase)

Longcase clock by William Parslow, c1720, based on correspondence with the British Museum.

During the 17th and 18th centuries there were at least thirty clockmakers in Gloucester, and nine in the town of Stroud, most notably William and John Holloway.

There were a few in most of the larger villages round Stroud from the mid-18th century onwards, with one in Nailsworth contemporary with Parslow. Like him, such country makers are often only known from one or two clock dials. During the 18th century there were fourteen apprentices to the London Clockmakers' Company from Gloucestershire, although none were from Stroud or Stonehouse. William Parslow is not recorded as a clockmaker, and he did not call himself so in any known document. He is usually described as a blacksmith, or as a gunsmith. It may be that some skilled metal workers made the occasional clock, but they did not regard this as their main line of work. (Makers)

William Parslow was the grandson of Roger Parslow, a blacksmith, who by 1632 was living in Stonehouse, at what is now Lion Villa, 68 High Street, by the Memorial Green. His son William had moved to Frocester, where his own son William Parslow was baptised in 1655. William Parslow the younger, blacksmith, bought what is now the Tudor Tandoori, 30 High Street, in 1684, and lived there until his death in 1723. "*Old William Parsley of Froster, smith*", died of smallpox in Stonehouse in January 1711, having presumably come to live with his son. William Parslow the younger also lost two of his own sons to smallpox in 1711-12. He married three times and had nine children, of whom four daughters and one son survived him. William Parslow was a respected person who was asked to make probate inventories for five other residents. One of these, Thomas Humphries, who died in 1721, was a wealthy clothier who lived across the road, at 19 High Street (Apsley House, or the Old Dairy), and had a clock worth £2. Again, it is tempting to speculate that Humphries may even have owned Parslow's one known longcase clock, made for a wealthy friend and neighbour. (Parslow family)



30-40 High Street: William Parslow lived in the cottage, and owned the sites of the three adjoining later buildings.

William Parslow's family connections were among prosperous tradesmen like himself. His daughters married two bakers, a cordwainer (shoemaker), and the innkeeper of the Swan in Stonehouse, now Orchard House, 60 High Street, on the Memorial Green. William prospered, and bought properties and land adjoining his own house, as well as having a family interest in Lion Villa. By 1715 he owned the High Street frontage as far as Orchard Place, and the land behind as far back as

Laburnum Walk. His son Thomas was a gunsmith in Stonehouse in 1757, but is not known to have made any clocks. Thomas branched out after his father's death, enclosed a piece of the manorial roadside green without permission by 1726, and had erected a cottage there without leave by 1736. This later became the site of Barnard Parade and the Town Hall. The Parslow family may be said to have influenced the shape of the High Street today. (Parslow High St)

William Parslow needed a market for his products. Eleven people are known from Stonehouse wills or probate inventories to have owned clocks between 1688 and 1848. The old parish included Westrip, Cainscross and Ebley, at a time when the population grew from about 600 in 1690 to the 2711 given in the 1841 census. The named clock owners are not a statistical sample, as not everyone made a will, or had an inventory made and, even if they did, clocks may have been included in general goods and chattels. No information has been found on whether the lords of the manor or various local cloth mill owners had clocks, although they probably did. However, all those named had prospered from the cloth industry or its connections. As well as Thomas Humphries the clothier, Daniel Moore, a clothier and clothworker, had a clock in his parlour in 1688, and Nathaniel Elliott, a tailor of Westrip, had a 'clock and case' in his kitchen in 1706. This last is perhaps more likely to have been a lantern clock with a travelling case, rather than a longcase clock. In 1726, William Smith, a cordwainer (shoemaker) of Oldends, left chattels including a clock, to stay in his house as heirlooms.

Thomas Alday, a clothworker at Cainscross, had 'a laron' worth 18 shillings (90p) in 1753. Thomas Jenner, a yeoman at Westrip, had a clock worth £1 in his hall in 1756, and in 1757 John Togwell, a tailor who had lived in Ebley and then Westrip, left a clock. In 1771 Thomas Moore, a blacksmith at Cainscross, had a 'clock or Laram' in his kitchen. His blacksmith's shop adjoined the house where Thomas Alday had lived in 1753 (on the site of Tricorn House today), and he appears to have moved into Alday's house, but whether the lantern alarm clock had stayed put is not known. It is possible that Thomas Moore, blacksmith, had made this clock. On the other hand, William Parslow was evidently known to the family, as the John Alday for whom he made an inventory in 1715 was brother to Thomas Alday, and their father John Alday senior was also a smith. Thomas Watkins, a carpenter of Ebley, had two clocks when he made his will in 1812, leaving one each to two of his sons. Richard Denton, a yeoman farmer at the Woodcock Lane end of Stonehouse, left a clock and bed to his son in 1820, and Richard Baxter, a weaver of Westrip, who also owned a house in Horsley, had a 24-hour clock (probably a 30-hour clock) in his kitchen in 1848. (Owners)

Thomas Humphries had total personal wealth of £727 in 1721, of which a £2 clock was a small part. Nathaniel Elliott had £178 in 1706, and Daniel Moore £32 in 1688, but the others mentioned before 1800 had total estates of between £5 and £16. A probate value of around £1 may have been lower than the price of a new clock, but even this would have represented a considerable investment to most people. Earnings in the cloth industry are very difficult to estimate, as they were based on piece work, but it is thought that a weaver might have made about 8 shillings (40p) a week in the 18th century, so a lantern clock might have cost him at least two weeks' earnings. Before 1800, clocks were affordable for prosperous clothworkers and tradesmen, but probably not for lower paid workers in cloth or agriculture. As time moved on, wages in the cloth industry may not have risen much, and were sometimes reduced, but clocks gradually became more affordable. The brass lantern clock was being replaced by lighter table and wall clocks driven by small pendulums, or by springs. They were far more moveable, and easier to set up, and they could be cheaper. The spring-driven carriage clock, developed in early 19th century France, offered a travelling option. 'Vienna regulator' clocks, which used the pendulum with a more accurate mechanism, became popular from about 1840 in public places such as post offices and railway stations, as well as homes, while longcase clocks remained a more expensive option. There was a shift from specialist makers supplying customers directly, to shops where clocks might be assembled from bought parts, or bought in whole, at competitive prices. This is seen in Gloucester, and in Cheltenham as it rose to be a spa, and also in Stonehouse. (Ownership)

After William Parslow, there is little record of clockmaking in Stonehouse until the 19th century. Thomas Cowley was described as a clockmaker in the 1841 census, when he was living on the site of the row containing Hurn's electrical shop, but no individual work by him is known. By 1851 he was a clock cleaner, living in The Square by the High Street railway bridge, and in 1861-71 he was a labourer, living at Haywardsend. He died in 1872. William Brown, a clock and watchmaker, was married in Stonehouse in 1841, but does not seem to have stayed. William Witham was living in Regent Street in 1841, with no defined occupation, but by 1851 he was a watch and clock cleaner. He was then living in what is now the veterinary surgery in Gloucester Road, which he was prosperous enough to have rebuilt for himself. He was still there in 1861 as a Greenwich Pensioner, a retired naval man. In 1870, then called a gentleman, he sold his house and by 1871 he had moved to Gloucester. William Brooks was a watchmaker in Regent Street in 1851, and in 1861 a watchmaker and machinist at Bond's Mill. By 1868 he was a watch and clockmaker in the High Street, probably on the site of the Co-op supermarket, where he may have had a shop until 1881. Again, no individual work by him is known. (Dealers)

The most prominent dealers in clocks in 19th century Stonehouse were the Neinenger family. Joseph Neinenger was born in 1819 in Baden, Germany, where there was a strong clockmaking tradition. He had various shops in Gloucester from 1852 until his death in 1885, and advertised himself in 1870 as a clockmaker, silversmith and jeweller. Anthony Neinenger, also from Baden, who may have been Joseph's brother, appeared with his wife in Stonehouse in 1851 as a clockmaker, aged 36 and born in Germany, in the newly built row of three houses which had replaced Thomas Cowley's house. He may have been attracted by the former business, and by the good railway communications. In 1854 he was naturalised as a British citizen, and bought the row of three houses where he lived, with two adjoining medieval properties, and a garden. (Neinenger arrival)

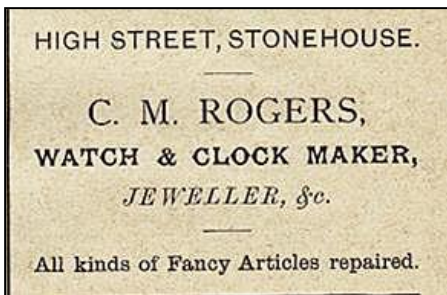
Anthony Neinenger had five children by 1861, and he also had as an apprentice his nephew Stephen Neinenger, aged fourteen and born in Germany. Anthony was then called a clock and furniture maker, and he was probably already a dealer rather than an individual clockmaker. In 1871 he had a different 'watch assistant', Guido Schulz, aged 26 and born in Germany. According to Morris and Co.'s Directory of 1876, Stephen Neinenger had set up as a 'watch and clockmaker and working jeweller' in Regent Street, although he had left by 1881. In 1876, when Anthony

Neinenger was a 'watch and clockmaker and furniture dealer', he had already begun to redevelop his High Street property. By 1881 he had filled the garden with the building now containing the Bay Tree café. He had also rebuilt the medieval properties as one house for his own family, with an imposing brick frontage, presumably designed to stand out. In 1891 he was a jeweller, with his wife and family, but without assistants. He died in 1894. In 1901 his widow Elizabeth, aged 73, was a glass and china dealer, although the business was operated by her four daughters. William Parslow and Anthony Neinenger prospered from the clock trade in different ways, but they both influenced the development of Stonehouse High Street. (Neinenger High St)



42-52 High Street: Anthony Neinenger probably lived in the middle house of the row of three, before adding the building far right, and rebuilding the brick-fronted one for himself.

In 1891 no resident of the old parish of Stonehouse was called a clock or watch maker. Messrs Godfrey and Russell of Springfield Villas, then in Bath Road, who included watchmaking in their wide-ranging store in 1896, went bankrupt in 1902.



Advertisement, 1914.

Charles Manning Rogers, who had moved from Stroud by 1901 to a house behind the former Lloyds Bank building in High Street, was more successful. He was a watchmaker and repairer, who was still in business in 1914. After this time clocks and watches were mainly bought in by jewellers, such as Stanley Neno of Regent Street in the late 20th century.



Advertisement, c.1900.

In the wider world, electric clocks were developed, and atomic clocks arrived in 1955.

Stonehouse Town Clock, linked to atomic timers, was donated by local river and canal engineer Frederick Rowbotham, shortly before he died in 1999. It was placed outside the police station, but when that closed in 2011 the clock was repositioned outside the Post Office, now the Town Hall. It therefore stands near the site of Thomas Parslow's house. Modern timekeeping is more accurate than ever before, but the craftsmanship in William Parslow's lantern clock is still something to savour. (Town)



Stonehouse High Street: the Town Clock is near the site of Thomas Parslow's house. William Parslow's cottage and Anthony Neinenger's shop are in the distance.

Sources of Information

All websites accessed January 2018; all photographs taken January 2018, SHG collection.
Family and property research methods: Hudson J., 'Residence and Kinship in a Clothing Community: Stonehouse, 1558-1804', PhD thesis, University of Bristol (1998)

Abbreviations

Dowler	=	Dowler, G., <i>Gloucestershire Clock and Watch Makers</i> , Phillimore, 1984
Hana	=	Hana, W.F.J, translated by Tyler, E.J., <i>English Lantern Clocks</i> , Poole, 1979
Robinson	=	Robinson, T., <i>The Longcase Clock</i> , Antique Collectors' Club, 1981
Sparkes	=	Sparkes, A., <i>Nineteenth century clock and watchmakers in Southgate Street, Gloucester: a preliminary enquiry</i> , Gloucestershire History no 16 (2002), http://www.gloshistory.org.uk/reprints/gh200202.pdf
GA	=	Gloucestershire Archives
TNA	=	The National Archives

Keywords

Dealers: Joseph Thompson of Cirencester, clockmaker, was buried in Stonehouse in 1739, Dowler p. 76; deeds William Witham 1870 GA D1159; census returns www.ancestry.co.uk, free at libraries and GA

Lantern: Hana, pp. 18-24; Robinson, pp. 20, 46

Makers: www.briangodwin.co.uk/Resources/English_gunmakers_1550_-_1850a.pdf; Dowler, pp. 175-191, 211-12

Neinenger arrival: Sparkes, p. 2; Dowler, p. 132; Hana, p. 17; deeds 1854, GA D1347/T30; naturalisation 1854, TNA HO 1/54/1756

Neinenger High St: census returns www.ancestry.co.uk; Morris and Co. directory 1876 http://www.sandford.plus.com/randwick/dirs/stonehouse_1876.html

Owners: Dowler pp.3-5, 113-114; wills and inventories Thomas Humphries 1721, TNA PROB 3/21/87, at GA GDR Daniel Moore 1688/139, Nathaniel Elliott 1706/120, William Smith 1726/156, Thomas Alday 1753/8, Thomas Jenner 1756/22, John Togwell 1757/24 and 1757/5, Thomas Moore 1771/12, Thomas Watkins 1817/44, Richard Denton 1820/159, Richard Baxter 1848/99

Ownership: <http://hampshireantiqueclocks.co.uk/history-of-antique-clocks/>; Dowler, pp. 48, 119-120, 132; Sparkes, pp. 2-8; wages: Mann, J. de L., *The Cloth Industry in the West of England, 1640-1880*, Alan Sutton, 1987, p.328; Tann, J., *Wool and Water* Stroud, 2012, pp.102-116

Parslow family: will of Roger Parslow, GA GDR 1669/150; deeds 1684-1784, GA D846/III/19; inventories by William Parslow, Thomas Humphries clothier 1721 TNA PROB 3/21/87, at GA GDR Thomas Collier tailor 1712/105, Ursula Collier spinster 1713/325, Richard Veysey broadweaver 1713/90, John Alday clothworker 1715/189

Parslow High St: deeds 1683-1771, GA D127/735-736; deeds 1665-1715, GA D177/III/12; marriage allegation Thomas Parslow 1757, GA GDR Q3/56

Parslow longcase: Robinson, p41; www.catalogue-host.co.uk/mallams/cheltenham/2005-06-02/page_1; correspondence with the Horological Department, British Museum, 2017-18; <https://www.britishmuseum.org/research.aspx> - search collection for Parslow.

Parslow will: TNA wills PROB 11/608/320; deed 1722, GA D846/III/19; Hana, pp. 19-45; Robinson, pp. 89-90

Town : census returns www.ancestry.co.uk; Stonehouse Congregational Church magazine, November 1914, SHG collection; Godfrey and Russell advertisement, SHG collection; bankruptcy report, Cheltenham Chronicle 31 May 1902 <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/>; www.electric-clocks.nl/clocks/en/page03.htm; www.localhistories.org/clocks.html

Stonehouse History Group

Report 2017 - 19

In May 2018 we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the formation of our group. Membership now stands at 71. We have continued with our monthly events, held at Park Junior School from January 2018, which attract an average attendance of 48. In November 2018 an outstanding performance of the play "*Tommy Atkins and the Canary Girl*" attracted an audience of 100.

Sadly, Darrell Webb, who was one of our committee members and website manager, died in November 2017. In 2010, Darrell created the Stonehouse History Group's website www.stonehousehistorygroup.org.uk, and developed it for seven years during which he built up a huge collection of information and photographs which continues to attract visitors from all over the world. Darrell also designed the SHG logo which is now in use on all our publications.

We have created a new website which can be updated by a number of editors. We are still in the process of gradually adding more information and photographs. Shirley Dicker has taken over the management of our Facebook site which generates many interesting comments and photographs.

In 2017, two more Heritage Information Boards were erected outside Park Schools and Wycliffe Chapel. We are grateful for the support of the Town Council and Wycliffe College in funding these. In 2019 we erected a board by Burdett Road railway station, funded by the Webb family in memory of Darrell, and one in Laburnum Recreation Ground, funded by the Midcounties Co-operative, the Town Council and SHG. We now have 9 boards around the Town and Doverow Wood. Thanks to the Council's groundsmen for their excellent work putting the boards in place.

We have talked to people about their memories of Stonehouse. Several have sent us written memories which we intend to include in future journals or on the website. We have also accompanied visitors to Stonehouse to see where their ancestors lived around the town. We have continued with local walks and talks, taking groups around the Church and Canal and High Street. We have visited a variety of groups including Maidenhill School.

We have finished scanning hundreds of photographic negatives which we were given by the Gloucestershire Gazette. Thanks to Shirley Dicker and Judith Matthews for their considerable efforts on this. We have already given several presentations of some of the images.

We have continued with research into various aspects of the town's history and were grateful to receive a collection of documents and photographs which belonged to local historian Jack Anderson. The collection was donated by Philip and Alex Walmsley.

We have joined with other Stroud area local history groups in creating a display at Stroud Museum on the effects of the First World War in our area. Our display for the GLHA Local History Day 2018 was on the topic of "*Stonehouse - Moving forward: 1919 – 1939*". It was judged 2nd best display in the GLHA competition. Our next display, for GLHA in 2020, will be on the topic of "*Education in Stonehouse*".

Our journals and calendars continue to sell well. We are pleased to publish Journal Issue 8 in May 2019. We have built our bank balance back up to a healthy amount through continued sales of the calendar and journals, raffles at our meetings and fees for our walks and talks.

Committee April 2019

Chair - Jim Dickson

Vice-Chair - Shirley Dicker

Secretary - Vicki Walker

Treasurer - Andrew Walker

Committee - David Bowker-Praed, Jane Gulliford, Janet Hudson, Rich White, Colin Wood.

Website working group – Crosby Brown

2017/18 Valerie Blick, Darrell Webb

SHG Events 2017 –2019 (attendance in brackets)

May 10th (53)

AGM and Show and Tell featuring - **David Montgomery** - "Metal detecting on Doverow Hill", **Pamela Tawse** - "Surrey farmers Support the Crimean War Effort", **Jan Dyer** - "Antique doll associated with Great Eastern Steamship", **Cresby Brown** - "House and business names in Stonehouse", **Terry Fulton** - "An heirloom and its problems (an old newspaper)", **Colin Wood** - "Memories of Stonehouse".

June 14th (40)

Mary Greensted - "Nature, Gardens and the Cotswold Arts & Crafts Movement"

July 12th (47)

John Greene from Gloucester Film Makers – a variety of home movies of the local area.

August 9th (29)

Evening visit to Stonehouse vineyard including wine tasting.

Sept 13th (52)

Jim Dickson - "Some history of the Stroudwater Canal around Stonehouse".

Oct 11th (54)

Bob Lusty - "Me, music and entertainment: 1970s and 1980s".

Nov 8th (41)

Pete Evans – "A lad with a camera: The last of British Rail steam".

Dec 13th (45)

Cherry Hubbard - "Tudor Christmas." Examples of the customs and food of Tudor times.

Jan 10th (55)

Vicki Walker and Shirley Dicker - "Stonehouse in old photographs".

Feb 14th (43)

Jennifer Tann – "Woolly Tales of the Severn Vale; the woollen industry from Stroud to Severn."

March 14th (63)

Show and Tell featuring **Steve Lacey** "My father: an unassuming Yorkshireman", **Jan Dyer** "WW1 Sweetheart Cushions", **Stephen Mills** "J.P. Moore: Architect and Surveyor of Gloucester", **Janet Hudson** "Archery", **Jim Dickson** "In amongst the icebergs", **Colin Wood** "Tales of Stonehouse Court".

April 11th (40)

Ian Margeson - "Abraham Lincoln: from frontier boy to greatest American President?"

May 9th (47)

AGM and Ten Year Review including Achievements and past events of SHG (**Vicki Walker**), Changes in Stonehouse over the past 10 years. (**Jim Dickson**) and What History Group means to me (**Shirley Dicker**)

June 13th (40)

Rich White - "The Birth of Radio - The experimental years before the BBC."

July 11th (42)

Richard Lacey - Marling & Evans – personal memories of growing up in a mill community."

Sept 12th (60)

Ray Wilson - "Stroud's other industries."

Oct 10th (55)

Richard Kelsey and Dave Lamb - "The Severn from the air - the last 80 miles."

Nov 14th (100)

Spaniel in the Works - "Tommy Atkins and the Canary Girl." (WW1 play)

Dec 12th (49)

John Putley - "Medieval Pets."

January 9th (50)

Show and Tell featuring **Bob Lusty** – "Down at Mill: working at Marling and Evans 1959-1962", **Eric Winder** – "The Crossbow in Medieval Times", **Stephen Hawksworth** – "Fergus O'Connor's Loyal Followers – A Century of Chartist Life in Gloucestershire", **Cresby Brown** – "Local Ordnance Survey Benchmarks", **Vicki Walker** – "William Pile & Co. Saddler"

February 13th (55)

Lois Francis & Jane Bethell - "Stories from the Stroudwater Canal Archives"

March 13th (38)

Tony Conder – "Royal Gloucester."

April 10th (47)

Howard Beard – "People of the Stroud Valleys in old photographs"



2017—2019

