



PUBS, CLUBS & GOVERNANCE

Introduction

The *Abbotskerswell Village History Series*, is now complete, with this fourth volume in the series. It is thanks to the HLF that we have been able to create and publish our village history.

The research for the series has been fascinating, and great fun, and inevitably just after a volume goes to the printer some new information comes to hand. The excavation of the bread oven behind *Rose Cottages*, shown below, is fantastic. We now know that *Whiddon Farm* was built in 1847, since an advert for its tenancy emerged recently.

Study of the Voters' Lists of the early 20th century, and a conveyance document, has shown that *Salem Bungalow* was not built by Mrs Hare but by Rev. Dence in 1924. So the research will continue, and there is no doubt that there is much more information to be found, for example, on The Priory and its nuns and sisters.



Chapter 1

A Social Background

Although this phase of the *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* is over we are ready to begin Volume 5, which will explore the village and its inhabitants during the 1940s and 1950s. Another application to the HLF seems likely in the future. The physical sign of AbbPast's work in the village is also developing, particularly with the preservation of Abbotskerswell's last telephone box; there will be more in the future. We were very grateful to the Parish Council that they took up our request for its 'adoption' from BT; it may not be a classic red box, but it is still going to be the last of its kind. By the time you read this we hope that it will be acting as AbbPast's advertisement booth.

It has been my pleasure to be the author of the Series, but without the support of AbbPast Committee members Nick, Felicity and Trish it could not have been done; a big thanks to Trish for her editing of my English, and Felicity for editing the history. Kim at Kingfisher Print has done a stunning job, taking my words and ideas and creating the publication, thank you Kim for your quality and patience. Central @ Model Stores have done a great job in making the booklets readily available to the villagers, thanks Chris and your staff. A final thanks to all those who have contributed and to you, the readers, whose words of encouragement have made the project worthwhile.

Peter Wade

www.abbpast.co.uk

In each of the previous three publications in the *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* there have been definite themes. However, in this last one it is more a case of looking at the things that have not been covered elsewhere. Even the title is a touch 'tongue in cheek', as it only covers certain elements of the volume, but the linking factor is the desire to see everything in its social context, and that will remain the case once again.

The public house, inn, pub or whatever title each went under, has been a crucial part of the village landscape for centuries. The village's first 'inn' would have been Church House, whose story was told in *3. Religion & Education*, where the local ale was brewed from the 16th century. Once the Church began to frown on this activity the inn began to develop as Chapter 2 will show. Until fairly recently this was a male dominated form of entertainment, the place that the village men went to unwind after long hard days in the fields, and later in the mills and quarries. Interestingly the landlords were often called beer or cider sellers in the Census, which tells us that the early style

of inn was simply a place to drink. Today of course food is such an important element of the pub's trade that the old 'wet' pubs such as *The Butchers Arms* can no longer survive.



Two bygone institutions; the *Tradesman's Arms* and the South Devon Hunt, which was calling in for the stirrup cup in 1952.

For centuries villagers had to make their own entertainment, consequently the Clubs section of this volume tries to chart those activities and show them in their significant roles before the days of television and cars, which dramatically changed the nature of activities; no longer are there fortnightly whist drives and dances.

Choir outings went much further afield, destinations like Newquay, Bristol and Bath etc. These were fabulous to us 'young ones' as we were called, leaving early in the morning, stopping for coffee, lunch and evening meal all arranged by Mrs Fey.¹

It is pleasing to see that traditional activities such as May Day and Jubilees are still being commemorated. The improvements in transport have added activities as well, with Twinning with villages in France and Ireland becoming possible.

The village children had a wonderful time playing in the fields and woods as described by Phyllis Ford:

Out of school the copse* was our playground, we built 'caverns' in the laurel bushes, climbed trees and sang popular tunes of the day at the top of our voices. The copse pond was a great attraction. Each spring, carrying jam pots tied with string we collected frog spawn and watched the tadpoles grow into frogs. Some of the boys made rafts and sailed around the pond. On dry days the children would lie in a row at the edge of the brook catching 'chopheads' with cupped hands.²

* This is *Court Grange* Copse at the end Ladywell Lane, nowadays very much out of bounds!

It must be remembered that few working people had transport, therefore anywhere beyond walking distance was rarely visited:

Most of us sang in the choir at one time or other and there was always keen competition to join. Summer outings were an exciting part of life. For the Sunday School outing, two or three coaches would leave Cross tree full of happy families carrying buckets and spades en route to Goodrington Beach. In the afternoon, Mrs Fey and her helpers would organize tea and games on the green.³

This day out in 1949 was reported in the MDA, which noted that four charabancs went to Goodrington, with a pasty, buns, 1 shilling for ices, then tea at 4pm for the children.

Village activities such as the whist drives and dances were very popular, as were village fetes and shows. The photograph⁴ below, of the 1948 village fancy dress dance, shows Phyllis Lowe on the left at the front, aged 16, in an outfit that probably caused some interesting comments!



The nature of governing the village has also changed dramatically, from the days of church dominance, to the local and district councils. It is interesting to see how the new Parish Council of the 1890s was made up of the significant men of the village, and Mrs Hare from *Court Grange*. The working people looked up to these people as being educated and knowledgeable, who generally endeavoured to look after their employees and tenants. National and County representatives would have rarely been seen in the village until transport improved between the wars.

The section on events is an attempt to cover important, and interesting things, that have happened in the village, and perhaps even made Abbotskerswell of regional and national interest; notable of course among these is the story of John 'Babbacombe' Lee, known as 'the man they couldn't hang'. But we also tell of other events, both happy and sad, that have affected the village over the years. Similarly telling the story of villagers both significant, and simply hardworking, is an important element of the make-up of village society, when people looked after their own, but began to spread further afield and achieve interesting things in their lives.

Chapter 2

Public Houses

During the last 175 years there have been five different public houses serving the parish of Abbotskerswell. For most of that time there were three working at any one time, which for a parish with a population of around 400 seems plenty. Although initially they would have been owned and run by individuals, often as family dynasties, four were eventually acquired by Heavitree Brewery.

The firm began in Exeter in 1790 and brewed its own beers until 1970. It began buying public houses in the early 20th century and has around seventy at present.



The Two Mile Oak

This is probably the oldest of the parish's four public houses, which John Somers Cocks' extensive research into the old houses in the village suggests: "dates from the 1600s and was originally a three-roomed farmhouse, possibly belonging to Singmore".¹ This is borne out by an advert for the sale of the Dornafeld Estate in 1784 part of which was "also a Meffuage or Tenement, called the TWO MILE OAK, confiting of two Dwellings, a Stable, and other Outbuildings, and one Acre of Gardens & Orchards ..."² The 18th century language style, with its use of 'f' in place of 's', largely makes sense, the word messuage, means a residential building with its building and land. There is no suggestion of it being an inn, which would surely have been mentioned. It has been suggested that it was first licensed as an inn in 1703 but we can find no evidence for this.

The earliest reference to the *Two Mile Oak* is in the 1839 Tithe Map documents, which refer to it as an inn with Henry Preston being the occupier. Its position on the main Newton Abbot to Totnes road, and not actually in a village, suggests it could have been developed as a coaching inn as transport improved in the 19th century. The first known landlord was Christopher Langler, who was the 'victualler' in 1850, or the 'inn keeper' in the 1851 Census. Next came William Board, who passed the licence on to

Aaron Nickels in 1860. The Nickels family were Stokeinteignhead farmers and became large land owners in Abbotskerswell and Ipplepen. Aaron suffered much tragedy in his life with 4 of his 5 children dying in the first year of their lives, and his wife dying in 1867. He died in 1871 whilst landlord of the Turks Head in Newton Abbot, aged 53.

He was followed in 1865 by William Bishop, John Bond in 1871 and Samuel Potter in 1889. In 1891 Thomas Boucher was recorded as the 'licensed victualler', with his wife Grace and son William, an agricultural labourer, living at the inn; they had previously been at the Rolle Arms at Chittlehampton. When Thomas died in 1901 Grace took over as the 'innkeeper' but by 1906 she had returned to the Chittlehampton area and was followed at the *Two Mile Oak* by Thomas Bond. Thomas was the second of the 11 children of Henry and Susan Bond who had moved to Ipplepen from Paignton. Thomas joined the Royal Navy at the age of 17 and spent the next 22 years as a stoker, achieving the rank of Petty Officer 1st Class. He married Mary Hull in 1899 and left the navy in 1903; by 1906 he had become the innkeeper of the *Two Mile Oak*.

Thomas had joined the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1904 and was recalled to the service in 1914 at the age of 50, joining the battleship HMS Ocean. Sadly he was killed in an accident whilst coaling his ship at Queenstown in southern Ireland. His story is told in full in the AbbPast publication '*Abbotskerswell During WW1*'.



Geoffrey Lee followed Richards in 1923, remaining until 1951. In 1949 he was fined £1 15/- for selling watered gin; he claimed innocence, stating that it was common knowledge that gin was tampered with in transit. In 1951 John Knowles became the landlord for most of the 1950s and by 1965 Joan Beard was landlady.

The Bonds were followed by Henry Richards who was publican until his death in 1923. At this time the inn was owned by W S Pinsent, whose Newton Abbot brewery was on the corner of Market Street and Halcyon Road; in 1920 the business was sold to Heavitree Brewery of Exeter.



A 1990s AbbTalk advert

By the late 20th century the *Two Mile Oak* had gone the way of many rural pubs, adding a dining room in the old barn, and soon established a good reputation for its food, which continues to this day.

The Butchers Arms

In 1839 the area that is today *The Butchers Arms*, was called South Town Orchard. It included two cottages, two gardens, two orchards and a stable with a court yard, as shown on the Tithe Map, *Map 1*. The South Town Cottage was owned and occupied by Susanna Cook and her husband William, who was an agricultural labourer; they were still living there in 1861.



Map 1

A – Stable, used as a wheelwright’s workshop and became a house by 1881. Despite its large ovens, it appears that it was not occupied in the 20th century.

B – *South Town Cottage*

C – On this site *South Down*, now *Brook Cottage*, was built in the 1870s

D – Cottage, and later *The Butchers Arms*

The Butchers Arms seems to have been created in the mid-1840s by William Burrige, who will be dealt with in more detail in the section on the *Tradesman’s Arms*. In 1847 it was named as *The Butchers Arms* when it was sold by auction on 16th September. The building was described as:

...now used as an inn or public house, ... comprising parlour, kitchens, a butcher’s shop, four bedrooms, and necessary offices, together with the cellars, stables, linhays, courtlage, walled garden and the productive orchard.³

The interesting part of the advert is the explanation of the pub’s name; it had been a butcher’s shop, with William Burrige as the tenant. It was bought by Francis Norton who lived there with his wife Elizabeth and their four children. In 1851 Francis was described as a farmer, but by 1857 he is recorded as a ‘cider seller’; however, he also died that year so in 1861 it is Elizabeth who is recorded as the ‘landlady’, helped by her two daughters. When she died in 1865 her son, John, took over the reins, although oddly it is his sister, Mary, who is on the 1871 census return as the ‘beer and cyder seller’. John and his family were living in Rose Cottages with John being a labourer. However, presumably he joined his aging sister at the pub, as the trade directories of the time and the 1881 census record John as the ‘publican’. Mary died in 1874, and John in 1886, but it was still a relative who took over as the ‘retailer of beer and cyder seller’; this time it was their sister Susan Perkins. She had married James Perkins and had been living in South Town Cottage. When Susan died in 1892 her Uncle William, who lived at Plumtree Cottage, took over until his death in 1897.

The family tradition still continued, but in a slightly obscure way. William Norton’s daughter Clementina had married Henry Taylor, a local man, and it was to be his brother who became the next publican. In 1891 George Taylor was the innkeeper in Torbryan, and moved to Abbotskerswell in 1897 as the beer and cyder seller, as well as being a stonemason. He would remain at



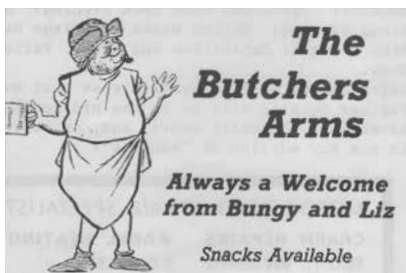
The Butchers Arms until 1906 when the first non-Norton relation for 60 years took over, this was Frederick William Prowse. He was a blacksmith by trade, presumably using the smithy that was across the road, because the census of 1911 does not mention him being the landlord. He remained there until shortly before he died in 1936.

In March 1920 Heavitree Brewery also acquired *The Butchers Arms* when they bought W. S. Pinsent's inns. This later created an odd problem, as in 1936 it was discovered that one of the four sisters who sold the property to Mr Pinsent in 1895 had not been paid her £35; this had to be paid from his estate.

Fred Prowse was followed by Thomas Maddicott; he was landlord until 1951 when he was succeeded by a village legend in Henry 'Bungy' Eyles, who would be the publican until 1987. *The Butchers Arms* was a small beer and cider house in those days, not obtaining a spirits licence until 1960. As with those before him, Bungy worked during the day, as a drayman for a brewery, and then "he ran the paper round in the village and surrounding area, carrying paraffin, cigarettes etc as well as papers".⁴



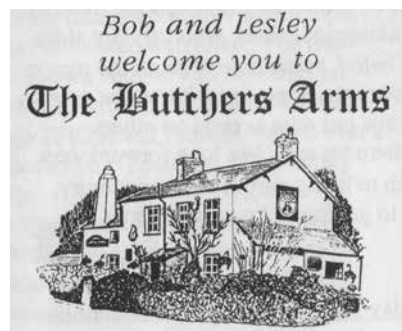
At the back of the pub was the 'Buff Hut', a Buffalo Lodge; Bungy was always an enthusiastic charity fund raiser. The Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes, shown above, had a long association at the Butchers having used it from the 1930s for meetings; in September 1930 they had raised £27 for the church restoration fund at the village fete.



A number of changes were made to *The Butchers Arms* over the years, with a major one occurring in the late 1970s, when the old South Town Cottage, which adjoined the pub, was incorporated into it. When Violet Norton, who with husband Fred had lived there for many years, died in 1976, the Brewery took the opportunity to extend the premises. A lean-to building was also later added to the Slade Lane end of the building. Another addition came in 1990 when Heavitree bought Brook Cottage (formerly South Down) which was then utilised as a restaurant.



Bungy and wife Liz after 25 years at *The Butchers Arms*



It would appear that having been forced to leave *The Butchers Arms*, he set up a rival pub in his new house. He was an interesting character; born in Kingsteignton in 1790, he became a soldier in the Canadian 85th Foot before settling in Abbotskerswell as a smith. Although the building was called the *Tradesman's Arms*, from 1861 onwards William was only described as a blacksmith; so we can assume that it was little more than a house selling beer at that time.

In June 1987 Bungy retired and was replaced by Mike Hoare. The Butchers saw a good many landlords in the next 25 years with only Mike spending more than a few years there. A number tried to develop the food side of the pub, with the Old Bake House, Werners Restaurant, Seymours and Mary Ann's occupying the room behind South Down, but most did not survive long.

However, in August 2013 Phil Upton, who may prove to be the last publican, left and since then it has been used as a residence, with no sign of Heavitree Brewery looking to re-open it as a public house.

Tradesman's Arms

This public house, known to locals as the 'Top Pub', was situated in what is now the first house in the row of cottages between *Abbotsvale* and *Grange View*, called *South View*. These cottages have had a variety of names over the years: *Tradesman's Arms Cottages*, *Burridge Place* and *Vale Terrace*. The *Tradesman's Arms* was first recorded in Billing's Directory of 1857 when William Burridge was listed as the 'beer retailer and blacksmith'.

William, remarkably for the time, lived until the age of 95. However, by 1864 his son-in-law William Dyer, who had married Charlotte Burridge, had taken over as the 'beer seller'. He was fined in 1864 for keeping a disorderly house! Over the next 20 years he was variously described as a licensed victualler, a road contractor, grocer, cowkeeper and farmer with 35 acres employing 2 men. He and Charlotte did not have any children, and as a consequence the *Tradesman's Arms* usually housed their nephews, or lodgers, who were agricultural labourers. As seemed to be usual in the village, the family took over at the death of the innkeeper; in this case when William died in 1899 it was Charlotte's nephew, William Burridge. He was the son of Emmanuel who had moved away from the village to live in Weston-Super-Mare. However, he did not last long and the family tie was broken, when in 1902 Henry Richards was at the *Tradesman's Arms*. By 1906 it was the turn of Thomas Herring, who was an ex Royal Artilleryman.

In 1910 it was John Lovering who became the publican, however, when he died in 1919 the licence was transferred to his wife, Leonora, until her sudden death in 1923. Leonora featured in a dramatic article in the MDA in November 1913, when it was reported that a Henry Jones had called in at the pub for a drink, and was caught taking money from the till. He escaped but was caught in Newton Abbot; he was sentenced to one month's hard labour. In 1920 the *Tradesman's Arms* was the third village pub acquired by Heavitree Brewery, when they had bought Pinsent's Newton Abbot Brewery. Harry and Florence Cowell became the tenants after Leonora's death.



Between 1935 and 1952 Jack Lake was in charge, as shown in this 1940s photograph. In the MDA of 24 December 1938 it was reported that the Tradesman's 'Thrift Club' had a record year, with 58 members; the club paid out £140, the following year it rose to £179.

In October 1952 Bet & Harold (Digger) Hancock took over and would be the last publicans in the *Tradesman's Arms* 170 year history. The 'Top Pub' was known for its Euchre team, with Bet renowned for the supper she would put on after a game. As the pictures on page 13 show, this was a small pub, with

just two rooms; these were called the Bar and the Snuggery. It represented the drinking pub of the time and even sold locally produced cider. With lots of local apples many people, such as Mr Elliott at *Willow Cottages*, made their own cider; he would invite friends in for a swift one when they passed. The glasses in the barn were never washed, and had a cloudy film on them which was gently swilled when the rather rough scrumpy was consumed.



However, by 1973 Heavitree Brewery were developing their new pub, the *Court Farm Inn*, and Bet was offered the chance to move there, but she declined, opting to retire instead. As a consequence in October 1973 the *Tradesman's Arms* closed, with its licence being transferred to the new *Court Farm Inn*. Bet's eulogy was later printed in *AbbTalk*:

Pop into your Local, before it disappears
 Just a T.V. title, or so it would appear
 But not so for the Tradesmans, for us, it's more severe
 Our time is nigh to join the ranks of those who disappear.

Flesh and blood means little, in these days of changing times
 But our memories are precious, I think we both will find
 They will help us in our lonely days
 The days that follow on,
 Memories of the happy times, in the years we leave behind.⁵

Court Farm Inn

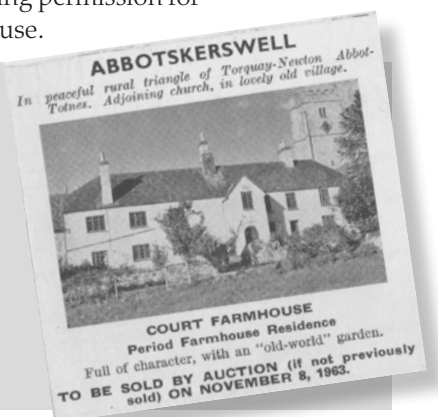
Of all the village's public houses, the *Court Farm Inn*, is both the youngest and the oldest; it just depends from which stance you are looking it. As a public house it was only created in 1973, but as a farm it goes back many centuries. The details of Court Farm's past are in *1 Industry & Commerce*,



which tells its farming history. The Court Farm was the manorial farm for the church until the 16th century; the building's construction is a mixture of 16th & 18th century work. From the 1830s it was part of the Court Grange estate, but it was in the late 1950s that the farm's

owner, Reginald Walters, obtained planning permission for building on the farm land behind the house.

This land became Burley's Abbots Park Estate. In 1964 the farm house was sold to the Heavitree Brewery for £7,650. Once the plan to create a new pub, to replace the *Tradesman's Arms*, was revealed 60 villagers signed a petition to try to stop the plan.



Whilst Wilton Way was being built, the farmhouse was rented out for local housing. However, in 1970 Heavitree acquired the land to link it to the new road which made it possible for it to be turned into

a public house. The barns at the southern end, already damaged by fire, were demolished and the pub created, with the first tenant being Mr Pat Atkinson; it was opened in October 1973. Pat and Daphne stayed for 15 years, with Robin Huggins being landlord for eight years.

An interesting piece of history occurred in December 1978, when the triangle of land next to the pub was sold to Kerswells Parish Council for one new penny and a pint of beer. The pint of beer was handed over by the Chairman of the Kerswells Parish Council, to William Tucker, the Heavitree Brewery Chairman. The *Court Farm Inn* has become a popular and successful pub, with its food being a major feature; the present tenant, Debbie King, became the landlady on 28 February 2005.



The Barn Owl

It needs to be remembered that Aller Vale was in the parish of Abbotskerswell until 1984, therefore the *Barn Owl* story is relevant. In 1976 Peter and Nancy Mills decided that the prospect of the Kingskerswell By-pass cutting across their land at Aller Barton Farm would make farming impossible, and consequently sold the land to Devon County Council (it only took another 41 years to actually build the road). The farm buildings were sold to Mr and Mrs Bird for £50 000, and in 1980 they obtained planning permission to create a licensed pub, which was called the *Birds Nest*. The old farmhouse was described by Peter Mills in a Herald Express article; it had a top kitchen, a lounge, a bottom living room and the 'Big Room' in which he learned to ride a bike. There were seven bedrooms, one of which was used as an apple store, and outside were a stable and a shippon for 20 cows.

Having established the *Birds Nest*, the Birds sold the business to Steve Winter, who in turn sold it to Derek Warner. Derek developed the business by establishing the guest bedrooms, and then sold it to Lionheart Inns of Exeter. In the late 1990s Eldridge Pope Inns of Dorchester bought the now renamed *Barn Owl*, whilst expanding into food based pubs.

However, their financial difficulties in the 2000s meant they sold their chain to Hall & Woodhouse of Blandford Forum in Dorset. They undertook a major renovation of the buildings and today it is a popular pub-restaurant, although rather dwarfed by the new road embankments.



Chapter 3

Village Organisations

The opportunity for the largely working population of the village to enjoy themselves, has come in many forms over the centuries; from the mediaeval church ales, to the inns and the clubs. This chapter looks at the wide variety that have existed, and those that still do exist in the village.

Social Clubs

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries the wealthier villagers felt that they should help the working classes to improve themselves; this was linked to the new schooling that was available, but also the realisation that the country needed a better trained work force. A good example of this was the **Mutual Improvement Society** which existed in the 1890s, taking advantage of, and supported by Mrs Hare's use of Church House. Magic lantern talks were popular at that time; these lanterns were the forerunner of the modern slide projector, powered by a mineral oil lamp which illuminated images on glass plates, and allowed shows in small halls and churches. In 1895 the society held such a talk on the 'Life of General Gordon'; there were others on 'Pilgrims Progress', with readings by Rev. Hine, who also gave a talk on the 'History of the Church of England', and Richard Welby's on 'The Moon'.

In 1897 Miss Helen Phillips, the sister of John from Aller Vale Pottery, gave a talk on her work in Ceylon, described as the "remote heathen village of Dodanduma"¹. She used photos and curios to tell her story of the rich girl, working in the British Empire to improve the lot of the natives; you cannot help but wonder what the villagers made of it!

Probably the most important social organisation in the village's history has been **The Village Club**, which existed for over 60 years. The first reference to a Village Club was in November 1895 when Mrs Hare provided a tea for the young men of the village at the club; significant villagers John Phillips (Aller Pottery), Richard Welby (*Heathcot*), and Charles Widdicombe (*Court Farm*) gave addresses which were followed by songs and ringing of the hand bells. In October 1895 Mrs Hare had taken out a lease on Church House and

several village activities immediately appeared, therefore it does seem that she was responsible for beginning the club. She was always keen for the villagers to have worthwhile activities to keep them occupied; in 1906 she set up a rifle range on her land adjoining the churchyard wall, "to foster a spirit of patriotism and encourage healthy recreation"².

There is no doubt that the Club had lofty ideals, with Rev. Hine as its President; reported activities in its early days also reflect this. In 1896 Miss Parker-Brown of the Factory Helpers Union, gave a talk on factory conditions, and the work of the Union helping 200,000 women and children to receive help in industrial areas. The Union provided clubs, sick-aid, holidays and clothing.

In 1896 the Club had around 50 members, with a reading room containing weekly papers such as *The Illustrated London News*, *Daily Graphic* and the *Black & White*; there was a lending library and a games room. Mrs Hare took over as President after Rev. Hine's death in 1898 and that year saw a magic lantern talk on 'Men Who Face Death: the life boatmen', followed by a humorous sketch entitled 'The Chimney Sweep & the Whitewasher', with Mrs Hare providing the connective readings. In 1899 she gave a tea, followed by a performance of the 'Toy Symphony'.

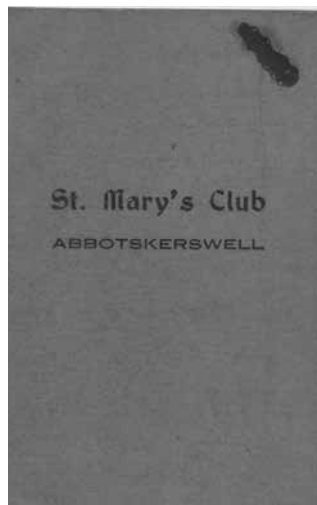
The Club's importance can be seen in 1901, with its Vice Presidents being Rev. Campbell, William Henley from *Mallands* and Major Buckle from *The Manor House*. S Brownson was the Honorary Secretary, librarian (the books provided by Mrs Hare) and hand bells teacher. In 1903 the Club spread its wings in a contest with Highweek Village Club, which saw them win three of the four events. The school Headteacher seemed to become the secretary, with Mr Hennion and Mr Keites being in the role from 1906 until 1921. The village craze for whist drives seemed to begin at the Club, when in 1917 they organised one for Club funds. Sgt Thorpe-Tracey, husband of Jane Elliott, of the London Regiment acted as Master of Ceremonies; whist drives remained on the village social calendar for 50 years. When Henry Keites resigned as Secretary he was given a silver mounted ebony walking stick, inscribed "Presentation to H. Keites from the Abbotskerswell Village Club; Hon. Sec., 1906-1921".

In the 1920s the Club continued to attract valuable patronage from *Court Grange*, with Mr Johnson being a Vice President, and Rev. Dence giving the Club a billiard table for use in the clubroom in 1926. In 1932 the Club Billiards Team was in Division II of the Newton Abbot District Amateur Billiards League; in December they hammered the YMCA IIs 8-0, and were 9th out of 14 in the league. In 1937 the team was G Tapper, F Maddicott,

F & R Huggett, G Pritchard and T Bulley. However, it was the billiard table that created a major crisis at the club in 1937, when the Caretaker at Church House reported to its Trustees, that men were playing snooker for money, and there was also unruly behaviour and bad language being used. Unfortunately one of the men was H Lee who was the Secretary of the Club. Despite him resigning on 20 September 1937 the Village Club was closed by the Trustees for infringing the rules of the Diocesan Trust who owned Church House. Fortunately it was re-founded with new stricter rules for the 1937-38 season.

During WW2, with many of the men away, the Club was closed but in September 1945 a meeting of the Church House Trustees re-launched the Village Club, with the strict 1937 rules reaffirmed. On Monday 8 September it re-opened, with billiards and darts matches; both rooms downstairs were used, the reading and games room and the snooker table in the big room. However, things had changed after the war and a men only Village Club no longer seemed appropriate in the village, therefore on 21 August 1946 it was agreed that women be allowed to join, and the Village Club would be renamed as **St Mary's Social Club**. At the new club's first AGM in September it was proposed "to allow ladies the same facilities as men"³; this was passed by 19 votes to 3. The Club Patron, William Purkis from *Court Farm*, donated a members' cup for billiards and the Gibson Cup was awarded for darts. Rev. Arthur Harries was President and George Stoneman Honorary Secretary.

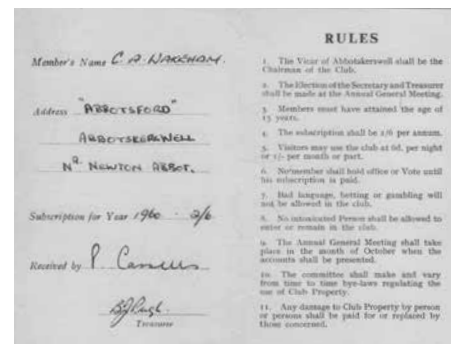
Mrs Lake presented the Club with a dart board, and the Club beat the *Tradesman's Arms* in a match 2-1. In 1947 the ladies' darts team lost in the Final of the Gibson Cup to the Keyberry Hotel. Later that year the Club agreed to form and run its own cricket club, and Melva Purkis agreed to the use of Berry Meadow, used before the war, by the club. The joint arrangement worked, with whist drives and dances organised as fund raising events, in fact the dances proved so successful that eventually in 1949 the snooker table was moved upstairs, and the partition on the ground floor taken down to make the big room we see today. The table had to have some of its legs cut to get it flat on uneven floor.



There must have still been issues with female membership as in October 1950 it was agreed by Church House Trustees that a ladies' section of the club could be formed, and that "the ladies have full use of club property with the exception of the Billiard Table".⁴ One ex. member remembering those days recently explained how she sat on the stairs longing to go up and play on the table!

During the 1950s St Mary's Club was busy, open five evenings a week, with modern additions like a wireless set that needed a licence in 1950. In 1951 the Club trophy winners were:

Purkis Cup for Billiards – J Brenton	Gibson Cup for Snooker – B Cooper
Pring Cup for Ladies Darts – Mrs B Cooper	Table Tennis Bat – Mark Rowe



The 1953 Club Outing was to Lynton, Lynmouth and Minehead, on Bank Holiday Monday. However, things were changing in the village and as a new group of rather younger people became involved with the club in the late 1950s, issues began to emerge. A 'youths' v 'older people' dispute broke in 1960 when the Club was refused

entry to Church House by the Trustees over unpaid rent. A series of letters were written in the local press by both sides trying to take the moral high ground, but probably making the situation worse, with comments such as "... in those days the behaviour of the youth of today would not have been tolerated for one moment".⁵ It appears that following some minor incidents of damage, and an inexperienced committee who did not pay the rent on time, the PCC took the opportunity of the Vicar's absence on holiday, to bring things to a head. Despite Michael Buckpitt immediately paying the rent, the ill feeling continued. A letter from the Vicar claimed the doors had never been closed, which they obviously had been, and that "the youths of the village ... cannot expect the older people to do everything for them".⁶ The committee responded with its own slightly inaccurate view of the purpose of Church House, and added "as the youths of the village ... if we get any pleasure out of our spare time in this village it is through our endeavours and not the so-called 'older people'".⁷

In an attempt to smooth the waters Mrs Wakeham from Abbotsford, whose son Chris was on the committee and also one of the 'youths' although he was 19, agreed that the letter was inaccurate in its historical knowledge, but commented that "there is much talk nowadays about young people drifting away. It would be a pity to drive away the few who remain."⁸ However, the damage was done and the Club closed, and despite an attempt to reform it in 1961, it seems that its time was over. The issue of what the village youngsters were to do in their spare time continued, and as the story of the Village Hall will tell, it was one of the prime movers for its construction.



A very different social group was formed in the village in September 1959, the **Women's Institute**. The W.I. was formed in Canada in 1897 but by 1915 it had arrived in Great Britain when it had two aims: to revitalise rural communities, and to encourage women to help in producing food during the First World War. Since then the organisation's aims have broadened and it is now

the largest women's voluntary organisation in Britain, with 7000 branches. During the 1920s, many W.I.s started choirs, and Sir Walford Davies was asked to write an arrangement of 'Jerusalem' for these choirs. This hymn, with its association with the fight for women's suffrage, was appropriate for the newly emerging W.I. movement which was encouraging women to take their part in public life. It was performed at the W.I.'s AGM in 1924, and was so successful that it has been sung at the opening of the AGM to this day, and at the opening of many of their meetings.



The Abbotskerswell branch continues to this day with monthly meetings, and has been involved in many activities such as May Days, Christmas Fairs and Church Bazaars.

In April 1979 they wrote a village history which was featured in the introduction to *2. Houses & Families*; Mrs Ivy Mathias was W.I. President at

the time, and they sold all 500 booklets produced. The Herald Express wrote a large piece on this commendable achievement, Mrs Mathias told the paper that "we had the idea about a year ago and got a little sub-committee

up. We asked members to contribute things they knew. The response was fantastic".⁹ One village tradition that the WI will always be associated with is the ringing of the hand bells, which had been bought by Mrs Hare in 1887 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee. They are owned by a village trust who have cared for them ever since, and were kept in Church House in a box made by Mr Partridge. In 1921 the bells were in need of attention, and Guy Henley from *Mallands* donated much of the money needed. In 1965 the hand bells were not being used so the WI took over the care of them, and created a group of ringers. Having come fourth at the Paignton Music festival, they featured at the 1968 County Show, when seven WI ringers did 5 half hour stints in three days.



*At the County Show L to R
Mrs M Stanley
(who transposed the music)
Mrs Frances Mills
Mrs Jessie Latter
Mrs Nancy Minto
Mrs Ann Aggett
Mrs Phyllis Ford*

In 1979 the W.I. raised £400 with coffee mornings and whist drives to have the 27 bells retuned, and two recast. At the Paignton Music festival of 1981 they won the coveted shield for bell ringing. In 1998 Phyllis Ford applied to the Millennium Commission for a grant to refurbish the bells and buy several more, making 38 in total, and also to teach ringing. The award of £3 195 created a great deal of interest, with an appearance on national television; the bells are still in Mrs Hare's Chest in The Parish Rooms.

Garden Clubs

In a rural community like Abbotskerswell growing vegetables and gardening will always be important, and as far back as 1880 this can be seen with the beginning of the annual show of the Aller Vale Pottery Allotments. After much debate, and a number of false dawns, John Phillips finally arranged for Abbotskerswell village to have **allotments** in March 1895. A three acre field rented from the church glebe land called Silliacre on Rydon

Lane was rented at a cost of £2 10/- pa. Not all the land was used, so the spare land was set to oats; the site continued to be under used until it was finally given up in 1903. This theme continued over the years as in 1916 there was discussion over having allotments again, but there was still not enough interest. In 1920 the issue arose again from a national initiative and with men home from the war. Abbotskerswell Allotment Association was created and they leased Roundmoor field on Rydon Lane. Once again after a few years this stopped, partly because the new council houses had large gardens for growing vegetables. It was the creation of ARA, Abbotskerswell Recreation Association, by the PC that brought about the new allotments in 1985; these were developed as part of the Recreation Ground development.

In 2016 the 37th **Village Garden Show** was held in the Village Hall, an organisation which is part of village history and which was revived in 1979. The first **Cottage Garden Society** show was held in 1925 and soon became a large undertaking that attracted many visitors. The 1930 show was described in great detail in the MDA, listing the committee, all the activities and prize winners. John W Palk was President, with George Stoneman the Chairman and with judges from all over the district. The show was held in Berry Meadow (which is where the bottom of Grange Road is today), with three categories of entry for the competitors: Cottagers, Open to the Parish and Open to All Comers. There were prizes for vegetables, flowers, fruit and dairy produce; it was a good year for peas and beans and Mr J Rogers won the "Advertiser Cup" for best quality produce, including a parsnip measuring 49½ inches long. The Priory was an enthusiastic exhibitor, winning best plums, dessert apples, runner beans and onions. Fred Brimecombe also gave a lovely description of the Show in AbbTalk No.13:

"On the Friday evening, all the committee would be at the field to put up skee ball, hoopla, bowling for the pig, spinning arrow and tip the bucket. Of course the highlight of the day was the Maypole, danced twice, at 3.00pm and 5.00pm to music from Newton Abbot Town Band. The girls were all dressed in white and carried posies of flowers. It was all over by 6.00pm, and then to finish the day in style there would be a dance at the Church House from 8.00pm to midnight with music from the Ern Medland Trio."

Sadly the show lost £11, and it was later decided to abandon the dance.

Mrs Dence presents the trophies.



In the 1930s Mrs Dence was created Patron of the Society, and Guy Henley was elected Chairman. By 1937 Percy Buckpitt was allowing the use of the Show Field in Little Hams, which now contains *Brambles*, on Manor Road; however, the 1938 show, opened by Mrs Dence, lost £12 10/- and it was decided to leave two years before the next show, by which time WW2 had begun and the show never restarted.

Now once again the **Village Garden Show** is a vital part of Abbotskerswell life, with 34 categories in the 2015 Show; these ranged from vegetable, flowers, gardens, craft items to classic cars. 2015 also featured the 8th year of the Open Gardens Weekend, part of the National Gardens Scheme, with six gardens and the allotments on view, shown right.



Recreation Areas

It was the arrival of Rev. F Gordon Campbell as Vicar of Abbotskerswell in 1898 that would be the main catalyst for village sporting activity; he was the founder and president of most of the new sports clubs in his early years in the village. In March 1899 a field near the Vicarage was provided by Major Buckle from The Manor House for the creation of the **Abbotskerswell Recreation Club**; there was provision for cricket, tennis, quoits and bowls. All that is known of where the site was is the vague reference that it was "situated near the Vicarage"¹⁰. To mark the occasion a tea and concert were held in the school, in aid of club funds. The evening concert featured Mrs Hare and her daughter Hilda playing the piano, Mrs Henley on piano and violin, and many songs by villagers.

This facility did not seem to last long and it was mainly through the generosity of the local landowners that some play places were available. Rev. Dence allowed one of his orchards to be used each summer during the children's school holiday. In 1927, in an effort to create a recreation area, he offered the land below churchyard where the former *Vicarage* and *Avalon* are now, but this was rejected by the Parish Council. In 1938 a playing field was established on the unused plot of land acquired for houses next to the *Barnfield* council houses, but this did not survive long, with the land becoming allotments for *Barnfield* tenants. During the next decades there

were occasional discussions about a children's playground that never really came to anything, until the late 1960s, when a playground was established on the site of the present playground.

A significant event for the village came in 1987 when the PC proposed to buy land for a recreation area. At a special parish meeting in October it was agreed to form a committee to manage a playing field; this became the **Abbotskerswell Recreation Association (ARA)**. The 3.53 acre plot was bought by the PC for £10 000 to provide the village with sporting and leisure facilities. Fund raising began with a bonfire night at *The Butcher's Arms* and in January 1988 the ARA Draw began, and still continues to this day. Soon the planning application for a playing field was successful,



with two conditions: a 25 vehicle car park and the burying of overhead cables. The plan was ambitious; to replace the small football pitch with two tennis courts, to build a new children's playground and create a full size football pitch and allotments.

By 1989 the car park had been built and six allotments advertised, each 55' x 15'. The tennis courts were opened in June 1991, with floodlights being added in 1993. The children's playground and football pitch also opened that year. However, for the pitch to

be used by the new village team a pavilion was needed, and this was opened in May 1995 in a ceremony in which M. Serge Lemee, the Mayor of Abbotskerswell's twin community in France, declared it open.

The remarkable fundraising abilities of ARA allowed a new entrance, a bridge linking the car park with the field, and a Skate Park to be built in 2000. The funding came from landfill tax credits donated by Charles and Ann Down from *Ruby Farm*. Their next project was to replace the old tennis courts, which was achieved in September 2014 with a multi-use games area. These were opened by Sophie Tolchard (the daughter of Sharon from *Hair Cair*), who had won a lawn bowls Gold Medal at the Commonwealth Games of that year, held in Glasgow.



Sports Clubs

The first sports club in the parish was the **Aller Vale Rugby Club** who were playing by the 1893/94 season, although it is not clear where they played. In January 1895 they had played 10 games in that season. The 1905/06 season was "considered by one and all a very good one"¹¹, despite difficulties getting a team together some weeks. The results for that season are shown in *Table 1*. They scored 30 tries, 13 goals and 1 drop goal that season; the leading try scorers were P Bradford (8), W Facey, S Ford & F Crocker (4).

The 1907/08 season proved a difficult one, with results being: P16 W3 L13 F51 A81. The team for the first game of 1909/10 in the Junior League v Brixham Reserves was: backs – F Crocker, F Best, W Hill, C Hill, G Dore, A Brooks (capt.), S Hill; forwards – W Facey, W Burn, F Bradford, H Cary, N Baker, G Hicks, N Brown and B Dart. However, the club had struggled for players for a number of seasons and by 1914 there are no references to the team still existing.

Team	Result	Points For	Points Against
Kingsteignton	home	lost	0 19
Taignton Reserves	away	lost	3 42
Newton Reserves	away	lost	14 6
Bishopsteignton	home	won	28 0
Telnes Reserves	home	won	8 3
St. Luke's College	home	lost	0 0
Kingsteignton	home	drawn	0 3
Dartmouth Reserves	home	lost	3 3
Torquay Ath. Res.	away	drawn	5 3
R.N.E. College 3rd	away	lost	5 3
Brixham Chiefs	away	won	10 5
Bishopsteignton	home	won	16 3
Teignmouth	home	won	10 0
Abbotskerswell	away	won	3 3
Totes Reserves	home	drawn	3 3
Kingwear	away	drawn	3 13
Teignmouth Reserves	home	lost	6 24
Brixham Chiefs	home	lost	20 3
Torquay Ath. Res.	away	won	0 5
R.N.E. College 3rd	home	lost	0 5
Dartmouth Reserves	home	won	16 0
Newton Reserves	home	won	16 0

Table 1



A number of sports clubs sprang up in the early 20th century, but the strongest and most long lasting has been the **Cricket Club**. There appears to be two versions of the club's formation; an oral description and the one in the local press of the time. In the Club's Centenary booklet we are told that:

The inspiration for the founding of the Club having come from a woman – Miss Hillard lived at Marystowe (sic) ... In 1898 she kindly purchased some "kit" for the men of the village and allowed them to play cricket in her field adjacent.¹²

However, in the local paper we learn it was Rev. Campbell who suggested the creation of a cricket club in 1898, of which he became President, with J Woodman being captain. There were soon 24 players and their first game was played on 3 September, in the meadow lent by Major Buckle called Fair Park; two innings were played with Denbury batting first but Abbotskerswell coming out on top. The scores are shown on page 26.

Denbury 1 st Innings	26	
Abbotskerswell 1 st Innings	30	F Norton 6
Denbury 2 nd Innings	26	
Abbotskerswell 2 nd Innings	39 for 5	J Woodman 10, G Palk & A Howard 8

Which of these two stories is true we will never know, but there is no evidence of a Miss Hillard at Maristowe, and all the fields there are rather hilly.

Fortunately the local press were keen to print results of cricket matches, and the report of one of the clubs early matches in May 1899 showed the complete scorecard, even though it is not very flattering! We are also lucky that the club took team photographs that have survived and have been labelled with the players' names. The one below is the earliest, from 1900.

ABBOTSKERSWELL v. OGWELL, C.C.

This match was played on the ground of the former and after a pleasant game ended in a win for the visitors. The home team were rather unlucky in being got rid of so cheaply, as it contains many promising players, and they will render a good account of themselves before the season is over. The ground was in a very fair condition. Scores:-

ABBOTSKERSWELL		OGWELL	
W. Manning, c & b Hobbs	0	G. Boarder, b Winsor	0
C. Marsh, b Warren	0	T. Alers, b Winsor	0
H. Howard, b Hobbs	1	W. Warren, b Winsor	4
J. Palk, b Warren	3	C. Hooper, b Palk	4
F. Winsor, c & b Warren	1	A. Perryman, b Winsor	1
F. Norton, c Alger, b	0	A. Wood, c Manning, b	0
Warren	0	Palk	0
P. Prowse, b Warren	0	T. Hobbs, b Winsor	17
F. Spoor, b Hobbs	3	S. Radmore, b Winsor	1
W. Elliott, c Webber, b	0	W. Webber, b Winsor	4
Warren	0	W. Northway, b Winsor	0
F. Howard, not out	1	G. Matthews, not out	0
H. Warren, run out	0	Extras	6
Extras	9		



In the early years of the 20th century the club continued to prosper, moving to play at Berry Meadow in 1905. As with many things Mrs Hare supported the cricket team, and this was her land, although with John Buckpitt as the tenant. During this period Wat Manning, pictured left, was the captain and star player. He is shown with a ball in his hand which is a clue to his strength. In a match in 1908 against Newton College 2nd XI he took 7 wickets and scored 34 in the total of 104 for 1 declared. At this time both teams usually batted until they were out, even if they passed the opponents' score.

In 1911 he won the club bowling award for the season, taking two hat-tricks during the season. Rev. Campbell was given a silver mounted ebony walking stick inscribed "Presented to the Rev F Gordon Campbell, President

of the Abbotskerswell C. C. from the members 1910". By 1914 they were playing in the South Devon League; in the Newton section their season record was P7 W3 L4. In the game against Haytor Vale at home they were bowled out for 9. When WW1 was declared most of the young men went off to war with two team members dying in the conflict; Harry Hawkins and Ernest Stoneman.

There were no matches during the war but in 1919 they began to play again with their first game being at Plainmoor against Torquay Union Street Wesleyans, who made 164-9 before bowling Abbotskerswell out for 67.

The 1919 team photo shows two men in uniform, and in the team that played at Ipplepen that year 10 had been in the services. Rev. Campbell sits in the centre of the front row in his usual pose with a walking stick.



By 1921 the club was re-established at Berry Meadow and finished last in Division II of the Newton Section, but did have the satisfaction of beating Ipplepen by 3 runs. In 1930 the demise of the Dences at *Court Grange* meant a change of venue for the club, which moved to Vicarage Lane; Roundmoors (probably the field called Higher Rowmoor) was owned by William Rowe of Fairview and the club played there until 1939. The poor scores for the 1931 season suggest that pitches were not very good; for example in the match against St Mathias at Stoodley Knowle the home side made 17 and bowled Abbotskerswell out for 6.

In 1947 the club was brought back to life after WW2, this time through the St Mary's Social Club; at a committee meeting George Stoneman proposed "that a cricket club be formed and run by the Club"¹³. With Melva Purkis, the owner of *Court Farm*, as President, the club returned to Berry Meadow and in its first match defeated Ogwell. The teams changed in the 'Buffs Hut' behind the *Butchers Arms* with a bridge over the Ladywell stream leading to the pitch, which was where the road is now outside 25-31 Grange Road; later a wooden hut was built for teas near the old oak tree. Hubert Wickens was captain, with Bill Cassells as a very useful bowler and batsman, who once made 176 in a game at Bakers Park. Ray Cooper was a good slow bowler, who once took all 10 wickets in an innings. In the 1949 season the team's results were P30 W18 L11.

The sale of *Court Farm* saw the club move to a new home in 1963, playing at The Hams on Manor Road, by courtesy of Mrs Buckpitt. A good team was developing with young players such as Chris Wakeham, Robin Pugh, Danny Ward and Vic Martin, who had all played for Devon Schools, coming into the side. That season the team were undefeated, an event featured in the MDA.

Abbotskerswell had an undefeated season

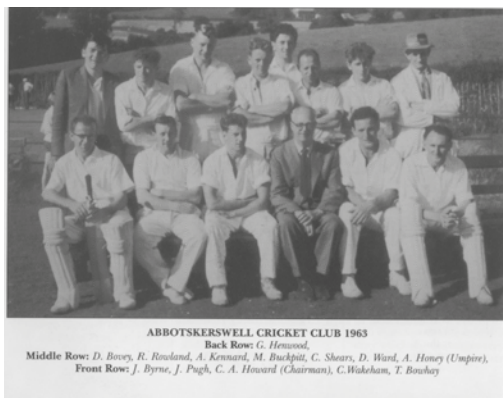
ABBOTSKERSWELL Cricket club were never defeated during their season's play. They played 20 matches, won 18, drew two and eight were rained off.

Batting average were (* denotes not out):

Name	Inns	n.o.	Runs	Highest	Ave.
A. Kennard	6	3	135	37*	42.50
D. Triggol	5	1	118	42	29.50
P. Cannell	4	—	106	69	26.50
D. Brook	17	2	278	66*	18.23
D. Webber	9	1	136	52	17.00
R. Pugh	16	3	174	34	13.38
J. Byrne	6	4	25	7	12.50
R. Pugh	8	—	90	46	11.25
D. Ward	18	—	173	29	10.81
C. Wakeham	16	—	104	21*	9.45
C. Bowley	12	—	43	14	5.27
M. Buckpitt	10	—	40	17*	5.00
G. Howwood	17	—	66	24	4.40
R. Rowlands	8	—	34	15	4.25
D. Ridley	4	—	11	6*	3.66
D. Bovey	6	4	7	5*	3.50
J. Pugh	6	2	12	6	3.00
C. Shears	1	—	0	0	—
R. Pearl	4	2	5	3	2.50

Bowling averages:

Name	Overs	Mdns.	Runs	Wkts.	Ave.
R. Pugh	6	—	111	31	1.80
D. Webber	53	20	111	31	1.80
R. Pugh	187	48	351	70	5.01
D. Ridley	10	1	21	9	2.33
C. Wakeham	139	56	307	54	5.68
J. Byrne	29	5	58	10	5.80
D. Triggol	17	3	33	5	6.60



The highlight of the time at The Hams ground was hosting the Devon & Cornwall final of the Haig Village Cricket Championship in 1973, when Abbotskerswell lost to the eventual overall winners Troon. This was despite Jim Coffey taking a hat-trick. The game is shown below.



In 1975 the Club was on the move again, to their present home at Two Mile Oak. Bernard Mills, of *Whiddon House*, provided the land and agreed a long lease; eventually the club bought the ground for £7000. A clubhouse and square were created during the winter and over the years it has become a popular venue. In 1983 the Club joined the Devon League, having only played friendlies until that time, and the 1990s proved to be a successful time, winning the Corinthian Cup twice, the Midas Shield and reaching the A Division, the 2nd tier of Devon cricket, for the first time.



In 1996 the club launched an ambitious scheme to build a new pavilion, however, despite receiving planning permission its cost prevented it ever being built, although the plan has been revived recently. In 1998 the Club celebrated its centenary, producing a splendid history of the club. Since then it has progressed well and now has three adult teams with the first XI winning Devon C Division in 2016; there are also five junior teams from U9 to U17.

In October 1906 Rev. Campbell held a meeting to inaugurate a **Football Team**, which was enthusiastically received; he became President with John Lee as captain. By December they had played five matches, the first being a loss, 3-0 to Babbacombe, as were the next three. However, there was great jubilation on 8 December when the first victory was recorded:

By dint of vigorous practise the football team have gradually worked into form, and secured their first victory on Saturday ... this has doubtless encouraged the local athletes to greater exertions and a more perfect exhibition of science in their play, and consequently the securing of the first of what we hope will be a series of victories.¹⁴



Although this photograph is dated 1904 in some books it seems likely that it dates from May 1907. Rev Campbell, as President, features with the players. The team was, left to right - backrow: F Manning, G Webber, Fred Norton, W Manning. Middle row: G Cowell, W Brooks, J Coombes, G Maddicott. Front row: W Crook, W Honeywill, J Norton.

However, the enthusiasm for football waned, and the club only seemed to play occasional games, with only sporadic references in the local press. In the 1920s Mr Johnson and Rev. Dence allowed the team to play at Berry Meadow, and when the village baths were opened we learn that W H Bond was running the club, and that they used the baths after games. A team was listed in January 1930 for a game at Starcross, it read in classic 1, 2, 3, 5 formation:

R Phillips
 G Williams C Howard
 F Joint H Truscott W Stoneman
 E Bone W Binmore W Bearne R Nicholls R Elliott

Abbotskerswell had to wait until 1982 for a fully organised and functioning team when a club was reformed to play friendlies at Broadhempston under manager Tony Uren. However, once again this faded until 1988 when the club began again, with Mike Hoare as President. Training began at *Court Grange* and on 13 March they played their first match against Midland Bank, losing 3 – 0. This time the club opted to join a league and in the 1988/89 season they played in the Torbay Combination, in its Supplementary Sunday Division, playing in Baker’s Park. They drew their first match against the Dog & Duck 1-1, with Steve Squires scoring their first league goal. The first win soon followed when they beat Embassy Tavern 6-0, featuring a Paul Curtis hat-trick. In that season they won the League.

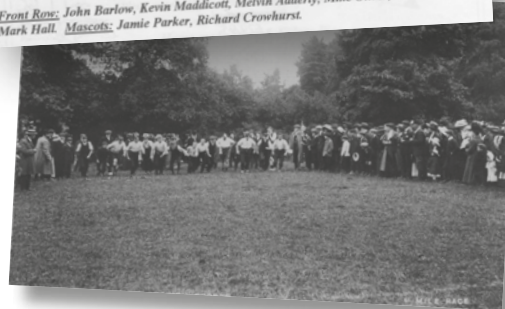
In the 1991/92 season they entered Saturday football in the South Devon League, with 1st and 2nd XI teams. A major moment for the village football team occurred on 27 May 1995 when they played Upton Athletic as part of the celebration of the opening of the new pavilion; Abbots Park has been their home ever since.

The 1995 Team, shown right, featured a number of local players and won Division 5 that year, with the Division 4 title following in the next season. By the early years of the 21st century they reached the South Devon Premier Division, an amazing achievement for a village team. In season 2015/16 they are now in Division 2.



Back Row: Pete Crowhurst, Sam Harvey (Player/Manager), Paul Barber, Martin Davis, Graham Hewitt, Reg Woodmore (Manager), Paul Haines, Nigel Reed, Simon Whitefoot, Nick Parker, Chris Byrnes (President).
Front Row: John Barlow, Kevin Maddicott, Melvin Alderly, Mike Oliver, Simon Glanville, Mark Hall. *Mascots:* Jamie Parker, Richard Crowhurst.

In 1907 there is a single reference to the **Abbotskerswell & District Harriers** who organised a race in December. Rev. F G Campbell was the starter for a 5½ mile road race which had 11 runners.



The winner was J Norton in 30m 20s, with Lang second and a dead heat for third between Medlyn and Miller. They were entered in a race at Newton College the next week, but sadly no further references exist for the club. W Norton ran for Newton Harriers in the 7½ mile cross country race at Salisbury in the West of England Championships, he was 3rd. He was considered to be the best runner at 3-4 miles in the county. The picture on page 30 of the 1 mile race at the 1911 Coronation Sports gives a good impression of the Harriers activities, it was won by Harold Taylor.

In 1991 it was the turn of the village women to have a sports club when Lynn Howard and Merion Chisholm began the first **Netball Club** to utilise the new hard courts at the recreation field. Initially they practised with their children in the care of Mandy Henwood. Although they were, and still are, a socially minded club, they soon became more competitive and joined the Torbay Leisure League. In 1995 they won Division 2. They soon had two teams which were named after their sponsors: GEMS (Gilbert Eales Model Stores) & RUBIES (Ruby Farm). By the 2000s they were running five teams, entering the Teignbridge League and Exeter & District League.



Club members in their formative years, winning in the Torbay League. L to R: Merion Chisholm, Lynn Howard, Debbie Trethewey, Lindy Wiltshire, Medal Presenter, Jayne Broughton & Tessa Smith.

In 1986 the Village Hall extension allowed another club to be formed that continues to this day; this was the **Short Mat Bowls Club**. The general play is the same as outdoor bowls, but it is played indoors on permanently marked mats, which are 45 feet long by 6 feet wide. Ray Vyse was one of the original committee and is now Chairman of this thriving club who won the Teignbridge Triples League in 2014. Over the years they have had success at local and county level, as the article from AbbTalk in 1994 revealed, as well as finding national success when club member Dennis Baker represented England in 1992.

The photograph shows the 1994 team with that year’s trophies. In 1998 they won the Teignbridge League.





A major addition to the sports clubs of the parish was **Dainton Park Golf Club** in 1993. In case you are wondering holes 7 to 12 are in the southern part of our parish, on a line from Two Mile Oak to Stoneyhill. Designed by Adrian Stiff, with his trademark use of sleepers, water features and bunkers, this a challenging, but popular course.

Over the years there have been other less long lived clubs which should be mentioned, such as the **Tug of War** team, pictured below.



The Abbotskerswell Tug of War Team 1931

Back Row (L to R): Tom Webber, Fred Truscott, Stan Norton, Bill Brooks
Middle: Albert Daniell, Fred Coombes, George Tapper, Jack Elliott, Fred Norton
Front: Jim Franks, George Stoneman

The **Rifle Club** was formed in 1906 when Mrs Hare, "with her usual desire to foster a spirit of patriotism and encourage healthy recreation"¹⁵, erected a miniature rifle range against the church wall where Court Road is today. It was revived during WW1 when Mrs Hare provided the land for a full rifle range, with 25 and 50 yard benches, where competitions for local clubs could also be held. A **Table Tennis Club** has existed at times based at the Village Club. In 1949 the Abbotskerswell team were in the Newton Abbot and District League Division III, by 1952 they had progressed to be 5th in Division II, and 2nd in Division II Handicap. Then there was the **Badminton Club** which was formed in 1976 and by 1985 had 40 members and was entering

eight teams in the Torbay League. In the following years the teams saw plenty of success regularly winning their leagues. However, by the mid-1990s the club seemed to dwindle and disappear. Their junior section was equally vibrant in those years, as shown in the photograph of their Cup competition, with (L to R) Leanne Congdon, Paul Matthews, Stephen Scarr and Anna Berryman, who was the winner.



Young People's Clubs

For centuries children in Abbotskerswell had no formal, organised activities available to them; as Phyllis Ford described in Chapter 1, they made their own entertainment. Until 1880 many of them would have been working as soon as they were old enough to be useful, so at harvest time the fields would have teemed with children gleaning. This was the task of picking up any ears or grains of corn that had not been collected during the harvesting process.

In our 3. *Religion and Education* publication we described the Sunday Schools and then the Board School which were the children's first experience of organisation. The first formal club to reach the village was the **Baden-Powell Scouts**, to give it its early name. In 1908 Robert Baden-Powell had published his book *Scouting for Boys*, based on African woodcraft skills. His six fortnightly magazines of the same name that followed caused an amazing reaction, with Scout Patrols being created up and down the country, all following the principles of Baden-Powell's book. In 1909, the first Scout Rally in London was attended by 11,000 Scouts and by 1910 there were over 100,000 members in the movement.

In 1909 the Haytor Scout Troop was formed and it was Mrs Hare who paid for its regimental colours, the first in Devon. She came from London to see their presentation at the County Sports in Newton Abbot, on 25 June; it soon had 12 patrols, with 96 scouts, which included six mounted and 28 cycle scouts. By August the Abbotskerswell Troop had been formed, and Mrs Hare paid 10 guineas to uniform and equip the 16 boys; it joined the Haytor Troop. Scout activities were listed in the local press.¹⁶

ABBOTSKERSWELL B.P. SCOUTS.

Monday.- Scouting, 7-30 p.m.

Thursday.- Tactical scheme, 7 p.m.

Saturday.- Scouting, 3 p.m; bring tea.

Promotions.- Scout W. Norton to be Patrol-Leader and senior in charge of all country sections, dated September 24th; Patrol-Leader W. Norton to be temporary Bugler.



The work of the troop received praise, with a description of its clever 'Dispatch Run' in muddy conditions and with an alert enemy:

...when a full muster, as is always the case at Abbotskerswell, met Scoutmaster E Smerdon, jun., and with Patrol-Leaders W. and S. Norton, [they] had an exciting time ... six out of eight messages were got through, and each Scout was on the look-out with a keenness and quietness which was a credit to their section.¹⁷



However, it seems that the Troop dwindled and stopped, probably during WW1 as it was reformed in 1924 by the Dences of *Court Grange*. Rev. Dence was President, with his daughters Doris, a Vice President, and Phyllis, an honorary instructor.

His son Arthur was the Scoutmaster. The grounds of *Court Grange* were used for the formal enrolling and the presentation of Abbotskerswell pack colours. The Troop can be seen in the picture above of the 1926 Beating of the Bounds.



Once again they seemed to disappear, probably after 1929 when the Dences left *Court Grange*, but in July 1939 they are shown pictured at their investiture at Church House, described as their headquarters. Rev. Bassett-Pike commented that he had been trying to form a group for years and was impressed by the boys' and their parents' enthusiasm. In August they spent a week under canvas at Illsington. Sadly it appears to have been a short lived venture, with war once again intervening; this time they did not reform.

As was usual at the time, girl's activities followed later and it was 1937 when Misses Willett & Sutton started a **Brownie Pack**, the 1st Abbotskerswell Troop. In usual style, a whist drive was arranged to raise funds, and by July 1938 they had been formed. This was soon followed by other whist drives and a jumble sale; the war did not stop the Brownies, and in May 1940 their whist drive, in aid of Guide Gift Week to pay for two air ambulances for HM Forces and a lifeboat, raised £2. In 1969 Lynn Eales, now Howard, joined as a seven year old when Kathleen Turner was Brown Owl, there was a full pack of 24 in those days. In 1980 Lynn took over as Brown Owl when Mrs Taylor left, to be followed Sue Hearn.



In 1988 they celebrated the 50th anniversary of the pack, they had 20 members and were in the hands of Margaret Kyte and Elaine Hunt. In 1990 Brown Owl, Mary Burke, took them on a pack holiday to Bowerman's Cottage at Manaton, which is a residential centre owned by Devon Girl Guiding. Much fun was had using a theme of butterflies, singing songs and playing games; they even stayed out late to the amusement of two local farmers. In 1994 they joined in the Church Roof Appeal and under the guidance of Ann Down they raised £100 with their sponsored country dance. However, despite celebrating the 60th anniversary of the pack in 1998, by Christmas they were forced to close because of a shortage of numbers.

One of the reasons for the disappearance of the Scouts and Brownies was changing habits of young people. This was reflected with the arrival of a **Youth Club** in the mid-1970s. People had been frustrated by the perception that the trustees of Church House did not want young people to use it, therefore the opening of the new Village Hall in 1976 was just what Geoffrey Mallinson and Gerald Burley needed to set up a youth club. Geoffrey remembers that his children were in need of something to do, and when youngsters gathered in the park it annoyed people living close by. Mr Holmes from the Village Stores donated a record player and speakers, and TDC loaned a table tennis table. Geoffrey and a good many other people were involved, and they organised trips, such as BBQs at Cheddar Gorge and on Dartmoor, as well as going to the Exeter University Open Day to use their sports hall.

After a quiet spell a new club was formed in 1985 at the Village Hall – The Klub, which was begun by Sam Sykes and Darren Baker. It was for 9 to 17 year olds and was open from 7.30 – 10.30 each Friday and continued for many years.

In 1947 there was a single reference to the **Girls Friendly Society** in the village, when there was a social organised featuring Mrs Fey on piano. This was a Christian society aimed at empowering girls and young women, by encouraging them to develop their full potential. A key focus was addressing the issue of out-of-wedlock pregnancy of working-class girls; the society did not appear to survive long.

Chapter 4

Village Governance

Governing the village of Abbotskerswell has changed a good deal over the years; for centuries it was the Abbots of Horton or Sherborne who made the decisions for the people, who had little say, and certainly not the vote. Even after the Reformation it was landowners who became the voters.

National Government

It was 'The Great Reform Act' that changed the outdated mediaeval system of voting, which was generally a privilege of the rich, with a wide variety of methods used to grant this privilege; for example in Honiton you had to be a 'potwalloper' to vote. This meant you owned a house, with a fire place big enough to hang up a large cooking pot ie the wealthy.

In 1832 this Act was to create a uniform system of voting, the franchise; but even then ownership and tenancy were what obtained a man the vote, with women not allowed to vote. A house worth at least £10 rental a year, or land worth £10 or more a year was needed to have a vote. At the top of the voters list for 1832 for Abbotskerswell it stated:

The LIST of PERSONS entitled to vote in the Election of Knights of the Shire for the South Division of the County of Devon, on respect of Property situate within the Parish of ABBOTSKERSWELL¹

This created 21 voters, as either freehold owners of land or property, or as occupiers of 50 acres of land; one of these people did not even live in Abbotskerswell. This meant that the vote was in the hands of 4.5% of villagers, or 9% of male villagers. These were men such as William Creed, William Henley, John Ruby of *Ruby Farm* and John Maddicott of *Court Farm*. In 1849 this had risen to 27 voters and in 1860 it was 32 but with eight non-residents, which was still only 11% of male villagers.

The second Parliamentary Reform Act of 1867 changed the voting rights, meaning in Abbotskerswell men who owned property worth £5 a year or were occupiers of property with a rental value of £12 a year could vote. In

1880 this gave a total of 25 "Persons *qualified otherwise than as occupiers under 'The Representation of the People's Act, 1867'*"², and 14 as occupiers. However, the number of working class voters was still small until a third Reform Act in 1884 gave the vote to all male householders over 21 years old in rural areas. Householders in towns had received the vote in 1867. The consequence of this was that in 1887 there were 93 voters, 43% of village males.

Women were still excluded from national elections but some did become voters in local elections; there were ten in 1895. It was the efforts of women during WW1 that finally persuaded Parliament to enfranchise some women over 30 in 1918 and then all women over 21 in 1928. Therefore on the 1919 voters list of 264 voters, there are 106 women; the 1929 list of 374 voters then had 177 women. In 1969 the age for voting was reduced to 18.

Abbotskerswell has been in a number of constituencies since the 1801 Act of Union created the modern Parliament; at first the village was in a 'county' constituency which was allocated two MPs. We were in Devon's Southern Division until 1867 and then East Devonshire until individual MP's constituencies began in 1885. The first was Ashburton, then Totnes, latterly it was Teignbridge and now we are in Newton Abbot. We have usually been represented by a member of the Conservative party, with Liberal phases; *Appendix 1* shows, with the full list of MPs and their parties.



Our MPs have been a mix of landed gentry and the well-to-do gentry of Devonshire. In the County days it was men such as Sir Lawrence Palk (1st Baron Haldon), Lord Courtenay (12th Earl of Devon) and Sir John Kennaway who was a Baronet. Later came Charles Seale-Hayne whose Will created the College of that name, Ernest Morrison-Bell who served as a major in WW1, Sir Ralph Rayner who lived at Ashcombe Tower, and rejoined the army during WW2, becoming a Brigadier. Our longest serving MP was Raymond Mawby, pictured on page 38, who served for 28 years but achieved notoriety after his death, when it was revealed that he had been a spy for Czech military intelligence. Using the code name 'Laval' he spied for 10 years in the 1960s, receiving £100 per piece of information, and meeting his Czech spymasters three times a month. He is the only Conservative MP known to have spied for a Communist government. It appears that he liked



gambling, he was often seen on the slot machines in the Newton Abbot Conservative Club, and this was exploited by the Czechs. He provided low level gossip on government ministers, as well as drawings of their offices.

Our shortest serving MP was Charles Buxton who won the January 1910 election for the Liberal party, but lost the seat in the December election, therefore being our MP for only nine months; he later became a Labour Party MP. Not far behind at eleven months was Henry Vivian who won the seat for the Liberals, for the last time, when we came under Totnes, with a majority of 502 votes. However, Samuel Harvey won it back the following year. Probably the most senior of our MPs was Patrick Nicholls who rose to become Under Secretary of State for Employment, but he too achieved notoriety when in 1990 he was forced to resign following a drink driving prosecution. In trying to justify Nicholls' actions, his agent made the situation worse by saying "there but for the grace of God go all of us"!

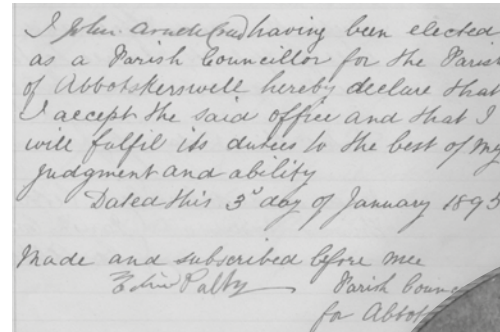
Local Government

In the earliest days of Abbotskerswell it would have been the village elders who made decisions; it has been suggested that the sunken garden of Mote House was where the village Moot met to make decisions on disputes and hand out punishments. By the 16th century church vestries were working like councils, appointing village officials such as Poor Law Overseers. The Local Government Act of 1884 set out the first attempt at a unified system, creating County Councils, with a second act in 1894 creating Rural District Councils, and Parish Councils; therefore by 1895 the village was under Newton Abbot RDC for major decisions, and Abbotskerswell PC for local decisions.

On the 18 December 1894 a poll was held to elect the first PC of seven Councillors, the result is shown in *Table 2*.

John Creed	65 votes	Thomas Maddicott	49 votes
Edward Palk	44 votes	Arthur Chard	39 votes
John Phillips	34 votes	John Partridge	32 votes
Charles Widdicombe	28 votes		

Table 2



Mrs Hare (who was an additional member) was elected as Chairman, with John Creed as Vice-Chairman, and John Pethybridge appointed as Clerk to the Council. Mrs Hare provided a chest to keep the PC's documents safe; it is still in the Parish Rooms, with a plaque commemorating the event.



At the first meeting in Church House on 3 January 1895 the councillors were sworn in by completing a statutory declaration, as shown below.

The Parish Councillors tended to be the village land owners, as they were educated and respected by the villagers; it was only later, with the impact of compulsory education, that working men became involved. John Creed soon took over as Chairman, regularly coming down from his London law firm to attend meetings. A number of councillors were on the PC for many years. A list of councillors with their service can be found in *Appendix 2*. In 1899 a Parochial Committee was formed to take charge of sanitary issues, such as water and sewage provision. The PC looked after village matters, such as the railings outside the school, stopping people washing pig entrails in the stream, and organising allotments. They also appointed Poor Law Overseers and School Managers, and they set the poor rate for the villagers to pay. One matter they had to deal with over the years was what was referred to as the 'village property', now the Parish Rooms, whose story is told in Chapter 5.

In 1934 a proposal was made to amalgamate the PCs of Abbotskerswell and Kingskerwell, and create a new Kerswells Council. This did indeed happen following the last meeting on 7 March 1935, with the Kelly Directory noting

that "By the Devon Review Order, 1935, this civil parish was taken to form part of the new parish of Kerswells".³ However, 49 years later the decision was reversed, and in 1984 a new Abbotskerswell Parish Council was created, with Gilbert Eales as its first Chairman. In 2016 it still continues its work, with Gilbert's son, Kevin, as Chairman.

Political Clubs

The village interest in politics goes back to the 19th century when few people could read and political information was limited, consequently the way to pass on political material was in meetings. In 1898 Mrs Leaman from the Liberal party gave an address in The Square in support of the MP at that time, who was Charles Seale-Hayne. In 1903 Mrs Hare hosted a Primrose League 'At Home' event, where her son-in-law, Colonel Perrott, and Mr J Webster gave speeches regarding the Government's trade policies. The League was a group whose purpose was to spread the policies of the Conservative Party. In addition to the speeches there was tea and sports, with such events as a potato race, threading a needle on a bicycle race, a tortoise race on bicycles and an egg and spoon race!

In the early 20th century there were a number of major issues that split political parties and needed explaining to the people, hence the meetings. One interesting event was the visit in 1907 of Mrs Stanbury and Miss Palliser from the 'Suffragists', who campaigned peacefully for the vote for women. They arrived in a dog cart and a "somewhat hostile attitude was assumed"⁴ by the villagers, until the ladies explained they were not there to cause trouble for the election candidates; the more well-known and militant 'Suffragettes' had begun their campaign of action by that time. The split of the Liberal Party over Free Trade and Home Rule for Ireland also brought speakers; in 1908 it was a Free Trade Meeting with Sir George Kekeworth and Hon. H Lygonas, and a Unionist meeting attended by Miss Morrison-Bell, the daughter of the Liberal Unionist candidate in the local by-election.

In February 1908 her father, Capt. Ernest Morrison-Bell, won the seat from the Liberals. He was opposed to Home Rule for Ireland and his party had joined a coalition with Conservatives over the issue, eventually merging with them in 1912 to form the Conservative & Unionist Party. A celebration for his Unionist victory was held in the Coffee Room of Church House. Local Conservatives such as Mrs Hare, Dr. de Pellier and Messrs Buckpitt, Palk and Cann were also there. A Victory Dinner was arranged for 6 March, and later in 1908 a 'Unionist Association' was formed with Dr. de Pellier as Chairman. Capt. Morrison-Bell MP attended a lively



Captain Morrison-Bell

meeting in 1909 to put the case for the retention of the House of Lords and tariff reform. Also in 1909 the Mid-Devon Labour League held a meeting in the village to advocate the cause of Socialism, which was new to the political scene at that time.

The village 'Unionist' Association stayed active for many years, with meetings and visits from our MP. In 1914 Capt. Jukes-Hughes opened a crowded Unionist meeting with comments on Home Rule, whilst Capt. Morrison-Bell talked on the size of the Navy and Irish Home Rule. In 1915 Abbotskerswell sent two elected representatives to the Mid-Devon Unionist Association. In 1922 Major Samuel Harvey was

elected as MP and attended a meeting in 1929; he was one of the few officers to lead a cavalry charge in WW1, and was also gassed. In 1931 a village Unionist social, whist drive and dance which 40 people attended, was held to celebrate Major Harvey's re-election; they danced until midnight. There was also a village Women's Unionist Association whose annual outing was reported in 1932.

As people became literate and newspapers cheaper and easily available, the political meetings tended to fade, although a Conservative Association was still active in the village in the 1990s.

Chapter 5

Parish Affairs

As described in previous chapters the governance of Abbotskerswell has been through the hands of many different organisations, both formal and informal. Until modern times this was similar to what happened at a national level, but with major issues needing to be addressed; these included national security, trade, workers' rights and poverty. It was the last of these that was delegated to a local structure to ensure that people did not suffer badly as a result of unemployment, sickness or old age.

The Poor Law

It was during the reign of Elizabeth 1 that the first Poor Law was introduced; in 1598 every parish was obliged to collect rates to provide relief for its destitute people. Over the next two centuries various methods were used to discourage 'able bodied' poor from claiming relief whilst helping those genuinely in need; the 1662 Act of Settlement enabled newcomers to a parish to be removed after 40 days and the 1722 Workhouse Act meant each parish should provide a workhouse where paupers could lodge, which was not really practicable in villages such as Abbotskerswell, although an 'Old Poor House', on the site of the Parish Rooms, is referred to in some documents.

It appears that in Abbotskerswell the poor were dealt with by payments from the rates, with an annually elected 'overseer' ensuring everything was done correctly. There are records of people being returned to their parish, as in the case of Susanna White in 1814 who was sent to Ilington because her husband was in Newfoundland. Orphan children, or those in poverty, could be apprenticed to an employer at any age; we learn of Jane Aysh being 'bound' to John Blackler in 1810 at the age of six, apprentices were bound until they were 21. The nature of the severity of these parish apprenticeships is seen vividly in an advert in the Western Times in 1835, which was headed 'Elopement'. Thomas Drew, a 16 year old, had run away from his master in Aller and it added: "a warrant is issued against him for theft. Whoever harbours the said apprentice after this public notice will subject themselves to the penalty of the law."¹

The setting of a poor rate was essential as whatever system was used had to pay for itself. The earliest existing record is of the 1613 poor rate, and is headed "A copie of the Rate what is payde towards the maintenance of the pore & impotente of Abbots Carswill"². The rate of 1640 notes that William Winter, Agnes Nichole and John Gloyne had been maintained from the rates. In 1700 the yearly rate needed was £6 13. 6d, with each property required to pay an agreed proportion of this rate; Thomas Lyngood paid 7s 10d, the Vicar 4s, with the lowest amount being 2d. In 1700 the rate was levied once in the year, but as costs rose it was levied four times in 1750, eleven times in 1793 and 42 times in 1820. The money was used for all manner of 'disbursements', in 1750 the Newton family received 66 payments for shoes, stockings, trousers etc. The rate also had to cover funeral expenses for paupers and work done for the poor, such as washing clothes. Illegitimate children were always a problem, and if a woman could name and prove who the father was, he could be forced to provide for the child with a 'bond' of £100 entered into, to be used if he failed with the payments.

A crucial change occurred in 1834 with the Poor Law Amendment Act which created a national system of workhouses where the poor were forced to go to get help: "life in a workhouse was deliberately made less comfortable than that of the lowest-paid labourer ... intended to be a *last resort for the totally destitute*".³ This time workhouses succeeded, because of the creation of a union of parishes with one institution; in Newton Abbot this was created in 1836 with 39 parishes in the Union, including Abbotskerswell, and a new building being built on East Street, which later became the hospital. It could house 400 inmates and anybody in need of poor relief was sent there. In many cases, they barely survived outside even with help from their family; the impact was that costs fell by 25% between 1833 & 1836. Sadly the workhouse was the only place that the old and sick could go for care until well into the 20th century, and was feared by all working people. Interestingly in the 1851 Abbotskerswell Census there were four villagers referred to as in 'receipt of parish relief'; three were over the age of 69, but Mary Ash was only 35. The following census returns make no similar comment, so we can assume that the workhouse system was fully functional.

In 1911 Jane Cowell, whose husband George lived in *Well Cottages*, was in the Newton Abbot Workhouse. We must assume she was too ill to be at home as she died in 1913, and there was no free hospital. There were 441 inmates, under categories such as 'not able bodied', 'ordinarily able-bodied', 'temporarily disabled' and 'vagrants'; there were also 27 children. Some were labelled as 'imbecile' or 'idiots from birth', or 'imbecile of 20 years'. Two inmates had been born in Abbotskerswell.

Fred Brimecombe tells the story of Jethro Bearne who lived in the village in the 1920s:

... some months later we heard him tearing up his mattress and throwing the straw etc out of the back bedroom window, the next morning he came to our door and asked for hot water to mash his tea and told my mother and Aunt that he was going to the workhouse. This he did and we saw him no more. He left his cottage open and all that was left was an old table, his chair, his tin mug and teapot. He died about 12 months later and was buried in a pauper's grave in Newton Abbot Cemetery (sic).⁴

The Liberal Government of 1906-14 created major reforms to deal with poverty, with the introduction of pensions, also unemployment and sickness benefits. In 1930 workhouses were finally abolished, many becoming the local hospital, as was the case in Newton Abbot. However, for a generation that followed these buildings were still a source of discomfort to many, and as a consequence older people would not go into the hospital. Even many years later George Cowell's son Harry, refused to go to Newton Abbot Hospital when he was ill in his old age.

In a working village such as Abbotskerswell the majority of the people would have been relatively poor until after WW2; by this it is meant there was little money for extras, therefore events such as Sunday School trips to Goodrington, or teas put on by Mrs Hare, were looked forward to all year. This reality of life has been seen throughout the *Abbotskerswell Village History Series*, with the houses, schooling, wars and with the fear of the Poor Law. Despite the fact that the villagers were hard working people, it needs to be appreciated that wages were low, and life was hard. Perhaps this account shows this. In 1916 a young girl was caught by Mr Lang of Henley's stealing fire wood. In Court her mother claimed to know nothing about this, and asked Mr Lang to give the girl a good thrashing if he caught her again; the judge, however, suggested she had sent the girl out to collect wood.

The Parish Rooms

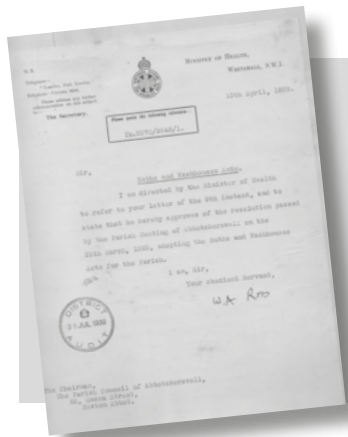
Just behind *Church House* is a building that today is called The Parish Rooms, it has an interesting history that reveals it to be part of the social fabric of the village. In 1839 a building, owned by the parish and described as "unoccupied, house in ruins"⁵ was on the site. In c 1850 this 'Old Poor House' was demolished and the gable ended part of the building constructed: this was then used as an outbuilding for *Church House*. In the early 1900s it was

called 'The Parish Property', and George Wilton, from nearby *Laburnum Farm*, rented the building and yard as a pigsty. Although there was a brief discussion about creating a Parish Room there in 1906, it was eventually let to the Village Club to use for storage. Also the original village street lights were stored there after they were taken down in the 1920s.

The building would rise to significance thanks to Rev. Dence of *Court Grange*, who came up with the idea of using it to create a public toilet and baths for the village. Rev. Arthur Dence, whose story is told in *2. Houses & Families*, was passionate about the need to clean up the polluted village water supplies to eradicate the diseases that they carried. Inevitably it was the working people who suffered worst from this, so by providing a place where they could bathe would help with cleanliness and disease. In 1928 the Rev. Dence arranged for the local architect, Richard Rogers, to design the baths. Two rooms were created in the main gabled ended building, each with a porcelain bath with running hot and cold water, towel rails and chair. A third room was for the caretaker, and housed an electric boiler which could provide 25 gallons of hot water. A second building containing public conveniences was built. The PC agreed to his plan, which was constructed, at Rev. Dence's own expense, by W J Beavis of *Model Cottages*.



Rev. & Mrs Dence



The Baths and Wash Houses Act of 1846 had been a national initiative to encourage such constructions and have them adopted by local councils. At a village meeting the PC proposed the motion “That the Baths and Wash Houses Act be adopted by this Parish”⁶; this was unanimously passed.

The baths were to be open on Tuesday afternoons for ladies and Tuesday evenings and Saturday afternoons for men. Mrs Dennis was appointed as caretaker. On 26 April 1929 the baths were officially opened by the Lord Bishop of Exeter; sadly Rev. Dence was too ill to attend, but his son, Arthur, hoped that The Sunshine Home at *Court Grange* and the village Public Baths would be a memorial to his father and would be appreciated by the villagers.

Two bronze plaques were attached to the outside walls of the baths: “one bearing the words ‘Public baths. The gift of Rev. A T Dence and Mrs. Dence 1928’ and the other the text, ‘Blessed are the pure of heart for they shall see God’⁷.”

By the autumn the baths were in full swing with 160 bath tickets having been sold, and the Abbotskerswell Football Team using them at the cost of 3/6d per match. Strangely the baths were only open in the summer months. By 1931 when they were re-opened the hours were; ladies Fridays 5 to 7pm and men Saturdays 12.30 to 3pm and 7 to 9pm. In 1936 it was noted that the village baths were well looked after but were used mainly by visitors and very little by the villagers, probably because the newly built council houses had bathrooms. The cost of the baths would become an ongoing issue, with only 14/- raised in 13 weeks in 1936,



meaning a £13 loss that year. In 1938, when the bath attendant left, there was debate at the PC as to whether they should stay closed after that summer. In April 1940 the baths were in need of repair and it was finally decided that these repair costs, and the lack of use, did not warrant them being kept open. With the electricity cut off they never reopened, although the toilets were kept open. One of the big and heavy enamel baths survived for many years in Tony Bowhay’s father’s barn, rescued for a client’s bathroom, a re-fitting that never occurred!

The old baths building remained unused for many years until a Paignton printer installed a printing press for several years. In 1980 the two buildings were rebuilt to create the Parish Rooms and larger public toilets; the buildings being joined together to make a bigger space for use by the Parish Council and village groups. They were further extended in 2008. However, during these years the two brass plaques ‘disappeared’ no doubt to local scrap merchants. In 2016, as part of the *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* events, the Parish Bath’s plaques were replaced with new granite ones, thanks to the interest of Mike Williams. In a generous gesture to the project Mike’s son, Robert, of Williams & Triggs, the monumental stonemasons in Newton Abbot, created and donated the new plaques 88 years after the originals were placed on the Baths.

The Roundabout Scheme

In a more modern context came the great roundabout scheme. In 1978 a plan was created by DCC to replant a tree in The Square, there having been one there until the 1950s. The plan also intended to widen the pavements with cobblestones which in turn would narrow the road in an attempt to slow the traffic down. This ‘throw back’ to the old days left villagers unhappy and led by Paul Coombe and Phyllis Ford, they held a public meeting, which demanded the scrapping of the scheme. DCC eventually agreed, until 1988, when a second plan for a mini-roundabout emerged because of the need “to control traffic that went through the village at ‘Brands Hatch speed’⁸”, as Councillor Julian Perkin put it. This time it was intended to narrow the pavement outside the Post Office and change the road junction at the bottom of Wilton Way. Once again village opinion was sought and an abridged version, creating what we see today, emerged.

Chapter 6

Village Events

Over the years there have been many events that characterise a community and bring it together, some happy and many sad. This chapter is an attempt to describe some of those, to show how the village grew and changed over time, inevitably it can only be a dip into the events of the past.

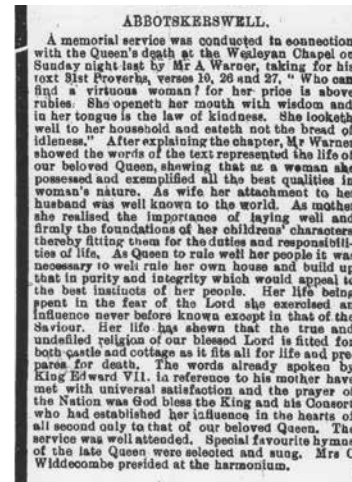


Jubilees & Coronations

Abbotskerswell does like a good royal occasion, always commemorating them and having a celebration. **Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee** in 1897 was

carefully prepared for by a committee, led by Mrs Palk from *Odle Hill House*; on 22 June the village was described as *en fete* with the following events.

- 3 – 4 am Salute fired.
- 5 am (and during the day) Peals of the church bells.
- 2 pm School children walked to centre of village and sang 'God Save the Queen'.
- This was followed by a procession, led by two Palk boys on ponies carrying a Union Jack, to Mr Palk's field near *Odle Hill House*. The village was decorated with bunting and a wealth of festoons, with the hand bells ringing peals as they processed. They entered the field under an arch, with banners and flags, a shield featuring a portrait of Victoria with 'VR' in flowers, and Chinese lanterns.
- Tea, served by the wives of the committee members, prepared by Mr Cann from the Bakery, with plenty of beef provided by Mr Palk, and mutton from Mr Bartlett, with Mrs Hare's £5 donation well used.
- Children's sports, with 40 events, concluded by three cheers for the Queen and the National Anthem sung.
- In March an ornamental lamp was placed in The Square to replace the elm tree that had blown down in 1896.



When Queen Victoria died in 1901 there was much grief in the country. This village piece from the *ESDA*¹, complete with black mourning border on all pages, showed one way Abbotskerswell faced the loss of a revered figure.

The next major celebration was for the Coronation of King Edward VII on 9 August 1902, with the day following a similar pattern. On this occasion a replacement tree was placed in The Square, using a special spade engraved with "Presented to Mrs Palk, on the occasion of her planting the tree as a memorial of the Coronation of King Edward VII, June 26th, 1902".² The

reason for a different date was that Edward's Coronation had to be postponed when he was operated on for appendicitis. There was a church service, parade, tea and sports, which was paid for from the £18 raised by the committee, again headed by Mrs Palk. The children were escorted to *Court Grange* where, on behalf of Mrs Hare, Sir Herbert Perrott gave them brooches and models of the Coronation chair; this was followed by fireworks. Mrs Hare's royal connections were shown when it was reported that she received this telegram two days later, from the King's Private Secretary: "The King commands me to thank you for your kind telegram of congratulation – Knollys"³

In 1911 came the Coronation of King George V, which this time featured sports and a concert. The postcard shows Wat Manning winning the Obstacle Race; postcards were made of events like this and were on sale within days in the Post Office. This gave villagers access to the photographs; *Table 3* shows the race winners.



Event	Winner	Event	Winner
Boys race	William Norton	High jump	George Tretheway
Girls sewing race	Lily Cowell	Children's race	G Wood
Boot and shoe race	E Norton	Egg and spoon race	M Dobell
Obstacle race	Wat Manning	Veteran's race	John Cook
Sack race	William Norton	Boys race	Les Cowell
1 mile race	Harold Taylor	Girls race	Adalaide Fowler
Potato race	Mr Bradford	½ mile race	Harold Taylor

Table 3

The concert was in a barn lent by William Buckpitt at *Court Farm*, decorated with draped curtains, evergreens, baskets of grasses and flowers by Mrs and Miss Buckpitt and Mrs W Elliott. Music was by the Minstrel Troupe, who were villagers playing instruments such as bones, tin whistle, concertina and triangle. Mrs Hare paid for a new street light in the centre of The Square as part of the celebrations.

In 1935 George V's Silver Jubilee was commemorated with a bench with the memorial "1910 – 1935 GOD SAVE THE KING" carved on the back rest. It is situated on Nunnery Lane (now Priory Road), next to Coombe Cottage, and it is fondly remembered by walkers and lovers. The bench was renovated by Peter Booth in 1997 but is sadly looking its age now. King George died the next year and with King Edward VIII only ruling eleven months it was his brother, George VI, whose coronation was next to be celebrated, in May 1937. The day's events for 12 May were advertised in advance in the MDA

ABBOTSKERSWELL	
10 a.m.	Church service.
2 p.m.	Sports for children at Berry, by permission of Mr. C. Warren
3-4.5	Presentation of mugs by the President of the H.O.P., Mrs. Bassett Pike.
4	Children's tea; cricket match, ladies v. gents.
5	Tea for all adults.
6-7.30	Sports for adults.
8	to 1 a.m. Dance for all at the Church House.
10	Bonfire at Slade Hill field, by permission of Mr. C. Warren

Sadly the day of the Coronation, a Wednesday, was disrupted by heavy rain, but the committee moved some events indoors and held others over until the Thursday ensuring a good time was had by all. The children paraded to the church carrying flags and a crown, with their teachers in attendance. The sports on Mr Warren's field at *Court Farm* began

but were stopped by the weather, so the children played games in Church House before the presentation of mugs followed by tea. The 'Long Night Dance' was a great success with music by the Torquay Regal Dance Band.

The sports recommenced at 7pm the next day, with the sensation being the ladies' cricket match when "the ladies wielded the willow with vigour, which accounted for the stiffness the next day. The married ladies won by 101 runs to 21".⁴ This was followed by refreshments and then the Furry Dance was held from the sports field to Church House, where more festivities occurred. Sports events winners included: A Sinclair, P Reynolds, W Wills, W Cleave, K Hawkins, K Vincent, R Andrews, H Warren, F Border, H Sutton.

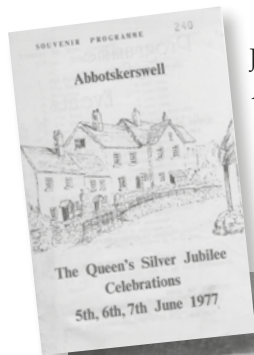
The next great royal occasion was the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on 2 June 1953, and once again the village celebrated in style. On the Sunday before the Coronation a packed church witnessed a grand service, with the men wearing their medals to celebrate the event. Later the Sunday School children carried, and presented, their Coronation replicas and received a prayer and hymn book, "which was attractively bound and bearing the Royal cypher and a photo of Queen Elizabeth"⁵; these children included Joyce and Hilary Rowe, Margaret and Rosemary Owen, David and Chris Wakeham. A Coronation committee, led by William Brooks, had worked hard to prepare for the actual day which began with peals from the church bells, a church service, followed by more peals during the morning. The Rev. Ainscow held a united service in *The Square*, when Melva Purkis read the lesson and William Brooks gave the address.



Miss Abbotskerswell, Geraldine Gidley, and Charlie Hollamby led a Furry Dance through the village, with music from Mr Cleave's accordion. There were sports in Berry Meadow followed, by tea in the schoolroom, where the children were given Coronation mugs. In the evening

there was a social in Church House, with Ben Cooper acting as MC, and George Quintrell the pianist; during the social the Chairman of Newton Abbot Rural Council, Cllr. Tuck, appeared on his 23 village, 140 mile round trip which had begun in Moretonhampstead at 9.30. Later Mrs Buckpitt lit a bonfire on what was optimistically described as the 'Village Hall Site', with more dancing and refreshments in Church House. Tobacco and refreshments were given to the village OAPs, being taken to the homes of those who could not attend.

Since then the village has only had royal weddings and jubilees to celebrate; the Silver Jubilee programme of 1977 is shown on page 52. The Diamond



Jubilee was welcomed with a street party and one of AbbPast's first offerings, an exhibition in The Parish Rooms. Elizabeth's 90th birthday in 2016 was commemorated with another street party, and an AbbPast display on Abbotskerswell in the year of her birth.

The Village Hall

Newly opened in November 1976



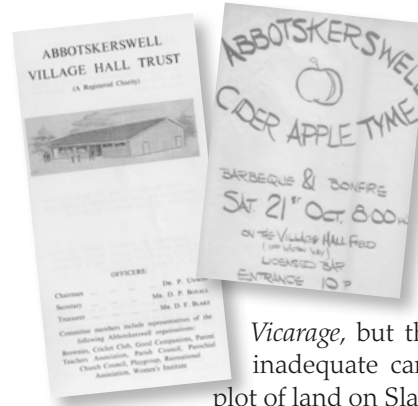
In 1952 the village wanted to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation and a group of farsighted villagers had realised that a growing village needed a bigger hall; indeed the

day showed to the village that Church House was too small for such village celebrations. A committee was organised and fundraising began, including creating a village float to visit all the local carnivals. In 1953 there was a 'Grand Long Dance' in aid of the Village Hall Improvement Fund, with George Causey and his Band, and by April they had an outline planning application approved for a site on Slade Lane.

However, despite their best efforts, the attempt failed and the project drifted into the background. It emerged occasionally as in 1961, when it was suggested that a Village Hall could be built on the site next to the Co-op (today's Orchard Café). In 1962 when Burley Homes first described their new housing development on Wilton Way they declared that they would build a Village Hall, plans were even sent to the district planners in 1963.

By 1968 there was a debate about whether to use money already raised for something else, as a Village Hall now seemed too expensive. However, it was decided to resurrect the idea. The momentum for this was Church House; the perception at the time was that it was run by the church, who did not really want non-church groups, especially involving children, to use it. Villagers wanted a real village amenity and although many people were sceptical, fund raising began again.

A Village Hall Trust was set up, whose key players were Edie Low, Ann Aggett, Eunice Anthony, Phyllis Ford, Joyce Townley, Peter Unwin, Denis Blake, Fred & Dot Brimecombe, Fred Fulton and David Boxall. The plan was to raise £5 000, which would then mean they could access a £5 000 grant. Fund raising began in earnest with a great variety of methods used:

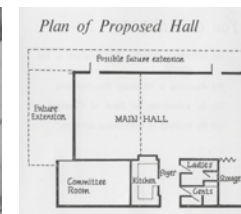


there were fetes, barbeques, selling of bricks, coffee mornings, barn dances, house to house collections, a Mini car raffle, taking out of a Covenant and many more.

The original site was to be behind the then *Salem Cottage* and *Orchard Cottage* on what is now the road up to the last

Vicarage, but the planning application failed because of inadequate car parking. Eventually they settled on the plot of land on Slade Lane next to *Penmar*, which was owned by Charles Lake who lived at *Fairfield*. The Committee bought the 0.33 acre plot of land, which was a marsh, for £1000 in 1971, with a grand plan that all village groups would have a committee member.

Soon the architect, Peter Tucker, had a plan that the villagers could see, which made the whole project seem possible. An exhibition was created in a marquee, complete with a scale model, shown below, with Dave Boxall explaining the layout.



Once the funding had been raised there was a big joint effort in the village to get the Hall constructed; Stoneycombe Quarry gave waste stone to drain the site, as the floor is a floating

concrete slab around a ring beam. The brick came from Lee Moor, the china clay washings mixed with lime and cooked, with the rough type outside and smooth finish inside. Different villagers helped at different stages with all types of jobs, but by 1976 it was completed. On 12 November the MDA had a centre page spread headed "Dream comes true for village" describing its story and its uses.

Very soon there was a playgroup, youth club, badminton club, short mat bowls club, and bridge club using the splendid new Village Hall, and it has gone from strength to strength since then. In May 1986 the first extension was added at a cost £10 500 of which £5 00 came from the Teignbridge Rural Aid Fund. This provided an extra function room, a tea room and dance floor. A second extension was completed in 1995 and opened by Maggie Stanton, Chair of the Rural Aid Committee. The MacPerson Legacy has supported the hall.

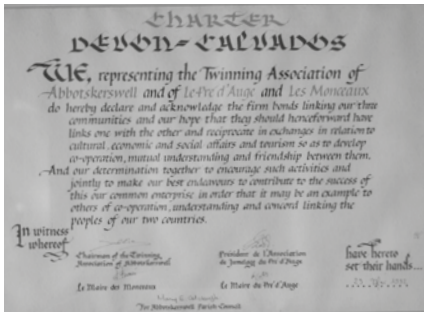


Councillor Frank Marks, Chairman of Teignbridge RDC, opens the extension on 31 May 1986

There can be no doubt that this was an incredibly impressive feat, with large sums of money raised to make all the phases possible. It has created a lasting village feature, which will be used for many years to come, and all those involved should be proud of their achievements.

Twinning

The idea of twinned communities is to foster friendship and understanding between different cultures by encouraging trade and tourism. The first British twinning was in 1920 between Keighley and Poix-du-Nord in France; however, the modern concept began after the Second World War, as an act of peace and reconciliation. Coventry twinned with Stalingrad, and later with Dresden, since all three cities had been heavily bombed during the war. It was not until 1990 that Abbotskerswell began its twinning process when a small group of villagers visited France to discuss twinning with the Calvados villages of Le Pré D'Auge and Les Monceaux. Dennis Downton had led a committee to test local interest, and with Derek Scarr as Chairman the group set off. The visit was successful and following a return French visit the next year, it was agreed to twin: the Formal signing occurred on 29 May 1992.



In 1996 it was decided to add a second village, Ardmore in County Waterford, which is in southern Ireland. The Ardmore Twinning Charter was signed on 27 October 1997, with a triple signing between all three twinning communities in June 1999. Over the years the Irish twinning has ceased, but the yearly French visits continue enthusiastically.

Festivals

Village life has always featured a wide variety of festivals to be celebrated, many going back many centuries, and being based on the cycle of the church. Saints days were celebrated enthusiastically, as it meant time off work, but the Reformation ended most of these. However, a number of festivals are still celebrated.

May Day

This old festival, a pagan one, has always been enthusiastically celebrated in Abbotskerswell and still is to this day.



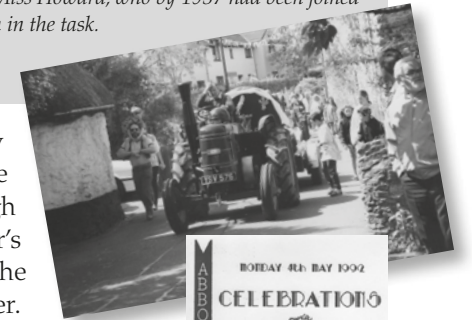
Back L to R:
Violet Norton, Florrie Cudmore, Ada Abraham, Agatha Perryman, Gwen Chudleigh, Queen Huggett, Dolly Warren, Kitty Flipp, ??, Priscilla Perrott.

Back L to R:
??, Hilda Cornish, Hilda Truscott, Edie Coombe, Helena Perrott, Ena Coombe, May Chudleigh, Tot Beavis, ??.

The oldest documented May Day celebration is from c1916 and is shown above, it was used in AbbTalk with a commentary from Mrs Lowe: "This Maypole was danced at *Court Grange*. Mrs Marcus Hare gave a treat to all the schoolchildren, when we took our mugs and sat around the front of *Court Grange* and had tea." ⁶ Interestingly the maypole dancing was taught by Lady Perrott, Hilda Hare and Violet Norton, with Lady Perrott's daughters taking part.



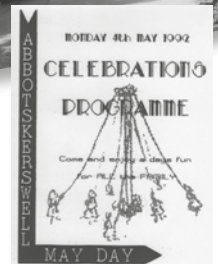
This c1928 photograph features Doreen Kingdom as the May Queen. Vi Norton was still teaching maypole dancing but now with Miss Howard, who by 1937 had been joined by Miss Sutton in the task.



In more modern times May Day celebrations have moved to the Village Hall, often with a procession through the village; for many years Guy Roger's Marshall tractor would chug through the village pulling the May Queen on a trailer.

In 1986 Mrs Lowe described how village events happened:

In Berry Meadow, where cricket was played in the summer, a lovely sight to see with the cricketers out on the field in their whites. Also Berry was the main field for all village Dos, such as Flower Shows and Sports and Games and 'Maple Dancing' and Beating the Bounds. In the centre of the field was a big oak tree where people would sit and watch the cricket. Ladies used to make tea for the cricketers and spectators who used to shade from the sun. ⁷





The oak tree is fondly remembered by older villagers and features in these two photographs of the cricket team in the 1950s, and next to 6 *Grange Road* in the 1960s. It was mysteriously cut down in the 1980s, to make way for the Whitehouse Development on *Grange Road*; no 7 stands on its site today.



Beating the Bounds

This is an ancient custom begun before the Norman Conquest, when a group of old and young members of the village would walk the boundaries of the parish, usually led by the parish priest. The purpose was to share the knowledge of where the boundaries were, and to pray for protection and blessings for the lands. In former

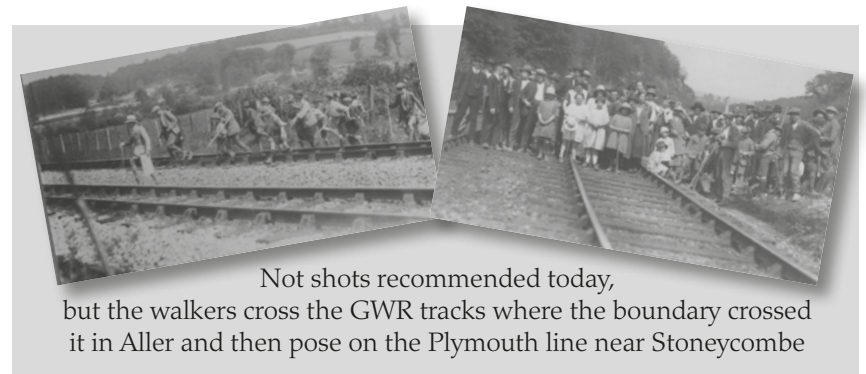
times when maps were rare it was usual to make a formal perambulation of the parish boundaries on Ascension Day. Elizabeth I ordered "that at the time accustomed the curate and substantial men of the parish walk about their parishes as they were accustomed and at their return to church to make common prayer".⁸ Knowledge of the parish boundaries needed to be handed down so that they were not disputed.

Like many customs this faded during the 19th century when accurate maps, such as the Tithe Map and OS maps, had become available. However, in 1926 the custom was revived with the first perambulation for around 100 years. A group of around 80 villagers met in The Square, for a hymn and a prayer, before setting off on the 14 mile trek around the parish border. In 1926 the parish was larger than today, including *Aller Vale*, but not *The Priory*. At boundary stones children were bumped on them, and in streams they were dipped in them; this appears to have been a way to encourage the memory of where the stones were situated.



The 1926 group take a well earned rest.

There were refreshments and sports at Maddacombe Bridge and again at Dainton, where the farmer gave them cider and oranges. 65 villagers finished the journey, the oldest being 82 and the youngest 10 years old.



Not shots recommended today, but the walkers cross the GWR tracks where the boundary crossed it in *Aller* and then pose on the *Plymouth line* near *Stoneycombe*

The next Beating was in April 1952 when 60 people took on a 12 mile route on a rainy day. Unfortunately they dropped a girl in a stream as they carried her over, but the seven hours walk was followed by a concert and supper at Church House in the evening. In 1979 a walk of eleven miles was undertaken, and the new parish boundary was tested out in May 1985, when it no longer included *Aller*, but *The Priory* had been added.



The 1985 photograph shows the 80 walkers about to set off at 9am. They were fortified with refreshment stops provided by *RNID Court Grange*, including at the Cricket Club at *Two Mile Oak*. They beat the 11.5 mile route and received a medal for

the trek. The last Beating of the Bounds was in 2009, with a certificate given to the successful walkers this time.



Flower Festivals

Flowers and churches have always gone together, as flowers are a way of decorating a church in a simple but effective way. Originally it would have been part of the worshipping process, but now it has become a fund raising event in its own right. *Abbotskerswell* has seen many as are shown in *3. Religion & Education* and 2016 witnessed another impressive festival.



The Abbotskerswell Festival of Music & Arts

In 1998 this remarkable festival was held from July to December. It was organised by ARA, with Roger Roberts as Chairman, and

supported by the Foundation for Sport and The Arts, as well as many local sponsors. There was a Flower Festival, drama events, bonfire and 24 concerts. Nationally significant entertainers were featured, including the poet Roger McGough, Bournemouth Sinfonietta Strings and folk/rock band Fairport Convention, who played excerpts from their album 'Babbacombe Lee', who is featured in Chapter 7. It culminated on 20 December with a series of events around the village and a Carol Concert.

Outings

As has been mentioned in various places village outings were an important part of village life, particularly before WW2 when transport was limited. Outings were often the subject of postcards as they contained many people who would hopefully buy one of them. Unfortunately it is not always clear what the outing was for, or when it was, but here are a few of them.



A pre-WWI trip Pictured leaving The Square.

Right: Another 1920s charabanc trip, this one is believed to be a pub outing. The names are not certain but could be:

*Back Row:
Les Bovey on accordion, Bert Stoneman,
Bert Quintrell, Jack Bovey, Bill Osborne,
Fred Coombe, Harry Stoneman, Stan Norton,
Mr Norton snr.*

*Stood at front: L to R: Tom Webber, Fred Norton,
Fred Lang,*

*3 Rows of seated L to R: Sid Webber, Jud Elliott,
??, Bill Norton, ??, Jack Eyles, Bill Prowse.*

*Front seat: George Tapper, Harry Allbrighton
the driver.*



A charabanc outing, and the 12 mph speed limit below the door meant a sedate one at that, photographed in The Square. Bulpin's have a telephone so probably in the 1920s.



A great photograph of a 1920s outing, with the villagers all in their 'Sunday Best', and showing some splendid fashion of the time. Once again photographed in The Square looking up Buckpitt's Hill.



An early 1950s outing this time, again in The Square and showing the last tree there, the pink hawthorn, which was demolished by a lorry in 1952.

And a some other events

1814 - Three houses blown down in stormy weather.

1840 - The burglar who broke into James Carnell's house was convicted and sentenced to 14 years transportation, probably to Australia. In June the otter hounds killed two adult otters in the parish!

1842 - Samuel Garret, 41, was killed whilst working at a sandpit, when he fell in. He was dug up the next day, imbedded in sand.

1850 - Three maidens at *Mallons Cottage* (*Mallands?*) saw off a burglar one night. The oldest girl was 14: she equipped her sisters with a lamp and armed herself with two pistols; faced with this the burglar fled followed by a volley from both pistols.

1853 - Over a hundred men, railway navvies perhaps, in a drunken fight in the village.

1874 - Thomas Palmer, 24, who was a fireman for the South Devon Railway, was killed with the driver of the locomotive 'Hero', when it derailed and turned over at Ivybridge. Both were terribly scalded by boiling water.

1903 - Franc Bighak, a German, was accused of setting fire to a hayrick belonging to John Partridge. The rick was in a field on the Totnes Road and Bighak was seen in the vicinity not long before the fire. He was found in the field with a pipe and matches. His English was poor so did not understand the questions put to him at the time by the two farmers who discovered the fire. He was taken to the police station where it was noted that his clothes smelt of burnt ash. However, when brought before magistrates it was decided there was insufficient evidence to convict him.

1903 - The wedding of Ernest Buckpitt of *Manor Farm* and Ellen Palk of *Odle Hill House* caused great interest in the village, being the union of two of the important village families. The bride wore a dress of ivory silk containing a Paris lace insertion, with a wreath of orange blossom, and carried a bouquet of white roses and lily of the valley. Rev. F Gordon Campbell conducted the service in a church decorated with flowers by Mrs Campbell, which were provided by John Creed from *Whiddon House*. The reception was at *Odle Hill House*, and the couple left for a honeymoon in Ilfracombe. The ESDA listed 69 presents, with the names of those who gave them; they included cheques, a silver tea service, jam spoons, silver salt cellars and silver sugar tongs.

1910 - The death of Ernest Buckpitt was announced in South Africa. His wife Ellen and their two sons Edward and Leslie returned to England.

1914 - In August William Henley launched a Patriotic Fund in the village, he said: "they did not know how serious this war might become and the number of wounded – both soldiers and sailors – might be very large".⁹ At the launch meeting Commander Jukes Hughes of *Whiddon House* gave, to applause, five guineas and commented: "every able-bodied man between 19 and 30 must come out, and he asked the mothers, sisters and sweethearts of such to persuade them to join the colours".¹⁰

In September the first villager died in the war, Thomas Bond, the publican at the *Two Mile Oak Inn*.

1920 - Louisa Truscott was killed by a charabanc carrying the village cricket team to a match in Ipplepen. She was running down a hill with a hoop, and did not see the charabanc.

1925 - Ronald Henley, son of William Henley of *Mallands* and living at The Priory in Ipplepen, was declared bankrupt. His potato business had failed and his £1000 investment in the National Co-operative Turf Association was lost when this proved to be a swindle; his liabilities were £2177.

1927 - People were poor, but Mrs Pearce was so poor she could not give her children anything at Christmas. When Fred Brimecombe's auntie, Vi Norton, heard this she told Mrs Pearce to send the children to her house, *2 Rose Cottage*, at 2pm on Christmas Eve. She bought a pig's head from the Palks for 1/6d and boiled it to get the meat from it, then when it had cooled she made two pies, adding potato, swede and carrot. When the five children arrived, being starving, they made short work of the pies and the potato cakes with currants.

1938 - A thunderstorm of unparalleled intensity hit the area, as the picture of Bank Street in Newton Abbot shows; it was under two feet of water.

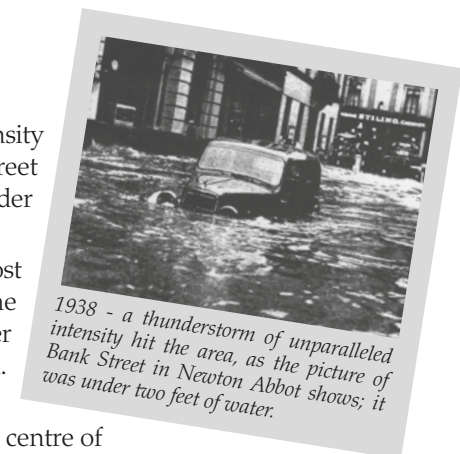
In Abbotskerswell Percy Buckpitt lost three sheep, killed by lightning and the chimney at *Pamval*, next to the Cyder Works, was split from top to bottom. The MDA described the impact:

Water rushed down the hills into the centre of the village, and Bottom Bridge became an island in the centre of a surging lake extending down the valley as far as the eye could reach. Residents in the lower part of the village had a distressing time. In places the water was four feet deep, reaching to the window sills in many instances, and a torrent of water swept in the front doors and out at the back, carrying with it everything moveable.¹¹

1949 - A village gymkhana was organised for the first time on a site next to the Totnes road, with landowner Bernard Mills being the Hon. Secretary. With a large attendance of villagers and many cars, it was a splendid day, with large numbers of entries in all events. It was great success with both show jumping and race events. The only accident happened when 15 year old Miss Oakley-Evans' horse fell during a race and she suffered a broken collarbone and cut head. The event was in aid of the South Devon Foxhounds, Dart Vale Harriers and Abbotskerswell Cricket Club.

1952 - Mrs Olive Fey organised a New Year's Eve supper and party for the village choir and bell ringers at Church House; the 50 guests enjoyed the supper, games and dances. Retiring churchwarden and captain of ringers, William Elliott, was presented with an illuminated address, produced by Claude Howard, and a wallet by Rev. Ainscow.

1985 - The first AbbTalk was produced with the 'founding fathers' being Tom & Beryl Williams, Derek & Jenny Bellotti and Tom & Linda Banks. The name was chosen by the children at the village school, and they set two main aims: "to fill the gap left by the demise of the Abbotskerswell Parish Magazine ... [provide] a full picture of life in the village".¹² There were pieces by eleven different groups from Brownies to Badminton Club, then Good Companions to St Mary's Church and the Parish Council.



1938 - a thunderstorm of unparalleled intensity hit the area, as the picture of Bank Street in Newton Abbot shows; it was under two feet of water.



Chapter 7

Village People

During the four *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* publications many people's stories have been told, including both significant people in the village and working folk. To finish the history of the village we have chosen to look at the lives of a number of people, who for different reasons have achieved recognition over the years. If there had been a Six O'clock News for the last 200 years how many times would Abbotskerswell have featured among the lead stories? Not often, but occasionally, thanks to some of these people.

John 'Babbacombe' Lee 1864 - 1945

One such occasion would have been the case of John Lee. No account of Abbotskerswell would be complete without relating the strange story of the 'The Man They Couldn't Hang'; Lee was convicted of murder, sentenced to hang but survived the trip to the gallows.

John was born in 1864 in Abbotskerswell, the second child of John and Mary and in 1871 was living at *Tree Cottage*, which was probably one of today's *Rose Cottages*; village tradition suggests it was No. 3.



At the age of 14 he joined his sister in service, but soon joined the Royal Navy, serving on *HMS Implacable*, which was an old ship of the line used as boy's training ship.

However, he caught pneumonia and was eventually discharged on health grounds at the age of 18, being described as of very good character. He found employment on the railway, but his old employer, Miss Emma Keyse, found him a job as a footman in Torquay. This only lasted six months as he was caught trying sell his employer's family silver, and served a six month sentence at Exeter Prison.



Emma Anne Keyse 1816-1884 P86

Miss Keyse took him back into her employment when he was released; her house, *The Glen*, was on the sea front at Babbacombe Bay. He became engaged to Kate Farmer but



was soon unhappy about his prospects, as his past appeared to prevent him from obtaining a good job. The event that would lead to his notoriety occurred on 15 November 1884 when Miss Keyse was brutally murdered at *The Glen*. Her skull was broken, her throat cut and she was set alight in what seemed to be an attempt to conceal the crime by burning the

house down. John was in the house, together with the two maids and a cook.

It was Elizabeth Harris, the cook, who smelt the smoke and woke the rest of the household. John helped the maids outside, and then went for help to the nearby Cary Arms, before going to Compton to tell Miss Keyse's half-brother of the tragedy. On his return he was arrested on suspicion of murder; the main reasons being the blood found on his shirt, and the fact that he was the only male in the house.

The trial began at Exeter Castle on 2 February 1885 with much public interest; *The Devon County Standard* and *The Illustrated Police News* featured the trial in illustrated editions. *The Crown*, with its two barristers, presented its case: "the evidence against Lee was circumstantial but considerable, and 26 witnesses were called".¹ The case was based on the following evidence:

- Lee was in the house and there were no signs of a break in
- he had been heard to voice his dissatisfaction about his job and salary
- he had blood on his shirt
- the window he claimed to have broken to let the smoke escape, and cut his arm on, was broken from the outside
- he made threats about Miss Keyse to the cook and the postman
- the oil used to set the fires in the house was kept in his pantry, in which he was asleep

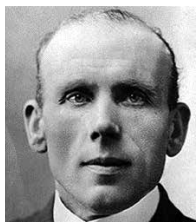
Lee's defence was poorly presented and no witnesses were called. It was based on explaining the circumstantial evidence, such as how the blood and oil were on his clothes, how the murder could have happened, and how he had ample time to run off if he was guilty.

The trial lasted three days and the jury took just 40 minutes to find him guilty; when condemning Lee to the death penalty the judge commented on his calmness throughout the trial. Lee's response was: "The reason, my lord, why I am so calm and collected is because I trust in my Lord, and He knows I am innocent."² Following the trial his mother suggested he had always been

of unsound mind, and Abbotskerswell's vicar, Rev. Vesey Hine, organised a petition which was sent to the Home Secretary, based on the view that his parents were good people.

On 23 February 1885 at 8 am Lee was led to the scaffold, he was asked if he had anything to say, his response was "No, drop away".³ The executioner, James Berry, tied Lee's arms behind his back, drew a bag over his head, tightened the noose and when the Chaplain had finished, pulled the lever to activate the trap-door. John Lee should have to fallen to his death, but nothing happened. The warders jumped on the trap-door but still nothing happened. Lee was moved to one side whilst the mechanism was tested to show it should work; the process was repeated but still the trap-door failed to open. The Governor ordered Lee be taken back to his cell whilst the scaffold was thoroughly checked; when the lever was pulled it was supposed to draw a bolt from underneath the trap-door which, with the weight of the prisoner on it, would drop to allow the rope to tighten. When it was tested satisfactorily, Lee was recalled with the watching witnesses in a very anxious state; the Chaplain in particular was close to collapse. When the mechanism failed the third time the Chaplain cried out "I cannot carry on"⁴, and without him to sign the death warrant the execution had to be halted.

Outside the walls of Exeter Prison the onlookers were waiting for a black flag to be raised to tell them the prisoner had paid the penalty for his crime, however, it was nearly an hour before journalists left the prison to explain what had happened. It was not the case that any person who survived three execution attempts was automatically reprieved, however, the Home Secretary could, and did, commute the sentence to that of Lee being held at 'her Majesty's pleasure', with a recommendation that he should never be released. Queen Victoria even voiced her opinion that he should now not be executed. By 1892 Lee was being housed at Portland Prison and on 18 December 1907, after serving 22 years imprisonment he was released.



By 1907 his father had died and his mother was living at 3 *Town Cottages*. They had completed the difficult journey to Portland many times, only being able to see their son for 30 minutes every three months. John returned home on licence on 18 December, with the event being extensively reported in the local press; he was photographed with his mother and also Rev. F Gordon Campbell at her cottage. John soon sold his story to Lloyd's Weekly News, and the by-line 'The Man They Could Not Hang' was devised, which helped to create the growing belief in his innocence. By 1908 this account had been turned into

an autobiography. His whereabouts were also reported in the area in 1908, with trips to Newton, Dartmouth and Tiverton, where he was mobbed by well-wishers. He left Abbotskerswell soon afterwards, becoming a barman in Newcastle and London, where he was used as an attraction. By 1911 he was married with two children, but it appears he abandoned them and left Britain for America.

What happened to him after seemed like a mystery; there were various reports of his life and death in Milwaukee, Australia and even Tavistock. In 1912 a film of his story was made in Australia, this has been followed by numerous books containing all manner of conspiracy theories, a play and even a folk rock opera! However, in 2009 it was at last revealed that he became an American citizen in 1939 and did indeed die in Milwaukee. He died in 1945 and is buried in a grave, alongside his common-law wife and daughter, at Forest Home Cemetery in Milwaukee.

The events of that day in February 1885 have been much debated and the most likely theory is that the rather flimsy outdoor scaffold had been rained on in the night before the 'execution', this made the wood swell and when he stood on the trap-door it would not drop after the bolt was pulled. Following this event the design of the scaffold was revised so that it did not happen again. It has been popularly suggested that Lee was innocent but was protecting the father of Elizabeth Harris' child; she was Lee's half-sister. Lee always maintained his innocence whilst being unable to say who he believed the murderer to be. Mike Holgate's interesting book 'The Secret of The Babbacombe Murder' contains all the theories if you would like to know more.



The cover to Fairport Convention's album shows Lee and his mother outside her house which is now part of Town Farm. In 1998 they played excerpts from their folk/rock album at the Music & Arts Festival.

Claude Howard 1906 - 1995

Claude was born and bred in Abbotskerswell, his work is still to be found in the village, and he went on to achieve worldwide renown. However, unless you have been involved with the cricket club you probably will not know of him. He was born in 1906, the second child of Albert and Annie Howard of 2 *Model Cottages*; his father worked at the Aller Valley Pottery and his mother

rose from a pupil teacher at the village school to become a qualified teacher. Albert served in WW1 as a private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, whilst Annie worked the village school as cover for Mrs Keites when she was ill. With the renovation of Church House, Albert and Annie moved into the living section as caretakers.

In 1919 Claude showed his gift as an artist by creating the village School Roll of Honour, which now hangs in The Parish Rooms. After leaving school he entered Newton Abbot College of Art in 1922 and in his time there he won the award of All-England Union of Educational Institutions 1st prize, three years in a row. He also attended Plymouth College of Art & Design in these years and won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, graduating in 1929 in Industrial Design and Painting. During his studies he became interested in stained glass windows, and it would be in this area that he would make his name. He became Deputy Headmaster of Newton Abbot College of Art from 1935-38.



Like his father before him he joined Abbotskerswell Cricket Club, and by the 1922/23 season he was captain of the side, and together with Mark Rowe would be one of the club's leading batsmen between the wars; he would continue to play for the team until 1954, and then he became a highly respected umpire. He continued in this role until 1975 and also held posts with the Devon Cricket Umpires Society.

The quality of Claude's calligraphic script work can be seen with the village WW2 Roll of Honour, again to be seen in The Parish Rooms, and the piece done for William Elliott (shown on page 72) is quite stunning.

He was commissioned by the City of Exeter to scribe the city's Royal address at the accession to the throne of Queen Elizabeth II.

In 1948 Claude joined J Wippell and Company who provided all manner of services to Churches, including stained glass windows. In 1954 he became a freelance designer, but maintained his close connection with Wippells. He married Edith and they had two children, John and Mary. Two of his local pieces of stained glass are at Thorverton and East Ogwel churches, and a major piece of his work is in St Andrew's Episcopal Church in Miami, Florida.



His modernist style is shown in his East Ogwel window, and in a Christmas card he created.

Although Claude and his family lived in Newton Abbot, he still maintained his links with the cricket club, being Chairman from 1947 – 1988 and President 1988 – 1995. The 1963 picture of him with the cricket team is how those who knew him well will remember him.

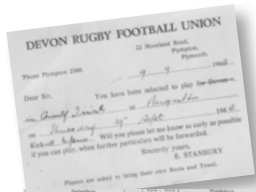


Chris Wakeham 1942 – 1964

Chris's story is unfortunately a sad and tragic one, but also one of another time in some ways. Chris was the third child of Mr & Mrs Reg Wakeham of *Abbotsford*, and was very active in the village where he had been born and grew up. He was a committee member of St Mary's Social Club, a member of the cricket club and a fine rugby player at Newton Abbot, and also part of the bell ringing team.

He went to the village school before transferring to Homelands Technical School in Torquay; it was

whilst at Homelands that his qualities as a rugby player were recognised, when he captained their 1st XV. He joined the All Whites of Newton Abbot as an 18 year old, and he was soon in the 1st XV, where he was known as an uncompromising tackler with no fear. John Evans, the Chairman of Newton Abbot Rugby Club said of Chris "He was always extremely loyal and this, combined with his skill, made him a very valuable asset on the field and a wonderful person off the field".⁵



In 1963 his ability was recognised, when he played for Devon against the Royal Navy. He was also a fine cricketer who played regularly for Abbotskerswell and became captain; Bernard and Robin Pugh of the club would later act as pallbearers at his funeral.

Month	Year	Club	Runs	Wickets	Other
May	1963	Abbotskerswell	100	5	
June	1963	Abbotskerswell	150	10	
July	1963	Abbotskerswell	200	15	
Aug	1963	Abbotskerswell	250	20	
Sept	1963	Abbotskerswell	300	25	
Oct	1963	Abbotskerswell	350	30	
Nov	1963	Abbotskerswell	400	35	
Dec	1963	Abbotskerswell	450	40	
Jan	1964	Abbotskerswell	500	45	
Feb	1964	Abbotskerswell	550	50	
Mar	1964	Abbotskerswell	600	55	
Apr	1964	Abbotskerswell	650	60	
May	1964	Abbotskerswell	700	65	
Jun	1964	Abbotskerswell	750	70	
Jul	1964	Abbotskerswell	800	75	
Aug	1964	Abbotskerswell	850	80	
Sept	1964	Abbotskerswell	900	85	
Oct	1964	Abbotskerswell	950	90	
Nov	1964	Abbotskerswell	1000	95	
Dec	1964	Abbotskerswell	1050	100	



Chris had the chance to join Rolls Royce's design team but opted to stay at home, where he was soon engaged to village girl Rosemary Owen. Instead he joined Hexter and Budge Ltd whose clay mines were in Kingsteignton. On 9 July 1964 Chris had been working a night shift in the mine, and was walking up the inclined tramway on his way to the surface when he was hit and killed by a number of trucks that were being run into the mine. At the inquest Peter Lear explained what had happened when he arrived at work early; wanting to get on with

his work, he "entered a winding shed and lowered some trucks to the brow of an incline into the mineshaft. He then loaded the trucks with timber ... he knew that it was against company rules for anyone but the winding gear operator to enter the shed to move trucks".⁶ The trucks were released to roll down the incline, and hit Chris.

Attitudes to health and safety have changed a great deal since then. The coroner told the inquest jury "... that it would be a mistake if it found the employee ... had been criminally negligent."⁷; consequently a verdict of accidental death was recorded. Workplace deaths such as this were 'tolerated' then; this was quite clearly not an accident.

Chris's funeral was a huge event in the village with family, many villagers, and representatives from his rugby and cricket clubs, as well as from many other clubs attending. There were dozens of floral displays, many with moving tributes: "To dear Christy, Pam. I will not forget, .. to my darling Christy, your broken-hearted Rosie, .. in memory of one who will never be forgotten, as an example of the best of youth"⁸, and many more.

The Low Family

Edith Nellie Low 1908 – 1994: Edie's mother was Mary Jane Coombe whose parents, Thomas and Philippa, came to Abbotskerswell from the Cornwall; they had 10 children and lived in *Rose Cottages*. Mary went to London as a servant, and eventually brought Edith home to be brought up by her widowed

aunts, Edith Brimecombe and Philippa Lomax, at *Park View*. It was a hard life and the stories that Mrs Low told in AbbTalk show this, giving descriptions of a life very different from today. One such story was about wash day: "Two galvanised baths were put on the kitchen table and filled with water – one for washing the clothes and one for bluing them. The clothes were washed and put in the boiler and poked down with a poking stick", later having been rinsed they were put " ... through the mangle. This was done by a pair of wooden rollers, turning a big wheel with a handle to squeeze the water out."⁹



She married Edgar Low, who worked at Stoneycombe Quarry, which meant they lived at *Stoneyhill*. Later they moved to *Barnfield*, and although Edgar died young, Edie took a full part in village life, and as the plaque shows, she was a vital member of the Village Hall committee.

The history of Abbotskerswell would be much less well told without the photographs and reminiscences that she provided for the AbbPast pages in the early AbbTalks, full of lovely stories: "I went there [school] at 3 years and left at 13 years. We had a schoolmaster and two schoolmistresses and about ninety children and order reigned".¹⁰ Her accounts of the 'Nunnery' are fascinating and the descriptions of gypsies, tramps, rag and bone men, and the Hurdy Gurdy barrel organ player, feel as if they are from a different world. Mrs Low had two daughters who have also lived in the village their whole lives and would, like their mother, contribute greatly to village life, and the telling of the village's story.

Phyllis Ford lived for many years at *Hillborough*, on the corner of Stoneman's Hill and Nunnery Lane, and was also a great contributor to the AbbPast sections of AbbTalk, as well as providing much information to the AbbPast research team. Her 'My Abbotskerswell' piece in AbbTalk is a fascinating description of the life in the 1940s, full of careful observation on life:

"We knew that there was a 'war on' but we didn't understand what it meant and we were happy. Houses were left unlocked with no fear of theft, vandalism was non-existent and neighbours were friends. I am sure that despite the lack of material things it was a wonderful time."¹¹

Her article called 'Memories of My Childhood' remembered her time living at *Stoneyhill* and contained this lovely comment:

I started school and how I hated it. Every school day we walked to the village in all winds and weathers. On dry days the Stoneyhill children straggled through Slade Lane and across the pathfields to get to and from School but on wet days had to walk the road which took longer. The journey did not upset me as much as having to leave Stoneyhill to move to Barnfield.¹²

She added a few naughty stories as well:

Like most villages, we had our eccentric, he was Jimmy Prowse ... Jimmy would strut around the village muttering two, two, two, two and was always watching the Church clock to see if it was time to go up to the Nunnery, never the Priory to us, for his daily soup from the Nuns. I'm afraid we taunted him so that he would get angry and chase us with his stick!¹³

Phyllis's sister is **Ann Wild** (Ann Aggett) and another wonderful source of tales on village life for the research team. I love the story she told me about Mrs Hare having to be curtsied to or there were serious repercussions. She and Ron were heavily involved in the Village Hall Committee.

Fred Brimecombe was Mrs Low's cousin, also brought up at *Park View* and also like her staying in the village, and he told great stories of past times. His descriptions of Manor Farm provided much of the detail of its work in *1. Industry & Commerce*. A number of people have said, it's a shame we didn't start our research when Fred was alive, because he knew so much. Thankfully Fred did village history a great service by writing his 'thesis', which was produced in AbbTalk Nos 224-7, and providing a great many articles in AbbTalk. Like Edie before him his pieces harked back to a different era, such as his description of Jethro Bearne who lived at *Thatches* in the 1920s. Jethro lived a simple life, collecting sticks and singing hymns, he also helped people by letting them stay with him. Sometimes 'roadsters' (tramps) would stay a few days, but once it was a family:

One time he took in a man and woman, a boy and a girl. The children for a short time went to school. Now Mrs A. T. Dence heard of the couple and instructed the Vicar, the Reverend Gordon Campbell, to go and see them regarding the welfare of the children, the outcome of this visit was he found that they were not married and he convinced them to get married, and this he did in Abbotskerswell Parish Church one Sunday morning at 9 a.m. The couple did not stay long and one morning they were off and were seen no more.¹⁴

Fred always took a keen interest in the village, being involved with the Village Hall Trust and the Garden Show.

George Stoneman 1895 – 1953



Harry Stoneman, his brother Thomas, and their families moved from Dawlish to Abbotskerswell around 1900; the brothers were agricultural labourers. Harry, George's father, and family moved into 2 *Sunny Bank* and then on to *Prospect Place* by 1911. In 1911 George was a domestic under gardener, although by 1915 he was a clay miner. During WW1 George joined the Royal Regiment of Artillery and served in France as sergeant; his brother Ernest was killed in 1917 on the Somme, whilst serving with the Machine Gun Corps.



On his return he married local girl, Mabel Tubb, and in spring 1924 they were living at 2 *Elm Tree Cottages* with their daughters Phyllis and Amy. They are pictured c.1923 outside *Prospect Place*. In late 1924 they moved into a newly constructed wooden house, which would become called *Salem Bungalow*. It was built by Rev. Dence, and eventually bought by George in 1934, for £375.

George was very active in the village, playing cricket and eventually becoming an umpire, he was also a member of the Tug of War team. It was in his role as the Honorary Secretary of St Mary's Social Club that he proposed that the Cricket Club be reformed under the club's banner after WW2, he also ran a youth club in Church House. He was a Parish Councillor for 3 years, Chairman of Coronation Committees, a Special Constable during WWII, and a member of the village Buffalo Order, in whose regalia he is pictured above. However, perhaps his most significant role was as the Honorary Secretary of the Cottage Garden Show for many years. George was a real village man.



The Elliott Family

This is an Abbotskerswell family that has been involved in all manner of village events.

William Elliott 1869 – 1956: William's father, Joseph, married Jane, who was originally from Abbotskerswell, and between them they had nine children. William was born in Abbotskerswell in

1869 and became a clay cutter in the local clay pits. In 1890 he married Florence Collard, and in 1891 they were living at 3 *Model Cottages* with Florence's brother, Albert. They had four children; Hilda, Charles, Florence and Olive. Eventually William bought *Willow Grove* in 1906, where his grandson, Tony Bowhay, still lives. He became a quarry manager at the Devon & Courtenay pits at Decoy, and also ran a hauliers business, moving the clay with a fleet of horse drawn wagons. The horses spent each weekend in the barn at *Willow Grove*, which eventually became *Willow Cottage*.



William was always active in the village, and was one of the founder members of the cricket team and is seen on the 1900 picture with his distinctive moustache. He was a Parish Councillor from 1919 to 1935, a Churchwarden and Captain of the bell ringers for over 25 years. When he retired from ringing in 1952 he was presented with one of Claude Howard's splendid documents commemorating his achievements. His invaluable work for the British Red Cross Society during WW1, was rewarded with an elaborate certificate. Charles Collard, Florence's brother, became famous in the world of pottery. He started work in 1886 as an apprentice to John Phillips at the AllerVale pottery, where he learned all the aspects of the potting process, becoming a skilled pottery decorator. Following Phillip's death he left, and worked in Exeter and Torquay, before starting his own pottery in Poole. In 1918 he bought the Honiton Pottery which he ran successfully for many years.



Two of William's daughters, Violet and Olive, ran a shop in *The Square* in the 1920s before Violet Bowhay had children, and Olive Fey took over at the Post Office. These shops are described in 1. *Industry & Commerce*. Mrs Fey, 1896 – 1990, became an important figure in 20th century Abbotskerswell, as post mistress and choir mistress. She ran village choirs for decades, organising concerts and outings; she was a churchwarden and church organist for much of her life. The brass chandelier in the Church Chancel is a memorial to her from the church choir. In

1982 she was awarded the British Empire Medal for services to the Post Office and the community. The medal is shown above.

Margaret Gibbs: there cannot have been many Olympic gold medallists from Abbotskerswell, but one still lives here. In 1968 Margaret Gibbs from *Odle Hill Grove* won two gold medals at the Tel-Aviv Paraplegic Olympic Games; in those days events were only for people with spinal injuries. These were in the



pentathlon, and the 75 metre swimming medley, plus two more bronze medals in swimming. She lost the use of her legs at the age of 12 after contracting polio, but being keen on sport she was determined to stay involved, and became a paraplegic athlete. She won two Commonwealth Games gold medals in Jamaica in 1966, and four more in 1970. In 1972 she was voted Disabled Sports Personality of the Year by the Sports Writers' Association.



There are obviously many others who have been worthy of note, such as **Fred Prowse**, 1843-1923, who lived in *Rose Cottages* and was blacksmith in the village. His smithy is now *The Staging Post*, having previously been Fey & Elliott's shop; there he created many fine pieces, such as the gates for *Court Grange* and church chandeliers. In 1888 he won the Washington Singer prize for iron-forging at the Torquay Art and Industrial Exhibition, for his flower stands and vases.

He was also appointed by Mrs Hare to light the village paraffin street lights each evening. **Ross Bellotti** is the son of a goalkeeper, Derek who made 145 senior appearances for Gillingham, Southend and Swansea. Ross was signed by Exeter City from school and made his debut in December 1994 at Bury. Hopefully present Exeter City player Matt Jay will be as successful.

John Somers Cocks 1921 – 2001

It seems fitting to conclude the fourth book in our series by mentioning the man who was the original 'village historian'. John's name is mentioned throughout the series, by quoting his various village publications, his contributions under the 'AbbPast' heading in dozens of AbbTalks, and also because of the wonderful archive material that he assembled which we have so often referred to.

John came to the village in the 1960s, living at *Crystalwood*, formerly the home of Canon Ward, whose son Stephen was involved in the infamous Profumo Affair in 1963. John was an engineer during WW2, when he contracted polio which left him badly crippled and needing a wheelchair for mobility. He wanted to be a writer, and developed as a transport expert. He became an important part of the Devon History Association, and an expert in Devon in the Middle Ages. His expertise led to him writing his important village history "Abbotskerswell Devon" which is often quoted in our Series, and shows his amazing research into the village in mediaeval times. The *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* is dedicated to John.

Chapter 8

The Heritage Lottery Fund Parish Trail

In 2012 AbbPast celebrated Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee by creating a Village Trail, which was reprinted in *3. Religion & Education*, and is also on the Parish Website, www.abbotskerswell.com. To mark the completion of our *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* we have created a longer Parish Trail that loosely follows the parish boundary to mark the places of historical interest outside of the village; we have dedicated it to the Heritage Lottery Fund, who have supported our work allowing us to produce the publications at no cost to villagers.

The Trail only gives brief details of each site, full detail is available in the four *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* publications. The Trail is around 5½ miles long and takes about two hours to complete at a gentle pace.

Our Parish Trail begins in **The Square (1)** which was once the commercial centre of the village; Orchard Café was built in 1929 as a Co-op store, across the road was Fey & Elliotts shop (now The Staging Post) alongside The Old Post Office which was The Post Office throughout the 20th century. Begin to walk up 'Buckpitt's Hill' but turn right along Vicarage Road, past the now forlorn Wesleyan Chapel which was open between 1851-1937, and you will see a splendid house now called Glebe House on the right. This is the old **Vicarage (2)** which was built in 1837 because the old one was too small for the vicar, William Kitson, and his family. In a strange reversal it would eventually be sold in 1977, because it was too big for modern vicars. The house's once extensive stabling and coach house have also been developed as a house. Return towards The Square, turn up the hill and on your left is Court Cottage; this was formerly the **Baptist Chapel (3)**. Abbotskerswell had both a Wesleyan and a Baptist Chapel by the mid-1800s, previously both groups had met in members' houses until they had their own chapels. The Baptists converted a house given to them in 1838. It closed in 1907 reverting to a house, but there are still remnants of biblical texts on the inner house walls.



Across the road is the splendid **Heathcot (4)** built in 1811 in the Regency style. This was the period of history when King George III was 'mad' and his son, George, acted as The Prince Regent. It was probably built by William Creed whose family would dominate the village scene for a 100 years and will appear again on the Parish Trail. Continue up the hill and on the left is a group of cottages known as **Rose Cottages (5)**; although often changed they probably date from the C17th, and have provided housing for working families for centuries. The C19th bread ovens, well and privies still exist in their gardens. John 'Babbacombe' Lee (The Man They Couldn't Hang) was probably born here. Across the road at the entrance to Manor Gardens is the imposing house that was once **Manor Farm (6)**; it was built in the 1840s by the Creed Family who were substantial land owners. The Tithe of 1839 shows that its owner, William Creed junior, owned 111 acres of land in Abbotskerswell. This was the last working farm in the village becoming a housing development in the late C20th when the Buckpitts left after a 100 years at the farm.

At the road junction turn right up the hill along Priory Road (once known as Nunnery Lane). The first thatched cottage is **Park View (7)** which played an important part in village history. It was in this cottage that John Phillips of the Aller Vale Art Pottery held craft classes from 1885, and they continued until his death in 1897. In these classes local people were taught the skills of working in wood, copper, brass and iron as well as needlework and designs for pottery. Up to 25 would attend the classes and many found employment in his pottery works. As you walk up the hill notice the fine view south westerly across the village. Walking on towards Kingskerswell you will pass **The Priory (8)** which between 1861 and 1983 was a St Augustine's Priory for up to 50 nuns. This Roman Catholic order bought Abbotleigh House in 1860 and the Priory buildings were designed by Joseph Hansom. The fine Victorian Gothic Church, now The Forum, is the centre of the site. The site was purchased by Clennon Developments who created an impressive retirement village, retaining all the original buildings. As you leave the site notice another fine late C19th house across the road, this is Maristowe.

Continuing down Priory Road you now have a splendid view of **Aller Vale (9)**, if rather spoiled by the new road, this was a vital industrial area in the parish. The parish boundary included The Zigzag Quarry, which is clearly visible, and Aller Vale until boundary changes in 1984. At the bottom of the hill is the **Turnpike Road (10)** that ran from Newton Abbot to Kingswear. Built in 1765 a tollhouse stood on the corner of the road until recently, a boundary stone marks its site. The farm you can see on the Decoy Road is the original Langford Bridge Farm. Turning right you cross Langford Bridge,

which is a listed mid-C19th road bridge, over the railway line and under the new road bridge of the **South Devon Link Road (11)** which links Newton Abbot to Torbay and opened in 2015. At the roundabout you look down onto the former Aller Barton Farm, now the Barn Owl and Aller Mills (SUPA Power Tools), an industrial site for over 200 years.

Follow the Stoneycombe road towards Kingskerswell church and just before Whitpot Mill turn right up the hill on to Foredown Lane. Carry on past Foredown Farm and follow the road round over the new road and down the hill to the railway bridge. As you pass underneath the railway bridge you re-enter the parish; notice the narrowness of the bridge, reflecting the nature of the road traffic when it was built in 1847 for **The South Devon Railway (12)** as it extended the line from Newton Abbot to Totnes and Plymouth Laira in 1848. In 1876 the SDR amalgamated with the Great Western Railway. Here the line goes up the notorious Dainton Bank which took two steam locomotives to haul heavy trains to its summit. One consequence of the arrival of the railway was the creation of **Stoneycombe Quarry (13)**; this is a limestone quarry which the GWR owned for many years. Limestone was quarried for roads, building and lime making and was worked by the Stoneycombe Lime and Stone Company. The cottages near the next bridge are Maddacombe Terrace built in 1924 by the company for its workers.

At the Maddacombe road junction take the middle road and head up the hill towards Whiddon. On the left is **Whiddon House (14)**, probably built in the 1830s by William Creed in the Regency style. The last Creed there died in 1903, although the house was owned by their descendants, the Carrs, until 1949. On your right is Whiddon Lodge, built for the Creeds' estate workers, and also **Whiddon Farm (15)**. This was built by William Creed in the 1850s as the farm for their Whiddon estate land, and like the house, tenanted until 1949. As you walk towards Two Mile Oak you go over the Whiddon crossroad, with Whiddon Cottages just up the road towards Stoneyhill. Stoneyhill was built in the 1920s and 30s for the quarry workers. As you approach Two Mile Oak look right across the valley and you will see the 'new' **Ruby Farm (16)**. It was established in the 1960s by Melva Purkis after he sold Court Farm and reused the name of the old farm in the village that became known as Monks Thatch. This farm was on the site of the Singmore barns and the farmhouse was probably built by Reginald Walters.

Two Mile Oak (17) is a community within the parish which features an inn from the C18th, a nice example of a 1960s service station (that was WaterMota's first Devon site) and some splendid 1930s bungalows on both roads. Now

turn right back towards the village and on the left is **The Cricket Club (18)**. This was formed in 1898 by Rev. F Gordon Campbell and has existed ever since, playing at Berry Meadow (Grange Road is built on this pitch), then the Manor Road and now on this site since 1975. As you walk along the main road you come to **Abbotshill (19)** with Denbury Diesels, the site of another 1960s service station, and Abbotshill Park which was established in the 1960s by George Hutchings. Next are Hillside Cottages built in 1907 by village baker Tom Cann.

At Abbotskerswell Cross turn onto Manor Road and walk past The Old Cyder Works, originally **Henley's Cyder Works (20)**, which was run by the Henley family from 1791 until 1933, when Whiteways took it over until it closed in 1965. The Henleys lived at Mallands until the 1970s. WaterMota moved to the site from Two Mile Oak in 1965 and became the world's largest marinisers of diesel engines in the world before they left for Heathfield in 2005. The site is now home to a variety of industrial units including the recently built Henley's Business Park. Continue along **Manor Road (21)**, past Old Barn, noting its cob built walls, and on the left is Higher Langford, built in the 1920s by Fred Croydon. On re-entering the village you will pass the bungalows of the 'Manorforde Orchard' development of the 1960s, the 1930s former council houses of Laburnum and Orchard Terraces, and the dramatic 1960s chalet bungalows until you reach **The Manor House (22)**. This fine house, rather hidden from the road, was constructed by William Creed in c.1850. The Creeds had lived in the village since the early nineteenth century, as a sad memorial in the church tells us, when William and Elizabeth lost three of their children, presumably to disease, within the space of 5 days in 1809. His surviving sons, William and John, held key roles in Abbotskerswell life. It was the young William who built the house and his son William also lived there, as the last Creed, until 1897. His sister Susan Carr and her children owned The Manor until 1951. All the Creeds were involved in village life as churchwardens, Board School Managers and land owners.

A gentle stroll down the hill brings you back to the starting point in The Square.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Members of Parliament

Election Yr	Member of Parliament	Party	Constituency
1801 - 1807	John Bastard	Tory	Devonshire
	Sir Lawrence Palk, 2nd Bt		(Two Members)
1812	Sir Thomas Dyke-Acland 10th Bt	Tory	Devonshire
	John Bastard [From 1816 Edmund Bastard]	Tory	(Two Members)
1818	Lord Hugh Ebrington (2nd Earl of Fortescue)	Whig	Devonshire
	Edmund Bastard	Tory	(Two Members)
1820 - 1826	Sir Thomas Dyke-Acland 10th Bt	Tory	Devonshire
	Edmund Bastard	Tory	(Two Members)
1830	Lord Hugh Ebrington (2nd Earl of Fortescue)	Whig	Devonshire
	Sir Thomas Dyke-Acland 10th Bt	Tory	(Two Members)
1831	Lord John Russell (1st Earl Russell)	Whig	Devonshire
	Lord Hugh Ebrington (2nd Earl of Fortescue)	Whig	(Two Members)
1832	Lord John Russell (1st Earl Russell)	Whig	Devonshire South
	Sir John Bulteel	Whig	(Two Members)
1835 - 1837	Sir John Yarde-Buller (1st Baron of Churston)	Conservative	Devonshire South
	Montague Parker	Conservative	(Two Members)
1841	Sir John Yarde-Buller (1st Baron of Churston)	Conservative	Devonshire South
	Lord William Courtenay (11th Earl of Devon)	Conservative	(Two Members)
1847	Sir John Yarde-Buller (1st Baron of Churston)	Conservative	Devonshire South
	Lord William Courtenay [1849 Sir Ralph Lopes]	Conservative	(Two Members)
1852	Sir John Yarde-Buller (1st Baron of Churston)	Conservative	Devonshire South
	Sir Ralph Lopes 2nd Bt [1854 L Palk]	Conservative	(Two Members)
1857	Lawrence Palk (later 4th Bt & 1st Baron Haldon)	Conservative	Devonshire South
	Sir John Yarde-Buller (1st Baron of Churston)	Conservative	(Two Members)
1859 - 1865	Sir Lawrence Palk, 4th Bt (1st Baron Haldon)	Conservative	Devonshire South
	Samuel Kekewich	Conservative	(Two Members)
1868	Sir Lawrence Palk, 4th Bt (1st Baron Haldon)	Conservative	Devonshire East
	Lord Edward Courtenay (12th Earl of Devon)	Conservative	(Two Members)
1874	Sir Lawrence Palk, 4th Bt (1st Baron Haldon)	Conservative	Devonshire East
	Sir John Kennaway, 3rd Bt	Conservative	(Two Members)
1880	Sir John Kennaway, 3rd Bt	Conservative	Devonshire East
	William Walrond 2nd Bt (Later 1st Baron Waleran)	Conservative	(Two Members)
1885 - 1900	Charles Seale-Hayne	Liberal	Ashburton
1900	Charles Seale-Hayne [From 1904 Harry Eve]	Liberal	Ashburton
1906	Harry Eve [From 1908 Ernest Morrison-Bell]	Liberal	Ashburton
1910 (Jan)	Charles Buxton	Liberal	Ashburton
1910 (Dec)	Ernest Morrison-Bell	Liberal-Unionist	Ashburton
1918	Francis Mildmay (Later 1st Baron of Flete)	Coalition Conservative	Totnes
1922	Sir Samuel Harvey	Conservative	Totnes
1923	Henry Vivian	Liberal	Totnes
1924 - 1931	Sir Samuel Harvey	Conservative	Totnes
1935 - 1951	Sir Ralph Rayner	Conservative	Totnes
1955 - 1979	Raymond Mawby	Conservative	Totnes
1983 - 1997	Patrick Nicholls	Conservative	Teignbridge
2001 - 2005	Richard Younger-Ross	Liberal Democrat	Teignbridge
2010 - 2015	Anne-Marie Morris	Conservative	Newton Abbot

Appendices

Appendix 2: Abbotskerswell Parish Councillors 1894 - 1935

Councillors	Yrs	Councillors	Yrs	Councillors	Yrs	Councillors	Yrs
Matilda Hare*	13	John Buckpitt^	7	Robert Jukes-Hughes^	3	Charles Tuplin*	6
John Creed^*	10	William Bulley Jnr	1	Charles Pellier	6	William Bond	3
Thomas Maddicott	1	John Emmett	7	Samuel Lang	3	George Stoneman	3
Edward Palk^	13	Tom Cann	3	John Palk^	6	Arthur Huggett	3
Arthur Chard	1	Fred Prowse	1	Fred Prowse	6	William Sinclair	7
John Phillips*	2	George Lee	1	William Elliott	16	J Brewer	7
John Partridge^	15	William Henley*	13	William Mills	3	J Patch	3
Charles Widdicombe	2	William Sercombe	12	George Mills	3	William Brooks	6
Fred Paddon	6	George Wilton^*	21	William Henley Jnr^	3	Donald Pengilly	6
George Taylor	1	Ernest Hexter	3	Henry Keites	3	Leonard Uren	3
William Creed*	1	Albert Judd	12	Fred Truscott	3	Fred Heywood	3
William Bulley	1	William Buckpitt	12	William Rowe^	7	Edward Jukes-Hughes	3
Thomas Maddicott Jnr	8	^ - Vice Chairman		* - Chairman			

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Acknowledgements

It is always dangerous to thank individuals for their contributions in case you omit somebody from the list, but we are indebted to the following people for their help: Debbie King of the Court Farm Inn, Ryan Goldsmith from Heavitree Brewery, Nancy Mills, Rose Christophers, Geoffrey Mallinson, Lynn Eales, Mel Adderley, David Boxall and Eunice Anthony. A big thank you must go to all those who have helped to create AbbTalk over the years, it has been a brilliant source of information.

A special thanks to Ann Wild and Tony Bowhay for all the hours that they have spent with me trawling their memories, and for all the introductions they created for me.

As always we thank the villagers for Abbotskerswell who have supported our project and added to the research in many ways. Also thanks to the staff at the Devon Heritage Centre, always so helpful.

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