The Village Echo

The Journal of The Pavey Group
The Charmouth Local History Resource Centre

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£2
The highlight of this Issue 28 is the sequence of remarkable photographs illustrating graphically, life in the village before the bypass. The excellence of this record of near disasters and their frequency leads one to suppose the photographer might have had some warning of the likelihood of a crash. The secret is that Mike Davis, the village chemist, kept a loaded camera under the counter of the Pharmacy. He was ideally situated and prepared to record these dramatic events. Mike Davis died before the bypass was completed. We are indeed fortunate in that his wife Mary Davis gave us some of her collection for the Echo. On Thursday 12th February in the Village Hall we will be, or were, delighted to see a presentation of the accidents by Mike and Mary’s son, Rob Davis. He was there!

Of the other articles, Mike Whatmore - Mr Panto - has presented what purports to be the definitive history of the great Charmouth Pantomime Tradition. Ohhh...Yes it is! (At least the dates are accurate!) Well done, Michael.

Not long after the war, a man named A.S. Neill advanced the concept of Progressive Education, at a school called Summerhill. This he said was the model for future education in Britain. To say the implications for the educational establishment were revolutionary is understated; every hackle on every teacher’s neck bristled in every staff room throughout the country. Total freedom? Attend classes when you wanted? Address teachers by their first names? Consider the impact: these were the days when the Malacca Whacker ruled.*

Such a school existed at Monkton Wyld: Peter Bide’s experience gives a much fairer assessment.

Part III of the Abbots House concludes this overview of the history of the old building. The problem has been since the beginning the paucity of sources. There’s not much to be found of ancient records of Charmouth, but there must be a great fund of anecdotal history that exists within the memory of our older people – of people, places and events. They are needed for our community’s history.

*A superior cane. It was applied with vigour - on the hands usually. There were other obvious areas of application, but this was only once in my experience.
T’was the third day of Christmas, I was feeling quite well
The magic of Christmas had me under its spell.
   I was quietly dozing the wife was asleep.
   In front of the fire, the dogs slept in a heap.
   All of a sudden there was a great clatter
   I jumped to my feet to see what was the matter.
The ‘phone was ringing loudly, cacophonous sound,
The dogs all jumped three feet from the ground.
I grabbed for the ‘phone, it was just Peter Press.
   ‘Excuse me my boy, I’m in a bit of a mess’.
He said ‘I’m in trouble and it’s Christmas I know,
   But I need an article for the village Echo.
I know it’s short notice, and is a bit of a cheek,
   But I really do need it, by early next week’.
‘The subject can be of the Charmouth Pantomimes’.
I said ‘Leave it to me; I’ll manage a few lines.
   ‘I’d like sixteen hundred words with photos to fill pages’.
   ‘You realise’ I said, that this could take me flipping ages’!
So, for the sake of posterity, herewith, and from the previously
Unrecorded Chronicles of the Charmouth Companions

A History

A long time ago, in fact way, way, way back in the beginning of the twenty-first century – early March it was. It was dark I recall, shortly before the pubs opened - or it could have been after they had closed.

It is all hazy now with the passing of time, although I am sure that I was standing or at least sitting upright without too much in the way of visible support, so it must have been in the evening: but I digress. Anyway, Richard Stirk, at that time the chairman of the Village Fayre said to me ‘I’ve always fancied putting on a pantomime for the village’. ‘I suppose we could,’ I said foolishly ‘Just a matter of getting a script, a stage somewhere and a few people to play the parts, some costumes and a bit of scenery…. Bob’s yer uncle.’ ‘Let’s do it then,’ said Richard. ‘Right!’ said I, or someone speaking for me, before I could shut up. ‘I’ll look for a script.’

And so it all began: ‘Ohhhh ….. yes it did!’ The scripts that we could buy were either not very good or far too expensive and in my opinion, not suitable for Charmouth. It should be appreciated that we as a society had no money, no assets and very little in the way of knowledge or experience. Charmouth Fayre kindly loaned us £600 towards our costs. This was to be the first ever panto and was to celebrate the new millennium. ‘I’ll write it myself,’ I said. My wife Barbara would make all the costumes. All sorts of people turned up with spare curtains, duvet covers, and loose material. Barbara used it all. Richard as stage manager could sort out the scenery. So without further ado we three sallied forth upon a journey that guided us and lost us as well on occasion, into the magical and mysterious world of live THEATRE.

Cinderella I decided – traditional and with lots of parts. In fact I wrote in a few new ones in order to accommodate the numbers of local people wishing to take part We three were determined to make this a purely village affair, produced by the village and for the village. The Church Hall, now the Community Hall was selected as the venue, but little did we realise how much work was required to get the stage and indeed, the hall itself suitable for the production we now had in mind. We wanted this to be something special. Mallory Hayter joined us immediately and proved a tower of strength in getting things done, negotiating through David Carter with the Parochial Church Committee and finding other even more than useful pairs of hands, especially Keith Waterson who built the proscenium arch. Then together, the rest of us put up many yards of rope and pulleys to lift the scenic drops and flats. Pete Sayers came aboard to install the lighting for the show. Richard Wyatt carried out emergency repairs to the roof that could have been used to strain vegetables with.
I finished writing the script. We auditioned. We were amazed not only at the interest and enthusiasm, but of the talent there was. Daisy and Holly Mildenhall – twins - were to play Cinderella, allowing me to make the magical dress transformations – live - on stage. Richard cleverly constructed a golden coach which magically appeared on stage where the pumpkin had stood.

Mike Davies and Graham Hopper played the ugly sisters. Greg Gibbs was Buttons with John Stamp as the Baron and Marilyn Waterson as his wife – the wicked stepmother. Celia Young from the library was the Prince, with Pat Holmes as the King. Tracey Oxenbury, Gerry Bearpark and Major Mac were all there with a huge cast of village children playing courtiers, villagers, mice, lizards, ponies, elves and fairies. Barbara designed and made dozens of costumes, Richard and I painted the scenery. Mallory and Keith built all sorts of things and adjusted the hall into something resembling a small theatre.

We opened Cinderella in January 2001 to packed houses - such was the support of the village. We even received a visit of judges from the Dorset County Pantomime Competition, and, lo and behold, received no less than three second prizes and a first prize in various categories. Since then the Companions have gone from strength to strength.

The following year I wrote a small street play to commemorate the king’s overnight stay in the Queens Armes during his flight from the Roundheads. It was entitled ‘Charles II to Charmouth’. This was a comedy on hysterically correct facts – that is, as far as I could tell. Peter Press accused me of having a somewhat off-centre view of history, or ‘cock-eyed’ as he put it. Nevertheless he contrived to have a part in it. The result was an outstanding success – attracting a large crowd of spectators, some no doubt, baffled by the
proceedings. The open air stage was the forecourt of the Queens Armes, now the Abbots House, complete with stage lighting provided by the careful placing of four cars with their headlights full on. Not only did we succeed in blocking the Street – unintentionally - but stopped all through traffic as well. Someone called the police, who turned up to ask what was happening and on receiving a brief explanation from me said, cryptically, ‘Fair Enough’ and drove off.

A bucket collection among the spectators produced a nice sum which was donated to the Pavey Group’.

Then I wrote our version of The Sleeping Beauty. Richard on this occasion played the dame, a ‘Grand Dame’ in every sense, as Nanny Goat, with Mike Davies as her would-be suitor, Sergeant Bert of the palace guard. Even more new talent emerged. We now had the services of two absolutely brilliant musicians, Ian Kindred and Pete Wild. Barbara managed somehow to produce eighty costumes and again we managed to pick up awards from the County Competition. The monster was now well and truly at large and out of control. There was no stopping it!

The year 2003 saw the production of Aladdin, this time written by Maggie Pratt and directed by Barbara Collins. Even more talent emerged, or crept out of the woodwork where it had been hiding - Rachel Hamblett-Edwards, Russ Pearce, Robyn Dixon and Nicky Coleman to name but a few. More nominations were made by the County judges and more awards were anticipated. Alas, but not to be! There was a fire at the County organiser’s house and all the records and reports were destroyed. Never Mind!
The following year, 2004, saw me back writing again with a new story line based upon Treasure Island and other tales called, **The Chronicles of Jim the Lad Tailor**. Emma Williams stepped out of the shadows and played the lead role brilliantly. There was an absolutely huge cast with brilliant scenery by Lynne Hooper and Cherry Davies there were dozens of costumes from Barbara and other special effects.

2005 saw my version of **Snow White** with a wonderful talking mirror played by John Debenham; a superb gypsy caravan site built by Keith Waterson and painted beautifully by Lynne Hooper, now sadly gone. Both Dan Edwards and Angie Dring entertained us beautifully with their singing of *The Raggle Taggle Gypsies Oh* and Cher’s *Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves*.

2006 saw the production of **Dick Whittington**, re-written and directed by Julian Addy - no mean performer himself and a professional actor to boot. I was able to obtain a part in this, teaming up with Mike Davies as two villainous pirates, Weevil and Biscuit. Young Sophie Thirwell took the female lead and performed superbly, alongside Rachel, as Dick Whittington. Barbara’s costumes again excelled.

**The Wizard of Oz** in 2007 saw Julian again, directing a brilliant and colourful production with his daughter Laura in the lead role as Dorothy.

2008 came but nobody had the energy to mount a production. **But this year, 2009 .... It’s Back!**

January will see **Beauty and the Beast** directed by Maria Herbert and Rachel. By the time you read this it will be over - Hope you will able to go and see it.

The Charmouth Companions, in addition to the Pantomime productions. Also mounted **Two Dramas and a Supper**, a hot supper sandwiched between two very funny little plays, one directed by Pam Ladd, another local actress of note and the other, by myself. Recently we mounted a **Murder Mystery Evening**, with all the usual suspects played by all the usual culprits, namely myself, Richard Stirk, Mike Davies, John Debenham, Pam Ladd and **Uncle Tom Cobley an’ All!**

I find I am now too stiff and creaky in the joints to do Panto anymore, but I am writing small plays, including something for the **Mid-Summer Garden Party**. All proceeds from this event will be for the benefit of the continuing refurbishment of the Community Hall.

In closing, as one of the three founding members of the Companions, I am delighted to see that the younger element is doing Pantomime – and long may it continue! Who knows, if they should decide to do **Christmas Carol**, I might even come back as Marley’s Ghost or The Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come. Mike Davies said he will take on any part that calls for a Robert Morley look alike: Ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh………Yes he will!

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*Mike Whatmore*
Monkton Wyld School

What, you may well ask, has Monkton Wyld School to do with Charmouth? Well, until the mid-sixties very little. The original school staff was orientated more to Lyme and Axminster, although Dennis Bearpark spent much of his life as cowman/gardener there and I began teaching there in 1960. The school at that time was designated as a limited company and was run by a board of governors from the original teaching staff. In 1965 two of these had just retired from teaching and Eleanor Urban, one of the founders, had died unexpectedly. I had recently been co-opted as a governor of the school and as the only experienced teacher remaining among a younger staff; I was pushed into accepting responsibility for the continued existence for the school. In fact, the average age of the staff fell by about twenty years within a few months.

After a few years, we reverted to the original principle of shared responsibility by all the teaching staff rather than having a controlling headteacher – much to my relief. One result of all this was that many of teachers moved to Charmouth and at one point there were five or six of the teaching staff living in the village. Some of you might remember the Fassnidges who lived near the old fire station, the Goodwins up Old Lyme Hill, Cherry Diplock at the top of the hill and Steve Webster at the corner of Old Lyme Road. They all raised young families in Charmouth.

So having established some village connection and in view of the general feeling that the school was a place with weirder children, I thought it might be of some interest, having spent twenty years teaching there, to try to give some idea of what the school was actually like.

A reverend gentleman who was obviously in possession of a considerable income built the house, and the church, in 1840. His congregation must have been limited to his family, his servants and people from the few neighbouring farms. Eventually the house became a hotel before being sold in 1940 to a group of four or five people led by Carl and Eleanor Urban who wished to offer an alternative form of education to the state system or the public schools. In addition it offered boarding education for both sexes away from the dangers of the blitz.

Monkton Wyld School thus became one of the group of independent Progressive Schools, relatively small in number that became well established for co-educational boarding education until the 1980s. Perhaps the most well known of these (and the most controversial) was A.S. Neill’s Summerhill, originally based on the Charmouth Road in Lyme. A large block of flats has now replaced it.

There were two main ideas that characterised the Progressive Schools. One was the considerable freedom of choice with academic subjects a
and craft activities coupled with individual tuition. The other was to give the pupils as large a part as possible in the day-to-day running of the school through regular meetings at which all staff and the pupils were able to discuss problems and invite solutions. Matters of finance, staff replacements and admissions remained the prerogative of the staff.

At the school, this strategy was an ideal situation for those pupils who had problems at home, or from classes in the state school system. When I joined the staff in 1960, between fifteen and twenty of the sixty children in the school population were sent and paid for by local Authorities from all over the country, many coming from inner city schools. This worked very well as there was little pressure on them to conform, apart from the considerable influence from their peer groups. The majority soon fitted into the school community. One boy I remember in particular was sent to us for refusing to go to school. On his arrival, he spent the first week determined not to leave his bed. We left him there until the rest of the boys in his room encouraged him to join us. He was with us for five years and eventually made a successful career in the music industry. The older pupils, between sixteen and eighteen, played a large part in settling in the newcomers as many of these had spent all their secondary education at the school.

Staff were called by their Christian names and although this sounded a little strange to me and some of the new pupils at first, the resulting informality led to a much more relaxed atmosphere. We once interviewed a prospective staff member who backed off very rapidly when he was told of this!
There were no classes as such, as each of the five permanent teaching staff (all graduates) had their own subject rooms, sometimes teaching more than one subject. Pupils spent each weekday morning on academic subjects of their own choice, the time being divided into half-hour periods with the option of changing subjects each period. This allowed the pupil to spend much more time on the subjects they enjoyed, with teachers offering instruction, help and advice to individuals where necessary. To ensure that none of the main subjects were ignored, each pupil was expected to fill in a booklet at the end of each morning giving details of where they had spent their time. These booklets were collected at the end of each week and checked by the staff to see a how wide a spread of subjects rooms each pupil was attending. Most of them had the range of normal school subjects, but occasionally a pupil would carry on working at a particular project for most of a week. I had one boy who spent much of his time with me working on long term projects, eventually getting an ‘A’ level in the subject. As I also taught geology I was able to take groups on fieldwork without disrupting timetables; in several cases this grew into a long lasting interest and one pupil in particular, although leaving Monckton Wyld at sixteen, eventually gained a doctorate in the subject. This was a fairly common pattern, as although we had our share of exam successes, it seems that many pupils needed the degree of freedom that the school provided to make a success of their education.

Afternoons were spent in various craft or sports activities; pupils choosing which activities they would like to follow for the term. Choices depended upon the interests and talents of the current teaching staff. The list of skills offered over the years was impressive: woodwork, art, metalwork, including the use of a school-built forge, pottery, dramatics, riding and music taught by visiting staff also football, cricket, hockey, rounders and archery. For some years there was a flourishing Morris-dancing group of senior boys who became quite well known in the area. Two of the boys went on to play the oboe and the cello for national orchestras.

We had the services of a full time maintenance man, (Stan Marchant from Uplyme, a professional stonemason) whose expertise kept the building in good repair as there was always something needing repair or re-decorating. If Stan did not have time for all his tasks, there were members of staff capable of carrying out a wide variety of jobs during school holidays. One of my afternoon activities was estate work. This involved various groups, both boys and girls, carrying out repair jobs from repairing broken windows to building an ex-army wooden games hut.

One particular occasion that stands out was the replacement of the filter beds in the school sewage system. This involved shifting some 80 tons of clinker, so a dozen of the senior boys stayed behind for a week to help with
wheelbarrows for eight hours a day. Another large undertaking was the replacement of sixty old sagging metal beds; I managed to work out a method of making wooden beds with drawers, using basic tools, that could be constructed fairly quickly. Although I made many of the beds, at least a dozen were constructed by various pupils over the course of two years. I noticed at the last reunion that the beds were still in use by the current community – after thirty years.

Initially living conditions were somewhat Spartan, as the only electricity came from a diesel generator and a bank of storage cells mostly operated and maintained by a group of senior boys. Heating by solid fuel was limited to the classrooms and common rooms and senior boys looked after these fires. The cold winter of 1963 was something of a trial for us all; particularly for the boys in their unheated bedrooms although I admired the way they coped without grumbling. Mains electricity arrived in the late 1960s making living conditions more comfortable. Water supply came from two wells, initially deepened and overhauled by staff and pupils and an extra classroom was built by Carl Urban and Stan Marchant.

*The Morris Men*
Most of the school’s fresh vegetables and some fruit came from the large walled kitchen garden, run by Derek Beer and Dennis Bearpark. They also looked after 100 hens and three cows that gave us all eggs and milk as well as enriching the kitchen garden in the autumn via the dung heap. Pupils were encouraged to do some cooking both as a craft activity and to produce each day’s supper. Lunches were cooked by local ladies. The end result of all this was an almost family atmosphere with everyone playing some part in the running of the school. Indeed, Catharine, my wife, and I became very fond of some of the older pupils who were like brothers and sisters to our growing family. They occasionally came to Sunday lunch with us, and later, we sometimes spent a weekend in one of the staff houses with five or six of them.

The teaching staff carried out the supervision of boarders. This involved one night a week and every third weekend, the duties being general supervision and dealing with any problems that might arise. Inevitably there were occasions when disciplinary matters had to be dealt with. When behaviour became too anti-social to accept - and as a very last resort - expulsion would follow. Two potential arsonists and an inveterate bully were cases in point. Although alcohol was banned, it became an increasing problem in the 1970s owing to the ease of obtaining it from local shops. Fortunately the drug problem hadn’t materialised to any extent at that time, although we did have to get rid of several new arrivals that were obviously in touch with the London drug scene. However the school did suffer a ‘second hand’ incursion - the Dorset police clearly regarded the school as a hot-bed of drug use and illicit sex. They arrived one evening with a search warrant, with a contingent of over twenty uniformed and plain-clothed detectives, plus dogs. This was a very traumatic experience for both staff and pupils and the two minor court cases reported in the press hardly justified the heavy-handed approach. One of the cases involved one of the girls who assaulted a policewoman who insisted on reading the girl’s private letters!

Things began to change in the 1970s as the result of a combination of factors. The introduction of comprehensive education led to the reduction in the number of parents willing to pay fees for an alternative form of education such as ours. We needed sixty pupils to remain economically viable and had to accept an increasing number of problem children from the state schools, many of whom proved to be quite disruptive. Most of these came from the 13 – 16 age group that gave us little time to sort out their problems before they were able to leave school. Boarding school education in the smaller schools was also becoming less popular. With Stan Marchant’s retirement the maintenance of the building became more of a problem and more difficult to afford.

Yet another major problem was the frequency of staff turnover. It meant an increase in younger and less experienced teachers coming to the
school, many of whom were less able to cope with the inevitable problems that arose from a large number of maladjusted children. By this time in 1980, boarding duties were becoming too onerous: the need for 24 hour supervision by less experienced staff – made great demands on them - and me. The fact that I was over twenty years older than the rest of the staff proved too great a problem. So, after twenty years of evening and weekend duties, I felt it time to opt out.

Luckily I had begun part-time ‘A’ level coaching at Symondsbury College that I continued for fifteen years. There were also fees from regular lecture series for the WEA and Bristol University. My wife Catharine was much in demand as a supply teacher and then joined the staff at Symondsbury school. By the mid 1980s, our three children had completed their university training and married – we felt we could relax.

The school was forced to close a few years later, largely for financial reasons. Some of the staff remained to set up a community with some educational aims. It is still operating, but no longer as a school.

There have been three or four reunions at Monkton Wyld over the past twenty years, all well attended and it is clear that the majority of former pupils felt that they had benefited from their time there. I know of six lasting marriages that began as friendships at the school; in one or two cases there are grandchildren.

Monkton Wyld School was not alone with its problems, as almost all Progressive Schools have closed down over the past twenty years. But for me the years spent at the school were a very rewarding experience.

Peter Bide
Many Charmouth residents will remember the days before the bypass, when the main A35 cutting though our village would bring a seemingly endless stream of traffic. Looking back, it’s hard to believe how we took the sheer volume of cars, caravans, boats, vans and lorries for granted. Living as we did, right in the heart of the village, just metres from the busy road, the smell of hot tyres and diesel oil were an everyday occurrence. Even in the middle of the night, our sleep was punctuated by the sound of large lorries revving up to ascend the hill in the main street. During the busy season, traffic would crawl nose to tail. As there was no pelican crossing in those days, it was often very difficult to cross the road.

Much of the traffic was passing through, to and from the West Country or to London, yet many visitors would like to stop and enjoy this beauty spot for a while. In summer, it became so congested that one had to drive to the beach before 10.30am. After this, police would block the entrance to Lower Sea Lane and usher drivers towards Seatown, as all Charmouth car parks were full.

Of course, with such a high volume of traffic came a high volume of accidents. The steep hill would catch out larger vehicles in particular and we would often hear the sound of descending juggernauts passing our Pharmacy shop with brakes screeching.
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<td>2</td>
<td>1972</td>
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<td>Cars and van shunt outside Lansdown House (opposite Queens Walk)</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Jan 1986</td>
<td>Grain Lorry overturns at Braggs (Ida’s)</td>
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I have written my memories of several accidents. My husband, the late Mike Davis, always had a camera loaded with film in the shop, and our location meant he witnessed most of the incidents as they happened. He would also be first on the scene to make sure everyone involved was safe and well.

**Cider lorry hits bus 1972**

We were having breakfast. My children were almost ready to leave for school when there was a terrific bang outside on The Street. We rushed to the front window and saw a bus that had crashed into Devon Edge (now Pattimore’s Butchers)

My husband Mike witnessed flying debris from the front bedroom window, making a “ping” sound as it hit the electric cables. When the bus was towed away the post box fell down. (See newspaper report and photographs)
Furniture lorry rolls back into Peria 1972

Two Lorry Crashes outside Devoneedge 1978
Boat trailer crash outside Queens Armes 1979

Runaway lorry crashes into waste paper lorry outside Dampiers 1979
Furniture lorry rolls backwards into Peria 1972 (opposite the library)

Several weeks after the cider lorry/ bus crash, a lorry containing aluminium foil rolled backwards and crashed into a house half way up the hill.

The Two Runaway Lorry Crashes May 31st 1978

It was Bank Holiday week with hundreds of holiday-makers enjoying a spell of very hot weather. At 7.45pm on Wednesday evening, visitors were enjoying an evening stroll, when a large blue French transporter lorry careened down the road with brake failure. It eventually crashed into The Wander Inn (now Red Buff).

A crowd gathered, concerned that no person was injured. Neil McNeil (Doctor) and Mike Davis (Pharmacist) were quickly on the scene. Mike acted as interpreter, consoling the French driver, who kept referring to his ‘poor family’.

Then, just 10 MINUTES LATER, people were flocking in the middle of the street just below Morgans observing the damage, when another lorry’s brakes failed due to the hot weather. The red vehicle was at the top of the hill and heading for the perplexed crowd, flashing its lights as a warning.

Our brave policeman, Monty Harris, risked his life as he ran ahead of the runaway lorry, shouting to onlookers to clear the way. This second lorry eventually crashed about 100 metres down the road, damaging four cars en route. It was a miracle no one was injured.

On arrival of the second runaway lorry, and while still dealing with the first desolate driver, Mike Davis was reported to have said: “I had to leap out of the way. It narrowly missed scores of people”. Contrary to the newspaper reports, the second lorry driver failed to sound his horn.

I asked my son, Robert what were his memories of this event. This was his report:

“I remember watching from our forecourt dad tending to the first lorry driver. Quite a crowd had gathered and it was very exciting for a 10 year old. Then somebody (Ron Oxenbury I think) bellowed “Another one’s coming” and I looked up the road to see another lorry with lights flashing rapidly. The atmosphere turned very strange and incredibly tense. A ten-ton lorry was out of control and hurtling towards us. The crowd parted instantaneously, and I remember lots of shouting and people running. Mum said to me “Get inside” so I ran into Owen’s hairdressers (now The Salon) to take cover. I ran to the very back of The Salon because I was worried the lorry would smash through the wall at the front of the shop. Moments later the lorry thundered past, and I ran out to see it “kick” three or four cars effortlessly onto the pavement as if they were toys. It was probably the most electrifying moment of my life.”
The Queen’s Armes  February 19th 1979
A trailer carrying boats crashed into the Queen’s Armes (now The Abbots House). The vehicle rested at right angles to the street, its front buried in the wall underneath a front window.

Runaway lorry crashes into paper lorry July 11th 1979
This accident happened when a lorry ran down the hill and crashed into a waste paper lorry outside Dampiers (now Premier).

Runaway lorry crashes into three parked cars Oct 26th 1981
There was another accident outside Dampiers (Premier). This was when a runaway lorry crashed into three parked cars. They were shunted and landed in different directions over the road. One car was very badly damaged both ends. The Frodsham rescue vehicle was busy again.

Cars shunt outside Whittingtons (The Limes) July 15th 1982
Several cars were damaged as they were shunted down the road and landed just beyond Barr’s Lane.
Lorry demolishes Brackendale Cottage Jan 31st 1983

Brackendale Cottage was a detached building, its end resting along side the pavement of The Street. It was the first house on the top of the hill, on the left hand side as one descends into the village. There was no roundabout at this time, so there was nothing to slow down large fast lorries that had been accelerating down the Axminster Road. To avoid running away down the busy High Street, the lorry driver realising a possible brake failure, used the first object to bring himself to a stop. Brackendale Cottage was that object. The house was so badly damaged by the impact that room-sized holes were left in its structure. I can remember seeing the toilet hanging down in mid air, and could see right through the building. Fortunately the owners were away and no one was hurt.

My diary recalls that my husband, Mike, and my son, Robert went up to the ruined building. It was dusk and the photographs were taken by flash photography. The house was re-built, but this time it was set further back from the road and at right angles to the main street.

Bus crashes into railings at Whittingtons (The Limes) August 29th 1983

Harding’s Sunshine Cruiser cruises into the iron railings outside The Limes.
Lorry demolishes Brackendale Cottage 1983

Bus crashes into railings at Whittington 1983
Car and van shunt out side Landsdown House (Opposite Queen’s Walk)  
**November 15th 1983**

I don’t have much information on this accident. The Morris Minor looks a write-off as it landed against the Norman’s butcher delivery van. It looks as though the car must have been previously hit by another vehicle judging by the condition of its boot.

**Grain Lorry overturns at Braggs (Ida’s) Jan 1986**

This accident happened mid afternoon, mid winter, on the junction of The Street with Lower Sea Lane. A haulage and storage transport lorry, with brake failure raced down the main street.

With the fear of damaging parked cars, and risking lives, the driver made a quick decision to steer right into Lower Sea Lane.

Its trailer swung around and collided into the single storey grocer’s shop. The side of the building wall fell like a row of dominoes leaving the roof hanging precariously, and close to caving in. The whole vehicle rolled over onto its side, throwing its grain over the pavement.

Car and van shunt outside Lansdown House 1983
Thankfully, children were still in school and no one outside was injured. However, inside, poor Ingrid, who was shopping there, had a dangerous encounter with a moving refrigerator… but that is another story. (See The Village Echo No.19) The shop had to close for a number of (days/weeks) but was eventually re-built and business resumed as normal.

**A Final Word**

Plans for a by-pass materialised after an album full of road accidents taken by my husband Mike was given to Linda Chalker. She was The Minister of Transport at that time and was visiting Charmouth. Unfortunately for us, she kept the album*, but fortunately for the village, the by-pass was realised. Miraculously no one was killed in The Street when it was the main South Coast Road. However, as soon as the by-pass opened, our first fatality occurred. It happened at a confusing junction at Wood Farm at the top of the hill. Thankfully, this dangerous road layout was eventually changed to the large roundabout that we use today.

*I am now proceeding to replace photographs for a new album.

Mary Davis

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Grain lorry overturns at Braggs (Ida`s) 1986
The Abbots House Part 111

Introduction Part III
As an introduction for those readers who have not read Parts 1 and 11 from earlier issues of the *The Village Echo*, a short resume of those issues might help to make sense of the following.

**Part 1** Introduced the impact of Cistercians monks of Forde Abbey in the creation of Charmouth. It dealt with the origin of the ‘refuge’ – the old house for travellers- built by the monks in the Late Medieval period. Its plan, construction and development followed. There were photographic details.

**Part 11** Was concerned with the House and its significance within local and national history. It centred on the 'Flight of the King' – Charles II's overnight stay at the Queens Armes in Charmouth. There followed the implications of the King's return to England in 1660, including the conditions imposed upon dissenting clergy — The Clarendon Code and its impact upon dissent within Charmouth. John Brice, the first Nonconformist minister, the Queens Armes becoming The Manse - the residence of Nonconformist ministers for the following 300 years.

**Part 111**
Yet another preface to Part III as it might prove productive if some of the terms and religious distinctions were offered. As it comes down to us, the word Protestant is a key word that was originally applied to the opposition of

*Eype Beach* by Galpin
Rome; Luther, Calvin and Henry VIII were the great protesters. With the ‘Great Schism’- the split with Rome - Britain and the north European nations became Protestant states — a political distinction.

Dissent in England on the other hand, is a term that described those who opposed the dictates of the established church - which was Anglican. In our specific case, Dissenters were those who would not conform to the attempts of King Charles II to re-establish the Anglican Church replete with the bishops that had emerged before the Stuarts, the Puritans and the Civil War.

In England, there were many shades of dissent and if a list of ‘evolving’ sects were to be made, it would be an impressive one. Consider Anabaptists, Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists in the 17th century alone, from which many more sects sprang forth. It was the nature of members of dissident groups that they held guiding principles fundamental to their lives:

These were:

Sanctity of the Gospels;

The preservation of 'Instituted Worship

The strict observance of a simple biblical manner of worship; and

To live one's life in strict accordance with the Ten Commandments.

They were determinedly independent, self-governing, democratic congregations who elected their Elders and appointed and paid their own ministers: there was no superior authority other than God.

In Charmouth there was much discussion on finding an appropriate name for their church; it was felt that the name should reflect the values of the membership. John Brice's original 'church' was the cob hut known initially as the Presbyterian Church. This had been the Floyers’ preference at Byrne Manor when John first sheltered there. When Mrs. Floyer and the daughters moved to Charmouth, John brought the title of the Presbyterian church with him. Evidently the designation 'Presbyterian' did not sit well with Charmouth community. The term had Calvinistic implications that were thought to be both severe and authoritarian, so the name was changed. Once established in Charmouth it satisfied the local members and attracted people from the surrounding villages who sought freedom of worship and the opportunity to gather and pray with like-minded souls. Hence the group became known as the 'Gathered' Church. Soon after it changed to a perfectly appropriate and descriptive title: The Congregational Church. And so it remained for over three centuries. Then in 1972 the English Presbyterians and the Congregational Church combined to form the United Reformed Church.

John Bryce, having become the first non-conformist minister in Charmouth, knocked down the little cob hut and built his own chapel. Half of it can still be seen on an east-west orientation at the east end of the Abbots House. It became known as ‘The Meeting’, or the ‘Old Meeting' and finally ‘The Brice Chapel’. By that time, John had been made residual legatee of the house by
Eleanor Floyer’s will, so from that time it became known as ‘The Manse’. He died there in 1716. From the time of his death, The Manse was to be the home of twenty successive Congregational ministers until 1930. From that list, a century elapsed before another prominent personality emerged who was to have a marked impact on The Manse and the village. His name was Benjamin Jeannes.

Jeannes was a man of considerable energies who was responsible for the major alterations to the Manse during the 1820s. These changes are described in greater detail in *The Village Echo No.26*. In brief, the changes were considerable: the main entrance to the house appears to have been moved to the west, involving alterations to what is the present dining room. Jeannes’ greatest effort however, was his western extension of the building to accommodate dormitory and classrooms for a private academy for the sons of gentlemen. As the minister he was 'provided for' by his congregation, so the creation of a private school in the building was perhaps a means of affording his modifications of the house.

The school was successful. One of the pupils, Henry Alford, the son of a clergyman from Curry Rival, became Dean of Canterbury and another became the captain of an East Indiaman. Yet another noteworthy presence at the school was the Art master named Galpin. Galpin painted many aspects of the village during his time and one particular painting is an impression of what he believed the front of the old Queens Armes might have looked like in earlier times. (See p.12 Echo 26) Another of Galpin's impressions and one of considerable charm is a view looking west from Eype Beach. See p.24

It was Rev. Jeannes who built the present chapel in 1815. It is a delightful little structure, simple, honest and reflective of the age. Oddly, it is built on a north-south orientation and in its construction, half of the old Brice chapel had to be demolished. The remaining half of the old chapel can be seen as the little kitchen extension sticking out of the west side of the present chapel.

Benjamin Jeannes died in harness in at the age of 55 after twenty-six years of dedicated service to the village. In Charmouth, it was a customary practice in those days for members to be buried in the chapel under the pew where they had once worshipped. John Brice had been buried adjacent to his pulpit in his chapel 1716. In 1838 Benjamin Jeannes was buried in his chapel under the pulpit from where he preached. The practice of interment in the chapel was stopped quite soon after; it became too popular and as one might suspect for sanitary reasons.

To the Present

There are documents filed under the Queens Armes File in the Pavey Room. Many of these are Searches, Land Tax forms, Mortgages and Conveyances. One of the old papers is for a Requisition for an Official Search.
under the Land Charges Act, a preliminary prior to the sale of a property. It is
dated 28th October 1930. It reads:

*All that piece and parcel of land situated at Charmouth in the County of
Dorset lying on the south side of the road leading from Bridport to Lyme Regis
together with the Dwelling house and cottage erected therein and formerly
known as the Manse and the Manse Cottage....*

This was the last occasion that The Manse was so named. Three days later,
there is a Conveyance dated 31st October 1930 between: **The Dorset
Congregational Association Incorporated to Mr. C.J. Stapleforth.** The
significance is that the house falls into private hands after all those years. All
subsequent documentation concerning the sale shows that it has reverted to its
ancient title: **The Queens Armes.**
In the file there is an abstract giving the changes of ownership and other details
from 1930 to 31st December 1958. From the list of owners, the following are
given:

1930 The Dorset Congregational Association to C.J. Stapleford
1930 - 1936 Conveyance C.J. Stapleford to L.M. De Ville
1936 — 1944 “ L.M. De Ville to Mrs. L.B.A. Teague
1944 — 1947 “ L.B.A. Teague to Mrs. F. Williamson
1947 — 1949 “ F Williamson to Mrs M.A. Hurst
1949 — 1951 “ M.A. Hurst to Mr. & Mrs. Jones
1951 – 1958 “ Mr. & Mrs. Jones to Mr. & Mrs. Harris

These are all the documents there are. As is the case with so many properties
the deeds may have been taken on the departure of former owners or possibly
they are still in a drawer of a solicitor's office — somewhere.

It is half a century since the last documented ownership of the
building was recorded. Obviously there have been many subsequent owners
and a great number of changes to the building. The only source of information
of these changes is in Mr. Pavey's notes on the house and these are brief to say
the least. He does tell of Stapleford's removal of the iron railings that once
stood in front of the building. Even that is significant historically, if you have a
postcard of the inn showing the iron railings in place, then you will know that
it is of a pre-1930 date. Exciting? In 1945 a Mr. Wills is known to have
uncovered a very large fireplace, an enormous ingle with the two ovens on the
east wall. This was the ancient kitchen, once part of The Manse Cottage and
the Angel Inn in the 17th century.
Doors, windows, stairs and fireplaces came and went, including that enormous chimney that once dominated the south wall. The fireplaces associated with this monolith can still be seen on both floors. The Tudor door on the south wall that once lead into the garden was uncovered in Mr. Pavey's time - within the early 20th century. It is a wonderful defensive structure and can be seen from the present dining room. There was a large chimneybreast and fireplace in the middle of the former dining room that was removed as recently as last year. It is as well that it was: it allowed for an enlargement of the present dining room and in so doing exposed a glorious oaken partition wall that reveals the handiwork of medieval craftsmen.

There are still mysteries: sources of information have to be gleaned from the senior villagers and it is by these means I have just learned that the Beasley family who lived there had the large kitchen and the flat built at the south-east extension sometime in the 60s? Yet another family name came up today – the Blackshaws, and I’m told there are others. Yet another problem is to find out who had the second westerly extension to the roof made and when? What were the dates of the little teashop at the west end of the building and who ran it? So goes the challenge.

This brings my quest up to date. I have lived opposite The Queens Armes and The Abbots House for many years. In that time, I have known three of the proprietors and have observed their efforts in maintaining and improving the building. Peter Miles was the proprietor of the Queens Armes for the longest spell, having been there for eighteen years. Peter had the extension on the south-west corner built as a flat for his parents. Peter and Jen suffered my incursions for much of that time and we are still friends. Phillip & Carole Mapstone followed, and the preservation of the frontal woodwork made great demands on their time.

The arrival of Nick and Sheila Gilbey, the current owners, has brought about extensive and exciting changes to the building - changes that were in every case sensitive to the historical worth of the house and the skills of those ancient craftsmen. In little more than a year every aspect of the internal structure has been carefully examined, treated and where necessary, sensitively enhanced. It was in this process of these improvements that a remarkable discovery was made. In removing old plaster from the interior west wall of the house, a hole in the wall that had been loosely plugged with small block of limestone was uncovered; within it - a horse’s tail. Enquiries at the museum told me that such ‘entombments’ of objects, often small animals and the like having been found in old buildings in the past. They agreed that the likelihood of an incarcerated horse being found in a hole that size would be unusual to say the least, and that such circumstance had never come to their notice in the past - not even a tail. Other sources speculated on
The Abbots House 2009

Paul Crosby and the "Wig"

Christ Church Charmouth
United Reformed Church
a possibility of a superstitious motive; black or white magic perhaps, or simply someone who was fond of his horse. This occasion came to my notice when Paul Crosby, the young builder who was responsible for the excellent reconstruction work in the Abbots House, banged on my front door, horsetail in hand, wondering if he had found King Charles’ wig! A rare moment.

For me it has been a time of ongoing excitement as each ancient feature had been revealed for the first time in centuries. It is a measure of Nick and Sheila's diligence and credit that these glorious features have been preserved.

Go and see for yourselves!

Peter M Press

Please Note: We’ve been taken to task regarding the absence of apostrophe: An apostrophe is not used in the name of the Abbots House.

Meetings Spring & Summer 2009

Thursday 12th February:
Charmouth before the Bypass  Rob Davis 7.30 Village Hall

Thursday 12th March:
The Cistercians of Forde Abbey Canon Rutter 7.30 Village Hall

Thursday 16th April:
Charmouth Beach: People & Things  The Group 7.30 the Elms

In June The Return of Bill Gordge. Activities to be published nearer date.

Further of presentations for the Summer will be given in Echo 29 in June.

An Apology

I very much regret the failure of the proposed Matinee presentation – an afternoon meeting - of January last. There was a great pile up of business at the office at that time. I am so sorry. The matinee proposal is still on however. It is suggested that the re-schedule should be during the winter months so that everyone is home before dark. I hope this will suit. Your comments would be appreciated.

Other than by The Village Echo three times a year, the only other way of communicating is by our excellent posters. Please check every telegraph pole at least every month!
Edna was born in Clapham on 13th March 1919. She liked to think that she had Scots forebears but she remained very much a Londoner. The family moved to Ealing in 1937 and there she remained until moving to Charmouth in the mid-seventies. She was proud to win a scholarship to St. Saviour’s and St. Olave’s Grammar School for Girls, where she did well. On leaving school she became a secretary working initially for a specialist in aerial photography. When war started the firm evacuated to Iffley, so Edna returned to her parents in Ealing and joined Thomas, the steel making firm, again as a secretary.

During this time she took up ballroom dancing and met a certain Peter Smith at dancing class. They married on 6th June 1942 and Edna became a housewife. Daughter Pat, (now known as Perry) arrived in 1944. They moved to Charmouth in the mid-seventies sometime after Peter retired, initially taking a flat in the Elms! They were delighted when No.15 St Andrew’s Drive became available, the bungalow that was to be Edna’s home for the rest of her life. Peter died in 1980. After giving him her support throughout their married life, Edna began to make a separate life of her own.

She joined, and took a very active part in, many local organisations. She became President of the W.I.; an enthusiastic Committee member of the Charmouth Gardeners; served the R.B.L. Women’s Section as Secretary, Committee Member, and latterly President. She was an active member of the Guild of Embroiderers and Lacemakers; (she and Jill Willshaw demonstrated lacemaking at various local events and she also helped stitch the New World Tapestry in Lyme). Edna was elected to the Parish Council in the 80s, and became Chairperson from 1990 to 1994. She was a founder member of the Twinners, and she served as a committee member of the Youth Club, (helping to get the new club hall built). She was a Friend of the Philpot Museum in Lyme and a member of the Friends of the Charmouth Heritage Coast Centre. She was also a member of the Charmouth Companions and the filing clerk to the Pavey Group. This represents a truly remarkable record of public service and she enjoyed it for all those years!

In her last year her failing eyesight and decreased mobility had limited her active participation but she still took a great interest in everything that was going on. She was a truly great lady and a great act to follow.

Pat Stapleton
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This list is of those people and organisations who have given most generously in support of the Village Echo and the Pavey Group.

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