

....beyond the memorials of Castleton Church

The Federation of Family History Societies was formed in 1974 to represent the interests of the fledgling county societies. The following year saw the formation of the Somerset & Dorset Family History Society (SDFHS) by a young man named Mervyn Medlycott, who became its first Chairman and Secretary.

Nowadays we most likely sit at our computers as we begin delving into the past and it is because people like Mervyn (later Sir Mervyn) set about selflessly travelling around churchyards documenting gravestones and memorials that those interested in their own family histories can know where burials took place, the words and dates that were put on the stones and possibly get to visit and see the actual stone under which their ancestors were laid to rest.

In July 2020 Patricia Spencer, John Damon and I set about revisiting Castleton Church to log any additions that had occurred since the original visit.

John reminded us that the inscriptions were as a result of other members of the family remembering loved ones and so, unlike official documents, the names that appear and the information that is given can throw additional light on their lives —hence Bessie for Elizabeth for example.

Anyone who travels to visit an unfamiliar gravesite will likely ask themselves why here? Why in this particular churchyard are my ancestors remembered? It is because of these questions, in the case of the church at Castleton, that the three of us began to collect as much information as we could about the church, the area in which it is situated and the people who used to live and work here. Our discoveries can be found on the following pages.

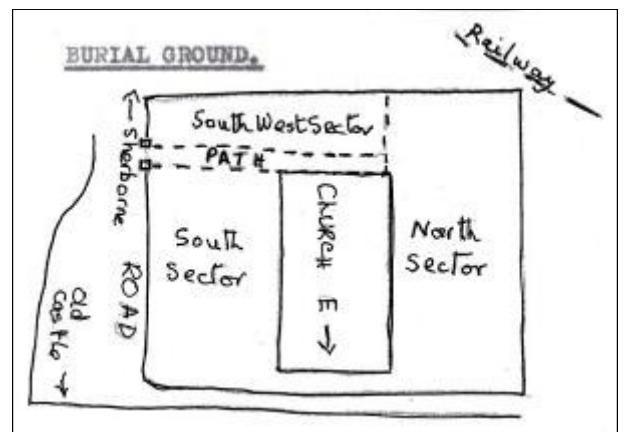
Before we got to meet up John sent me a copy of the MIs that Sir Mervyn had produced as a result of his careful examination and logging of all that was available within and without the church at sometime before 1975 when his findings were published. I set about getting this list into a new document that we could work with and the three of us met for the first time and had a look around the churchyard (the church itself was not open) to acclimatise ourselves. What did we find? The church and the churchyard are completely surrounded by stone walls. Sir Mervyn included a little map with his original MIs that divided the churchyard into three sectors—the North Sector, the South Sector and the South West Sector. We found cremation stones that were not included in Sir Mervyn's list and around the walls large plaques where more recent names are remembered. There are also memorials on the outside of the church itself. In total Sir Mervyn recorded 137 MIs containing over 250 names.

There are seven mature Yew trees and the grass is close cropped and has a wide variety of wild flowers growing very close to the ground amongst the grass. The area is very quiet and peaceful. The church is situated amongst a clutch of houses and the entrance to Sherborne Old Castle is close by. Around the Eastern side and beyond the wall is a separate burial ground for the Digby family of Sherborne Castle.

We realised, at the end of our first visit, that we have, on our hands, a fascinating and rewarding project to undertake on behalf of the S&DFHS which we aim to make public via the website (sdfhs.org) and we hope that it may help further the understanding of those unable to visit in person.

Barbara Elsmore

July 2020





On the right is a photograph taken by George Tatham of a framed plan of the churchyard hanging in the vestry at Castleton Church. The name at the bottom right hand corner is Montague P Sampson, Sherborne February 20th 1906.

I managed to locate him as he appeared as a Townsman in the 1905 Sherborne Pageant.

**Montagu Percival Sampson
(1886-1927)**

Son of Harrie Williamson Sampson (1854-1902), Chief Clerk for the County of Dorset, and Jane Ellen (née Chaffin and sister of the Sherborne Photographer), of Ludbourne Hall, South Street, Sherborne.

He was the brother of Archbold Thomas George Sampson (1878-1933). Both the brothers were pupils at Foster's School in Sherborne and the above photograph has been extracted from the photograph of the whole school taken early in 1900. On leaving school he was working for Mr Thomas Farrall, the architect, and this is very likely how he came to make the plan of the churchyard. He would have written the name of his old headmaster, Mr Irwin, on the plan as Arthur Patrick Irwin who died April 9th 1900, aged 41 years, is buried in the North Sector of the churchyard.

By 1911 he was working as an architect in the War Office. During the First World War he served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Engineers. In 1925 he was appointed as a draughtsman in the Office of Works, County of Dorset.

I am not permitted to show you a Frith photo of 1924 without paying a fee but you can find the photo on their public website https://www.francisfrith.com/sherborne/sherborne-castleton-church-1924_75972 where you will notice two or three rows of graves and three gravestones, not visible today, in the foreground. These appear next to the pathway in the bottom left hand corner of the plan. The large tree trunk in the foreground of the photo can be seen on the plan surrounded by gravestones.

When Sir Mervyn Medycott checked the Monumental Inscriptions in 1975 he listed a number of gravestones piled together in a corner of the churchyard and my guess is this plan will help to locate some of their original locations.



...beginning with Castleton Church and Gerald Pitman's informative booklet

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY MAGDALENE CASTLETON, SHERBORNE.

Written by G. H. D. Pitman first published 1970 revised editions 1975 & 1996

Cover Designs by Guy Dawson, Late Churchwarden

Castleton and Newland, now integral parts of Sherborne, were once separate Boroughs, each with its own court and its peculiar rights and liberties. Newland Borough was created in 1227-8 by Richard le Poore, Bishop of Salisbury, as was Castleton slightly later. Castleton, from its founding in Norman times and for several centuries thereafter, lay apart from Sherborne and, as its name implies, was an isolated adjunct to the great 12th century castle built by Bishop Roger of Salisbury. Outside the curtain wall of his castle. Roger built a Norman church, dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalene, "visible on the isle where the castle stands". This building - Castleton's earliest parish church - the bishop intended, no doubt, for the use of his tenants and retainers who, drawn into a close colony outside the Castle walls, formed what was to become some hundred years later the Borough of Castleton. This church stood overlooking "Maudlin Close".

The little Norman building was still standing in its tiny churchyard of one-third of an acre when Sir Walter Raleigh first came to Sherborne in 1592. Raleigh got permission to demolish the old church; this done, he built a new one where the present church of Castleton now stands. The new building, finished in 1601, appears to have been structurally a very poor substitute for the 450-year-old church he destroyed, since it was described as "very ruinous" a mere hundred years later. It is possible, however, that the new church may have suffered damage in the two sieges of Sherborne Castle during the Civil War. Anyway, in 1714 the 5th Lord Digby built the present church, partly at his own charge and partly by subscription. It was dedicated as before to Saint Mary Magdalene and consecrated on 7th September, 1715.

The lay-out of the new church showed a break with earlier tradition. Now the object was to emphasise the importance of Bible reading and preaching. Chancels at this period disappeared or became, as at Castleton mere recesses. To begin with the new church had an east window, but soon after this was blocked its outline is still visible on the outside. The Church is remarkable in that, while it was planned as a "preaching" church, it continued the Gothic tradition in its arcades and window arrangement; it must have been one of the last. More than a hundred years was to elapse before Gothic was revived as a church style in this part of the country.

The Church was full of character - and was justly admired by Alexander Pope who wrote: "The next pretty thing that caught my eye was a neat chapel for the use of the town's people (who are too numerous for the cathedral). My Lord modestly told me he was glad I liked it, because it was of his own architecture."

Exterior

Above the blocked east window is a stone which must date from the church of Raleigh, for its date is 1601, but the slate slab beneath it reads:

"This church being very ruinous was rebuilt with the addition of two aisles and together with the church then enclosed was consecrated Anno Dom 1715 Soli Deo Gloria."

A monument above the south-west door to Margaret Barnard a servant to the Earls of Bristol for over 70 years, records that, in 1716 she gave twenty pounds towards the building of the church. It was, surely, a notable gift.

The west front of the church was drastically restored in recent times: the problem, which remains with other walls of the church, was created by the 18th century builders failing to ensure that the limestone blocks laid in their natural "bed" - i.e. in the same layers as the stone grew in the sea. Many of the blocks were laid so that rain (and then frost) could percolate between the natural layers of the stone; this has caused deep and extensive scaling, which is most difficult to repair.

The square stone bell-turret is an attractive feature of the west front and is

characteristic of the 18th century, as are the gate piers to the churchyard.

Interior

The 18th century gallery, originally intended for musicians, is reached by a 17th century staircase, re-used. (This staircase was recently completed on its eastern side with rails modeled on the 17th century originals; the new rails, a memorial to Charles Gordon, were the work of John Elliott, a churchwarden and a member of a family with a long tradition of craftsmanship in the service of Sherborne's churches, are used. 17th century window lights the gallery: both staircase and window must be survivals from Raleigh's church. On the front of the gallery are the Royal Arms of Charles II dated 1671. Under the gallery are "charity boards", recording 18th century bequests.

The font, in the south aisle, is of the early 18th century with gadrooned ornament and an elegant baluster stem. Nearby is part of the octagonal stem of a 15th century font.

The "classical" re-arrangement of the east end of the church began shortly after its completion. First, in 1722, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed were added on either side of the east window; two years later, the sentence under the Lord's Prayer was added. Finally, in 1733, the fine pedimented oak Reredos was inserted with the Ten Commandments, which blocked the east window.

One of the most striking features of the church is the brass chandelier with two tiers of six branches. It was the gift of Jonathan Beaton in 1714. The dove finial is from a pattern in use from 1704 onwards and the suspension ring is decorated with a pair of vestigial dolphin masks. Although it lies within the main tradition of London design, it is not sufficiently similar to be identified with any others as the work of a single maker. Only seven Dorset churches still have earlier chandeliers, the one in the Lady Chapel of Sherborne Abbey being the earliest dated one in England. From 1791 to 1814 the cleaning of the Castleton chandelier was performed by one John Sherren for the annual payment of 7s 6d. Now the chandelier is cleaned free - and with its brass gleaming and candles alight it is a beautiful sight on the festivals of the church; the patronal festival of St Mary Magdalene is 22nd July.

There are a number of interesting 18th and 19th century memorial tablets. One on the north aisle wall commemorates members of the Bastard family. Benjamin Bastard a member of the famous family responsible for the re-building of Blandford after its disastrous fire in 1731, is buried in the family vault, which lies outside the north wall of the church, beneath a wall-tablet now, alas, illegible. This Benjamin Bastard lived in Sherborne and was the architect of its principal Georgian monument, Sherborne House in Newland - now the home of the Sherborne Arts Centre. Benjamin Bastard's wife was born a Prankard and a memorial to her parents is now sadly hidden by the organ.

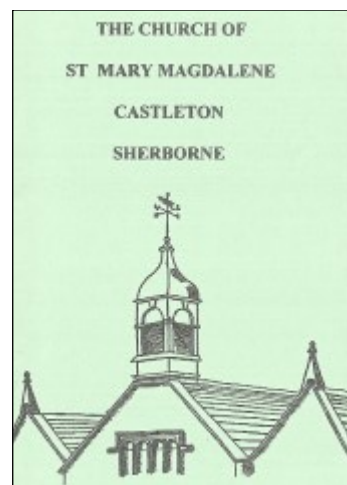
The organ itself was restored in 1953 in memory of Colonel Wingfield Digby, of Sherborne Castle and Lieutenant Colonel Lidderdale, sometime churchwarden.

The furniture of the church is generally unremarkable, but the simple 18th century paneled pulpit should be noted and a single 17th century coffin-stool survives in the chancel.

The communion plate dates from the building of the present church, 1714, and includes a chalice, paten, an alms-dish and a handsome flagon.

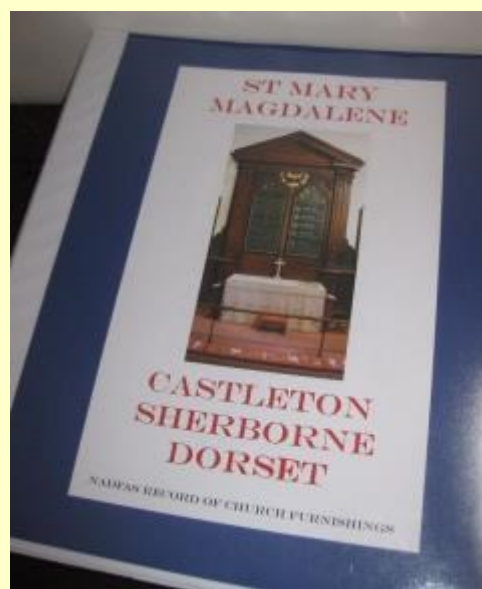
Epilogue

Castleton church, fronted by the pleasant 17th and 18th century buildings opposite, is now a quiet bye-water of Sherborne. It is good to think that the solitary bell of St





NOW LET'S GO INSIDE (December 2023)





I imagine that a substantial majority of the inhabitants of Dorset may never have heard of the parish of Castleton (C). It is an eccentric place: it is large, extending to 5,000 acres, has no village, and its parish church stands outside its borders.

In fact it consists of a large collar of land encircling the town of Sherborne (S); its church of St Mary Magdalene, lying on the eastern edge of the town, was rebuilt in 1715.

C has suffered changes in its size and shape over the years, many of them seemingly the whims of local government. This is reflected in variations in the number of inhabitants: in 1801 the population was 125, but this had fallen to 59 in 1851, half of the houses in the parish having been removed to facilitate the construction of the railway to Yeovil. In 1895 six tithings of the civil parish of Sherborne were added to the parish, but in 1928 part of these were transferred back. The population in 1931 was 312, but has since declined again, dropping from 193 in 1971 and further to 141 in 1991.

The original see of S was established at the beginning of the 8th century with the building of the Abbey church of St Mary, but the Old Castle was not built until Roger, Bishop of Salisbury and founder of Salisbury Cathedral, began its construction on the east side of S early in the 12th century.

After Sir Walter Raleigh had persuaded his Queen to allow him to take over the decaying ruin in 1594 and started to repair it, he gave up the effort, and instead built a new mansion nearby, known as S Lodge. It was an impressive building of three storeys, with its four polygonal corner towers, built of rubble from the castle, with one of the first uses of plaster in its construction. But

political changes after the accession of James I brought Raleigh's downfall with confinement in the Tower, and his death.

The DIGBY family, who came from Coleshill in Warwickshire, appeared in Dorset in the person of John Digby who was knighted in 1606 and became ambassador to Spain in 1610, and served in that capacity until 1618, when England's relationship with that country remained a delicate matter. On his return to England, John Digby was created Baron Digby of Sherborne, and Raleigh's estate, including the Lodge, renamed Sherborne New Castle, was granted him. He was also further elevated to become Earl of Bristol. In the Civil War he was a Royalist, and he and his son George were among a group of nobles who were sentenced to death by the House of Commons in 1648. Prudently they had gone to France, where in 1652/3 John Digby died in Paris.

George Digby had a venturesome career in politics. A refugee in France, he became an officer in the French Army. He returned to England after the restoration of Charles II, and died in Chelsea in 1676/7. His son John became 3rd Earl in 1677, and though twice married, he died at Sherborne without an heir in 1698 and the earldom became extinct. He was a nonentity, but his huge monument dominates a transept of Sherborne Abbey.

The Digbys put their stamp on the New Castle by building four more towers to match the older ones, and we have this most striking building still to savour although it was drastically restored in 1859-60 with the addition of a new range on the west side. It lies 400 yards south

of the ruins of the Old Castle. The contents of the house, pictures, furniture, china and other treasures are also outstanding.

The Sherborne estate was inherited by the heir to the 3rd Earl, his cousin and heir male, William Digby, who was the fifth Baron Digby of Geashill, an estate in Ireland. He died in 1752 aged 90 and was succeeded by his grandson, Edward Digby, 6th Baron, who died unmarried in 1856. His heir was his brother Henry, who was created the first Baron Digby of Sherborne, and in 1790, first Earl Digby.

Henry Digby built the graceful three-arched Pinford Bridge, which crosses the east end of the beautiful Sherborne Lake. This lake is one of the most attractive stretches of water in Dorset, handiwork of that famous creator of gardens, 'Capability' Brown, in 1756.

Henry, Earl Digby died unmarried and the Sherborne estate was inherited by his niece, Charlotte Maria Digby, who conveyed it to her husband William Wingfield-Baker. It passed to their son George, who changed his name to WINGFIELD-DIGBY. His descendants still own the estate.

The present Castleton parish church of St Mary Magdalene in Sherborne was a replacement in 1715 of the rebuilding in 1601 of the medieval church. It includes rubble from the Old Castle. It has a simple form of combined nave and chancel, with full-length aisles added on each side. The W gable of the nave carries a square bell-turret. A 15C font is the chief survival from the early church, but most impressive to the visitor may be the fine brass chandelier given to the newly opened church by Jonathan BEATON. A new organ was installed at the end of the N aisle in 1865.

The deposited registers begin with transcripts of baptisms 1715-1813, marriages 1716-1754 and burials 1715-1724. There are original registers for baptisms 1813-92; marriages 1716-1970, with 1813 missing; and burials 1725-1992. There are banns 1826-1959 and indexed transcripts for baptisms and burials 1813-37; and marriages 1716-1886. There are Bishop's transcripts of marriages 1606-1717.

Churchwardens accts cover 1743-1815; Overseers of the poor accts for 1706-1867. There are Vestry minutes 1820-1901, a Vestry valuation and rate book for 1849-61. There is a terrier (describing areas of land) of C parish, for 1835, including details of owners and their tenures; five settlement examinations and one certificate in 1746 to 1844; and two removal orders and four apprenticeship indentures 1748-84; three bastardy bonds, two orders and one warrant.

There is a tithe apportionment of 1841 and a parish map of 1875 and MIs have been recorded. Altogether a useful bag of all sorts.

In 1851 the most frequent names were BURROWS, SUGG and IRNSIDE. Unusual names include KIMM and PRANKERD.

A BRIEF LOOK AT OBOURNE

Obourne is a small parish of about 600 acres, 2 miles NE of S, with C its neighbour to the S and W, Poyntington on the N, while a mile of border on the E has Milborne Port in Somerset as neighbour. It has a strange shape on the map, with a long thrust NW to 500-foot Ambrose Hill. Its name is formed from OE *woh*, crooked, and *bourne*, a stream; it was spelt with an initial w in early texts.

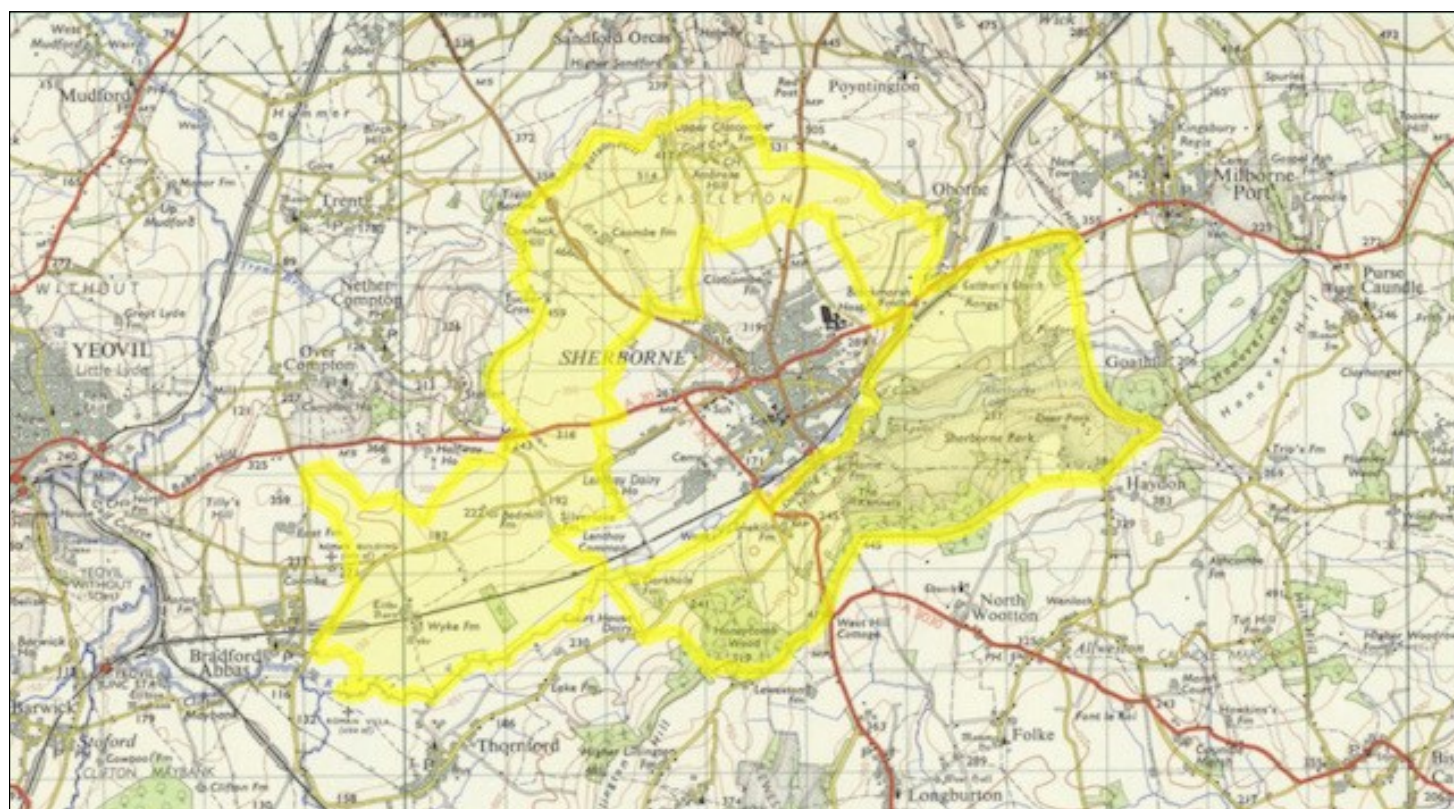
The village is small, with a few 17C buildings, including Grange Farm and one house and a barn of 16C date. It is pleasantly situated on the N side of the parish along the small brook that gives it its name and flows into the River Yeo. The remains of the parish church of St Cuthbert lie W in the parish of C.

The Manor of Obourne was long a possession of the bishops of Salisbury, but after the Dissolution it was granted to Richard BAKER, esq. and Sir Richard SACKVILLE. It later reverted to the Crown. In 1617 James I granted it to Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, who leased it to Sir John DIGBY, whose family have since been patrons of the parish.

The parish church of St Cuthbert stands just over the parish boundary in C. It was originally a chapel of ease to S, but the chancel was rebuilt by the Abbot and the Sacrist of S Abbey in 1533. It became ruinous over the years, but the chancel has been restored in recent years. A new parish church was built in Obourne village in 1862.

Rather in common with C, the population of the parish has suffered major fluctuations, from 33 in 1831 to 150 in 1861, but it has become more stable in recent decades and numbered 110 in 1991.

Alan Nineham



Above: Map showing how Castleton now surrounds Sherborne

Katherine Barker tells us in *Sherborne Camera* 'Castleton was a medieval borough with two mills, a court leet, a market and an annual fair that grew up around the crossroads outside the gate of the 12thC Castle. It was bypassed by New Road (1852) and finally by the coming of the railway (1860). Until 1894 Castleton was a very small parish surrounded by Sherborne. Since 1894 the reverse has been the case—Sherborne surrounded by Castleton!'

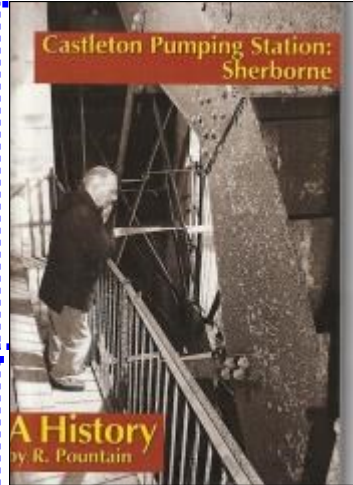
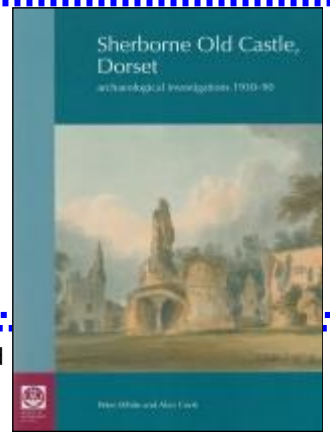
From Alan J Brown for S&DFHS—Castleton Church location: ST646168; on eastern side of Sherborne, at the entrance to Sherborne Castles old and new.

Parish Records: Prior to 1715 events were recorded at Obourne. The Dorset History Centre holds the following: Christenings 1715 - 1992 (microfilm). Marriages 1716 - 1970 (microfilm) 1716 - 1836 (transcripts). Banns 1754 - 1812 1826 - 1959 (microfilm). Burials 1715 - 1992 (microfilm). The S&DFHS have the following records: Marriage Index 1715 - 1837 Burials Index 1750 - 1864 Monumental Inscription transcripts (AJB)

...where next?books

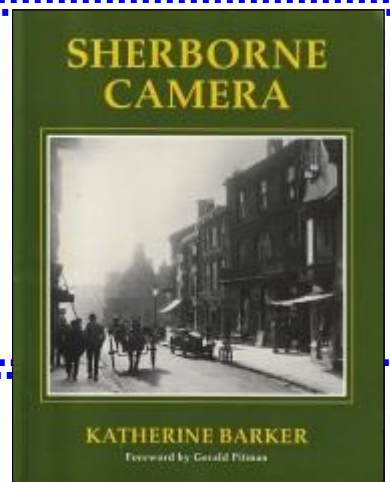
BOOKS—Title	Author	Comment
<i>'Voices that be Gone': Reconstructing the Victorian Parish of Castleton, Dorset 1834-1901</i>	Michael Hanson	2010
<i>Around Sherborne</i>	Nicola Darling-Finan	2001 Two photos Castleton 1891 and two 1924
<i>Sherborne & Milborne Port</i>	Richard Brewer and Richard Duckworth	1996 Two photos
<i>Castleton Pumping Station: Sherborne</i>	R Pountain	2001
<i>Dimond Gem</i>	Jack Dimond	1999
<i>Exploring Sherborne</i>	Gerald Pitman	1966
<i>Mediaeval Sherborne</i>	Joseph Fowler MA, FGS	1951
<i>Mills on the Yeo and the men who worked them</i>	Martin Bodman	2013
<i>Sherborne & Castleton, Abbey, Town, School</i>	Rodney Legg	2004 reprint 2012
<i>Sherborne Camera</i>	Katherine Barker	1990 Includes two photos of Castleton before and after the railway plus extensive written information
<i>Sherborne Observed</i>	Gerald Pitman	1983
<i>The Book of Sherborne</i>	Jim Gibb FSA	1981
<i>Sherborne Old Castle, Dorset. Archaeological Investigations 1930-90</i> (published by The Society of Antiquaries of London, 2015).	Peter White & Alan Cook	Includes: The historical and architectural importance of the castle, the site and its setting (topography & geology, and the surviving remains), the historical record, antiquarian interest in the castle to 1952. Occupation of the castle site (Iron Age and Roman finds, the Saxon cemetery, the ditched enclosure), the development of the castle 1122-1645, the structural remains: the bailey and its defences, the central building complex etc. Also useful maps and photographs of the area.
<i>The Church of St Mary Magdalen, Castleton</i>	Gerald Pitman	See earlier pages
Rodney Legg, while researching his book <i>Sherborne & Castleton</i>, consulted Fowler and Pitman plus the following		
<i>The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset</i>	W and Ogle J Densham	1899
<i>My Ancestors: Being the History of the Digby and Strutt Families</i>	Lettice Digby	1928
<i>The Story of the Sherborne Pageant</i>	Cecil P Goodden	1905
<i>A History of Sherborne School</i>	A B Gourlay	1951 second edition 1971
<i>Alan Turing, The Enigma</i>	Andrew Hodges	1983
<i>Fosters: The Story of a Dorset School</i>	S G McKay	1975
<i>Sherborne Mill from Silk to Glass</i>	Frederick Marsden	1980
<i>The Joy of It and Still the Joy of It</i>	Littleton C Powys	1937 and 1956
<i>The History of Sherborne School Cadet Force</i>	Lt Col J P Riley	1988
<i>Royal Commission on Historical Monuments Dorset Volume I</i>		1952 and addendum 1975
<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation</i>	Dorothy Whitlock, Editor	1961
<i>Life of St Aldhelm; First Bishop of Sherborne</i>	W B Wildman	1905

Peter White and Alan Cook, ***Sherborne Old Castle, Dorset archaeological Investigations 1930-90*** (published by The Society of Antiquaries of London, 2015). It includes the following chapters: The historical and architectural importance of the castle, the site and its setting (topography and geology, and the surviving remains), the historical record, antiquarian interest in the castle to 1952, the sequence of investigation 1932-95 (Col. E.A. Rawlence, C.E. Bean, P.R. White, A.M. Cook, the finds and records of the investigation), pre-castle occupation of the castle site (Iron Age and Roman finds, the Saxon cemetery, the ditched enclosure), the development of the castle 1122-1645, the structural remains: the bailey and its defences, the central building complex, other structural remains. Also useful maps and photographs of the area.

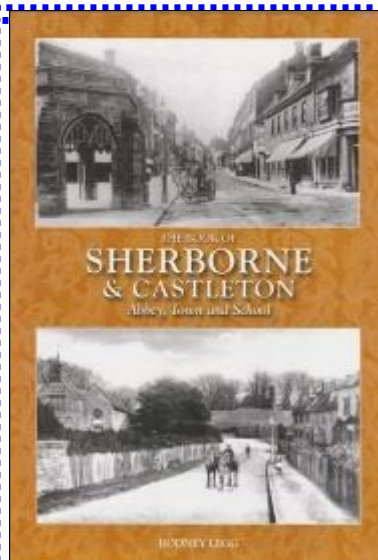


R. Pountain, ***Castleton Pumping Station Sherborne: A History*** (published by the Castleton Waterwheel Restoration Society, in conjunction with East Dorset Heritage Trust, Wimborne). It includes the following chapters: geography, population, geology, the 1848 Public Health Act, Clean Water: first attempts, The London and South-Western Railway, The Water-wheel Driven Pump-House, The Steam-Engine Driving Pump-House, The Next Twenty Years, The New Water-Wheel Driven Pump-House. On to 1932, Subsequent History. With appendices: The Sherborne Mills, Location, The 1903 list of authorised tradesmen.

Katherine Barker's ***Sherborne Camera*** is undoubtedly one of the most important books of old photographs of Sherborne. It is not just the over 150 photographs that reveal so much but it is the wealth of written detail that accompanies each one which makes a copy of this book vital to have on the bookshelf of anyone with an interest in Sherborne's recognisable past.



There is a chapter on the coming of the railway and the effect that this had on the village of Castleton. This includes two very important photographs—a before and after—with the second photograph showing a steam train emerging from under the newly constructed Castleton road bridge. The originals of these two photographs are held by Sherborne Museum.



Inside the back cover of ***Sherborne and Castleton—Abbey, Town and School*** is the author statement and this really says it all about the man: *Rodney Legg founded Dorset County Magazine and moved from Bournemouth to Milborne Port in 1968. He became a Sherborne addict and his writings soon expanded from journalism into archaeological and countryside books, mostly about the county, which by the late 1990s had made him Dorset's premier living historian. Rodney Legg died in 2011.*

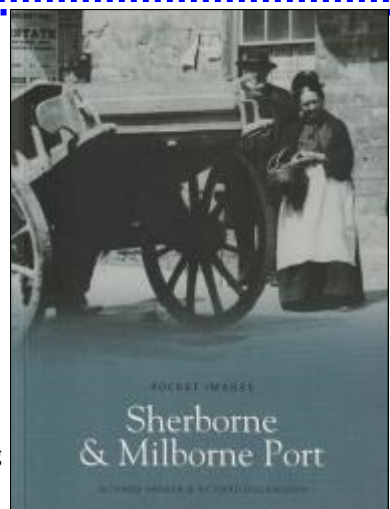
This is another must for the bookshelf. Rodney Legg's meticulously researched books, are written for 'everyman' as they make reading and learning such a pleasure and although not full of footnotes and references with his original journalistic background one can be absolutely certain of the veracity of the information.

The fact that Castleton is right there in the title does indicate the importance of this part of Sherborne and there are many mentions of the area in the text. There is also a set of photographs and more information in a chapter on Castleton itself.

The informative pocket sized little book ***Sherborne and Milborne Port***, by Richard Brewer and Richard Duckworth, contains around 200 photos, many from private collections. The book was first published in 1996 and the pocket edition in 2006. Richard Brewer was a keen amateur photographer and he was looking after the photographs at Sherborne Museum at the time of publication and many will have appeared here. Richard Duckworth is known as Milborne Port's own principal historian and is well known for the contributions made by him to the discovery, conservation and cataloguing of photographs and information concerning the history of Milborne Port.

One of the delights of this little book is that the two Richards were clearly passionate about the naming of names. Many of the photographs have lists of names underneath—a source of great joy to any family historian able to locate and fix a former relative in time and place.

There are a couple of photographs of Castleton one of which I have not seen before and may have come from a private collection—this indicates to me that in my search for photos of Castleton before and after the coming of the railway that there are very likely to be some out there in private hands.



'Voices that be gone': Reconstructing the Victoria Parish of Castleton, Dorset 1834-1901 by Michael Hanson

(see also NEW *Voices that be gone* at SDFHS.org 2025)

A very important book - the '*Voices that be gone*' a reference taken from a poem by William Barnes - *The Depopulated Village*.

*'As oft I see by sight, or oft
In mind, the ridges in the ground,
The mark or many a little croft
And house where now no wall be found
I call the folk to life again
And build their houses up anew.....'*

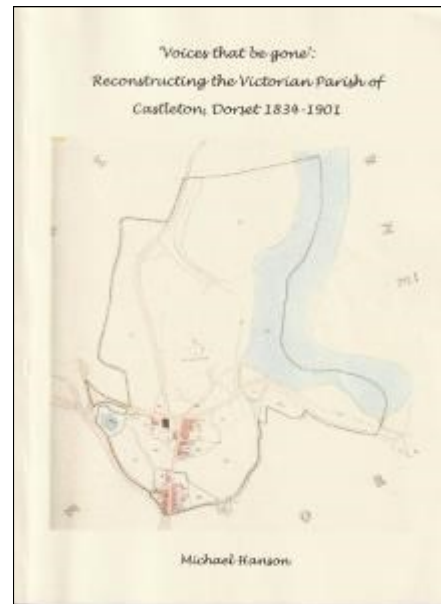
By closely examining, maps photographs, censuses and records between 1834-1901, Michael Hanson has been able to throw a light on the lives of people who lived in Castleton, the village around the Parish Church, before and after the arrival of the railway. Were they born in the parish or did they move in? What percentage of residents were born in Dorset? What size were the families? How many servants lived in Castleton? How many properties were there and what was the occupancy rate? Did many move out of the parish and how far did some of them travel? He looked at the house occupancy. He also highlighted some of the interesting stories of some of the residents lives that he discovered in the course of his research.

By examining the Tithe Map of 1845 (on the cover of the book) together with the Tithe Apportionment — the list of land and properties, the ownership and the occupiers — it is possible to see the drastic changes that the coming of the railway in 1860 made. Below you will see an extraction of the map oriented to the north reproduced here by kind permission of Michael Hanson.

The church is situated at the crossroads and the village originally grew up around it. Look at the Church (no12) there is a dwelling house and garden (no13) to the north. A roadway runs directly along the eastern wall of the church and this road heads to Castle Farm in the north and on eventually past the entrances to both Castles and towards Sturminster Newton in the opposite direction.

Everything to the north of Castleton Road, apart from the church, was demolished and numbers 30, 33, 34 and 35 to the south.

An important building was Castleton Mill (no6). Martin Bodman in his book *Mills on the Yeo* tells us it was



the largest mill in Sherborne. He continues '*The three-storey mill was recorded as 120' x 30' and it had four pairs of stones, grinding flour and meal. It was largely stone-built, with the second storey in timber.*

The Salisbury and Yeovil Railway bought the mill in 1859 for £1,740 and it was demolished. Stone taken from the mill was used in the construction of Sherborne and Milborne Port railway stations.'

Martin Bodman's reference to reuse of the stone he took from Ron Pountain's book *Castleton Pumping Station*. Ron also states that the three railway bridges in Sherborne also used some of the stone in their construction.

According to Castleton Tithe Map of 1845 Thomas Miller was the occupier of the Mill

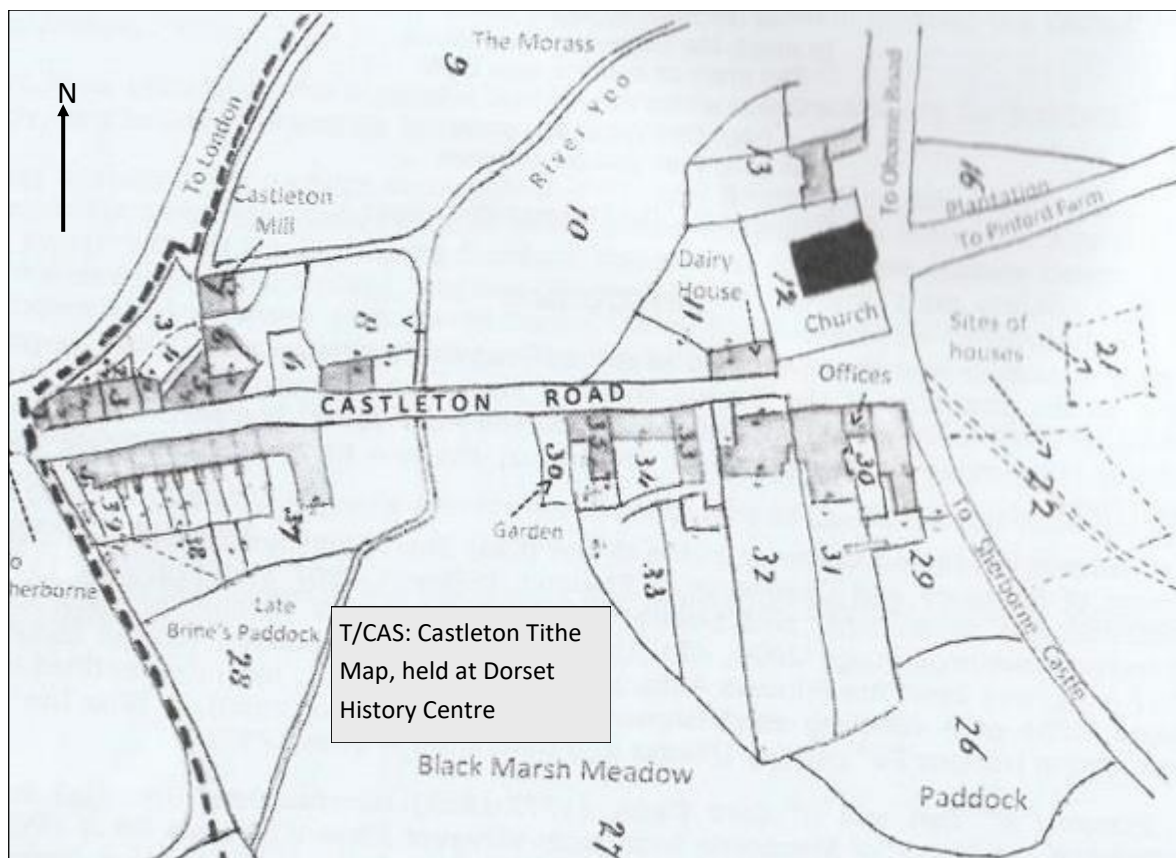
though he may not have been the Miller.

Thomas is buried in the churchyard and the inscription on his memorial stone reads:

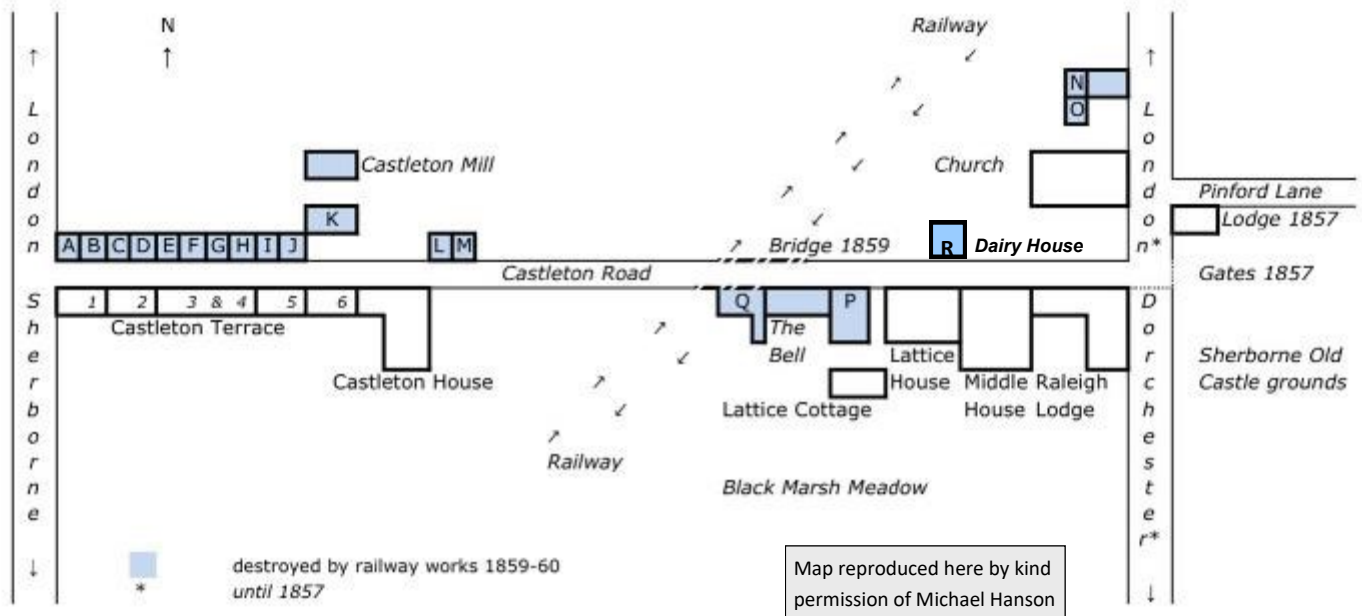
HEADSTONE sacred to the memory of Thomas MILLER who died April 13 1860, aged 55 years. Also of Anne wife of the above died June 12th. 1894, aged 75 years.

*Just as I am without one plea,
But that thy Blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come.*

He must have died just a year after the mill was demolished.



Castleton houses 1857-1860
(simplified road layout, not to scale).



Families affected by railway works	
Houses (see map)	Head(s) of households, 1851 Census
<i>Castleton Road (North):</i>	
A	James Bown
B	Mary Burnett
C	James Baker
D	Unoccupied
E	Charles Sherring
F	Unoccupied
G	John Ironside
H	Charles Pearce
I	Unoccupied
J	John Burrows, James Burrows
K & Castleton Mill	John Caines, James Gander
L	David Caddy, Job Fox
M	James Sugg, Alexander Pope
R (Dairy House)	Unoccupied
N	Unoccupied
O	Revd Mason Skinner
<i>Castleton Road (South):</i>	
Raleigh Lodge	Samuel Jelfs
Middle House	Revd Richard Lagden
Lattice House	Joseph Brittan
Lattice Cottage	George Ladson, Charles Lamb
P	Jane Dyke
Bell beerhouse	John Dyke
Q	Charles Brett
Castleton House	Elizabeth Worsley, Elizabeth Bicknell, William Kimm
Castleton Terrace*	James Lewis
Castleton Terrace*	Kitty Hounsell
Castleton Terrace*	Unoccupied
Castleton Terrace*	James Browne
Castleton Terrace*	John Green
	Building demolished 1859-60.
* House numbers not assigned.	

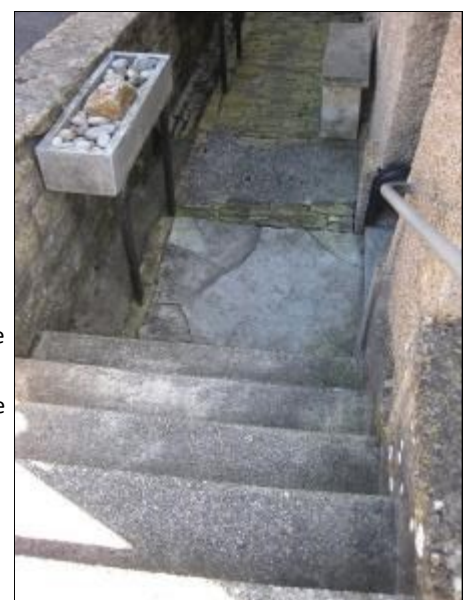
With the coming of the railway Michael Hanson has deduced that there must have been much uncertainty about where the tenants were going to live during 'the lengthy struggle to secure a direct rail link to Sherborne'. Waterloo Terrace was built for Lord Digby and situated in the Osborne Road and some of the tenants would have moved here though it could not house them all, it would appear, as Michael has estimated that around 92 residents were living in the houses that were about to be demolished in the 1851 census.

In November 2020 Michael Hanson has commented favourably on the extractions that have been made from his book and he has very kindly created the table on the left to show the families who were affected by the coming of the railway—Sherborne station was opened on 7 May 1860.

The map shows just how many properties were demolished—marked A-R on the table.

Michael Hanson adds March 2021: "At least 54-58 named Castleton residents were evicted in 1858 to allow the railway track to be extended to Sherborne. Thirteen dwellings, The Bell beerhouse, two mills and other buildings were destroyed."

Today Castleton Terrace is situated on a back road that stops at the gates of Castleton House. Originally these cottages and Castleton House were accessed directly from the roadway with another row of cottages directly opposite. You can see the dramatic change in level that has occurred when you walk around the front and side of Castleton Terrace where possibly the original surface of cobbled stone still exists. There is a flight of four or five steps down from the current pavement on New Road to the front





If you look at the map on the previous page and imagine yourself standing where this photo was taken you were likely at a lower level in line with the cottages on your right. There would not be gates ahead of you and you would be able to see the roadway running ahead of you towards the church. The roadway was very likely to be cobbled and an area of cobbles can still be found along the front of the cottages on your right.

As you stand here on your left and immediately on the other side of the roadway would be another row of cottages. These cottages extended, with a gap where you would look towards Castleton Mill, beyond Castleton House on the other side of the roadway.

There would then be another gap to both the left and the right of you and it is here that the river Yeo

would flow with possibly a leat as well heading towards East Mill —(I am not sufficiently confident on this at the moment and need to consult with others.)

As you proceed you will pass three properties on your right with the local public house—The Bell—in the middle. Set back from the third of these properties is Lattice Cottage.

Next on your right is Lattice House and on the other side of the road is Dairy Cottage.

In the photo below is the roadway in front of Lattice House.

These two main photos show the remains of the original roadway which now has the original linking section taken by the railway.

Looking again at the map on the previous page the London to Sherborne Road was what is now the Osborne Road and Long Street.

By looking at the cottages at the end of Long Street you can see the adjustments that had to be made to the levels when the new road building took place at the junction with New Road.

There is a step down into these cottages with the cottage fronting New Road with the most 'drop'.





Above: Waterloo Terrace from the Osborne Road. Left the back of the terrace and below the accompanying outbuildings.



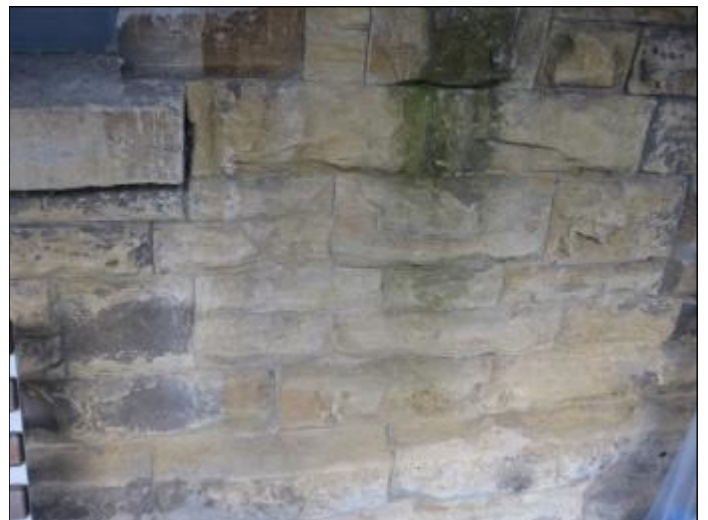
The number on the door of a house in Castleton Terrace with the ostrich and horseshoe signifying the Digby Estates





Left is the bridge over the railway in New Road—the stone used on the left of the bridge has a raised profile on the front of each block.

Below: Sherborne station where similar stone can be seen. Does Milborne Port station have the same sort of stone? Richard Duckworth says it has been rendered and painted and it not easy to tell in the first of his photos of Milborne Port station.



Four photos of Milborne Port station from Richard Duckworth. The station closed in 1966 and became a private house. Below current trackside view of the former station



This has to be one of the most important books for anyone who wants to achieve any sort of understanding of the hardworking lives of the farming families who have helped shape the countryside that surrounds us today.

Jack was born in December 1925 on a farm in Pilsdon and was so small his mother was said to fit him into a pint cup. When he was a week old he was struck down with pneumonia and the doctor thought he would not make it through the night. Jack clearly had other ideas so maybe this was the first manifestation of the determined streak that would set him in good stead throughout his life. He cannot remember his very early days at Pilsdon but was told that he would lie on some hay in a half cider barrel while his mother and father milked the cows.

In 1931 came the move to Castle Farm, where he would live for the rest of his life. One of the joys of the new farmhouse was a modern toilet instead of the one at the end of the garden that the family had been used to. Jack walked to his new school in Newland and then he would move on to his next school in Horsecastles travelling the 1½ miles four times a day, as he came home for lunch, often on roller skates! At the age of 11 he was the very last to travel in Sherborne's Black Maria—an ambulance pulled by a black pony—when he was carted off to the isolation hospital in the Marston Road with scarlet fever.

Castle Farm was and still is a dairy farm where pigs and chickens were also kept in Jack's day. There were apple orchards and winter feed, including mangolds, cultivated. Throughout Jack's childhood he would have many jobs to do on the farm. On one occasion his father lost two horses in the brook that ran through the farm and was desperate for a horse to help with haymaking. A neighbouring horsedealer told him he could have a horse that was grazing on Lenthay Common and Jack was sent off to pick up this 'easy to catch' horse. When he arrived he spotted the horse and rode it back to the farm where he harnessed it up and continued with the haymaking. After a while the horse collapsed and then died. Its owner was sent for and his immediate reaction was 'This isn't my horse!'.

During Jack's younger days he was very enterprising earning money by catching and skinning rabbits and also moles. He kept ferrets and, interestingly, one or two greyhounds and these he would also enter into local races with several successes. He reared pigs collecting food waste in the town which he processed by cooking it in a copper before feeding it to the pigs.

He was adept at rick thatching in the area and he would cut his own hazel stays and ties for this purpose. One rick would take him five nights working four hours a night which paid him £1. This was called 'after tea work' as this was an extra activity undertaken after the main activities of the day were completed.

Jack left school at the start of the war and worked full-time on the farm where a 60-70 hour week was the norm.

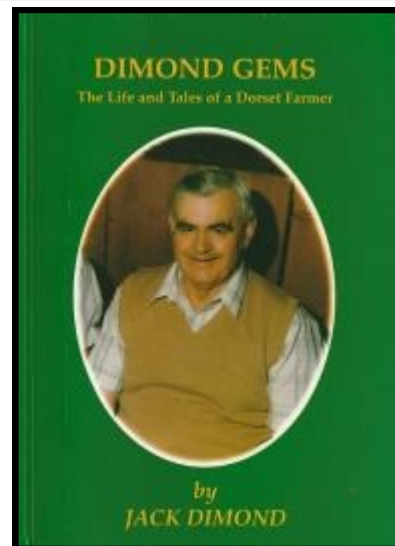
Jack married Diana in 1949 and around this time his father took on another farm and Jack took over Castle Farm. His sister and brother in law took over Higher Castle Farm and so the farm was divided into two once again. They had to pay for the cows, the ricks and the machinery left behind which took several years to pay off. In December 1950 their first son Richard was born and he would be joined by Robert, Ian and Peggy. Jack said they worked hard but now they were working for themselves. In 1958, Jack's father who still had the tenancy to Castle Farm gave it up and Digby Estates transferred the tenancy to Jack. His sister and brother-in-law took on another farm in the area and so the Higher Castle Farm tenancy also passed to Jack reuniting the two farms once again.

In 1974 Jack and Diana purchased an old thatched cottage (Toll Cottage) which they set about renovating. He also purchased an area of woodland away from the farm which he greatly enjoyed.

Jack's book goes on to reveal much of his life beyond, though always closely intertwined with, his life on the farm.

Was Jack somehow special or does he typify the hardworking resourceful born farmer of his age? I think he is both. He is special because he had many other interests that ran alongside his farming and, a huge bonus for us all, he has managed to get his memories into print. I had the pleasure of meeting him on one occasion only and I was charmed by his undimmed enthusiasm and I managed to get a lovely photo of him standing by the two old transporters of luggage from Sherborne Station that he had rescued together with some of the many hundreds of horse shoes he has found on the farmland over the years.

When he was buried in Castleton churchyard in 2019 Canon Woods remarked that Jack's was the only burial in Castleton Church during his 25 years in Sherborne—a definite distinction for this very distinguished man.



Country Life Xmas 2018—Was there a response?

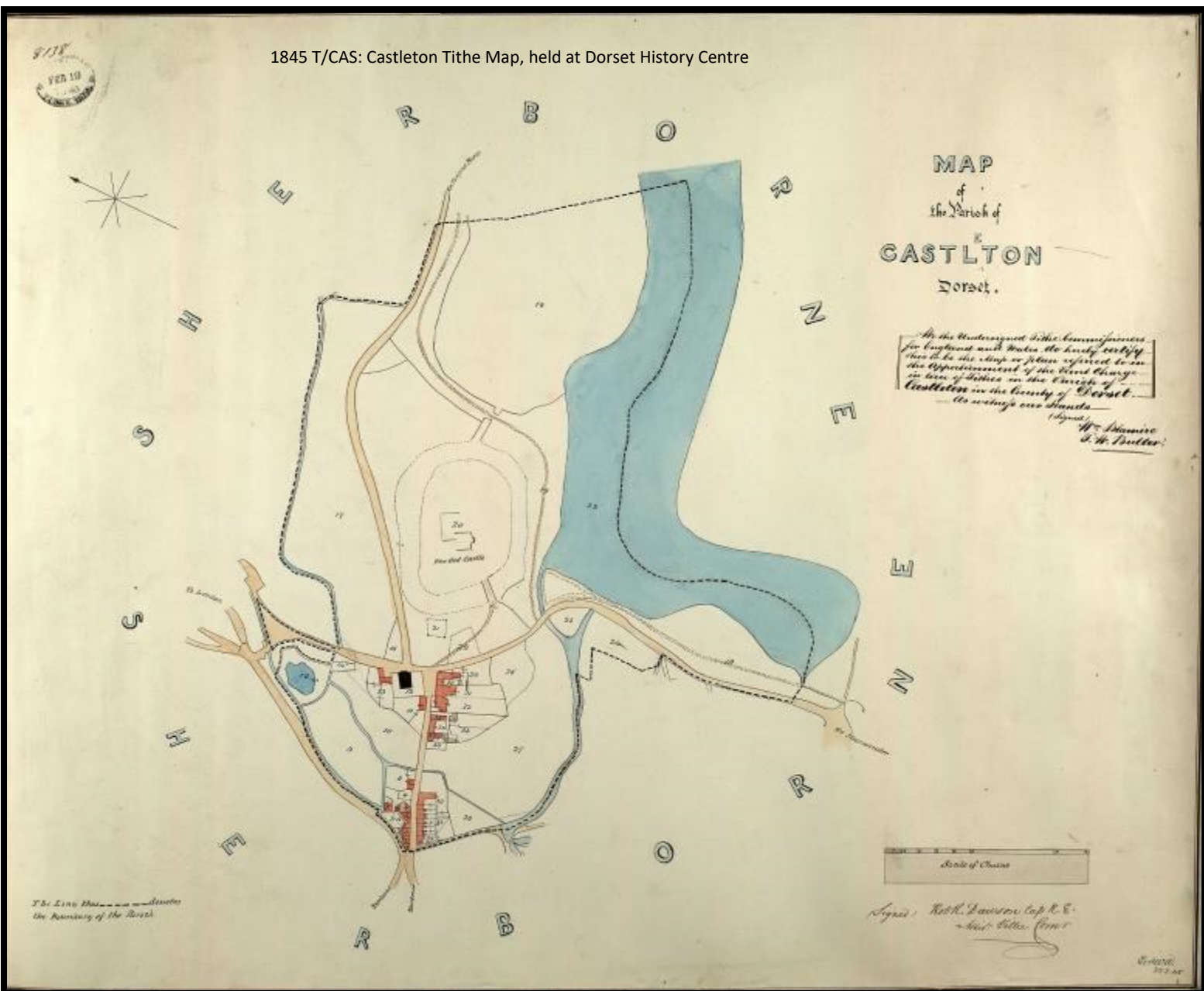


.....and maps

MAPS Title	Date	Location and notes
Bishops' Estates in Sherborne Map	1570	
Ayres Map	1802	Based on John Ladd's survey of 1735
Edward Percy's Sherborne Terrier	1834	Original hanging in Porter Dodson, Solicitors Office (estimated size 12" x 9' (needs checking). The Sherborne town segment photographed and made available with the apportionment, by Jim Gibb and sold in Sherborne Museum. There is an alphabetical list available produced by Harry Robinson
Tithe Map for the Parish of Castleton	1845	Original at DHC and available with the apportionment via Ancestry.co.uk
Robert Dymond and sons of Exeter Survey 1852	1852	Large Scale Map - held at Sherborne Museum. Original 13' x 8' hangs in Town Council Office
Ordnance Survey Map	1901, 1927, 1938	Available Old Maps OnLine - oldmapsonline.org
Castle Farm	1999	Created by Jack Dimond for his book <i>Dimond Gems</i> —gives the names of all the fields



Edward Percy's Sherborne Town Plan and Terrier 1834. As you can see this is a detailed map of Sherborne but not of Castleton as it was outside the boundary. Castle Farm is shown to be within Sherborne's boundary. Elizabeth Miller was the occupier of Castle Farm House and the associated buildings and land and Earl Digby was the owner.¹⁶



From Wikipedia: the term **tithe map** is usually applied to a map of an English or Welsh parish or township, prepared following the Tithe Commutation Act 1836. This act allowed tithes to be paid in cash rather than goods. The map and its accompanying schedule gave the names of all owners and the occupiers of land in the parish. Individual tithe owners sometimes prepared maps for their own use to show who owned what land. These maps are sometimes also called tithe maps, although such maps are not common before 1836.

Tithes, originally one-tenth of the produce of the land, were paid to the church and, after the Reformation, to some lay tithe owners as well. These "lay impropriators" were often landowners that historically gained the rights to the tithe rent payments on the redistribution of monastery lands in Henry VIII's time. When this land appears in the 19th century records, the sums payable to the successive landholders will be listed within the apportionment records.

The Tithes Commutation Act of 1836 finally abolished payment of "goods in kind" and instituted a fixed annual monetary payment based on the land value. The aim of the government was that over time and with inflation, this tithe payment would diminish to nothing but a mere token amount. But first the government had to discover the value of the land holdings across the country so that it could carry out its plan. To do this, a grand survey was undertaken, and the result was tithe apportionment records and their accompanying maps.

As soon as the Act of Parliament was passed the surveying started. Taking about 15 years to carry out, with the first completed tithe maps and apportionments beginning from 1837.

Three copies of the tithe records were made. One would have been sent to the Parish to be kept safely, but in most cases the accompanying maps were so large that they would not fit in the parish chest. They ended up stored elsewhere in the church; even propped up against a wall and so many were lost or damaged.

The second went to the Church of England diocese with authority over the parish and the third set of tithe apportionments and maps were sent to the Tithe Commissioners in London. This is why copies from the whole of the country are now housed in The National Archives (TNA).

Castleton, Dorset - Tithe Apportionment 1845

No	Landowner	Occupier	A	R	P	Description - Lands and Premises	Description - Cultivation
1	BOWN James	BOWN James			2	Dwelling House	
2	BOWN James	BOWN James			8	Dwelling House and Garden	
3	DODD Thomas	SHERRING Charles			15	Dwelling House and Garden	
4	IRONSIDE Ralph	IRONSIDE Ralph			4	Dwelling House etc	
5	OWEN Mary	PEARCE Charles			9	Dwelling House etc	
6	DIGBY Earl	MILLER Thomas			12	Mill Dwelling House and Garden	
7	DIGBY Earl	MILLER Thomas		1	11	Castleton Mill, Mill Pond etc	
8	DIGBY Earl	MILLER Thomas			32	Dwelling Houses and Gardens	
9	DIGBY Earl	MILLER Thomas	1	2	31	Part of the Morass on the meadow	Meadow
10	DIGBY Earl	MILLER Thomas	1	1	21	Other part of the Morass on the marsh	Meadow
11	DIGBY Earl	MILLER Thomas		1	15	Dairy House, Gardens, Yard etc	
12	DIGBY Earl	PARSONS Rev John		1	1	Church and Churchyard	
13	OWEN Mary	HILL John		1	9	Dwelling House and Garden	
14	PITMAN Mary	AMANS George			18	Garden	
15	DIGBY Earl	MILLER Thomas		2	22	Withy Bed and Pond	
16	DIGBY Earl	DIGBY Earl			28	Plantation	
17	DIGBY Earl	MILLER Thomas	7	2	30	Home Eight Acres or Mandlins Close	Meadow
18	DIGBY Earl	DIGBY Earl	11	1	29	Dry Grounds	Pasture
19	DIGBY Earl	DIGBY Earl	8	1	36	Pleasure Ground adjoining Lake	
20	DIGBY Earl	DIGBY Earl	12		12	The Old Castle Ramparts, Moat and Grounds surroundig	Pasture
21	MASTER	DIGBY Earl			18	Sites of Houses	Pasture
22	MASTER	DIGBY Earl		1	13	Sites of Houses	Pasture
23	DIGBY Earl	DIGBY Earl	11	2		Part of the Lake	Pasture
24	DIGBY Earl	DIGBY Earl	3	14		Part of Denny Paddock	Pasture
25	DIGBY Earl	DIGBY Earl	1	4		Other part of Denny Paddock	Pasture
26	MASTER	LONGMAN Robert		2	19	Paddock	Pasture
27	DIGBY Earl	TURNER Edward	4	3	18	Black Marsh Meadow and part of late Brine's Paddock	Meadow
28	DIGBY Earl	GREEN John Junior		2	5	Other part of late Brine's Meadow	Meadow
29	DIGBY Earl	BRITTAN William Guise		1	12	Dwelling House and Garden	
30	BURNET John Representative	CROFT John			8	Offices and Building	
31	BURNET John Representative	CROFT John		1		Dwelling House and Garden	
32	LONGMAN John	BRITTAN Joseph		1	32	Dwelling House and Garden	
33	MILLARD Elizabeth	MILDWATER George		1	32	Dwelling Houses and Gardens	
34	GREEN John Senior	GREEN John Senior			12	Dwelling House and Garden	
35	BRETT Charles	BRETT Charles			7	Dwelling House and Garden	
36	BRETT Charles	BRETT Charles			10	Garden	
37	HIMSELF	ISAAC Thomas		1	38	Dwelling House and Gardens	
38	LONGMAN Robert Junior	VICARY John			17	Dwelling House and Gardens	
39	GREEN John Junior	GREEN John Junior			29	Dwelling House, Workshops, Yard and Garden	

.....and photographs



These two before and after photographs are by far the most important historical photographs to be taken in Castleton and they appear here by kind permission of Sherborne School Archives. A B Gourlay has noted on the 1858 photo: 'Castleton 1858. Before the railways arrival. Note the wall on the extreme right knocked down to take surveyors' levels.' The photo with the train in it Gourlay has labelled: 'Castleton 1939. A photo taken from exactly the same spot as can be seen from the alignment of the church tower with the surviving masonry of the castle.' Katherine Barker has included these two photos in *Sherborne Camera* together with the quotes. Overleaf is a photo taken in 1900—note the railings and the old lamppost.

In the top photo it is most likely 'washing day', therefore, a Monday. The trees are not in leaf and note the closely pollarded willow trees. In the lower photo it is possible to see a large number of flowering plants in the grass—are they Primroses or Cowslips perhaps? Where did the river run to in the upper photo? Did it flow towards East Mill? It now runs into an underground culvert. The flow is intermittent and can practically dry up in Summer but can still flood in Winter.



CASTLETON IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY. The Old Castle is in the background. Very little has changed since, although the fence on the left has gone and from this viewpoint it is no longer possible to see the church because of the height of the surrounding trees.



CASTLETON FROM THE OSBORNE ROAD 1900. This shows Raleigh Lodge and the railway bridge which dates from 1859. The field in the foreground is Miller's Mead. Castleton is an especially interesting part of Sherborne, not just because of its church and proximity to the Old Castle, but because it was one of the two old boroughs, the other being Newland. At one time this was part of the original Salisbury to Exeter road.

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The two photos on the left have been extracted from *Sherborne & Milborne Port* by Richard Brewer and Richard Duckworth.

Richard Duckworth has given his permission for this page to be reproduced here.

I am not able to reproduce the Frith photos of Castleton but they can be found by searching their website where you will find nearly 300 old photos of Sherborne including the four Castleton photos that appear in Nicola Darling-Finan's *Around Sherborne*.

The top photo, which also appears in Rodney Legg's *Sherborne and Castleton*, is curious. It does not appear amongst the Frith photos although a very similar photo does with the two children but with a small pile of horse manure instead of the pair of cart horses with their rider. How very odd—was a bit of cutting and pasting done back in the early days or did the children stand very still as the horses passed by and then a second shot was taken? Perhaps they knew that you they were not supposed to move when a photograph was taken.

How very interesting to see in print under the lower photo that this was part of the old Salisbury to Exeter road.

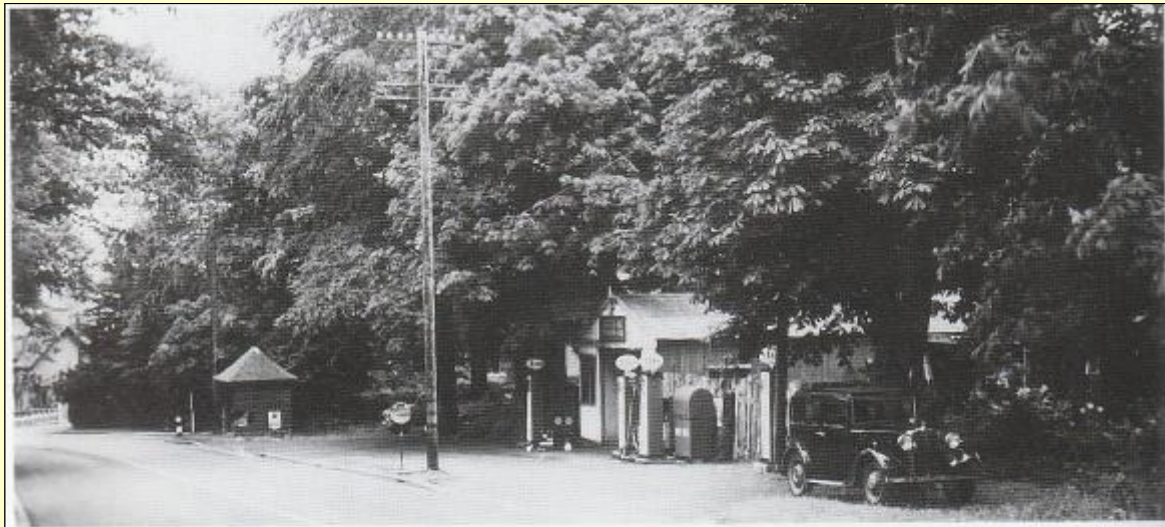


Photo taken April 2020—you can see the river disappearing into the culvert.

....interesting asidesPolo at the Castleand Greyhounds too

John House is a modest man who, like many, says he is a mine of useless information. Not so I say! John carries on a long held tradition of verbally, and oftentimes written, recollections and stories.

One day I was idly chatting to him about various changes taking place on the Osborne Road towards Blackmarsh Farm and he mentioned that the stables for the old polo field at Castle Farm are behind the area now used by Stalbridge Storage. He told me the polo ground itself was on the flat field on the other side of the railway line that can be seen from the Osborne Road when you have gone past the Castle Farm buildings. John also said that the old polo hut was removed to Crackmore Garage in Milborne Port and it can be seen in a photo in *Sherborne & Milborne Port* by Richard Brewer and Richard Duckworth.

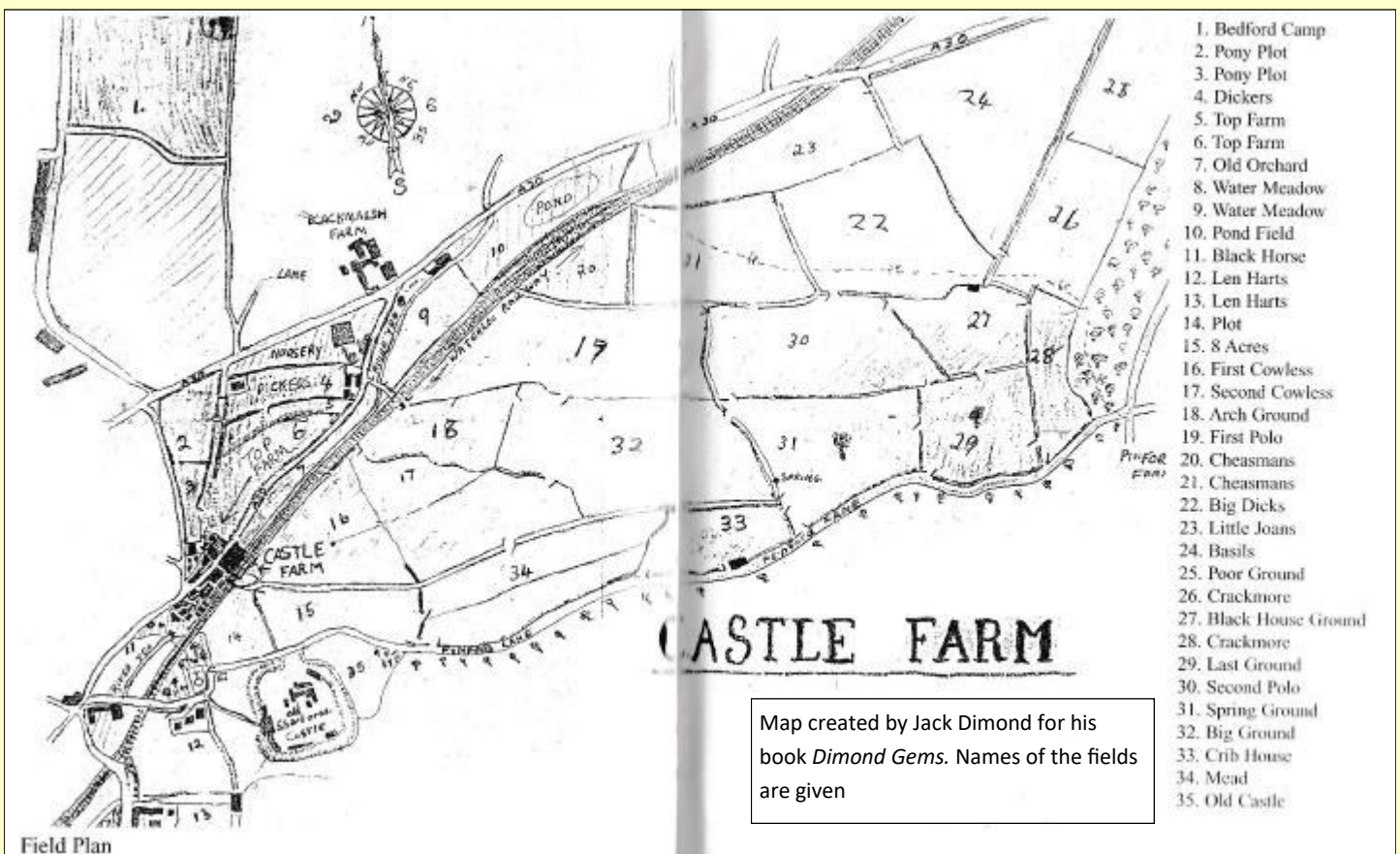


CRACKMORE, MILBORNE PORT c. 1955. Looking down through this fine avenue of horse chestnut trees can be seen, on the right, Mr Harold Clarke's garage with a Morris car (used for taxi work) on the forecourt. Below the garage can be seen the new bus shelter built in 1954, at a cost of £118, with money provided by the Women's Institute who, in 1953, decided to mark both their twenty-first birthday and the Coronation Year in this way.

The late Jack Dimond's house (currently up for sale 2020) is called Toll Cottage and has a small window in the north side looking up Castleton Way. The road originally went down Castleton Way through Castle Farm, along past the east side of Castleton church and then past the Castle entrance to the road up through the Terrace and up the hill from there. The map that is included in Jack's book *Dimond Gems*, published in 1999, shows the location of the two fields used for polo. John speculated on whether royalty might have played polo on the field and asked why the polo playing guests stayed at the Digby Hotel and not the Castle? John also mentioned that a famous racing Greyhound was bred at the stables and challenged me to see if I could discover more.

He also mentioned that Ann Smith, the Castle Archivist would know more and that Jack's sons, Ian and Richard both live at Castle farm. August 2020

Royalty did indeed play polo on these fields—see Rachel Hassall, Sherborne School Archivist, report: <https://oldshirburnian.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Edward-VIII-the-ten-month-King.pdf>



Map created by Jack Dimond for his book *Dimond Gems*. Names of the fields are given

1. Bedford Camp
2. Pony Plot
3. Pony Plot
4. Dickers
5. Top Farm
6. Top Farm
7. Old Orchard
8. Water Meadow
9. Water Meadow
10. Pond Field
11. Black Horse
12. Len Harts
13. Len Harts
14. Plot
15. 8 Acres
16. First Cowless
17. Second Cowless
18. Arch Ground
19. First Polo
20. Cheasmans
21. Cheasmans
22. Big Dicks
23. Little Joans
24. Basils
25. Poor Ground
26. Crackmore
27. Black House Ground
28. Crackmore
29. Last Ground
30. Second Polo
31. Spring Ground
32. Big Ground
33. Crib House
34. Mead
35. Old Castle

George Tatham has some answers to John's questions in an article written by him, in 2018, for *The Conduit* magazine

**'Greyhoundes he had as swift as fowel in flight;
Of prikyng and of hunting for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.'
*Chaucer.***

'That hearty good fellow'

On Saturday 22 February 1879, the attention of many of Sherborne's inhabitants was focused on the Waterloo Cup Coursing meeting, traditionally held at the Altcar Club, Southport, over three days. George Hooper Miller, local yeoman farmer and greyhound trainer, had entered his home-bred dog Misterton in the 64-dog-stake, the most prestigious event of the coursing season. The news of Misterton's success arrived at 4.30 by telegram and wide-scale rejoicing ensued (some of a pecuniary nature no doubt!) A large crowd gathered on the following Monday to greet their heroes as the last train arrived from London. Cheering greeted Hooper, and the hastily assembled Military Band accompanied the throng to the Digby Hotel. A complimentary dinner was held the following week at the Black Horse Hotel to honour Hooper's notable achievement (the first occasion a dog from Dorset had won the Waterloo Cup). Among the loyal toasts was one in support of the Army, Navy and Reserve Forces, since news of the great disaster at

Isandhlwana, in the Zulu War, was fresh in the memory, but no mention of the stout defence of Rorke's Drift! The chairman, Mr Lionel Ruegg, proposed the toast to 'The health of George Hooper Miller.'

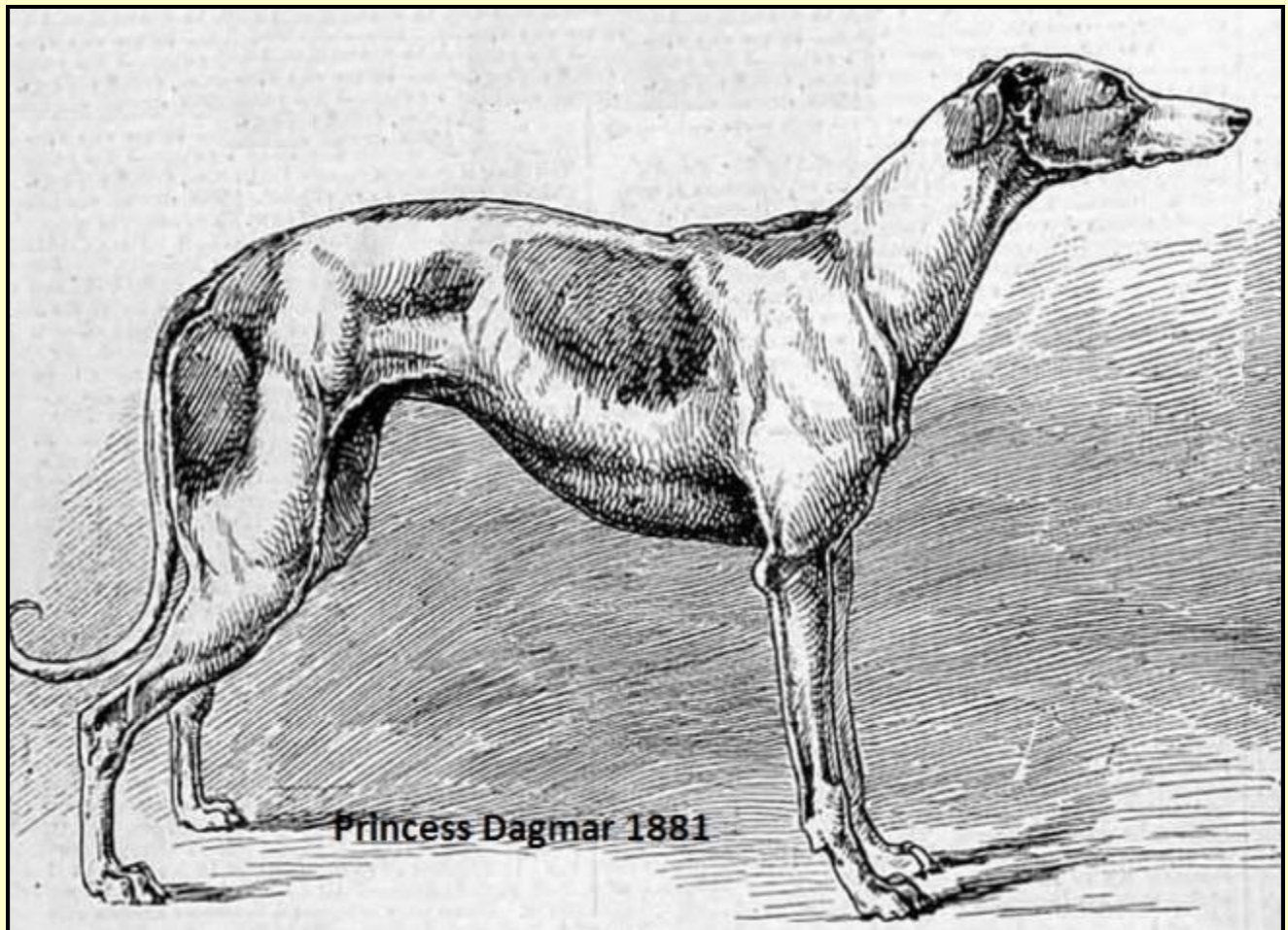
Coursing clubs grew in number in the 19th century and, as a spectator sport, attracted large crowds and associated betting. Field sports are capable of arousing strong emotions and today remain politically and socially divisive. Hunting with dogs and hare coursing were banned in 2004.

George Hooper Miller was born in 1845, the eldest son of Thomas and Ann Miller, well-respected yeoman farmers in Sherborne, tenants of the Digby estate at both Castle Farm and Blackmarsh Farm. George and his brother Thomas (both educated at Fosters School) supported their mother on the farm after the death of their father. Both were keen sportsmen and, in particular, George turned to breeding greyhounds and later race horses (in partnership with Robert Lemon at the Glenwood Stud in Longburton). It was George who arranged the first Blackmoor Vale Open Coursing Meeting in 1886, at Milborne Port, attracting a large crowd and 100 mounted followers. Two examples of his later success include repeating his Waterloo Cup victory with Princess Dagmar in 1881 and breeding a yearling which sold for £5000 guineas in 1891.

However, good fortune then deserted him and, living in straightened circumstances, his mental state was badly affected by the loss of five puppies from canine influenza. He died in 1896 aged 51 in his Church Lane lodgings of 'acute mania' preceded by nine days of convulsions. He lies buried at Castleton. Today, Black Shed Flowers occupies a one acre site at Blackmarsh Farm where the languid presence of Paul and Helen Stickland's greyhound or 'long tail' harks back to the achievements of George Hooper Miller.

George Tatham, September 2018.

John House adds: There is still a picture of Misterton, the greyhound, on display in Peter Hunt's Blackmarsh farmhouse.



Rachel Hassall shares the story of a brave Sherborne woman and resident of Castleton

Maude Steele GM ISM (1901-1997): awarded the George Medal for bravery during the bombing of Sherborne in 1940.

Maude Steele was born in Sherborne in 1901, the daughter of George Steele (later licensed victualler of the Traveller's Rest in Horsecastles) and Blanche Steele (née Moore) of 12, George Street. Maude entered the telephone service in 1916 and was appointed Supervising Telephonist at Sherborne in August 1939. At 4.40 pm on Monday, 30 September 1940, Sherborne was heavily raided by a force of some 150 German bombers which dropped several hundred bombs (about 60 tons) in a straight line from Lenthay to Crackmore. About 86 buildings were destroyed and seventeen civilians died as a result of the bombings. Despite the telephone exchange having received a direct hit, Maude refused to leave her post thereby ensuring that the emergency services were kept informed of the local situation. In June 1941, Maude went to Buckingham Palace where she was awarded the George Medal by George VI who had instituted the medal on 24 September 1940. In 1947, Maude was awarded the Imperial Service Medal. In 1949 she married Arthur Edgar Davies (1886-1968) at Castleton church. Maude died in Exmouth on 8 October 1997, aged 96.

The George Medal was instituted by King George VI on 24 September 1940. It is awarded for gallantry 'not in the face of the enemy'.

Maude Steele (1901-1997) was born in Sherborne on 17 September 1901, the second child of George Henry Steele (c.1870-1932) (a domestic groom & later licensed victualler of the Traveller's Rest in Horsecastles c.1919-1923, he died at Herrison House, Dorchester), and Blanche Steele (née Moore) (1876-1961) of 12 George Street.

Maude was baptised on 3 November 1901 at Sherborne. She had an elder brother, Reginald (b.1899), a hairdresser, who served with the Dorsetshire Regiment 1918-1919. In 1918 the family were living at 1 Horsecastles.

By 1939, Maud was living with her mother at Beechside in Castleton and working as a Post Office telephonist. On 30 September 1940, she was aged 39, when Sherborne telephone exchange was blown apart by a direct hit. As Supervisor of the telephone exchange, she ensured that casualty reports were sent by road. Following the bombing there were no services at all – no water, no telephones, no gas, no electricity, the sewers were fractured, and all the roads out of the town were blocked. For her bravery she was awarded the George Medal 'for courage and devotion to duty during the air raid on Sherborne'.

Sherborne Museum's 'Make Do and Mend – Women in Wartime' project website https://www.sherbornemuseum.co.uk/MDAM/about_the_project.aspx, set up by museum curator Judy Nash, 'Maude Steele lived in Osborne Road, Sherborne. At 4.20pm the first of 300 bombs rained down on the town. Throughout the raid and its aftermath Miss Steele stayed doggedly at her switchboard, keeping the town in touch with the outside world. A friend said 'she was terrified but she said that no Hitler was going to stop her doing her job.' Miss Steele, later Mrs Davies, retired from the post office when she was 60 and when Sherborne Museum staged a small exhibition to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the raid [in 1990], was living in Exmouth having left her home in Westbridge Park, Sherborne, due to failing health'.

Four women were amongst the 16 George Medal recipients listed in a supplement to the London Gazette published on 3 January 1941.

Western Gazette - Friday 10 January 1941

AWARD OF GEORGE MEDAL. TELEPHONIST'S COURAGE DURING AIR RAID.

Many messages of congratulation have come from a wide area to Miss Maude Steele, the Sherborne supervising telephonist, to whom the George Medal has been awarded for her action during a raid by

enemy aircraft. Miss Steele, who is a native of Sherborne, being the daughter of the late Mr Steele and of Mrs Steele of Beechside, Castleton, entered the telephone service in 1916, and was appointed supervising telephonist in August 1939. In the words of the official announcement of the award, Miss Steele, who was in charge of the telephone exchange when Sherborne was subjected to a terrific air bombardment, showed distinct courage and

devotion to duty at the risk of personal danger by refusing to leave the exchange, although bombs were falling all round the building. By her action and that of the temporary telephonist who remained with her, and whom she inspired by her courageous attitude, ambulance, police, fire and A.R.P. services were kept in constant touch with their respective headquarters, and other vital services were maintained until the majority of the local lines were put out of action and the exchange became untenable. Even when a heavy bomb exploded within the Post Office precincts, Miss Steele proceeded from the refuge room to the exchange, hoping she might still be of service. The raid occurred during a meal relief time, when only Miss Steele and Miss Marion Northam were on duty in the exchange. Several bombs fell within a short distance of the building, windows were shattered, ceilings in the building collapsed, and the building was "rocking" before the Head Postmaster (Mr W.H. Arlett) – who was also in the exchange – could persuade them to go to the refuge room. "Then," Mr Arlett told a representative of this paper, "when my back was turned Miss Steele returned to duty." Mr Arlett also expressed high praise for the work of Miss Northam. As the result of their action, all the urgent calls that could be put through were dealt with. Immediately after the raid, Miss B.M. Arlett, the Head Postmaster's daughter who is an ex-telephone supervisor, and who was working in another part of the building, went to the exchange and rendered assistance. Tribute has also been paid to the work of Mr Harding, the engineer attached to the Post Office.

To commemorate the award to Miss Steele, the members of the Post Office staff are contributing £10 to the local Spitfire Fund.

Western Gazette - Friday 06 June 1941

CONGRATULATED BY THE KING. MISS M. STEELE RECEIVES GEORGE MEDAL. Amongst those summoned to Buckingham Palace recently for the investiture by H.M. the King of the George Medal was Miss Maude Steele, supervisor at the Sherborne telephone exchange. Miss Steele was accompanied by the Head Postmaster of Sherborne (Mr W.H. Arlett) and Mrs G. Cornwell (late telephonist at Sherborne). In the course of investiture, His Majesty shook hands with Miss Steele and congratulated her on the part she played with such conspicuous courage during an enemy raid on Sherborne in September last year. Fellow citizens join in congratulating Miss Steele on the award of the George Medal, by which, through her unselfish and courageous action she has brought honour to her native town.

Western Gazette - Friday 03 October 1947

AWARDED IMPERIAL SERVICE MEDAL.

The Imperial Service Medal has been awarded to Miss Maude Steele, who recently retired from her post as supervising telephonist at Sherborne Post Office. Miss Steele also holds the George Medal, which was awarded to her for courage and devotion to duty during the heavy air bombardment of Sherborne in September 1940.



...the flora of Castleton churchyard

There are seven mature Yew trees and the grass, usually closely mown, has a wide variety of wild flowers growing very near to the ground amongst the turf. One is reminded of the patchwork of wild flowers growing on top of the closely cropped grassy hilltops of the South Downs growing in a similar fashion. The area is very quiet and peaceful and three birds—a Chiffchaff, a Wren and a Blackcap were heard, on 30 June 2020, (the day the three of us paid our first visit) hidden in the mature trees and shrubs that surround the churchyard.

The remains of a long ago hedge can be seen along the front wall on either side of the gateway and the stumps extend along the SW wall too. There are half a dozen Hart's-tongue ferns together with self seeded Hawthorne and Holly around the perimeter walls.

Amongst the colourful carpet of wildflowers throughout the churchyard we found red and white clover, purple *Prunella Vulgaris* or self heal, yellow Bird's Foot Trefoil, common rock rose, daisy, buttercup and a type of small dandelion. Two types of Plantain were holding their seed heads high. There was a general buzz of insects around attracted to the flowers. Richard Domoney has looked after the churchyard for many years and his method of mowing without cutting too low is enabling the wildflowers throughout the year to flourish at a low level. Richard lived as a boy at Pinfold Farm and remembers walking past the church on his way to school.

The church is situated amongst a clutch of houses and the entrance to Sherborne Old Castle is close by. Around the Eastern side and beyond the church wall is a separate burial ground for the Digby family of Sherborne Castle.





....additional biographical details for some of those remembered at Castleton Church

TURNER, William Lakin was born to George Turner and his wife, Eliza Turner (born Lakin) (1837–1900) in Barrow upon Trent. He was educated locally before he boarded at Trent College. He was the eldest of four children and his talent for art followed his father's abilities. His father was a part-time farmer but he also painted landscapes and he had a number of successful students including David Payne and Louis Bosworth Hurt. He is not known to be related to the more well known artist J. M. W. Turner, but his father was known as "Derbyshire's John Constable". Turner met his first wife Rachel Selina (Lina) Burville whilst they were both studying art at West London College of Arts and they married locally in Chelsea in 1892. Turner's father served on the Art Committee of Derby Art Gallery and both his and his son's paintings are included in the city's collection. There are at least seven of his paintings in Derby. Turner lived at various places, including Fulham and Loughton, (Essex), but is best known for his paintings of the Lake District, where he resided for at least twelve years. When his father died in 1910 Turner received just £100 as his father had remarried seven years before to Kate Stevens Smith who received the bulk of the estate. This behaviour was mirrored when four months after his own wife died, Turner made a new will in favour of a woman who quickly became his second wife. It is thought that Turner knew he had a terminal disease at the time of his marriage and he died of cancer months later in Sherborne, Dorset in 1936. William Lakin Turner displayed his work at several notable exhibitions. Turner exhibited hundreds of paintings including fourteen at The Royal Academy of Artists, four at the Royal Hibernian Academy and six in Birmingham. Between 1905 and 1936 he exhibited over 350 paintings at the Lake Artists Summer Exhibition as well as 81 paintings at the annual exhibition at Nottingham Castle. As a result, his paintings are available at the Museums in Nottingham, Nuneaton, Derby and the Ruskin Museum. Notable sales were to Beatrix Potter of a painting called Rydal Water which still hangs in her home which is owned by the National Trust and another which was used as a book cover. https://www.levenshistory.co.uk/uploads/1/2/6/4/126405959/william_lakin_turner2.pdf

The above pdf was written by Ian Hodkinson (Prof. Emeritus) and includes the following: His death certificate gave his address at the time as Kingsbury, Milborne Port, Wincanton, Somerset. It seems clear that William had been aware of his terminal condition at the time of his marriage to his second wife Janet Langham.

NOTE: From John House of Milborne Port: I have just been talking to Richard Duckworth who is the Milborne historian, he cannot help with a Kingsbury House in those days. There is one now but that house changed its name to Kingsbury House in recent times. There was a Kingsbury Farm which is a larger house.

May 2021—contacted by Ian Hodkinson via Rachel Hassall as she had put a photo of his grave on Find a Grave I have sent four photos.



December 2023 Ian Hodkinson published his 15 years of research into WLT in Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society Third Series Volume 23 pages 157-176.

....additional biographical detail—continued



BORRETT Catherine died February 11th. 1912, aged 88. Watercolour paintings of Sherborne New Castle and Sherborne Old Castle ruins by Mrs Catherine Elizabeth Borrett (nee Hughes) of Castleton, c.1868 -70. Catherine was married to James Borrett, M.D. (1804-1873). The paintings were given to Sherborne School in 1950 by Mrs Borrett's son, Frank Collingwood Hall Borrett. Paintings reproduced here by kind permission Sherborne School Archives.



IRWIN PATRICK Headmaster of Richard Foster's School died suddenly aged 41 in 1900 and is buried in the North Sector. The new school in Hound Street was built in 1886 but prior to that it seems very likely that the school the headmaster together with any borders were based in Castleton House. Mr Irwin was appointed Assistant Master in 1881 when Mr Cooper was headmaster and he took over from Mr Cooper when he left the school.

From Michael Hanson:

Mr Irwin had a tenancy agreement with Digby dated 1884 (D-FFO/36/8) which said he would be 'after James Charles Cooper' (*Voices*, Table 5, 1881), so I placed Patrick in Castleton House until he decamped to Foster's boarding house (I don't know when but now very likely in 1886). I suppose there was room in Castleton House for all those boarders and masters. I no longer have a copy of the document. There is no entry in a Castleton census for the Irwins.



Patrick Irwin pictured with the senior boys at Foster's School in 1898

We are very keen to add more information, especially more biographical information, and if you can help please do make contact as we would love to hear from you: sherbornesdfhs@gmail.com

Patricia Spencer, Barbara Elsmore and John Damon

Sir Mervyn Medlycott died in 2021 and in 2025 the Somerset and Dorset Family History Society celebrated its 50th anniversary and this article appeared in the *Sherborne Times* and recalls Sir Mervyn's vital role.

50th Anniversary SDFHS in 2025

The Federation of Family History Societies was formed in 1974 to represent the interests of the fledgling county societies. The following year saw the formation of the Somerset & Dorset Family History Society (SDFHS) by a young man named Mervyn Medlycott (1947-2021), who became its first Chairman and Secretary.

Mervyn had become interested in family history when he was 13 years old, which perhaps is not so surprising with Medlycott as a surname and a baronetcy in the family (which he inherited in 1986, becoming the 9th Baronet and the last in the line). In 1966, aged 19, he set himself up as a professional genealogist, such a remarkably young age to know what he wished to dedicate the rest of his life to.

In the first edition of the SDFHS's newsletter *The Greenwood Tree* (1975) Mervyn described his own early steps into family history and how he hoped the SDFHS would help guide others through the maze of available institutions and resources: 'When I first became interested in trying to trace my forbears, I well remember the sense of bewilderment as to where I was supposed to start - the atmosphere of the cavernous halls of the Public Record Office; the heavy indexes in the old Somerset House; the zombie-like atmosphere at the Society of Genealogists.' Adding that 'In the last three or four years a new movement has sprung up to try to help those who are bewildered by it all.'

During his spare time Mervyn began transcribing Memorial Inscriptions (Mis) from churches and gravestones in Somerset and Dorset, many of which have since been lost or are now illegible. This invaluable resource, along with other useful family history research assets, such as books, pamphlets and photographs, is now held by the SDFHS. In 2001, the SDFHS set up a research centre in Long Street, Sherborne (the ground floor of what is now Upstairs/Downstairs) which, together with a new website - www.sdfhs.org – resulted in a flood of enquiries both in person and by email, from home and abroad.

Space, however, soon became an issue, especially when packing and despatching 5,000 copies of *The Greenwood Tree* to subscribers, and in May 2006 the research centre relocated down the road to the St John's Building on the Parade (d'Urberville's today).

50 years on, and with the advent of online genealogical databases, is there still a place for family history societies? I believe the answer is yes. At the SDFHS research centre, which is now based at Broadway House, Peter Street, Yeovil, BA20 1PN, anyone can pick up a free 'Starters Pack' courtesy of the generosity of a member living in the USA, whose own origins have been traced back to Somerset. The pack together with the help of the knowledgeable volunteers at the centre will set you on an exciting journey into your past. Of course, you will turn to the internet in time, but with the foreknowledge of what it is you are looking for and where you might find it.

Barbara Elsmore February 2025