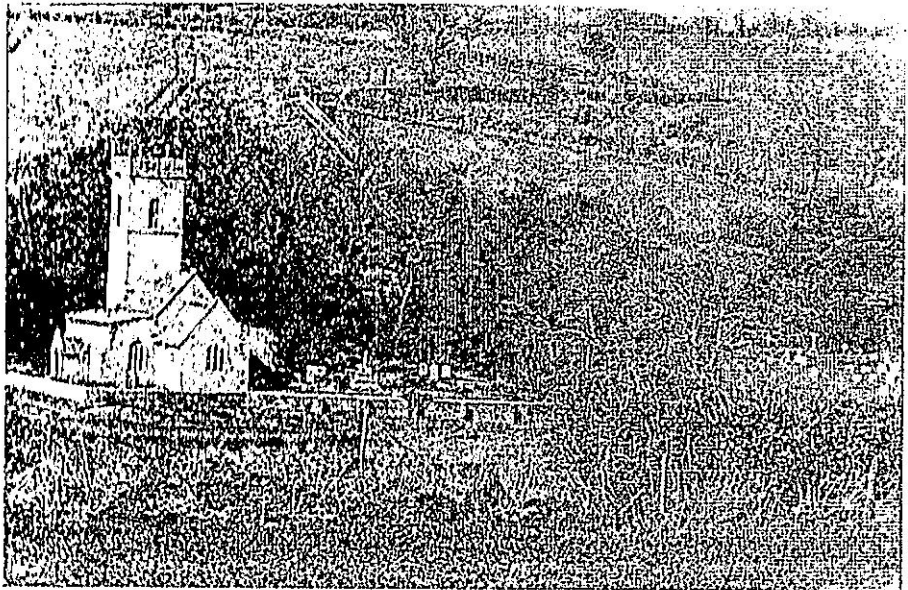


A HISTORY OF CHESELBOURNE

By
Donald Bridle



October, 1998

CHESELBOURNE - A SHORT HISTORY

by Donald Bridle

That people from the Bronze Age settled the downs above what is now the village of Cheselbourne was established in 1840, when Charles Hall and C. Warne excavated a number of round barrows on West farm and Bramblecombe Farm. These were Durotriges, (Dwellers by the water), a warlike tribe who settled in Dorset from 2000 - 600 BC. They swept aside the Neolithic tribes who lived here from 4000 - 2000 BC., being bigger and stronger, and possessing skills to make tools and weapons of Bronze, whereas Neolithic man was still using tools and weapons of flint. The Durotriges buried their dead in round barrows as opposed to Neolithic man who constructed long barrows, which seems to follow the pattern of the Durotriges having round heads while the Neolithics had long heads.

Among pottery and various artefacts found were Roman coins, some from the Hadrian Period, which wasn't surprising as there was a Roman Villa in Dewlish on the site where Dewlish House now stands. A tessellated Pavement was unearthed there 250 years ago. The pottery and coins are in the Dorchester Museum.

After the Bronze Age came the Iron Age from 600 - 55 BC., the time of the Roman invasion of Britain. There was an Iron Age settlement on the down above Lyscombe. It is generally believed Celtic immigrants were responsible for introducing the art to smelt iron ore, bringing with them the potters wheel. This could mean it was the Durotriges who were overrun by the Romans having acquired the skill to make iron.

It is doubtful the Romans would have found much to interest them in and around the area as the existence of the village of Cheselbourne was nearly 1000 years into the future. They would have marched north and west after the capture of Maiden Castle, probably the biggest Iron Age settlement in the country around 43 AD., by the second Augustine Legion commanded by Vespasian, later Emperor of Rome. Keeping to the ridge roads to avoid the swamps and dense woodland of the valleys they would have overrun the settlements in this area leaving behind minor officials in Dewlish to oversee the area. The occupation of England was completed by Agricola in 84 AD., and they finally left these shores in 416 AD. to defend their mainland empire against invading hordes from the north, among them the Saxons, the people who later invaded and conquered England.

The first recorded history of Cheselbourne was in 965 AD. when King Eadgar made a grant of land at Ceosol Burnan (Gravel Brook) to Wulheard, a faithful man. Clearly he was thought highly of by both the King and Church as the Grant was signed by the King, the Archbishop of the Metropolitan Church, four Bishops and ten Ministers. The Grant was made in perpetuity, to be passed to whichever heir he chose. King Ethelred later gave the Manor to his son Aelfston, and it was passed by King Edmund to the Abbess of Shaftesbury.

In 1016 parts of the Manor were given by King Canute, the first Danish King, to his servant Edmund. Henry III fought a lawsuit over some of the land in his long struggle against his Barons, and after the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry VIII, the Manor of Cheselbourne was sold to Thomas Arundel for £400.

The entry for Cheselbourne in the Domesday Book of 1085 reads simply:-

Ceseburne; Shaftesbury Abbey; Mill; Remote.

In 1585, the Earl of Arundel, known as a rake and libertine, incurred the wrath of Elizabeth I, and attempted to flee to France. He was caught and imprisoned in the Tower of London, forfeiting all his lands and properties. These were later restored to the family, probably by James I, a known Catholic sympathiser, and so the Arundels once more became the owners of Cheselbourne.

The first Rector was Michael de Wodeford in 1295, but his tenure was short lived as in 1298, a letter was sent by the Bishop of Salisbury to the Abbess of Shaftesbury requesting a fit person be sent to the Church at Cheselbourne as the living was vacant. The Abbess sent John Tarent in February 1298.

In 1508, Sir Matthew Arundel, the then Patron, installed William Jessop as Rector. The Arundels continued as Patrons and Lords of the Manor until 1716, when George Pitt acquired the Manor of Cheselbourne. He built Kingston Maurward House in the classical Palladian style in red brick in 1720. George III is reputed to have been a frequent visitor, and on a chance remark that he disliked red brick houses, William Pitt had the entire building encased in Portland stone in 1794.

The only family of note to reside in Cheselbourne was the Keyte family, whose coat of arms and family tree is listed in Hutchins History of Dorset. They lived in the Manor House, which is referred to simply as the farmhouse. A memorial to Hugh Keyte in the Church shows he married Maria Grove of Odstock near Salisbury, there being ten children from the marriage. He died in 1589, leaving five sons, and five sons and daughters dead. When Elizabeth Keyte, the widow of Thomas Keyte died in 1663, it is the last mention of the family. The name on various monuments is spelt either Kete or Keate, but this was common in 16th - 17th centuries.

When William Box became Rector in 1733, George Chafin and Edmund Rhydal held the Manor until 1750, when George Pitt jnr. became Lord of the manor and Giles Templeman became Rector. He was also Rector of Wimborne St Giles, a parish over twenty miles from Blandford. In 1760, George Pitt was elevated to the peerage, becoming Lord Rivers, and John Freke became Rector.

In 1820, Thomas Wickam Birch was installed as Rector, and his tenure was to last until 1871. A bachelor, he was the son of Charles Birch, Rector of Cheselbourne from 1797-1817. Thomas Birch provided something badly needed in the village, a free school, which was built within the boundary of the Rectory. It was intended for 80 pupils, and it is difficult to see how he intended to fit them all in. In fact the average attendance was thirty five, something he probably had at the back of his mind. The main reason for the lack of pupils was they did not have suitable clothes or footwear. I remember a late parishioner telling me how he often had to carry his younger brother to school on his back as the younger boy had no soles to his boots. Another reason was some parents did not agree with their children educated and their heads filled with ideas above their station. In their eyes, if a boy could not hold plough before the age of twelve he was not likely to ever make a farm labourer. The girls invariably went into domestic service where no academic qualifications were necessary.

Some doubt has always existed as to when the school was built, 1861 being put forward as a likely date. In Kelly's Directory of Dorset it was noted that a Miss Elizabeth Longman was headmistress of the Free School in 1848, so clearly an earlier date is most likely. The lessons were written on slate boards using slate pencils, and when a slate broke there was enough slate roofed houses in the village to provide replacements. The fire that caused the new school to be built was caused by a traction engine when sparks from its chimney ignited the thatch of a barn adjoining the school. I was told by a

man who was pupil at the time that the pupils were not allowed to evacuate the school until it was impossible to see across the classroom. Mr Fox, headmaster at the time clearly did not think inhalation of smoke was harmful to children. By this time the school had already passed from control of the Church to the Local Education Authority.

When Charles Barton first came to the village as Rector in 1873, he found the village had the 'Starve Acre' appearance of a village uncared for by either itself or its Lord, who of course was absent. This phrase was first coined by Thomas Hardy in describing Doles Ash, which earlier like Lyscombe had been a sizeable hamlet.

There is rather a macabre story concerning Charles Barton who died in 1893, and was Rector for 12 years. His eldest daughter had gone to live in Australia and the family wished her to return for her father's funeral. To enable the body to be kept for six weeks, the time of her journey home, holes were drilled in the coffin which was then placed in the stream to allow the water to flow through the coffin. You could say if true, it was a variation on a theme when a high ranking officer or nobleman died at sea and the body brought back home for burial. Then the body was placed in a barrel of alcohol which was then lashed to a mast. This had a twofold purpose; to allow the weather to assist the process, and to prevent the seamen drinking the alcohol.

The last Rector before the parishes of Cheselbourne, Melcombe and Hilton were amalgamated was Frederick Beale. In 1922 Ernest and Elizabeth Bridle rented part of the Rectory as the Rector was in some financial difficulty. Their daughter was born there, that last and probably the only child born there this century. While they were living there the Rector's two sons together with their mother who had been conducting a long running feud with the rector attempted to burn down the house by piling great quantities of straw around it. Only prompt action by some of the villagers prevented serious damage.

In 1929 Harry Caryl was installed as Rector of the combined parishes. A man in the Pickwick mould, he was very outgoing for a parson in those days, and although past playing, had a passion for cricket, and if the need arose would stand in as umpire. He would also attend Socials in the old school where he would sing his party piece, 'Sweet Molly Malone'.

A stickler for punctuality, I was told by Norman House of Hilton, who drove Mr Caryl in the latter stages of his ministry, he would start reading the minutes to empty room should the other members of the P.C.C. be late in arriving.

His curate was called Large, a tall strange man who cycled everywhere. The trick if you saw him coming was to pretend you were out as once in he was very difficult to dislodge. He nearly killed himself one day when his bike brakes failed coming down Streetway, and he crashed into the stream by Fred Bullen's Farmhouse.

Cheselbourne Church was built mostly in the 14th century, and is dedicated to St Martin who is best remembered for sharing his cloak with a beggar. He died in 397 AD., and his shrine is at Tours. Parts of the nave and south aisle date from the 13th century, and the chancel was added in the 14th century. The south porch was built in 1500, and there is a scratch sundial beside the door.

The belfry in an unbuttressed tower originally held five bells, and the last time they were rung correctly was in 1875, before the fabric of the tower made this unsafe. They were then fixed and struck on the outside. The first and third bells were made by John Wallis and dated 1618. The fourth bell was cast by Thomas Rosskelly and dated 1754. the second bell was probably cast in the Salisbury foundry, and the fifth dates from medieval times.

In 1981, the sum of £4000 was raised, including £700 made from the sale of the fourth bell, to rehang the bells, and they were rededicated by Bishop Ellison. The Church has been restored twice, once in 1874 and again in 1924. A feature is the Cheselbourne Boys restored to the Church in 1898, and rest on corbels in the north aisle. The present organ was purchased in 1976 from the redundant Church of Holy Trinity in Dorchester.

Outside the north porch is an old tomb known as the dole table where payments were made to the poor. There is also the remains of a Preaching Cross. It is believed that the first Preaching Crosses were erected by the monks sent from Ireland by St Patrick to convert Cornwall and the West Country to Christianity. There are numerous crosses in Cornwall, some dating from the 4th century. In Somerset there are 200, but only 62 in Dorset which were erected in the 14th - 15th centuries. These were nearly always erected in villages owned by some Monastic or Ecclesiastical body. In some cases the cross was erected after the main part of the Church was built, near the main door, where some service of preparation was carried out before entry into the sacred building. This being the case, it is possible the Preaching Cross in Cheselbourne Churchyard was erected after the main body of the Church was built.

A photograph taken around the turn of the century shows the cross in a very dilapidated condition with several large plinth stones missing. A large hole in the church wall is shown stopped up with a hurdle. The New Cemetery was presented to the village by Clement Tory in 1920. It was the garden of a cottage by the Church path and the home of Fred and May Whelan when they first married in 1919. Their honeymoon consisted of a ride to Bulbarrow in a pony and trap.

The Primitive Methodist Chapel was built in 1866 through the efforts of Levi Thorne and Joseph Mullett. A Methodist lay preacher, Levi farmed 400 acres at Waterside where he employed 18 men and a number of boys. He also provided a comfortable Roof Tree, a shelter for visiting preachers, so we can assume the Methodists met there for their services before the Chapel was built.

Joseph Mullett, a carpenter, lived in a large double roofed house above the chapel where he ran the wagon works. The Chapel was built on his land on a plot adjoining the saw pit. His family remained closely involved with the Chapel until 1910. Within living memory the Chapel was too small to hold the congregation and the singing of those outside could be heard for quite a distance.

The Chapels being always full whereas the Churches were virtually empty prompted the Bishop of Exeter to declare, 'If you want to heat the Church you must know where to put the stove, in the pulpit.' This was a direct reference to the dull preaching in the Churches by educated men to the rousing sermons in the Chapels by men some of whom were farm labourers. One Rector did remark later, 'You can hardly be fired up with enthusiasm when faced with a near empty Church !'

It would be well to point out that, in the days up to and after the Second World War, a strict demarcation existed in the village as to the mode of worship. The Chapel was strictly for the lower orders, and the only time they went to Church was for weddings, funerals, christenings and, after the First World War, services of Remembrance. These occasions brought welcome relief to men like the Rev. Caryl who deplored preaching to a near empty Church and enjoyed the singing of a full congregation.

There was one occasion when the Anglicans and Methodists came together for a combined service of the Harvest Festival on the invitation of the Church Wardens. It was during the interval between the death of Charles

Barton and the inauguration of Thomas Beesley as Rector. To bring some enthusiasm into the service a Methodist cornet player accompanied the Anglican organist, but there is no record of who actually conducted the service.

For some reason Thomas Beesley did not live in the rectory after his installation as rector in 1895. It is possible he witnessed his predecessor's body still lying in the stream and found it all too much to bear ? The old man who told me the story could see nothing out of the ordinary about it. As he said at the time, 'They had to do something to keep the body, so what better place then the stream ?' Whatever the reason, the Rev. Beesley was listed as non-resident and in 1902 his Curate, the Rev. William Clarke, took over the running of the Church, at least until 1904.

The fire reached the pulpit in Cheselbourne with the arrival, in 1909, of Charles Whistler, a former fishermen's chaplain, and author of stirring Viking tales. He was described as a man of outstanding geniality, and although unable to increase the number of his congregation became very involved with the village in that he was able to form a small string orchestra from pupils at the school. His daughter was the first woman to hold a driving license on our roads. The Patron and Lord of the Manor at that time was A.E. Fox Pitt of Hinton St Mary, and the Rector's stipend was £195 per annum. In 1910 the Patron had added Rivers to his name to become A.E.L. Fox Pitt Rivers.

Meanwhile the Chapel was thriving with a Sunday School in the morning, and afternoon and evening services. Two anniversaries were held each year, one in mid-summer and one at Christmas when every pupil was presented with a book. During the service each pupil had to recite their piece or poem always selected and written out by Miss May Tucker, the infant teacher at the school. May, or Teacher Tucker as she was always known, taught at the school for nearly forty years and lived in a cottage behind the school which was demolished in 1958. Earlier it had been the village Ale House before the advent of licensing laws and the Rivers Arms being built. It possessed a unique feature in that the sitting room had two windows, something not seen in any other cottage of its size.

On the evenings of the anniversaries people would walk from Ansty and Dewlish to attend the service, and the forms would be placed in the aisle to accommodate them. An outing to Weymouth was also organised with the children handing in what money they could in order to have spending money

on the day. The average amount was 1s 6d, around 7½ new pence, as the wages for a farm labourer at that time was £1 9s 6d per week, barely £1.50p.

The evening service at the Chapel was often attended by three men from Ansty, and an amusing diversion, at least for the children would take place. They always sat apart from each other and would shout, 'Praise the Lord; Alleluia; and Glory be to God.' when they thought the preacher had made a profound statement. At no time were they ever known to clash so perhaps they were gifted with E.S.P.. The three were brothers Joby and Sylvester Thorne and Ted House. Joby was a carpenter and joiner and the undertaker for Cheselbourne, Ansty and Hilton. Sylvester worked for Tom Riggs at the Blacksmith's shop, and Ted was a painter and decorator. He used to ride through the village on a ladies' bicycle on his way to Puddletown steering with his right hand and holding a lemon in his left hand which he sucked as he rode. Joby, when the occasion arose, would stand in for any listed preacher who failed to arrive at Ansty Chapel.

Another man who would stand in for the preacher was Charles Mullett who lived in the family house above the Chapel and a descendant of Joseph Mullett. A big man, Charles ran the Sunday School and had his own way of dealing with unruly pupils. He would grip them hard above the knees and squeeze, and an old parishioner who attended his Sunday School told me after Charles had handed out his punishment you could barely stand. On his death Charles Old, a shepherd took over the Sunday School and the running of the Chapel.

During the Civil War of 1641 - 43, Cheselbourne was staunchly for parliament and this isn't surprising as the headquarters for Cromwell's forces in Dorset was Bingham's Melcombe House; Corfe Castle being the Royalist stronghold. Even so, the village had its rebels as, after the battle of Hambleton Hill, Cromwell's forces were reported to be on the lookout for Ronald Arnold of Cheselbourne, a desperate agent, and Rawleigh Radford of Dewlish, a more desperate malignant. In 1648 Joseph Hall of Cheselbourne refused to pay a tithe to Cromwell's newly appointed Church Minister, and in 1647 a committee in Dorchester awarded the sum of twenty shillings to John Strude of Cheselbourne maimed when serving as a soldier in the service of Parliament.

In 1348 the village was virtually wiped out by the Black Death when the population stood at nearly 1000. It was reported at the time the disease reached the village via Melcombe Regis, a thriving port. A plague pit was

discovered in the Churchyard some years ago as a few survived to dig individual graves.

In 1666 Cheselbourne was generous in giving aid, and a collection of £1 7s 6d was made for the people of London impoverished by the Great Fire. In the following twelve years they gave assistance to people in Weymouth, Poole, Montgomeryshire, Newport, East Deane in Sussex, Bishops Clift in Devon and Wickham in Hampshire. These places all suffered disastrous fires at a time before fire insurance. As the Lord of the Manor was absent we can assume the Rev. Richard Basket was instrumental in these awards being made. He was Rector from 1661 - 1684.

In 1760 Cheselbourne sent £1 4s 3d for the redemption of captives during the siege of Candia by the Turks. In 1680 they sent £1 15s 0d to help Christian captives in Algeria, and in 1688 sent money to relieve the plight of French Protestants.

The earliest Social Security was operated by the overseers who were responsible for those in need, helped them in sickness and bought them firewood. They also paid for the burial of the dead and for bread and cheese for the wakers. Having said the overseers were responsible, they were inasmuch as they gave the names of those who in their opinion were in need of help to the Parish Meeting who decided what form that help should take. The Parish Meeting consisted of men with some social standing such as farmers and tradesmen with their own business, and included the Rector and the Parish Clerk. They, in turn, appointed two responsible men to be overseers.

A typical entry in 1753 concerns Edward White who had fallen on hard times.

Quarterly rent for Edward White	2s 6d
Beer	8d
A pair of breeches	1s 0d
A yard and a half of livery for waistcoat	1s 10d
Forell for flanning	1s 3d
Thread and buttons	3½d
Making a shirt	4d
Keeping Edward White for a month	5s 0d
	<u>13s 7d</u>

They also paid for cleaning the wash pool, 1s 6d for sweeping the poor house chimney, and paid £1 for lime for the poor house. They found the way-menders' beer, mended the common bridge and paid the mason's bill for fixing Mrs Mey's chamlay and her window tax.

In 1781 bleeding cost 1s 6d, but inoculation against smallpox cost 10s 6d. the average family spent 1s 0d per week on oatmeal, flour being too expensive, 8d on tea, 8d on sugar and 6d on soap. Dr Warren the Rector of Tolpuddle, giving evidence before a wages committee at Dorchester just prior the Tolpuddle Martyrs' trial, stated the farm labourers in the area lived on nothing but tea and potatoes. It is true that this was something of an exaggeration, but the conditions and standards of life for the farm labourers were desperately low. There was one recorded case in the area where a family of eleven persons who slept in a room 10ft square, with a single window 15inches square.

To alleviate these conditions most cottages had a garden where vegetables were grown to go with the meat, mostly rabbits that were poached. Farmers invariably turned a blind eye to their workers taking rabbits, but took a different view to black mutton (venison) finding its way to the table. As late as the latter part of the 19th century the penalty for poaching deer meant a prison sentence.

One man in Cheselbourne who found a way to lift himself out of the poverty trap was Robin Roberts. That he was successful was proved at Dorchester Crown Court in 1848 when he was fined £200 for smuggling. He could have lived in one of a pair of cottages that stood where Burnside now stands as they both had smuggler's holes built into them. This was often a cavity reached from the fireplace, where a man could hide out of sight of the Excise men. Clearly Robin was unable to make it home one day. On reflection, it would appear his smuggling activities were quite extensive as £200 was large fine and normally would have entailed a prison sentence in Dorchester gaol, or did he have friends in high places who benefited from his activities?

Whatever the privations suffered by the village, time was always found to indulge in sport in the 18th - 19th century. Football played in Cheselbourne attracted men from a wide area. The mind boggles at what exact form it took, as most country sports were emphasised heavily with brute force and ignorance. In other words, the bigger you were the more chance you had of winning. One man who was a keen participant was the Rector of Alton Pancras who was

threatened with dismissal if he persisted in shortening his sermon in order to ride to Cheselbourne to play football.

As the village appeared sport orientated undoubtedly other sport would have been played here such as cudgels, a sport, (I use the word loosely), played in most villages in the area. It was played with a weapon 3ft long and an inch in diameter, made of ash with a leather thong to go round the wrist. A platform of some description was raised and the challenger would ascend and throw down his cap which was then picked up by his opponent. This was thought to be a remnant of the knightly challenge of throwing down the gauntlet. A restriction was placed on the contestants by having their free arm tied behind their backs. Hitting below the knees was forbidden, and the attack was centered on the body, the neck and knee, the object being to wind or double up your opponent. When this was accomplished the victor was entitled to cut his opponent across the head with the sharpened end of his cudgel, and as blood was drawn the game was won. Also if the cudgel was knocked out of a player's hand it counted as game.

The undoubted champion in the 19th century was John Combes of Lower Buckshaw near Sherborne, know as Tally Ho Combes, who took on allcomers over a wide area. He was reputed to be able to stand in front of a five bar gate with his hands in his pockets and jump over it without a run.

To compensate for not being able to hit below the knees the game of Cut Leg came into being. It was played with hazel rods 3ft long and the thickness of a finger. The players slashed at each other's legs and the man who could stand it the longest won the game. It was said the scars from both games on body and legs were shown off with as much pride as the scarred cheeks of a German officer wounded in military duels.

The Enclosure of the Common Lands in Cheselbourne in 1844 brought an end to the age old practice of villagers being able to run their geese and pigs, most on Bramblecombe and square down. One man was usually chosen to keep an eye on the stock, and at the end of the year was presented with a new coat. As the area consisted of open downland and gorse bushes the enclosure was hated by hunting men who were assured of a fast forty minutes gallop across country from Milborne St Andrew through to Cheselbourne and Piddletrenthide.

When Joseph Arch, the founder of the Agricultural Workers Union in Dorset, first came to Cheselbourne he found it the most radical village in

the area. He first arrived in 1888 and began to hold a number of meetings in a vain attempt to regain the lost land due the enclosures. There was a battle hymn written that was sung at the meetings and the Candlemas Hiring Fair at Dorchester, and the whole essence of the fight is expressed in the last verse :-

Remember that ye cannot claim
One acre or one sod;
Give back the land the wretched cry,
You stole it from your God.

During the 19th century the population of Cheselbourne varied considerably, rising from 347 in 1848 to 432 in 1876. from that time it decreased steadily, so that by the time Charles Wheeler was installed Rector in 1909, it had fallen to 194. This was due to something of an exodus from the villages to the towns by tradesmen such as carpenters, builders, blacksmiths and wheelwrights, all seeking higher wages and better standards of living, but left the farm workers with nowhere to go. It was said the boot and shoemakers, known as snobs, stayed behind to ensure the workers were well shod, and to pass on the gossip.

Some of the decrease could be blamed on a disastrous period of rain and depression in 1875, and again in 1890. Young men also left to join the armed forces like Algie and William Tucker, brothers of May Tucker. They both joined the Royal Navy as stokers, and both died, William in 1907 serving on board H.M.S. Patrol, aged 27, and Algie a year later on H.M.S. Bulwark aged 30. The mortality on board the coal-fired warships at that time was very high. Another reason was young boys and girls were given assisted passages to Canada and Australia around the turn of the century to give them a better start in life. One such boy was George Curtis, the uncle of Ken and Les Whelan. It later emerged this was a travesty to all the youngsters as they were treated virtually as slaves.

In 1848 there was no carrier from the village to Dorchester so it had to be self-sufficient, and here is a list of tradesmen, farmers and shopkeepers etc., at that time :-

Thomas Birch, M.A., Rector	James Hillir, shopkeeper & shoemaker
Esau Baker, farmer	James Kingsbury, butcher
James Cain, yeoman	John Kingsbury, farmer
Charles Davis, farmer	Levi Riggs, farmer
John Davis, farmer	William Tett, farmer & miller
Samuel Dicker, carpenter	Joseph Miller, shopkeeper carpenter

Samuel Dicker, carpenter	Joseph Miller, shopkeeper carpenter
Thomas Drake, boot & shoemaker	Joseph Mullet, carpenter
John Hall, blacksmith	Mary Shepherd, shopkeeper
Elizabeth Longman, schoolmistress	

James Cain, listed as yeoman in 1848, was listed as farmer in 1865 with 700 acres which clearly was Eastfield Farm. He ran 700 sheep and 150 pigs.

There was still no Post Office in 1895, the nearest one being at Puddletown or Piddletown as it was known then. Philip Cleal had started a carrier business to Dorchester on Wednesdays and Saturdays with a horse-drawn van, but it wasn't until 1890 that the first Post Office was opened in Cheselbourne by John Riggs, blacksmith and wheelwright, the great grandfather of the late Barbara Lewis. In 1900 Henry (Puggy) Davis took over the Post Office which he ran from Carriers Cottage, and this was to continue as the shop until 1981. Henry Davis died when he fell downstairs and broke his neck on Christmas Eve in 1921. The Tuckers then bought the business until selling it to Charles Buckland in 1933. He was the late Madge Whelan's father. Herbert Crail was the next sub-postmaster, and was there during the war years.

Mary Shepherd was a shopkeeper for a great number of years, listed in Kelly's Directory as early as 1848. She lived in the middle cottage of the three that stood in front of where the school is now, and they burnt down in 1885. The old thatched cottages had one feature that was often their undoing, the fireplaces. they were huge, allowing people to sit on stools either side of the fire as it was often the only way to keep warm in the winter with the draughts coming in through badly fitting windows and doors. The chimney was large and straight, so it was possible to see the sky when sat in the fireplace. It was also possible to hear the hiss of the rain falling on red hot coals during a thunderstorm. The saying of having a fire half way up the chimney stemmed from these old fireplaces as it was possible to put a whole faggot on the fire. A roaring fire meant a lot of sparks coming out at the top of the chimney and falling on the thatch which often led to fires which destroyed the cottages. There being no fire engines, the only means of fighting the fire was to pull blazing thatch from the roof using firehooks, but these were always kept in the Church with the dog tongs. This meant that the nearer your lived to the Church the more chance you had of saving your cottage.

The most influential family in Cheselbourne from about 1890 until after the 1939-45 War was the Bennetts. Richard Cave Bennett, a seed and corn merchant of Dorchester, leased Eastfield Farm from the Rivers Estate of some 700 acres, and with his son, Reginald, employed a large work force. They were the first to go into dairy farming at a time when to own a cow was considered something of a luxury. They also ran a large flock of Dorset Horn sheep. On Richard's death in 1925 he was the last person to be interred in the old Churchyard.

Reginald Bennett, an astute and able farmer, became a J.P. as well as Church Warden, Chairman of the school governors, Chairman of the Parish Meeting and Chairman of the Reading Room. He had an artificial leg, the result of an accident when a boy, but he was very mobile, riding out every day on a tour of the farm on a horse called Jorrocks with a cropped tail. He always carried a whip rather than a riding crop, and would delight in making it crack on meeting children.

In 1926, when Lewis Damon married Winifred Bridle, the Rector, Rev. Beale collapsed at the beginning of the service. Equal to the occasion, Reginald stepped in and completed the marriage ceremony. No one at the time questioned the validity of the marriage even if they had their suspicions as he held the livelihood of so many in his hands. Truly a man for all seasons !

In 1919 the Bennetts purchased Eastfield farm when the Rivers Estate sold all their land in Cheselbourne, some 700 acres. They also purchased Bramblecombe and Northfield Farm. Richard Bennett then installed his daughter, Winifred, and her husband Harry Birch in Bramblecombe Farm, and sold Northfield Farm to Sydney Bullen who had bought Waterside Farm. He in turn installed his son Frederick in Northfield Farm.

Richard Bennett lost no time in making his presence felt in the village as the following extract from the minute book of the Parish meetings will show.

1898. Parish meeting of Cheselbourne.

The annual Parish meeting was held in the School Room on Monday, March 28th, at 7 p.m. after due notice had been given.

Those present:- Rev. Beesley
Mr R.C. Bennett
Mr W. Rogers
Mr J. Riggs
Mr J Christopher

Notice calling the meeting having been read and the minutes of the last read and confirmed, it was proposed by Mr J Christopher and seconded by Mr W Rogers that Mr R.C. Bennett be reappointed as Chairman of the Parish meeting.

Mr J Riggs and Mr W Mullett were on the proposal of Mr W Rogers and seconded by Mr J Christopher nominated as overseers for the coming year.

Proposed by Mr J Christopher and seconded by Rev. Beesley that the Chairman be requested to call the attention of the District Surveyor to the bad state of the footbridge over the Cheselbourne Brook leading to the Church, to the great inconvenience and danger caused by its delapidated condition, which was carried.

R. C. Bennett, Chairman

It wasn't until 1948 that the Parish meeting became the Parish Council under instruction from Dorset County Council when the first Parish Council was elected. They were :-

S. Parsons. Chairman
E Bridle
S Brown
E Snoad
E Virgin.

This order had first been issued in 1947.

During the 1914 -18 War men left the village to serve in the armed forces, and their names are listed in the Church. This extract was taken from the minute book of the Parish meeting:-

1922. Parish of Cheselbourne.

The War Memorial in the form of a cross of Portland Stone was erected in the new burial ground to the memory of the gallant men of Cheselbourne who made the supreme sacrifice for King and Country in the Great War of 1914 -18, and was duly dedicated by the Rural Dean, the Rev. Helps of Puddletown, and assisted by Colonel Lord Ellenborough C.B. on the afternoon of Friday 17th, at 3.30 pm.

A memorial service was first held in the Church which was of a most impressive kind.

The honoured names of the fallen are:-

Walter Old	Killed in France
Bertram Kellaway	Killed in France
Reginald Kellaway	Killed in France
Charles Kellaway	Killed in Gallipoli
Jack Honeybun	Died in France

The patriotism of the village stood remarkably high, for no less than thirty men served in His Majesty's Forces during the war, and two of them, Ernest Bridle and Lewis Damon were awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the field.

Reginald E Bennett, Chairman
March 20th., 1922.

Richard Bennett and his son Reginald held the chair of the Parish Meeting for a total of 47 years - Richard 26 years, and Reginald 21 years.

It was around this period that something occurred that typified the high-handed attitude of people in power in those days. Lord Ilchester, who owned Chebbard farm, erected two gates across the road much to the inconvenience of users, and despite protests from the Parish Chairman and the District Council, he refused to remove them, and they stayed in position from 1921 until they were finally removed in 1923.

Meanwhile Major and Mrs Freeland had bought Manor farm, and in turn leased the farm to Albert Westmacott. Mrs Freeland was a violinist in the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, driving herself to Bournemouth from Cheselbourne as her husband was confined to a wheelchair. She is remembered as a very careful driver, stopping for even a bird on the road. Every Christmas they gave a party for the village children when their butler, Bill Liney, would come to the school to get a list of presents requested by the children. He also played the part of Father Christmas at the party at the Manor. I well remember as a small boy when the Christmas entertainment was provided by Peggy Newth, the ward of the Freelands and budding ballerina who performed a dance. Never has casting pearls before swine been better demonstrated.

In 1936 Charles Walker bought the Rectory from Mr Allen who had renovated the house after it had lain empty for a number of years after the death of Rev. Beale. He was chairman of Edmunds and Walker, the roller and ball

bearing company, and he followed the Bennett's example by having a 50volt battery system installed powered by a generator and stationary engine. As befitting his position he arrived from London with a yellow Rolls Royce and a Graham Page, a large American car. He also employed a full time chauffeur, a first for the village. The family did a lot of entertaining, and four people who were children then will always have cause to remember one cold Christmas night when they sang carols outside the dining-room window, as they were invited in to sing to the dinner guests.

During the 1939 - 45 War, both men and women enlisted in the various armed services and non-combatant organisations, and here are their names:-

Mary Bennett	W.L.A.	Hubert Hasler	R.N.
John Birch	G.R.	Nancy Holbrook	C.N.R.
Richard Birch	R.A.F.	Ronald Holbrook	F.A.A.
Donald Bridle	R.A.F.	Marjory Newth	W.L.A.
James Bridle	R.A.F.	Molly Walker	A.T.S.
Molly Bridle	W.L.A.	Claude White	R.A.F.
Charles Bullen	R.A.F.	Harold White	R.A.F.
Charles Curtis	R.A.	Rita White	W.A.A.F.
Dora Curtis	A.T.S.	Hilda Curtis	A.T.S.
Nancy Curtis	A.T.S.	Irene Whelan	W.A.A.F.
George Damon	R.N.	Kenneth Whelan	R.A.S.C.
Winifred Damon	W.R.N.S.		

There was also a platoon of Home Guard drawn from Cheselbourne and Dewlish comprising of 28 men with Frank Terry of Chebbard Farm as their C.O..

The oldest known building in Cheselbourne is the Chapel at Lyscombe built by monks of a secular order which tradition says was dedicated to St Mary the Virgin. These were replaced by Benedictine monks in 964 by King Eadgar. Lyscombe, as it was then known, then belonged to the Abbott of Milton supplying vegetables and even fish for the Abbott's table from the stream which is reputed to be much larger then. In pre-reformation days Lyscombe was a hamlet comprising of up to 15 cottages, but now only the Chapel and one cottage remain.

In 1882 Lyscombe was amalgamated with Cheselbourne for civil purposes only, but in later years was fully integrated into the Parish of

Cheselbourne. This was the resting place for the Abbott and his retinue on their way to Cerne Abbey via the Holy Road, part of which is Streetway Lane. Somewhere in the 18th century it came into the ownership of John Tregonwell, Lord of the Manor of Milton, who later sold it to a yeoman called Miller. Some of the finest examples of flintwork in the county can be seen in the walls of the farm buildings.

Another old building is the Cheselbourne rectory, built in the 16th century, and was originally a single story building. One belief is that it was used by the Abbott of Milton to break his journey on the way to Cerne Abbey. There is a Fleur de Lis above the fireplace in the dining-room giving some credence to the story. The house has undergone several alterations in its history, but like so much in the village little has been written down except in the case of the Church.

As in most villages there were characters in earlier days, none more so than Mrs Emily Thorne, known to everyone as Granny Joe, one of a family of thirteen. She lost an eye in 1930 when chopping wood so wore glasses with one lens frosted over. The cottage she lived in stood in front of Northfield farmhouse and would have been at least two cottages earlier. On the death of her husband, Joe Thorne, in 1921, she turned her front room into a shop where she sold goods ranging from sweets and soft drinks to boots and shoes and articles of clothing supplied to her by Baileys of Dorchester.

Her shop was a regular meeting place for the young men of the village in the evenings drinking stewed tea from a teapot always simmering on the hob. The late Stanley Parsons was a regular customer in his young days. Children knew, if they had a halfpenny to spend, it was better to go to Granny Joe's than the Tucker shop where Miss Paddock would cut a toffee in two to make the correct weight. Not for nothing was she known as Mother Cut Fig. In the twenties Granny supplemented her pension of ten shillings a week by providing lodgings for the village constable. Born in 1875, she lived to the ripe old age of 94.

When P.C. Cully came to the village in 1933, he lodged with Mrs Gosling who lived with her daughter in Sunnyside Cottage. She kept goats, and a highlight of the day for children coming home from school was to watch her milk them from a suitable vantage point. The old lady would get settled on her stool when her Billy goat would charge knocking her to the ground. Clearly she was used to this and never suffered any injury, picking herself up to continue the milking. P.C. Ken Parsons followed Jim Cully, and was the

constable during the war years. When the Goslings left the village P.C. Frank Jeans and his wife moved into the house, and Mrs Jeans, a fine soprano greatly enhanced the singing in the Chapel. The last policeman to be stationed in Cheselbourne was Dennis Coupe who lived in the new Police house in Streetway Lane built in 1956. In 1959 he was moved to Piddletrenthide due to centralisation.

Between the wars a little man came to the village known as 'The little man with the basket on his head'. He wasn't much over 5ft tall and did in fact carry a clothes basket on his head full of such items as laces, segs, tips, darning wool, needles and cotton, buttons and even vases and alarm clocks. Of indeterminate age, no one knew his name or even bothered to find out. It was almost as though he and the basket were one. A van would drop him off near Chebbard and he would make his way calling at every house to be picked up at the far end of the village.

Jackie Fortnight came as his name suggests once a fortnight with his goods in a Gladstone bag strapped to the carrier of his bicycle. A tall dark man, with a lugubrious face, the complete contrast to the little man. Among the standard items in his bag such as pins, needles, darning wool, cotton, buttons etc., were items that often tempted housewives weary of living a life of poverty, small pieces of cheap jewelry. He made it easy for them by introducing easy terms, a penny or twopence a week being average. This may sound ridiculous, even childish to people living today, but to people living on the poverty line it meant saving even that small amount from a wage that was barely enough to exist on. This often meant running into debt when payments were missed and called for careful planning. A child would be posted in a strategic position to watch for his approach, and then to report back to mother who would promptly disappear, usually under the table, until he wearied of knocking on the door and more importantly looking through the window.

A man called Edwards came out from Dorchester once a week selling fish from a van with a woman's face painted on either side. I often wondered in later years what was his reasoning behind this style of decoration when he sold fish, but no one seemed to think it odd at the time. Bread was delivered from Grey's Bakery at Milborne St Andrew, and a man called Baggs used to walk there every day from Cheselbourne to work at the bakery. Knight the butcher came from Puddletown, as did Stephens the grocer.

In 1919 Alec House started a carrier business with his brothers Gus and Ivor running from Hilton through Ansty and Cheselbourne to Dorchester. The Coombes family also ran a bus service from Hazelbury Bryan. A board showing either a H or a C would be placed on the bank outside the houses for whichever carrier you wished to call. Alec became something of an institution, and would take orders for a wide variety of goods, even articles of women's clothing provided the order was plainly written on a piece of paper. Gus, something of a speed merchant, often had to run the gauntlet of trying to outwit the local speed cop, P.C. Conway should he drive the last bus back from Dorchester on Saturday night. That bus was always heavily patronised, and I can never remember getting a seat, but it was more of a social occasion than a bus-ride. On Alec's death the company was carried on by his sons Norman and Mervyn until they retired in 1986.

In 1932, the headteacher of Cheselbourne Council School retired and Mrs Jenkins took her place. Wife of a Baptist Minister, she travelled to the village every day from Wincanton, a distance of twenty-five miles driven by her husband. She was keen on developing a school choir, which she did with no small measure of success. In 1935 the choir from the school won three first prizes at a Music Festival at the Sydney Hall in Weymouth. The choir consisted of all the senior pupils including those who were tone deaf, and so as not to spoil the singing, they were taught to mime. In 1937, two pupils from the school were chosen to sing with Dorset Youth Choir at the Albert Hall in London.

Until after the 1939-45 war entertainment in the village was limited to the Social and Dances and Whist Drives, with the Socials being the highlight. Music was supplied by Nell Upshall on piano and Bert Kellaway on drums. The Socials followed pretty much the same pattern with solos always sung by the same people, the only criteria being you had to have a reasonable voice as the audience brought up to sing in the Chapel were very knowledgeable. Nell Upshall always sang 'The Farmer's Boy'; Ernest Bridle sang 'The Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill'; Jane Bridle sang 'Granny's Old Armchair'; and Bert Kellaway, considered a comedian, always sang a comic song. I don't remember the title, only the first two lines of the chorus:-

I'm washing my face tonight for you,
I haven't washed since eighteen ninety-two.

These old songs always had a chorus, and the audience would really lift the roof when it came to their part to participate in the singing. There were also games for the children.

In 1940, Mr Noel Paul, a wealthy landowner and founder member of the Lombard Finance Company, bought West Farm, some 1000 acres, from Clement Tory for £8 per acre. Part of his farm at Woodsford had been requisitioned by the Air Ministry for the building of an airfield. He was the first farmer in the area to use a combined harvester, and when Eastfield Farm was sold and broken up became the biggest employer in the village.

The first pair of Council Houses were built in 1927, followed by four more just above in 1936. Another pair was built opposite the school in 1939, and twelve houses on Streetway Lane in 1954-5. The village hall was built in 1968 on land donated by Col. and Mrs Turner. In 1960 the bus shelter was erected to the memory of Mrs Nora Hosford by her husband Dr. R. Hosford. On the green opposite the bus shelter is a seat commemorating the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953.

Old names, their meaning lost in the mists of time are, however, still used by parishioners fast approaching their century. The lane that runs down from Badgers Knapp, past Hayes Cottage to West Farmhouse was known as Pen Dog Street. Why Pen Dog can only be a matter of conjecture, but stray dogs were always a nuisance, so perhaps they were caught and penned up somewhere in the area as there was quite a collection of cottages along the lane which was one of the main thoroughfares through the village. Dog tongs were also kept in the Church to remove stray dogs during the service.

The lane that goes down behind Rose Cottage had the unusual name of Peep and Slip it, and I have no suggestions to offer. Unusual was the name given to the cottage (the Thatched House. Ed.) now owned by Mr Barnes as it was called Spanny Orum, and I make no apologies for the spelling. For years it was the office for the Rivers Estate and had not Giles Parsons moved there in 1919 when he bought Cowherd farm would have been demolished as unfit for human habitation. As things were at the time it was the only cottage available for the farm.

Another cottage further along the lane on the right was a cottage with an unusual feature in that the stream ran through an end room. Levi Thorne lived there and farmed a few acres but, as was said at the time, he fell victim to John Barleycorn, spending too much time at the Rivers Arms. On

his death the cottage, like so many others, was pulled down. Too often there was little wrong with the cottages, as some of them were quite well built with brick and flint walls, but they were often pulled down purely for the material used in their construction such as the bricks and timber.

Country people were always superstitious, Cheselbourne people being no exception. Ann Riggs was always credited with being a witch, and once when she was refused permission to go gleaning on Francis Chapman's land took her revenge by riding several of his horses to their death through exhaustion. How one woman was able to climb on the backs of several heavy shire horses then ride them at speed was never taken into account. It was enough she was a witch so anything was possible. Of course, it wasn't only people living in remote villages who believed in witchcraft. In 1941, Helen Dunkin was imprisoned by the government of being a witch for prophesying the sinking of a battleship. Of course this could have been expediency at the time.

Another tale told in the village was of a carter who lost his way one night driving home from Ansty with his horse and cart and drove into withybeds, never to be seen again. As always the story grew more lurid with the telling and the horse and cart became a carriage and pair.

The Giants Stone on Henning Hill was also credited with magical powers in that it would move when the first cock crowed in Cheselbourne. It was believed to have been thrown when two giants engaged in a contest as to who could throw the farthest. The one whose stone fell short died of vexation and is buried in Giant's Grave on the same hill. There was also a belief that if you placed your hand in the hole near the top of the stone you would pull out five nails. I have to admit that I was naive enough to try as a child.

Superstition also surrounded a custom in Cheselbourne when village maidens, dressed all in white, would walk through the corn fields on Palm Sunday for the purpose of treading in the wheat. Thomas Hardy included this custom when he wrote 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles'.

Mary Christopher who lived in the last cottage on the left in Streetway Lane, now long gone, never went out during the day. It was said she never trusted any people, and would only go out late at night when she thought everyone was in their beds. With her three cats for company, she would walk up Streetway what was only a track, calling her cats, Tiddy, Fan and Sue, and could be heard by people living near. A girl living in the cottage below

Carriers Cottage used to wake up in the middle of the night screaming, and the only way she could be stopped was to carry her up onto Churchill.

Water, always a precious commodity, was supplied to the village by five wells, the Manor, Rectory, and Eastfield having their own supplies. The first well was sited outside Primrose Cottage; the second outside Granny Joe's, opposite Campion Cottage; the third was outside 55 Cheselbourne in the boundary of an orchard that is now part of the garden of Eastfield.; the fourth was outside Hayes Cottage, and the fifth stood in front of the Rivers Arms.

Since the end of the second World War, Cheselbourne has undergone more changes than any time in its history. Electricity was brought to the village in 1948, and the first piped water in 1971, a year after the Old People's Bungalows were built. Old landmarks such as Trumpet Tree, Criblands Bars, Green Door, Sheep Wash and Tin House no longer hold any significance except to a few.

Long Cheselbourne as it was previously known, being approximately one mile long has never been a pretty village, although it has been described as the Valley of the Orchards. Another writer was more complementary when he said, "The village of Cheselbourne is scattered about in picturesque confusion amongst its orchards." John Hymens called it "A straggling untidy village." so obviously he could see no beauty in orchards. There were twelve altogether.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

J.S.Udall. Dorsetshire Folklore.

A. Pope. The Old Stone Crosses of Dorset

Hutchins. History and Antiquities of the County of Dorset

Diane (Billy) Deaves. A Village History

Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club

Barbara Kerr. Rural Radicalism

Kelly's Directory of Dorset