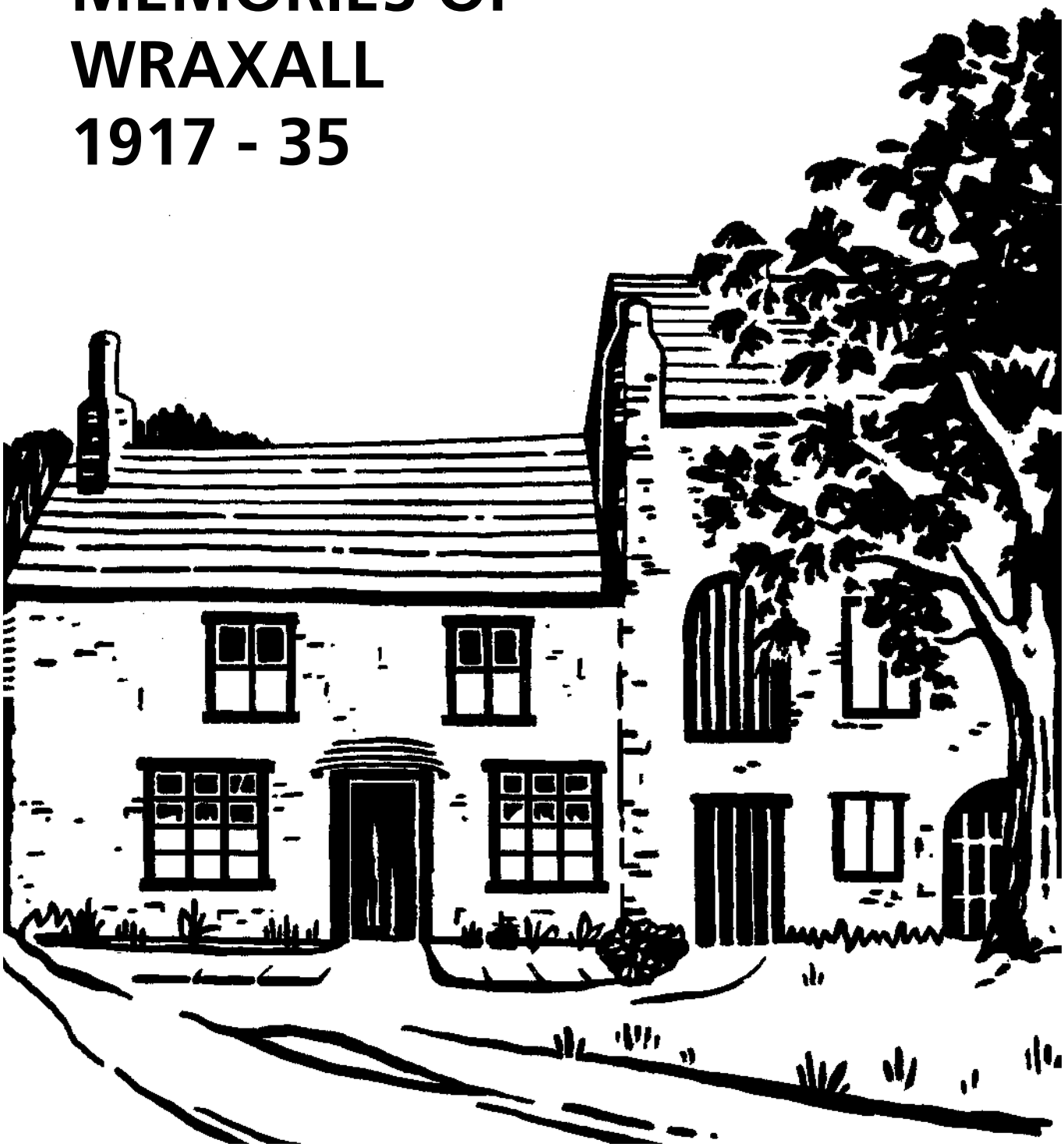
MEMORIES OF WRAXALL 1917 - 35



W.L.REW

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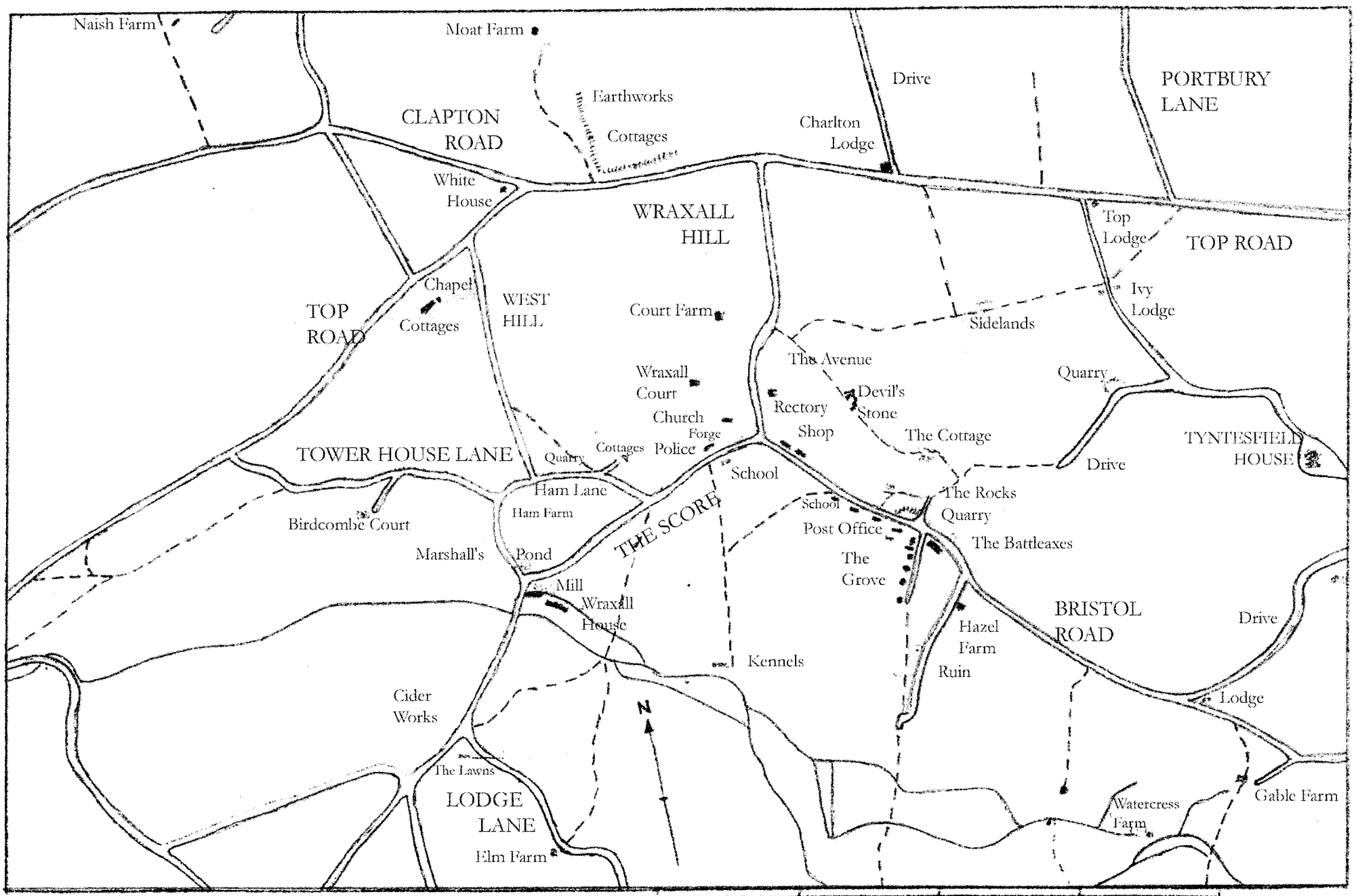


WRAXALL : 1936 MAP 1

THE VILLAGE (1)

Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself has said,
"This is my own, my native land".

This book is intended as a reminder of Wraxall as it was, forty to sixty years ago. It cannot hope to be a complete story, much less a 'History of Wraxall', but it is written so that those who come after us may be better able to realise what Wraxall (and to some extent other villages) were like before they were destroyed by the rapid changes which have taken place in the last twenty or thirty years.

The 'built-up' part of the village is mainly contained between the B3130 and B3128 roads, with its western boundary just beyond Tower House Lane and its eastern boundary beyond the road through Tyntesfield Estate which comes out on the B3130 about a quarter of a mile before Belmont Hill.

Since the period covered by this booklet (roughly 1917 to 1935) the names of some of the roads have been changed; in general on the map (Map 1) I have used the old names, but to help identify them and to avoid confusion, here is a list of the old and new names:

Old Name	**Present Name**
Clevedon Road	Bristol Road (B3130)
Top Road	Clevedon Road (B3128)
West Hill	Stoney Steep
Parson's Lane (or Wraxall Hill)	Wraxall Hill
Clapton Road	White House Road

(The portion of the B3128 now called West Hill was merely 'Part of the Top Road')

Also shown on the map are the principal landmarks of the village, including the Church, Rectory, Cross tree, Forge, two schools, the Battleaxes Hotel,and several big houses. The mill has since been destroyed in a road-widening exercise, and only ruins remain of the Kennels. Naish House was a ruin before the period covered by this account: it was burnt out in 1900.

It is hoped that this booklet will serve to jog the memories of others who may be able to add their stories to mine. It will contain errors…..memory is a fickle thing, especially when stretched over sixty years, but if people are encouraged to write to the Nailsea and District Local History Society, pointing out the errors and helping to correct them, it will have served a useful purpose.

I am indebted to Trevor Bowen for the cover design. The illustrations have been produced from photographs; acknowledgements are made in each case to the person who kindly supplied the original. I am indebted to my friends who have pointed out some of the worst gaffes; for the rest it's all mine. I can only hope that no one will say,

with Sheridan, *"The Right Honourable Gentleman is indebted to his memory for his jests, and to his imagination for his facts".*

THE MAIN ROADS

"Does the road wind up hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end."

Let us take an imaginary walk through the Wraxall of the period before the 1920's. It will be convenient to walk along the left hand side of the B3130 road from the Nailsea boundary by what is now Marconi's and walk to the Flax Bourton boundary near Belmont Hill, returning to the starting point along the other side of the road. This will be followed by a similar journey along the B3128 from the top of Tower House Lane to Portbury Lane and back, and then similar journeys along the side roads and the footpaths.

THE CLEVEDON ROAD (B3130)

From the Nailsea boundary, the first important buildings were Cook's sawmills. The frontage of these was sold to Redvers Coate who built a Cider Works on the site: strictly, Coates' Cider Works were in Wraxall…just. The remainder of the sawmills site has been redeveloped as a trading estate, and now (1981) the Cider Works is being developed as a factory for Marconi Avionics.

There were three cottages following the Cider Works; the first of these was occupied by Mr. And Mrs. Henderson. In later years it was used as office space by Coates'; it has now been demolished (March, 1981) to provide space for the roundabout at the entrance to Marconi's. The other two cottages are still occupied.

After the three cottages the next building was a stone store shed opposite the Mill and then no more buildings on that side right up to the top of the Score. However, as we walk down the short hill from Marconi's we come to the river. This area has been greatly changed during the last twenty years or so due to a road straightening exercise: I will deal with the changes later on. Reference to the left hand part of Map 2 will show what the road was like before the changes.

At the bottom of the hill we came first to the river wall. In this wall there was a gap, which led to a flight of steps down to the water. At one time, before a water supply was made available by the Friendship Inn, this was the water supply for part of Nailsea. This gap in the wall, and, in fact, much of the wall itself, can still be seen, only now it is to the right of the main road and is the left hand boundary of the lay-by.

This end of the river was very dirty; it was said that the sewage from Wraxall House flowed into the river at this point. Be that as it may, at the other end of the water was a ramp which also led down to the water--- it was clean at this point, and was used to

give access to the water for carts, which would be loaded with churns and tanks for the water.

The road then rose to the end of Tower House Lane, and then turned sharply to the right: the route can still be seen as the old road is now the lay-by at the left of the new road. The iron railings along the right hand side of the lay-by are the railings which were the boundary of the field behind Wraxall House, and the raised bank behind the railings was part of the field. Finally, the road turned left and followed more or less the same route as today.

Continuing up the Score, the next road on the left is the entrance to Ham Lane. A flight of steps leads up to a raised pavement, and at the top of the steps there was an Ordnance Survey Bench Mark on the wall. This is probably still there, buried in the ivy. The pavement drops down to road level half-way up the Score, and at one point is only about a foot wide….a very dangerous bit of road work.

At the top of the steep part of the Score, on the left, is first the entrance to Wraxall Court and then the lane leading to the west gate of the church. At the top of the lane, just outside the gate, is the house built by Richard Vaughan for the master of the village school, which at that time was inside the churchyard: the old school building is now the church library, although it does not seem to be much used as such now: in the 1920's and 1930's it was used as a library and for the Sunday School.

Returning to the road, there are two very nice cottages built above the road level. The first of these was the police station, with its black notice board carrying, at various times of the year, notices concerning Colorado beetle, sheep dipping, warble fly and, very early in my youth, licences for armorial bearings and for male domestic servants.

The new churchyard I can remember being made and consecrated. Some cottages at the corner of Church Lane were demolished to make it, including one in which Mr. Dan'l Windo lived: I understand one of these cottages was the original Post Office for Wraxall. On the other side of the lane was the village Pound (ruined), the wall of which has now been nicely incorporated into a building at the forge.

The forge was operated by Arthur Warry, a real character. Many stories are told of him, mostly apocryphal, but he was a popular man and a great blacksmith. He carried on with horseshoeing to a very great age, and with his son George used to do the rounds of the riding stables. His youngest son Bob still lives at the Forge.

Immediately after the forge, at the junction with Wraxall Hill, stood the Cross Tree. It was always ailing and of course had to be cut down, a victim of Dutch Elm disease. A horse-chestnut tree has been planted in its place, and Bob Warry has planted crocus and daffodil bulbs around it.

From the Cross Tree we come to the high wall of the Rectory garden, and then at the bottom of the slope was the village grocery stores. This was run by Mrs. Westcombe, and when she retired the shop was taken by Mr. and Mrs. Ware. When they retired

the shop and cottage behind it were demolished and rebuilt as two houses. Two cottages next to it were refurbished as one house (Wisteria Cottage): these may have been used as a temporary Rectory when the original one was being repaired, in the early 1800's.

One small reminder of the shop remains. At the rear of the shop was a large yard with a big gate opening on the road. When the shop was demolished and the new house built nearer the rectory wall, the gateway in the wall was built up. Even today the difference in shade of the old and new parts of the wall is visible.

Next to Wisteria Cottage is the Wheatground, with its superb holly hedge, reputed to be the longest holly hedge in the country before all the gaps were made in it (others believe the longerst holly hedge was the Tyntesfield hedge, further along the road). The top of the Wheatground is bounded by the Avenue, while to the right of the field there are two cottages, one of which is still occupied….both were occupied in my day. These cottages were approached by a footpath opposite the Post Office and also by one from the top of the Rocks. Access was difficult for heavy loads, e.g. coal, and they had no water supply --- the only water supply for these and many others was rain water caught in barrels.

In the high field above the Post Office were the gardens for the Boys' School. It was full of stones and infested with rabbits: if you could make a success of gardening there you could cope with almost anything.

Next we come to the quarry with the steep path (The Rocks) by the side of it between the quarry and Rock Farm. The path up the Rocks gives access first to the track to the two cottages, and then carries on to the end of the Avenue and continues as a road through part of Tyntesfield.

The quarry was still producing stone for road making when I was a boy. I remember the great square heaps of broken stone, and the men breaking the stone by hand. This was a highly skilled job, as the stone used in road building was graded, with large stones at the base of the road, followed by smaller ones above it and smaller still at the top, the whole being consolidated by rolling, using a steam-roller. These men could break the stone to the required sizes, unlike the procedure used in a quarry such as the one in Portbury Lane, where the stone was crushed by machinery and then graded by being passed into revolving drums with various sizes of holes in them. This system saved skilled labour, of course, but meant perhaps an over-production of unwanted sizes of stone; the men at Wraxall would produce only the required size.

Next after the Rocks we have Rock Farm, and then we come to "Bankside": this is a pair of cottages at the top of a steep path, and were the cottages for the workers on Hazel Farm. Next to these a very nice house was built by Frankie Stevens for Miss Penny.

The field next to this was used for grazing, but at the top was a small pavilion for use by the village cricket club. Next to this field came the Doreen Hut. Named after Doreen

Gibbs, daughter of the first Lord Wraxall by his first wife, it was a wooden building on brick piers and was intended as a meeting hall for the village. This has now disappeared; all that remains is a clump of trees and the small gate in the wall.

We are now nearing the end of the built-up part of Wraxall, if we can call it built-up! Four cottages occupied by four employees of Tyntesfield, followed by the Jubilee Cottages for retired employees, then by a more recent house built for the butler of Tyntesfield House (Mr. Hemmings) and then we come to the lodge. Beyond this is the wide expanse of Tyntesfield Park: during the Second World War an American army camp was built on this, and for a time after the war, when the troops had moved out, it was used for temporary housing. All this has completely disappeared and the land has been restored to its previous use.

Next to the far end of Tyntesfield Park is an estate road with another lodge: this is the last building in Wraxall alongside the road. There is only a field belonging to Belmont Farm and then we come to Belmont Hill, which is on the eastern boundary of Wraxall.

We must now retrace our steps along the other side of the road. Passing two fields, we come first to Gable Farm. This, sadly, seems to be falling into ruin, but in my day it was a very well built farmhouse, occupied by Mr. Davis, "Farmer Hop-on" to most of us.

At the top of the small hill beyond Gable Farm we come to a bridle path to Flax Bourton, and then to a block of three cottages, which were the homes of employees on Gable Farm. Next to these was a footpath to Watercress Farm, then a small copse. A little way further along we come to Holly Cottage, where lived Frank Stevens, the builder, of whom more later. Next to this was the lane leading to Orchard Farm, and then St. John's, where Mr. Coate the cider maker lived.

We are now approaching the busier part of Wraxall; the next field is the ploughground of Hazel Farm, then comes the home ground and the garden, and then the lane leading to the farm, and continuing as a path to Backwell. I shall be writing more of this farm later.

Next we come to the shoe shop built after the First World War for Dick Mitchell, and then to what was the Battleaxes Hotel. This area has changed considerably since those days; the stables of the hotel were used for a number of things, in fact, Dick Mitchell started his shoe repairing in one of them before his shop was built. The room over the stables was used as a rifle range. This block was destroyed by fire a few years ago.

The hotel itself has changed. I understand that many years ago it was called the Gordon Crest Inn; this is the name it bears on the 1837 Tythe Map. However, to us it was the Battleaxes Hotel: the name referred to the arms of Tyntesfield, to whom it belonged. When the hotel was sold by Tyntesfield, the right to the name was not sold with it, so a new name had to be chosen, though heaven knows why Widdicombe, which is neither in Avon nor Somerset. I suppose to a townsman anywhere in the West Country must be connected with Widdicombe.

Attached to the Battleaxes but not forming part of it was the Club Room. This building also belonged to Tyntesfield, and has been sold to the hotel and now forms part of it.

We are now at the top of the Grove; later on I will be writing a lot about this lane, as it is the part of Wraxall of which I know most----I was born there! We then come to Quarry Farm and then to four bungalows which were built in the 1960's for retired people. The building of these bungalows meant filling in the duck pond by the farm buildings: this was no loss, as the pond was very smelly in warm weather, and was no ornament at any time.

Next to the field on which these bungalows were later built was a corrugated iron building, which was the Scouts Hut. Later on, another village club was built in front of it: the other club, as I said before, was owned by Lord Wraxall, and the members had a disagreement with him, so they "upped and went", first to a temporary place at Quarry Farm and then to a new place when it was ready. Wraxall then had <u>two</u> village clubs.

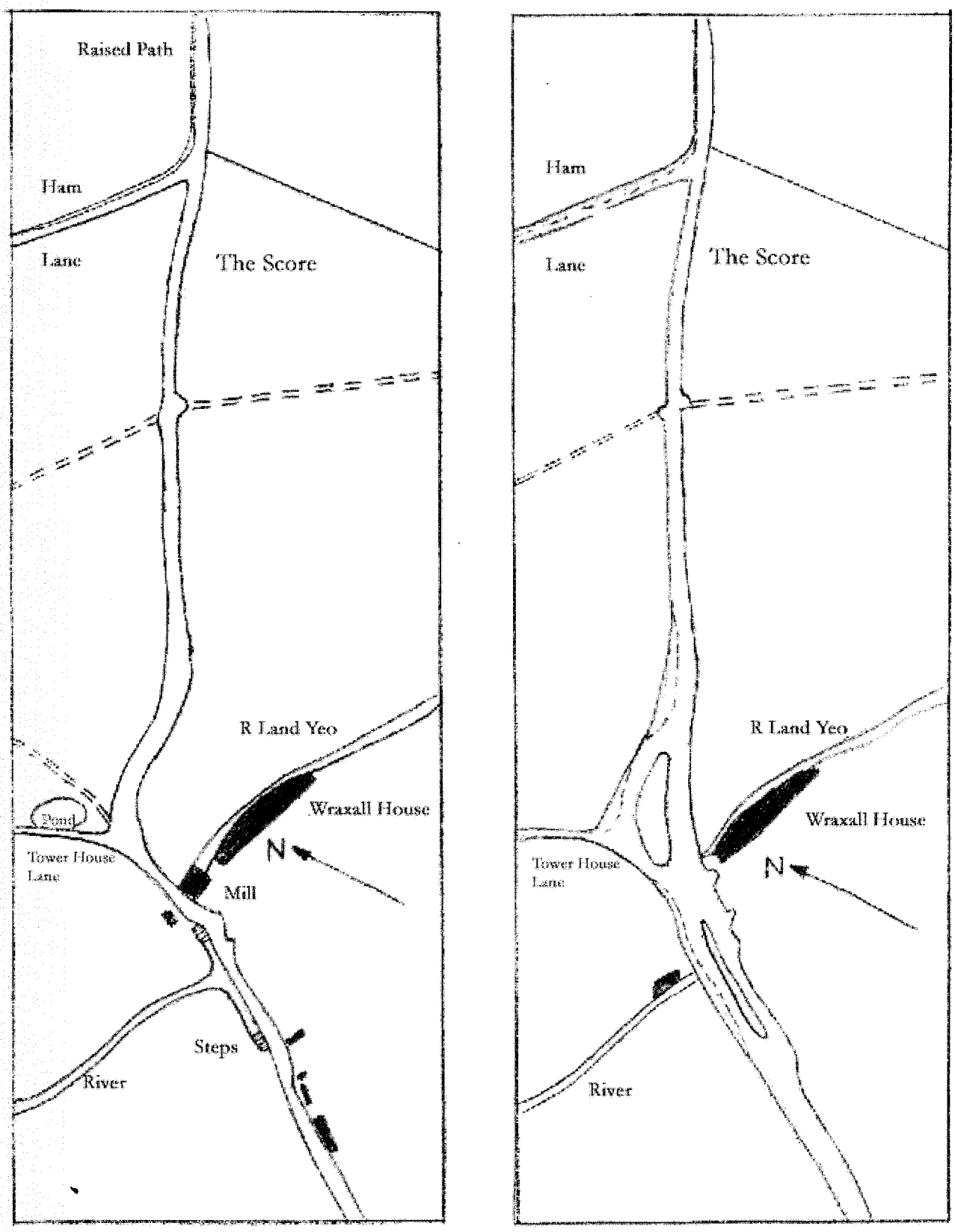
Next to this comes a ladies' hairdresser, which was the Post Office, and then two cottages. In the cottage next to the Post Office lived Charlie Derrick, who worked on Rock Farm, and in the next an employee of Gable Farm.

The field next to these two cottages was at one time the village allotment garden. This, however, was not much used, as most houses had plenty of garden attached to them, so the ground was bought by Mr. Charles Russell, who turned it into a market garden, and later built, first a garage to house his lorry and then the bungalow which is still there.

Two more cottages follow by the side of the road, and then the Boys' School. This was in use until just before the Second World War; the boys of the village went there from the infants' school at about the age of seven.

Between the Boys' School and the Girls' and Infants' School is a large field of over twenty acres. This we always called Stump Park, but I see that an alternative name is Stubbs Park. We pupils at the Boys' School were permitted to use this field for occasional games which could not be played in the playground, and it was in Stump Park, on the flat part at the bottom that Mr. Haining first got us to measure out an area of one acre, to get that fixed in our minds. The Girls' School also had the use of the part at the other end of the field. I think this was just a working arrangement with the farmer who farmed the land with Gable Farm (a long way away), possibly because his own son was attending the school.

After the Girls' School we come to the top of the steep part of the Score, and at the bottom is the entrance to a footpath to the Kennels. These cottages, ruins now, were a very ancient place which at one time was called Whelpes Court. The cottages, at any rate some of them, were lived in when I was a boy, and Mother told us she was born there!



1936 1976

Wraxall : Bottom of The Score

MAP 2

We now come to a part of Wraxall which has suffered much in the cause of progress. There was a severe S-bend at the bottom of the Score, and drivers had to be careful when coming down the hill. The road has been straightened, so they no longer need to take care, and don't. (Incidentally, there was no pavement here). The old mill was demolished, and the changes can be seen by comparing the two halves of Map 2.

The mill itself had finished working about the beginning of the century. The mill and cottage were built at right angles to the wall of Wraxall House, and a very fine horse chestnut tree stood in front of the mill---the stump of this tree was still standing when this booklet was being written. Mrs. Griffin and her son Alfie lived in the cottage; Alfie did shoe repairs in the mill while Mrs. Griffin ran a little sweets and tobacco shop from the cottage.

By a coincidence, I came across an interesting relic of the mill while I was writing this. As Wraxall House was up for sale, I asked and received permission to go in and take photographs for our archives. In the grounds I was able to examine the garden wall, and found, built into the wall, the old millstones. We now have, in our files, photographs of the stones.

The layout of the mill leat was interesting. A hundred yards or so upstream from Wraxall House was a sluice gate, which when raised allowed the water to run into a channel around the end of the gardens of the House, diverting it from the mill leat. Another sluice gate at the back of the mill could be lowered to shut off the water from the mill or raised to let it enter. To operate the mill, the mill sluice would be lowered to cut off the bypass stream. Both streams passed under the road in separate conduits, and joined the river on the far side of the road.

Wraxall House was occupied by Captain (later Rear-Admiral) Tweedie in my day. The route of the old road passed Wraxall House, the boundary of the road being the wall of the house. Again, there was no pavement, and the old road still exists as the lay-by on that side of the road.

At the foot of the next hill were three cottages built on a plinth above road level: these have been demolished. At the top of the hill were three more cottages built some way above the road level: these have been demolished and one house built on the site. There were relics of old coal workings behind the cottages, so we children were not allowed to go into the field to play when we were visiting our aunt!

Following these was the yard of Neate's Garage (still there), and there was a row of cottages behind the yard. Beyond the garage were two nice brick-built houses; in one of these lived our local news reporter, Mr. Hodge, while in the other lived Mr. King, the AA scout. Finally we come back to our starting point at the end of Lodge Lane.
The big house on the Nailsea side of Lodge Lane, called the Lawn, is also in Wraxall: the boundary here is very confusing. The house was occupied by Mr. Elliot Armstrong and Mrs. Armstrong, with their daughter, Rachel, (who later married Dr. Reg. White, of Nailsea) and their son, Howard. We choir boys at Wraxall Church thought a lot of Elliot Armstrong, as he left a sum of money on trust when he died to pay the choirboys;

before this we were unpaid. To qualify for the payment of sixpence (old money) we had to attend choir practice and one service on Sunday.

Well, that just about covers the major points of interest along the Clevedon Road (B3130). Let us now take a similar walk along the Top Road (B3128).

THE TOP ROAD (B3128)

This is the name we always gave to what is now the Bristol/Clevedon road. When I was small the road was not tarred--- it was made of rolled stones, and in the summer it was very dusty. Mother could always tell if one of us had come home from visiting Grandma via the Top Road instead of Stoney Steep from the state of our shoes.

Starting from the top of Tower House Lane, which is effectively the boundary with Tickenham, the road rises steeply past a number of modern houses. At the top of the slope is a road called Cuckoo Lane, which goes up to Cadbury Camp.

Continuing along the Top Road, we come to the White House. The house bearing that name now is a modern one: the original one was built by one of my ancestors. In Victorian times a soldier who had given long and meritorious service might be given, not a medal, but a piece of land on which to build a house for his retirement. That was the origin of the White House, which was built by one of my grandmother's ancestors, a Rogers. This passed to Grandmother Rogers who lived there as a widow with young children. Uncle Billy Pope, her brother, came to live there to help her support the children. In my day it was occupied by Aunt Ginnie (Mrs. Garland) and her daughter Nellie (Mrs. Waite). Later Grandma (Mrs. Millicent Youd) lived there with Mrs. Waite.

The road to the left which passes the side of the White House was called Clapton Lane by us; it is now called White House Road. This goes to Clapton Hill, passing the end of Cuckoo Lane and the road to Cadbury Camp. At the top of Clapton Hill are the ruins of Naish House, which was destroyed by fire when Mother was a girl, I believe at Christmas, 1900. Naish House at the time of writing was in Wraxall by a few yards, Naish Farm being in Clapton. A proposal is under consideration which would put Naish House into Clapton.

Naish House was being used as a boys' private school at the time of the fire --- fortunately the boys were on holiday so there was no loss of life. It was a very ancient place, perhaps best known for its connection with Bishop Ken.

Returning after this brief diversion to the Top Road, from the junction by the White House we carry on towards Bristol, and the next place of interest on the left is Moat Farm, one of the few moated farmhouses in the country. The boys from the family of farm workers (by the name of Cox) used to attend the Boys' School when I was there, and they told us that the field to the right of the path leading to the farm was the site of a battle between Romans and Britons. I wouldn't attach too much importance to the story, but it's true the field is a mass of mounds and ditches: close by a Romano-British settlement is marked on the OS map.

About a half a mile further on the road rises, and at the top of the hill we pass the end of the drive to Charlton House, now the Downs School. The next road on the left was Portbury Lane, which really was a lane in those days, and beyond this the road continues to rise into Failand.

Retracing our steps as before on the other side of the road, the first building is the Top Lodge to the drive to Tyntesfield House. A hundred yards or so further on is a footpath across the field which leads to Sidelands. The road then passes the top of Parson's Lane (Wraxall Hill) and then skirts the top of the fields belonging to Court Farm. After bearing left opposite the White House the next lane is the top of Stoney Steep. Further on again we pass several market gardens, and in fact the whole of this side of the Top Road is almost an unbroken line of them as far as the top of Tower House Lane, where we started. These gardens used to grow strawberries and violets as their principal crops: the one at the top of Stoney Steep (always called West Hill by us) was cultivated by my grandmother.

THE SIDE ROADS

"Like one that on a lonesome road,
Doth walk in fear and dread…"

The side roads of the village in general join the two main roads, so it will be convenient to start our imaginary walk from the B3130 and move towards the B3128. As in the case of the main roads, *"The road winds up hill all the way",* this being the penalty of exploring a village set on the side of a hill.

TOWER HOUSE LANE

At the bottom of the Score, a few yards north of the site of the mill, Tower House Lane branches off to the left from the layby. The lane is named after Tower House, an old name for Birdcombe Court: a row of fairly modern houses and bungalows is built on the left-hand side of the road, while on the right is a field, part of Ham Farm. Until a few years ago there was a large pond in this field (marked on the Map 1 as Marshall's Pond). This has now been filled in and grassed.

At the top of the slope there is a T-junction; Tower House Lane continues to the left, the right-hand arm being Ham Lane, which I shall refer to later. Turning left, the road continues to rise, passing a disused quarry on the right, and giving at the top of the slope the first good view of Birdcombe Court. Over fifty years ago I had a very interesting object lesson here.

Further up the lane a piece of land had been cleared of trees, and we were permitted to collect firewood from the site, so Mother and I took the old trolley up to load it and take the wood home. I had been told that there was 'a secret passage' which went from Tower House to 'somewhere near Wraxall Church', and which went under the road at the top of the slope. Certainly when the heavy iron wheels went over the road

it sounded hollow at two points a few yards apart. This, of course, could be just a geological feature, as the shape of the land makes it difficult to imagine a tunnel beneath it, but --- there is the story, and I've actually heard the hollow sound!

Another interesting experience I had in Tower House Lane was in connection with one of the bungalows on the hill to the right. The problem with these bungalows was the lack of a water supply, which made them something of a fire risk: for this and other reasons it was usual to build a large storage tank for rain water. Mr. John Russell built one under the verandah of his bungalow, and when I visited him one day he showed me around. To my surprise he also had a well with a spring, giving him a fresh water supply. On asking him how he knew where to drill, he gave me a demonstration of water-divining, and traced the course of the underground stream to the boundary of his property and beyond. He got me to try it (not successfully), and to grip his wrists to confirm he wasn't playing tricks; I have since learned that my Uncle Henry could do it.

Further up on the left is a footpath through the woods, leading to a stone stile and to Jacklands Bow. The road continues a little further and comes out on the Top Road.

HAM LANE

Ham Lane is a short stretch of road from the bottom of the steep part of the Score to the T-junction in Tower House Lane. Working as before from the main road, Ham Lane branches off to the left by the flight of steps which gives access to the raised footpath. That part of the path along Ham Lane has been neglected and is somewhat overgrown, but is still useable.

On the right-hand side of the road are a hedge and bank; there used to be many wild violets in that bank, including a clump of red ones (yes, my flower book confirms there are such things!).

I've searched, but I can't find any now. A little further the raised path finishes by a gate leading to two cottages belonging to Wraxall Court. These cottages are built on or adjacent to the parish Poorhouse; this was no longer used for its original purpose after about 1839 when Workhouses were set up following the Poor Law Act of 1834.

Following the road, we pass a small quarry on the right and then the ruin of a limekiln which used the stone from the quarry. This ruin has been incorporated into a farm building in the rick-yard (mow-barton to us!) of Ham Farm. Past the yard we come to Ham Farm on the left and the start of West Hill (now Stoney Steep) on the right. The road then goes down a hill and joins Tower House Lane.

An interesting but disturbing state of affairs comes to light in this lane. There is a footpath which branches off to the right just past the gate leading to the Court Cottages, and follows a high wall into a field called the Coombe. This path continues across the Coombe and comes out on Stoney Steep. The footpath is completely blocked with brambles and is impassable.

This is a disturbing state of affairs, as this was the official way for the people of West Hill to go to the Church and for the children to go to school; it is still marked as a footpath on the map.

The path passes the top of the quarry referred to above, being protected by an iron fence. Mother used to tell us that she was the cause of the fence being there, as she had fallen over the edge on her way to school. When the Parson heard about this he wanted the quarry fenced, and when Henry Vaughan wanted anything done it was done and fast.

WRAXALL HILL

Wraxall Hill, popularly known as Parson's Lane, and referred to by Rev. Masters as 'Parsonage Lane', joins the B3130 at the Cross Tree and comes out on the Top Road. It is not a very interesting road except for the points to which it gives access.

It passes first the lych gate at the Church: the large gate by the side of the lych gate is narrower now than when I was a boy, when one large gate filled the space between the walls. I remember also at that time that over the lych gate was a gas lamp; this, and the lamps in the Church, were supplied by a gas generator in the lean-to building outside the Library.

Further up the hill are two entrances to the Rectory on the right hand side and an entrance to Wraxall Court on the left. Immediately after the entrance to the Court we come to a raised footpath. This has been used for many years to dump material cut from the bank during road maintenance, and is now impassable. This was an important safety feature in my day, as Wraxall Hill, with its gradient of 1 in 8, was very dangerous in case of brake failure, and the high path kept pedestrians safely out of danger. The road is still very dangerous, and it would be a great help if the path were re-opened: it would only mean removing the heaps of rubbish.

At the end of the footpath, on the S-bend in the middle of the hill is the entry to Court Farm. This is followed by a patch of waste land covered with small trees and then, on the right hand side are the entrances to two footpaths: I will return to these later. Further up at the level stretch of road in the middle of the hill is a piece of road which neither my mother nor my aunt liked to traverse, at least alone. They always felt there was some evil presence there, so if anyone knows of any reason for it perhaps it would give a pointer to some dark mystery of bygone ages.

In this same area there was a small disused quarry on the right, used for dumping. There was also an iron road sign put up by the Cyclists' Touring Club, warning of the steep hill. This has now been replaced by a modern sign.

From here the road rises and comes out at the Top Road at a Y-junction. There is one interesting feature about the road itself --- for a large part of its length it has been cut through rocks: it is not run through an existing valley nor does it go over the hill. One might have expected that the road would have come off the Top Road at a point a few

hundred yards towards Clevedon and then come down through the Coombe past Court Farm, removing the need for so much labour. It might be an interesting study for someone to determine when the road was cut, why it was cut, and if there ever was a road through the Coombe.

THE GROVE

The Grove today is very different from what it was when I was a boy. Then, it was a rather uneven, unmetalled lane, leaving the B3130 by the old Village Club. There were ten cottages, all on the right-hand side of the lane, in semi-detached pairs, and there was a well outside No. 3 which supplied all the drinking water for the cottages. Some of the cottages were very old: I have it on good authority that our two cottages (Nos. 7 & 8) were built in the early 1800's. Others were fairly modern. I shall be returning to these cottages later on in this booklet.

Now the Grove is a road serving a large estate of houses. More houses were built in the 1950's between the pairs of cottages on the right-hand side, while a large number of houses were built on the left in three fields which were, respectively, the Battleaxes orchard, an allotment garden, and the top orchard of Hazel Farm. A sewage disposal plant was built in the field at the end of the lane, and it must be admitted that the installation of drainage instead of cesspits and tap-water instead of well-water made life much easier, although these came after I had left. Another improvement was the supply of electricity, much more convenient than paraffin!

FOOTPATHS

WEST HILL (STONEY STEEP)

There is a very rough track, leaving Ham Lane opposite Ham Farm and coming out on the Top Road. It is unsuitable for vehicles over most of its length, with overhanging trees near the top. It serves a few cottages, running for some distance alongside the Coombe and then past the wall to the coverts belonging to Wraxall Court for the rest of its length. Near the top, on the left, there used to be a path leading to more cottages and then, after another steep climb, a second path leads to the same cottages. I assume traffic to these cottages now makes its way from the Top Road and not from Stoney Steep, which means there is now no need for the lower path, except for the poor pedestrian who has to climb the very steep path. The lane then continues to the Top Road.

The cottages are of some interest. There are three in a row; the farthest was the home of my grandmother. It had a considerable range of outhouses, and grandma told us that at one time the house had a beer-licence. She had the original licence in her possession, but it has since disappeared.

While writing this account, my attention was called, by my sister, who had been reading the 1841 census returns, to the fact that someone by the name of Rogers (my

grandmother's maiden name) is recorded as being a beer seller. This would appear to confirm the story.

In the second cottage lived Mr. and Mrs. Baden, while in the first lived Mathew Crane and his wife, with their daughter Catherine. Close to the house was a chapel, disused, but in excellent order ---it made a good playroom for us in bad weather! This has now been demolished and no sign of it remains.

THE AVENUE

I mentioned when writing about Wraxall Hill, the two footpaths from the S-bend. The path on the left, now blocked, led to Sidelands, while the one which goes straight ahead is the Avenue.

The Avenue passes some cottages, then the small yard of Rectory Farm, and then on through the wood. A short way along is a hollow in the bank on the left-hand side. It is now mostly filled with earth and small trees, but when I was a boy it contained a couple of huge standing stones. These were always known as the Devil's Stone, or Devil's Seat: I never heard any reason for it, but we were told it was the entrance to a tunnel to 'near Charlton House'. This seems highly unlikely.

Further on, to the right, is the top of the Wheatground.: I never remember any wheat being grown there. There was a story current that an old lady was turned out of her cottage here to enlarge the field, so the old lady laid a curse on the land, saying that the hedge to her property would never be prevented from growing, thus showing to posterity the evil that had been done to her. Mother and Dad both said the gate to the old lady's cottage could still be seen, and up to a short time ago when the fence was replaced, there were, in fact, <u>two</u> small gates. I used to think it was the one nearest Wraxall Hill, but if so, the old lady's hedge has gone, but my sister is sure it's the second one, a hundred yards or so further on; if this is correct, the curse must still be working --- in spite of attempts to cultivate the ground, blackberry briars still continue to grow there.

The Avenue skirts the back of the Cottage, and later joins the path from the top of the Rocks. Further on is a disused quarry which used to supply the stone for the roads on Tyntesfield. Finally, by the farm buildings, the road turns left and climbs past the site of Ivy Lodge (of which nothing remains) to the top lodge on the Top Road.

Ivy Lodge consisted of two cottages, one on each side of the drive, and joined together by a square arch with castellated top. Mrs. Goodridge lived in one of them, but I could never see the point of an extra lodge half way down a drive, when there was already a lodge at the top entrance.

MINOR PATHS

This is probably the best place to mention a few of the minor paths in the village, that is, those which are hardly more than tracks. Others will be mentioned when writing about the farms.

From the end of The Grove, over the gate into Nutwell, a footpath runs to Backwell Bow. The path passed a pond (which dried out in summer) and thence to a stile in the hedge of the bottom orchard of Hazel Farm. From here it ran to a stile at the end of the orchard, then via a short path to a wooden bridge. The other end of the bridge led to the lane from Hazel Farm. (Map 3).

Another footpath links up with this; we used to call it 'The Old Lane'. It is the access lane to Hazel Farm; starting by the shoe shop it passes the farmhouse and continues as a lane, getting steadily rougher and wetter. I walked that lane a few months ago, and was pleased to see that, although the surroundings have changed, quite a few of my old landmarks still exist. There was an old ruined building just inside the gate to the bottom orchard: my father thought it was an old stable, but it appeared to be very heavily built for that use. Further on was an old well: this and the stable can still be traced. Over the well was a wild gooseberry bush, which is still going strong! Beyond this the land bends to the right, and links up with the path from the footbridge.

The combined paths now turn to the left, and peter out at a gate. From here onwards they are just a track, except that here and there it has a hard surface where stone has been rolled in. I used to think that this was where the farmers had made up the road to make it easier to use in the winter, but the Tithe Map of 1837 shows it as a road, so perhaps it is the remains of a longer road. The path goes past a gully where there used to be a couple of willow trees, then across another field to 'Wumbles Bridge' and thence to a farm on Backwell Bow.

While I was writing this I found that the Tithe Map shows the fields either side of Wumbles Bridge as 'Wamrrells'.

There is another footpath between a stile close to the Boys' School and Lodge Lane, with a branch to the bottom of the Score. From the stile, the path went down the steep part of Stump Park (or Stubbs Park) to the stile in the lower corner of the field, close to several elm trees, now gone. Over the stile it led either to the Kennels or to a path alongside the river. Before reaching Wraxall House there was a way over Cradle Bridge, from which the path led to the end of Lodge Lane where it joins the B3130. An alternative route passed Cradle Bridge without crossing it and followed the bank of the river, coming out by the Mill at the bottom of the Score.

Another footpath still exists, up the Rocks, a very steep path by the side of the quarry opposite the top of the Grove. It starts from the main road and finally meets the path from the Avenue, then continuing as the road through Tyntesfield which I have already mentioned. At the top of the first steep part of the Rocks is a footpath to the left; this leads to the pair of cottages which I referred to when writing about the Wheatground.

Another steep path, unofficial, came off to the left a little further on and went up by the side of the orchard of the cottage. This gave us a short cut to the Cottage but was very steep; it has now disappeared.

Finally there is still in existence a bridle path between Gable Farm and the farm cottages. I am told it goes to Flax Bourton, but I must confess, to my shame, I have never walked it!

THE FARMS

'And departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of Time.'

Longfellow, of course, didn't know the Wraxall of my youth, or the farms. For much of the year footprints were left in mud, not sand; red, gooey mud. My father worked on Hazel Farm, and during the winter months was wading in the stuff for most of the day. A few months ago I revisited the farm, over forty years after leaving Wraxall, and the farmer advised us to wear Wellingtons if we wanted to walk down the fields. We wouldn't have dreamed of going there without them anyway!

I shall write more about Hazel Farm than the others because I know more about it. As children, we and our friends had free run of the farm, subject to the normal disciplines of country-bred children --- no shaking apples off the trees, no breaking hedges, shut the gates behind you, etc. My parents were quite firm about this, possibly because my father worked there, but all the children observed the same rules even though they had no connection with the farm.

In my first few years the farm, which was owned by Colonel Gibbs, who later became the first Lord Wraxall, was tenanted by Bill Child. He and his sister Mary Child ran the farm, with help from Mrs. Marshall and, I believe, a Miss Weaver, in the house, while the outside workers were my father and Sam Butchers.

After the death of Farmer Child in, I believe, 1917, the farm changed hands, and was then farmed at first by four farmers and their sister, Fred, Albert, Arthur, Bill and Alice Ball, trading as Ball Bros. Farmer Bill died within a few years, Farmer Arthur developed a severe heart trouble and had to retire early, so for the greater part of their tenure the farm was run by Fred, Albert and Miss Ball, with Mrs. Marshall in the house and my father, Sam Butchers and Eddie Davey in the fields.

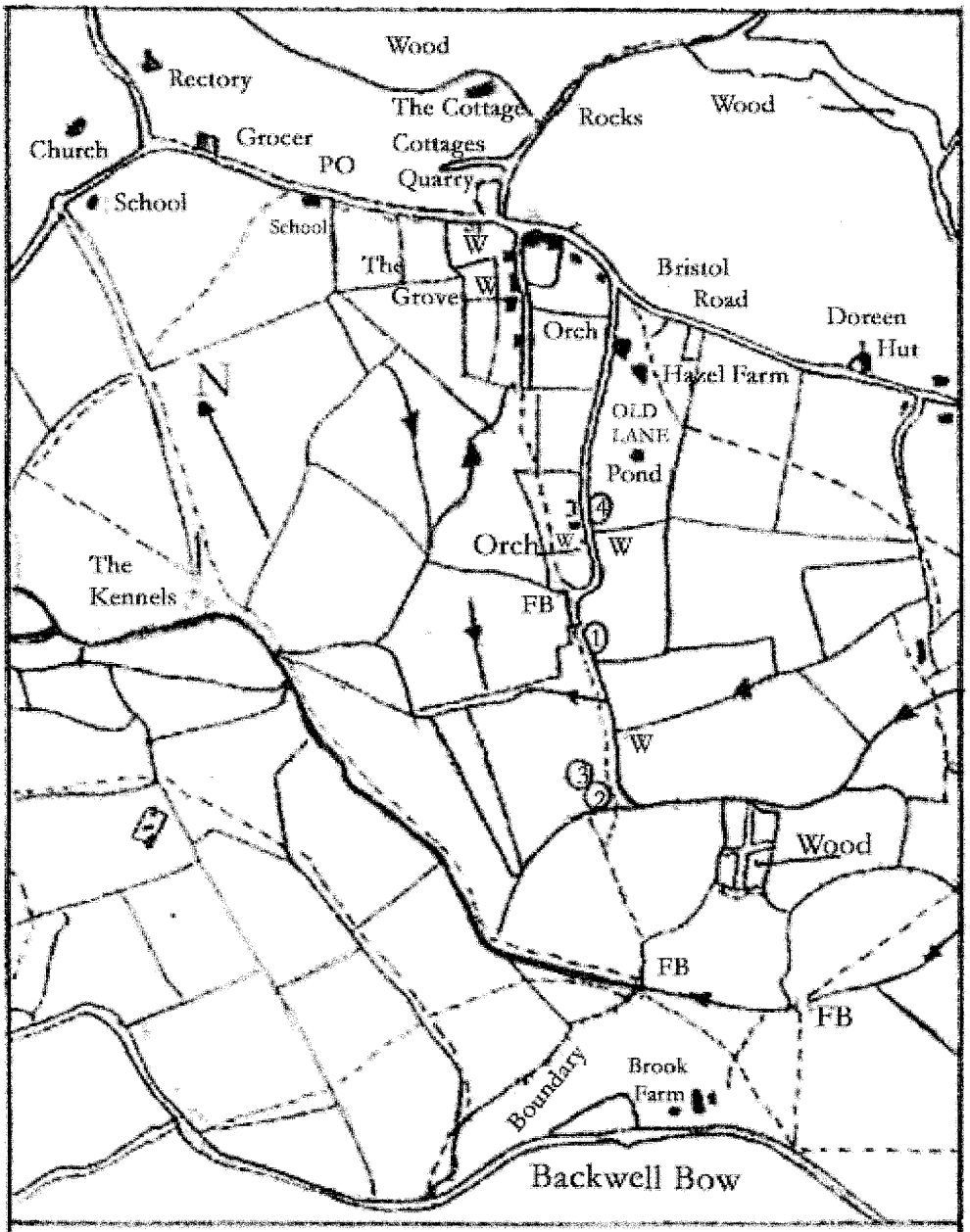
Like most farms in the district, or for that matter in the county, it was a mixed farm but basically dairy. About thirty cows were in milk; sheep were not kept in my early days as the low-lying ground encouraged foot-rot. Later on a few sheep were kept, so presumably the difficulties were overcome, possibly by choice of breed. Wheat was regularly grown in the Ploughground, especially during the First World War, and root crops for the cattle.

In connection with the Ploughground, there was an old custom on the farm which I believe was a vestige of feudal times. I have never heard of it elsewhere: each man on the farm was allowed one furlong of ground in which to grow potatoes. Presumably in earlier days it would have been wheat, but one furlong or one eighth of a mile would grow a lot of potatoes, and sometimes if there was a spare bit of ground Dad would get two furlongs. When ploughing, possibly for root crops, Dad would drive the plough up to open the furrow, then Mother and I would go up behind him putting in the seed potatoes, which were covered in the next time round. Later in the season Dad would change the mouldboard on the plough and earth them up, and then at the end of the season he would plough them out. Mother and I would walk behind and pick up the potatoes in a quarter-sack basket and bag them for Dad to bring home. Have you ever picked up a quarter of a mile of potatoes on a steeply-sloping ploughground?

Another important product of the farm was cider. A small amount was sold, but in the main this was produced for use on the farm; each farm worker was entitled to a quart of cider a day, so he would fill his own bottle before going out to the field after breakfast. Cider was also supplied to the casual labour in the fields at haymaking and harvesting; several stone jars in wicker baskets were taken with bread and cheese to the field.

The cider apples were grown in the two orchards, both now gone. The Top Orchard is now built on, and the Bottom Orchard wasn't very profitable as the trees were very old. What a collection of apples --- I never learnt all the names, only a few that were good for eating, like the Morgan Sweet, Berkeley Pippin, and Beauty of Bath. I still wish I could find some Morgans!

The apples were shaken off the trees and allowed to stand in heaps for a couple of weeks. This increased the amount of sugar in them, necessary for the production of the alcohol. The apples were carted to the shed where the cider press stood; the first process involved passing the apples through the apple mill where they were chopped. The chopped apples were collected in horsehair bags, which were half filled, leaving plenty of end to fold over. The bags were then placed in the cider press, consisting of a pair of oak beams, a foot or more across and four or five feet long. Two huge screws passed through the beams, and a man would climb up over the press and turn two iron handles at the top to force the upper beam on to the bags of apple pulp, the juice running out into a circular trough, from which it was allowed to run into open vats for the first stage of fermenting. Nothing was added to the juice; no yeast or water or (contrary to fable) any meat, although many wasps used to get drowned in it. Farmer Ball had a good reputation for his cider.



NOTES

1 Between 1 and 2 the track appears to have a solid base
2 Near item 3 in 1930 were two old willow trees (now d alongside a narrow ditch
3 Item 4 was an old ruin in 1930 which has nearly disappeared. The well beside it has now gone

WRAXALL 1936 MAP 3

THE GROVE, OLD LANE and FOOTPATHS

Like many of the farms in the district, parts of it were low-lying, and part of it is below sea level at high tide. For this reason extra rates were payable for drainage in respect of a couple of fields, and there were strict rules about cleaning ditches. 'Old Sam' did most of the ditching, but Father would be called in to help if needed. He was skilled in the three branches of farming that a good farm worker was expected to do, hedging, ditching and thatching, together with hand milking, ploughing with horses and later with tractor, haymaking, and the specials for Hazel Farm, cider making and blacksmithing!

One small field, past the end of the Old Lane, was called Burnhouse. Father told us there had been at one time a house there which had burnt down, but it was many years before and there was now no sign of anything there. However, I have been shown the 1837 Tithe Map, and this shows a house and garden at this point, so the old Dad was right again. The fields next to this were called the Rushy Grounds, because they were so waterlogged they would only grow rushes. Farmer Fred and Father decided one day to try an experiment; Father was sure that the reason for the waterlogging was the blocking of the land drains, so they dug at the place where they thought the blocking would be found. Sure enough, there it was --- when the damaged drains were replaced the trouble was cleared, and the Rushy Grounds are now good pasture. When fields are as low-lying as these, drainage is critical.

Hazel Farm was one of the larger farms (Farmer Fred told me it was about 120 acres). Adjoining it was a very small farm, Orchard Farm, run by Mr. Jimmy Salvidge. He had quite a struggle to farm it, as it really needed a family to run it, but unfortunately his son, Eddie, had a bad heart, so the father had to struggle on with only his wife to help.

Another very small farm was Quarry Farm. Most of the fields here were let out to other farms, with the exception of the old orchard on which Miss Child used to keep chickens. Most of this field was taken finally for building four old people's bungalows, and the farmhouse was sold as a dwelling house with no farm.

Across the road was Rock Farm, which was kept by Mr. Winstone and his sister. An interesting feature was the cider orchard, now grubbed out. The apple crop was not large enough to merit having a cider press, so the apples were sent to Hazel Farm for Farmer Ball to make it. Although the apple blend was said to be similar to that on Hazel Farm the cider was very different, which was said to be due to the difference in the soil, Rock Farm being on high ground and Hazel Farm on low. After Mr. Winstone died, the farm was taken over by Mr. Vowles.

With the exception of the Rectory Farm, which was very small, all the other farms were large. Tyntesfield Farm was complex, because in addition to being a farm it also carried features not normal to agriculture. There was a quarry supplying stone for the roads to the estate. There was a sawmill for preparing timber from the trees on the estate, to be used in repair of the property. There were many acres of trees; in the wood at the top of the Rocks the timber is mainly hardwood, e.g. beech, but elsewhere there were plantations of conifers. It was, and is, difficult to decide which part is the farm and which the grounds of Tyntesfield House.

Another large farm is attached to Wraxall Court. This farm is bounded by the full length of Wraxall Hill, and extends along the top road as far as the top of Stoney Steep. The third boundary is Stoney Steep from the top to the end of the wall by the stile into the Coombe (but not including the Coombe) and the fourth boundary is the wall at the top of the Coombe, running right through to the bottom of the Score and up the Score to the entrance to the church. The farmer in my day was Mr. Mitchell.

Bounded by Ham Lane, the Score and Tower House Lane is Ham Farm, which was farmed by Mr. Marshall. An additional field on the north side of Ham Lane was the Coombe; this, which is part of Ham Farm, contains the ruin of the limekiln.

On the Top Road is Moat Farm. We never had much contact with that one, except sometimes to fetch the milk for Grandma. We were never sure in ourselves if it was in Wraxall as it was on the 'wrong side' of the top road, which we used to feel was the boundary of civilisation. 'Over the top road' had similar connotations to us as 'north of Watford' has to the Londoner!

The furthest farm from the centre of Wraxall was, I suppose, Gable Farm. The house is fast becoming derelict; a pity, for it seems such a solid old stone house. In my day it was farmed by Mr. Davis.

This really completes the list, with the exception of several fields whose ownership I never could make out. The Wheatfield might have belonged to Rectory Farm. Stump Park I remember used to be farmed by Farmer Davis from Gable Farm, but I can only assume that this was a special arrangement as the rest of Gable Farm is a mile away. The field along the east side of the Score, adjoining Stump Park, I never could decide who farmed that, while the next field down, bounded by the river, I believe was farmed with Ham Farm. Who farmed the field by the Kennels I haven't a clue!

Finally, it is very interesting to examine the old maps of Wraxall and compare the farms with those of the 1930's. The field boundaries have scarcely changed, many of the fields have the same names, and, a very interesting thing, the farms are run by people whose families have been farmers for a century, although they are not necessarily on the same farms. In the district still are farmers Vowles, Wyatt, Winstone and Stokes.

BIG HOUSES AND IMPORTANT PEOPLE

'It is the duty of the wealthy man
To provide employment for the artisan.'

The families of the village were clearly divided into two classes, the wealthy and the poor, and each knew its place. There were a few families, generally long-established business and professional people, who might be considered to be in between, but in general the division was clear and understood.

Firstly there were the two big landowners, both of course resident in the village (we didn't go in for absentee landlords).

Colonel Gibbs owned Tyntesfield and a large part of the village. He and his first wife were very active in the village, especially Mrs. Gibbs. They had one daughter, Doreen.

After the death of Mrs. Gibbs, the house, lacking a woman's hand, became somewhat neglected internally until Col. Gibbs married again, and some time after (in 1928) he was made a Baron, taking the title of Lord Wraxall. A son was born in the same year, and on the death of his father in 1931 succeeded to the title.

The Death Duties payable on the estate were, of course, crippling. This is one of the causes of the break-up of the old country way of life; the big estates are broken up and dispersed or are left impoverished and short of capital for improvement or even basic maintenance. Added to this in the case of Tyntesfield the new owner was a minor, so perforce the family had to withdraw from active village life.

The other big landowner was Mr. T. R. Davey. He was a tobacco millionaire, although we didn't realise he was so rich until his will was published. He and Mrs. Davey were very good to the poor people, although they were very discreet about gifts because they knew the poor had their pride. For instance, Mrs. Davey had a lady's maid, Miss Boosey, who was always around the village. It was part of Boosey's job to keep her ears open and give Mrs. Davey news of people in difficulty. Furthermore, Mrs. Davey rarely visited such people, as neighbours would notice if she did --- usually a visit was made by someone working on the estate.

Mr. and Mrs. Davey built a Playhouse for use by the villagers for meetings, entertainment and the clinic. Mr. Davey also gave great help to the new village club and to the Church.

Of the somewhat smaller landowners and their estates, we have first Captain (later Admiral) Tweedie at Wraxall House. We had little to do with them as they did not run any appreciable farmland, but they were greatly respected, and the house had a good reputation for training domestic servants.

Wraxall House itself we always felt was a grim, forbidding place, probably because we could see so little of it unless we had occasion to go to the front door. The back was just a white slab of wall pierced only by windows with black-painted frames, and with the water just outside, had a very depressing appearance. All we could see from the road was the high stone wall with two gates and some trees inside making the whole place look so gloomy. In fact, it was a very interesting house, with an attractive frontage and set in really glorious grounds, but none of this could we see from outside.

Of the remainder of the larger houses, the first to consider is the Rectory. This was really an old house, to which bits had been added in the past; most of these 'bits' have recently been demolished, the only part of them remaining being the Long Room.

Apart from the real part of the Rectory, which is that part which can be seen today, the part which was demolished was mainly the servants' quarters. Entered from the small door, at present still used to go to the Long Room, we had to go down the flight of steps and along a flag-stoned yard to the back door. Inside was a room, floored again with stone, the walls plain whitewashed and the furniture typical Victorian --- plain table, simple chairs, etc. There was no architectural merit in this part, and Rev. Fussell was given permission to have it demolished. This made the Rectory a home more suitable for a present-day parson, with little or no domestic staff and with heating bills more in keeping with a present-day parson's income.

The grounds of the rectory were much as they are today, so I will not elaborate on them. The Parson, of course, was one of the old school of gentlemen.

The Rev. Henry Vaughan was Rector when I was a boy, and his grandfather, Rev. James Vaughan before him [The Rev. Edward Protheroe Vaughan was Henry Vaughan's father and predessessor James was Henry's grandfather, Rector before Edward P]. They had descended from a wealthy family who had one time lived at Wraxall Court, and even today the living of the benefice is in the hands of the Vaughan family. This meant that the Rector was not solely dependent on his stipend for his income, so he was able to do much for the parish that later Rectors could not afford to do.

Mr. Vaughan was a very active man with a great love for his flock. He and Tom Davey used to collaborate with the local doctor, Dr. John White, to help people who were on hard times, and many stories have been told of his good work; he was not, however, a 'soft touch', preferring to help people to help themselves. Typical of his methods was to buy anything a parishioner had to sell: my Grandfather kept bees, and the first combs of the season were always taken to the Rector, who would buy them and pay top market price.

On one occasion, when grandfather was home ill, with no money coming in, and a poor Christmas coming for the children, Mother and her brother (both not above twelve years old) persuaded Grandma to let them go carol singing. They sang at the Rectory, and Mr. Vaughan asked who the singers were. On being told, he asked them in and enquired about the family and their plight. He sent them away with food and money, and then had a real row with his staff because John Youd was having a hard time, with a big family to keep, and nobody had bothered to tell him. He was a great, old-fashioned Parson; he had the money to do good deeds and he used it.

By the time I was growing up, Henry Vaughan had passed on and his place was taken by Rev. Mather. It was only a few weeks ago, when I was going through the parish registers, that I discovered that Mr. Mather had married into the Vaughan family, so the family still had a member as Rector of Wraxall.

I mentioned Dr. John White, who was not resident in Wraxall: his house and surgery were in Silver Street, Nailsea. He was at first in practice with Dr. Corfield of Backwell, and I understand from mother, that it was Dr. Corfield who attended her when I was born, in 1913. They dissolved partnership a couple of weeks before Dr. Corfield died;

Dr. White practised on his own for a while until his nephew, Dr. Reg. White, qualified and joined his uncle in the partnership. Later on, as the old man gradually eased off, Dr. Gornall joined the partnership.

Dr. John was greatly loved and respected, both in Wraxall and Nailsea. He had a brusque manner, and was a friend to many --- he loved children, although he never married.

He had a little surgery at the top of the Grove, where he used to visit for a couple of hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays, (which saved the walk to Nailsea), and he had his own stock of medicines in a big cupboard. As I got older I used to love to see these bottles with their beautiful labels --- CHLORIF AQUA, SODII SALIC, --- it was probably from there that I got my first love of chemistry! However, the reason for his visits to Wraxall was to see his patients, and I remember Mother telling of a day when he was to see me, probably for some childish ailment. Mother, of course, had washed me and dressed me up clean, and then let me out to play in the lane. Needless to say, I was playing with Addie Windsor, and we were making a good line of mud pies. Mother saw me just as the doctor was coming in, and said to him, "I've never seen anyone get as dirty as he does". The Doctor laughed, and replied in his deep powerful voice, "That's not dirt, woman, that's clean dirt". It was the firmly held conviction of all of his patients that if he had charged them what he had every right to do, he would have died a rich man.

One of the most outstanding houses in Wraxall is the Cottage. This was owned by Tyntesfield, and when I was young it was occupied by Miss Grant and her niece Miss Penny. The house is visible for many miles; in those days it was thatched, but after a couple of roof fires it was slated as it is today.

When Miss Grant died the house was too big for Miss Penny on her own, so she had a house built for herself, the Cottage then being taken by the local Member of Parliament, Lord Erskine. Miss Penny's new house was built by Frankie Stevens, of whom more later. Miss Penny was another of those wonderful people with whom the village was blessed; she was not rich but gave her time and money unstintingly to help the poor.

I think the following anecdote might serve to show the respect in which she was held. When the first Lord Wraxall was buried, there was, of course, a very big funeral, with representatives from the House of Lords, House of Commons, the Army and of course many local notables. I was standing beside the newspapermen, our local man, Mr. Hodge, and a man from Fleet Street. They were helping each other with the names of the mourners; Mr. Hodge knew the locals and the Fleet Street man knew the London ones, so each would say the name of the person passing so that the other could make up his list. The conversation went something like this: "Lord and Lady ….. Duke and Duchess of ….." and then Mr. Hodge said "Miss Penny". A quiet voice behind me said, "and that's a <u>real</u> lady".

I mentioned Frankie Stevens, another of our great characters. By trade a builder of the very highest standards, in his seventies he still used to ride round on his bicycle to keep his eye on the jobs where he had men working and would go up the ladder to inspect a roof job. He was also the undertaker, who took the part well, as he was tall, dignified and gentlemanly. It was said he knew the time for a funeral to reach Wraxall Church from every house in Wraxall, because he had taken one from every house.

I suppose that's really enough of the better-off people and their homes. I could perhaps mention the schools and the teachers, and perhaps the village policeman: they could hardly be termed 'better-off' but they were respected as good professional people.

The first school in Wraxall was built by Richard Vaughan, but by my time this had become the Church Library, and we now had two schools, one for girls and infants at the top of the Score and one for boys aged from 7 to 14 further along the road.

When I started at the infants' school at the age of 4, the infant teacher was Mrs. Darby, who, I discovered many years later, was an authority on the teaching of infants in rural schools. The headmistress was Miss. Baker and the junior girls were taught by Miss Winnie Baker.

At the age of 7 I went to the boys' school. This was quite a rough school, with a lot of bullying of the younger boys by the older ones. The headmaster at first was Mr. Brown, who was succeeded by Mr. Haining, the son of a previous policeman in Wraxall.

Mr. Haining cut out a lot of the bullying, and managed to give us a reasonable standard of education, in spite of the very poor facilities available in village schools in those days. There was only one big room with two teachers trying to teach boys of all ages together from 7 to 14 years old. There was no electric light (although it was installed in the girls' school later); no tap water, very crude toilet facilities, and heating was provided by two coke-burning stoves. There was an underground room, much too dark for any classes; in this we could shelter in playtime if it was raining. In here were kept the gardening tools, which we used on the school garden in the field above the Post Office. In spite of all these difficulties, Mr. Haining taught us well enough to get me through the scholarship exam., the first person ever from the Wraxall schools. I couldn't do anything wrong for the last few weeks of that summer term in 1925, and quite honestly I was pleased for his sake. He helped me quite a bit after I left Wraxall school, and he managed to get another boy, Jack Everett, through four years later. One every four years doesn't sound very exciting, but scholarships were scarce, and in a school of only fifty pupils of all ages from 7 to 14 isn't as bad as it sounds.

We had a policeman in those days, Mr. Hiscox, who lived in the Police Station at the top of the Score. Like most of the rural policemen he was greatly respected, and serious crime was very rare. We also had a Post Office which, like the Police Station, is no longer in operation. I suppose it could be said that Wraxall people are so law-abiding they don't need a policeman, but it's a shock to see it no longer has a post office or a grocer's shop!

The Postmistress was Miss Russell, who later married and became Mrs. Ball. Besides her duties in the post office she was the headmistress of the Sunday School, and was in charge of the Church Library. Her assistant in those early days was Gladys Shipton; later on Doris Durston became the assistant and later still the Postmistress.

I well remember the first time I had to make a telephone call, I believe to my Aunt Louise. The call box was inside the Post Office, and in fact the way behind the counter was through the box. The microphone was fixed to the little mahogany desk on the wall, the earpiece was the old Bell type, and there was a spare earpiece for someone else to listen. Miss Russell made the call, while I sat on the stool (round polished top on a central black pillar, screwed to the floor), and listened with the spare receiver. At the end of a call they had to 'ring off' by turning a handle.

Telephones now have all gone auto. We miss the personal touch on the telephone, being able to ask for a local subscriber by name, or getting help if the lines were troublesome. It used to give me great pleasure to ring Wraxall Post Office from, say, Southend-on-Sea, and hear the operators routing the call, with the changes in dialect from Essex, through London and Reading to Bristol, and finally to hear the voice of Mrs. Neal replying "Nailsea", followed by my operator saying "Nailsea 19". It's all so impersonal now.

SMALL HOMES AND ORDINARY PEOPLE

'Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why ---'

Most of us in the village were neither rich nor important. Many of the men worked on farms or in the gardens of the big houses. The families in the Grove were, I suppose, typical of most; in the first two cottages (Nos. 1 and 2) lived Mrs. Price, a widow, and Mr. Golledge, a retired policeman. In the next pair (Nos. 3 and 4) lived Mr. and Mrs. Henry Windsor and Mr. Windsor's father and mother, Mr.and Mrs. John Windsor. Henry was the sexton at Wraxall Church, his wife cleaned the Church and the boys' school, while John Windsor was one of the bell-ringers.

It was at Henry Windsor's house that I saw my first valve wireless set. Staying with the Windsor's was Mr. Windsor's father, Mr. Lilley. He was bedridden and lived in the front room downstairs, so they got him a wireless set, with a pair of bright-emitter valves on the top of the mahogany cabinet.

In the next pair of cottages (Nos. 5 and 6) lived my grandfather, William Rew, and Mr. and Mrs. Jim Harvey. After Mr. Harvey died, Mrs. Harvey continued to live there for some years. She had an unfortunate accident when on holiday in Guildford; a child on a scooter knocked her down on the pavement and broke her hip, so she was crippled for the rest of her life.

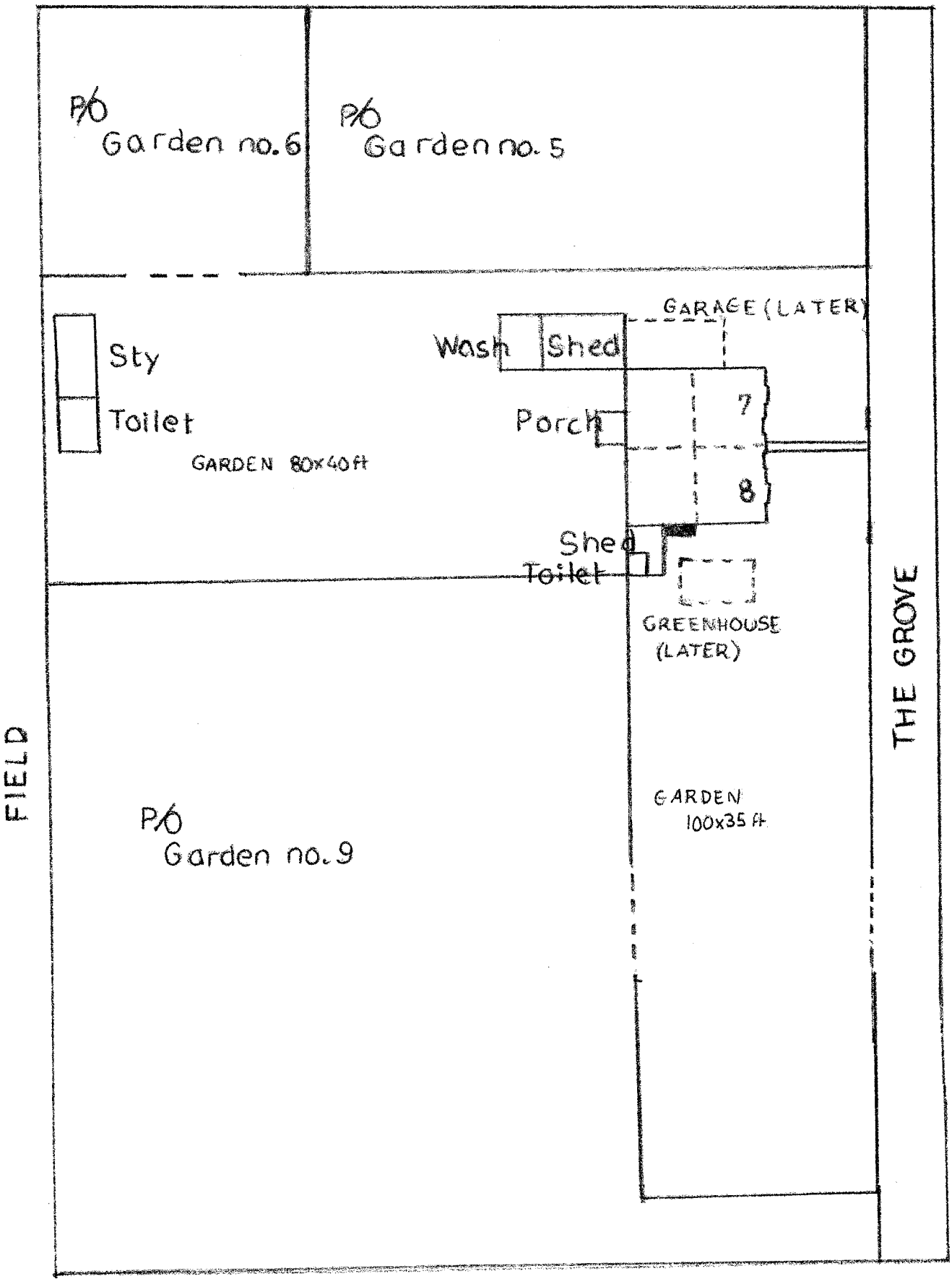
In the first of the next pair of cottages (No. 7) lived Mrs. Hibberd, with her son Ken and daughter Vera, and we lived in the next one. Before Mrs. Hibberd there was a Mr. and Mrs. Vowles; Mr. Vowles worked for Tyntesfield, I believe, or for Gable Farm. They had a family of five children, and later on a sixth. An amusing tale was told in connection with the family; on the occasion of the visit of the school inspector to the infants' school he asked if anyone could tell him the names of the five vowels. Quick as a flash one bright infant replied, "Yes, sir, Ivy, Stanley, Sidney, Gwennie and Ivor".

Mother told me that I owe my life to Mrs. Vowles. When I was very tiny I had an attack of convulsions. Mother was really frightened about it, so ran in to Mrs. Vowles to ask her what to do. Mrs. Vowles was just doing her washing, so she was able to dump me into the hot washing bath, which is just the thing to do. I don't remember the Vowles' at No.7, although of course I knew them after they had moved to Gable Cottages. For most of my time Mrs. Hibberd and family were our next-door neighbours.

Our family, at No. 8, consisted of father, mother, myself and three sisters; my father as I have said worked on Hazel Farm. Mother for a time cleaned the girls' school to keep me at Grammar School; with all of us to feed she couldn't have done it on Dad's wages of thirty-six shillings a week, even with the rent being only two shillings a week and the rates about sixpence a week (old money). Coal, I remember, was two shillings a hundredweight, and we used a hundredweight a week. I will return to this cottage and our life in it a little further on, after I have completed the description of our little community.

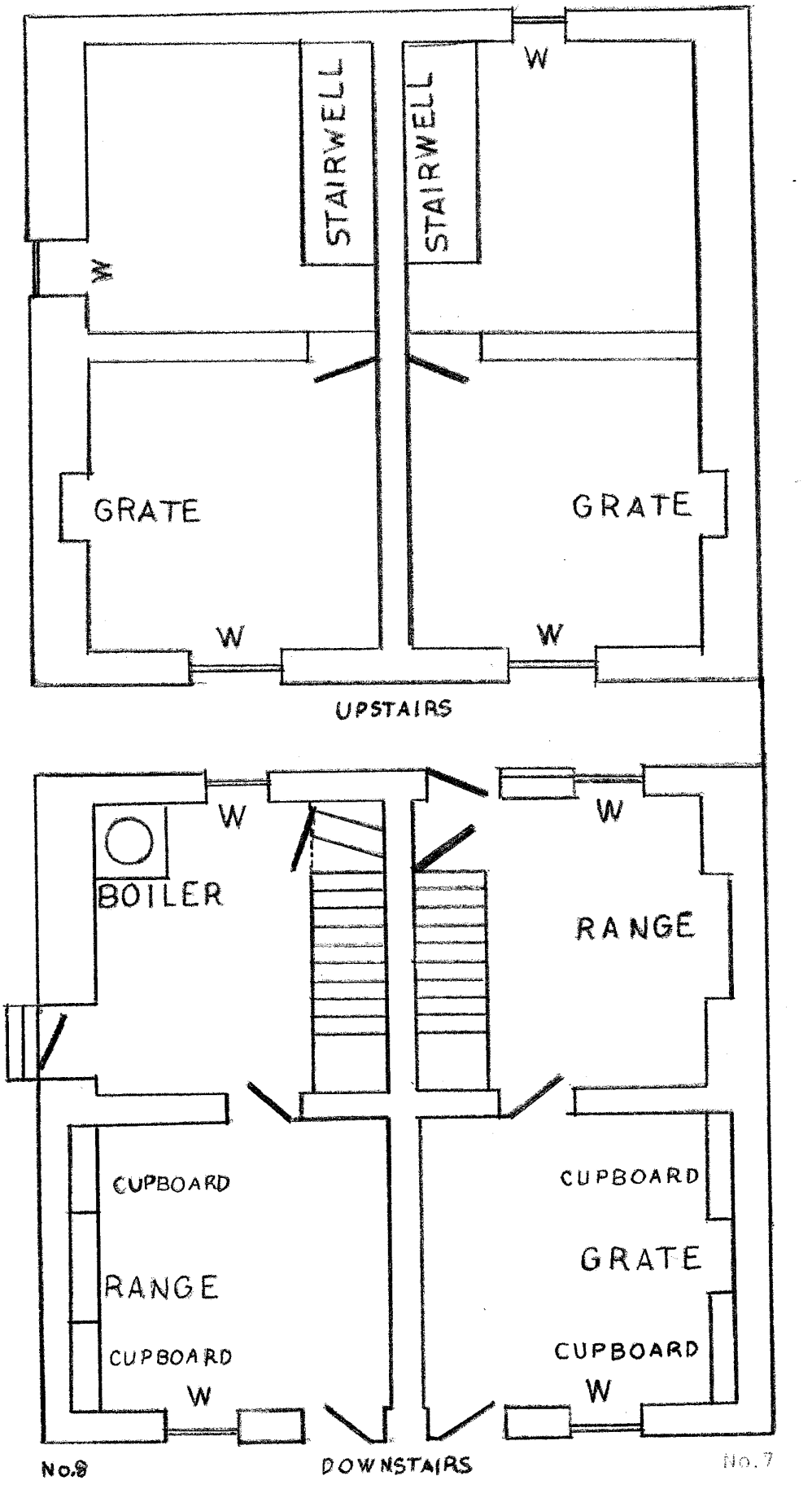
In the last two cottages, Nos. 9 and 10, lived Mr. and Mrs. Fred Windsor with their son Mervyn, and another Mr. and Mrs. Windsor, (no relation) with their adopted son Fred. Mr. Fred Windsor was a carpenter on Tyntesfield while Mr. Jim Windsor ('Tumper'), who was deaf, worked on Tyntesfield Farm.

This, then, would be a typical community of the day. If you include my grandfather, who was working at the time I write of, i.e. before 1920, there would be, in all, ten families, six working on Tyntesfield or other farms, three retired and one lady working at dressmaking. Similarly, if we look at the houses along the road going towards Bristol on the left, there were two cottages on Bankside (both occupied by farm workers), then, before Miss Penny's house was built, the next four houses were occupied by people working on Tyntesfield (Mr. Hunt, Mr. Evered, Mr. Pope and Mr. Davey); then came the Jubilee Cottages being retirement homes for old workers on Tyntesfield, and then the Lodge.



WRAXALL 1920

Nos. 7 and 8 The Grove (Site Plan) PLAN 1



Nos. 7 and 8 The Grove

FLOOR PLAN
PLAN 2

Wraxall, then, was an agricultural community; fully half the breadwinners worked on farms, many on either the farm or the gardens of Tyntesfield House. Life, though, was hard, and many would have liked to break out of the rut. The war, of course, when it came in 1939, finally broke up village life, but the seeds of discontent had been sown long before, possibly at the end of the First World War. Certainly, out of about ten boys of my age at the boys' school, sons of farm labourers, who might have been expected to go on the farm when they left school, only one did so. I remember Mother, when she had the letter telling her I had won the scholarship, saying, "Now thank God you don't have to go on the farm like your father had to". She had six years hard graft to keep me at school, but she was happy to do it to keep me off the farm.

At this point it may be of interest to see the layout of a typical farm worker's cottage. When the new houses were built in the Grove, some of the old cottages were modernised, including our pair, Nos. 7 and 8. It would probably have been cheaper to have knocked them down and rebuilt them, but money was not available to build, only to restore and repair. (See Plans 1 and 2).

Taking No. 8 as typical --- this had two rooms downstairs and two upstairs, no bathroom or kitchen, and an outside toilet in the big shed outside the backdoor. There was no water supply, no electricity, and there was a cesspit for the toilet (later replaced by a sanitary bucket when the cesspit developed faults).

Access was generally made by the back door, up two stone steps into the 'back kitchen'. This had a flagstone floor (badly worn in places), a boiler in one corner in which was done the washing, and the door to the stairs in the other corner: in between was a small fixed window which gave a view of Wraxall Church. Next came the usual 'cupboard under the stairs', which was used to house everything imaginable --- potatoes, Dad's shoe repairing tools, and later on it became my darkroom for photography.

Next to this was the 'middle door'. This gave access, under a very low lintel, to the living room, also stone floored. Both rooms had very low ceilings; I remember during the First World War Mr. Gough, the farm bailiff from Tyntesfield coming to see Dad. Mr. Gough was a very tall man, probably 6 ft. 6 ins., and he had to stoop to come in, stoop still lower to come into the living room, and to remain stooped until Mother brought him a chair to sit on!

In the living room was the only means of heating and cooking, a coal-fired range. On either side of the range were cupboards and shelves; there was a single-sash window with a deep sill, and in the corner of the room, the front door.

Upstairs, the small bedroom opened to the right off the landing. This had a very small casement window with a view down the garden, and, a real horror, a ceiling which sloped from, perhaps, six feet high on the one side to less than three feet on the other. The big bedroom had a step up from the landing; it had one single-sash window and a small fireplace, but at least it had a high ceiling. Unfortunately, to give this height there

was little space between the ceiling and the roof, only a few inches; i.e. there was no loft.

When the cottages were modernised it was found that they had no foundations. The first job was to lower the floor downstairs, thus in effect raising the ceiling height. The next job was to insert foundations and a damp course by cutting in half-way under the walls and filling in with concrete, then cutting out from inside and filling again with concrete. Finally the roof was raised at the back giving a reasonable ceiling in both bedrooms.

The adjoining cottage, (No. 7), although basically similar in size and construction, differed in several important features. Firstly, the boiler was banished to an outside (stone built) washhouse. This was a great improvement; for one thing the steam didn't drift round the house on washdays, but more important, the back room, which contained the range in this house, made a good living room, leaving the front room as extra living space. Mrs. Hibberd also had a small lean-to outside the back door in which to wash up.

The stairs were straight instead of angled at the bottom. Upstairs the back bedroom was separated from the landing by a low wooden wall with a curtain over the top instead of a complete wall as in our cottage. The front bedroom was similar to ours. The toilet was at the far end of the garden, and adjoining it was a stone pig-sty, never used as such in my time.

Mrs. Hibberd had one big problem every winter. When the water level had risen in the gardens next door (a foot or so higher than Mrs. Hibberd's), a spring of water would rise under her grate: this was due to the houses being built straight on the soil without foundations. The problem was finally solved by Uncle Henry.

He had heard that many years before, the gardens had been drained by a tile drain across the lane in front of our houses, and he believed that the drain was blocked; more springs used to rise at points in the lane. He traced the course of the drain by water divining; the lane was dug up where he indicated and the blockage found (due to broken pipes). New pipes were laid and there was no more trouble from springs.

I have gone into these in some detail, as most similar cottages have long since been demolished or rebuilt (thank goodness), so this description will be all we have to show future generations the conditions under which we lived. Our cottages, of course, were the oldest in the lane; There were modern ones which were not so primitive.

One of the big problems in these cottages was --- they were plagued with cockroaches. No matter how much Keating's powder or borax we put down they used to appear again next year.

THE VILLAGE (2)

"This is where we came in".

It might be a good idea here, in finishing this story, to trace the changes in the village life, with their causes, and perhaps to look a little ahead to what future changes may come.

The first rumblings came after 1918, when some of the men came back from the war. Those who had expected 'a land fit for heroes to live in' became disillusioned, and many moved out of the villages into the towns, where opportunities and facilities were so plentiful compared with those of the village. For one thing, schools were better endowed in the towns than in the country, and I speak from experience as I have taught in town and country schools in Somerset! (I wonder if any old inhabitants can remember when I taught at Nailsea? One of the tasks I was given was to set up the first science course. My allocation of money for equipment, but not books, was £5. Yes, five pounds!).

Higher education was also to be had only in the towns; if a lad wished to take up a trade which involved evening classes (no part-time day release in those days) he would have to cycle from Wraxall to Merchant Venturers College. Buses were of no use as the last one left Bristol before eight o'clock. It was much easier to get a job in Bristol and live there.

Even entertainment was more plentiful in Bristol. There was a choice of cinemas and theatres, while in Wraxall there was nothing except a very occasional evening's show at the Playhouse. We had several sports clubs and the village club, but these were not really places for the occasional evening out with the girl friend.

Besides all this, let's be frank and say the farm boy was looked down upon as being not too bright, in spite of the skills that a farm worker developed. A future father-in-law would feel disappointed if his daughter wished to marry a farm boy, as he knew she was condemning herself to a hard life.

The next changes came with the break-up of the big estates. Big landowners were no longer able to afford to run farms and big gardens, so the opportunities for employment were drastically reduced. There were no longer so many jobs for domestic servants either; houses that had one time employed perhaps a dozen servants had to make do with one or two. These changes led to a reduction in population, which meant that cottages became derelict, and would not have been suitable for occupation even if later there had been a demand for them.

Finally, the Second World War finished village life. Boys and girls left the villages to join the forces, and on their return they had ideas beyond 'living in the sticks'. To attempt to encourage youngsters to remain in the villages local authorities built a number of Council estates with houses at a reasonable rent. Unfortunately, they had to build

them where land was available, which in many cases meant around towns; the first council houses built by Long Ashton Rural District Council after the war were at Backwell, so the youngsters went out of the village to get a home. More Council houses were then built in Wraxall (in the Grove), by which time the demand was not so great from the Wraxall youngsters, so other families moved into Wraxall.

This movement of families was also taking place among the richer people. The Daveys of Wraxall Court, the Tweedies of Wraxall House --- all these families have gone. The effect today is that the village is a home of strangers: most of the old families with roots going back hundreds of years have gone. I came back to the village after being away for forty years, and I knew hardly a soul!

In many cases, of course, change has brought improvement. The newcomers have brought new ideas, the only trouble being that many of them are older people who have retired, so the villages are being denuded of children. This, of course affects schooling. The demand for better living conditions has meant provision of services, as well as better roads, although the purpose of the roads seems to be merely as race-tracks for through traffic.

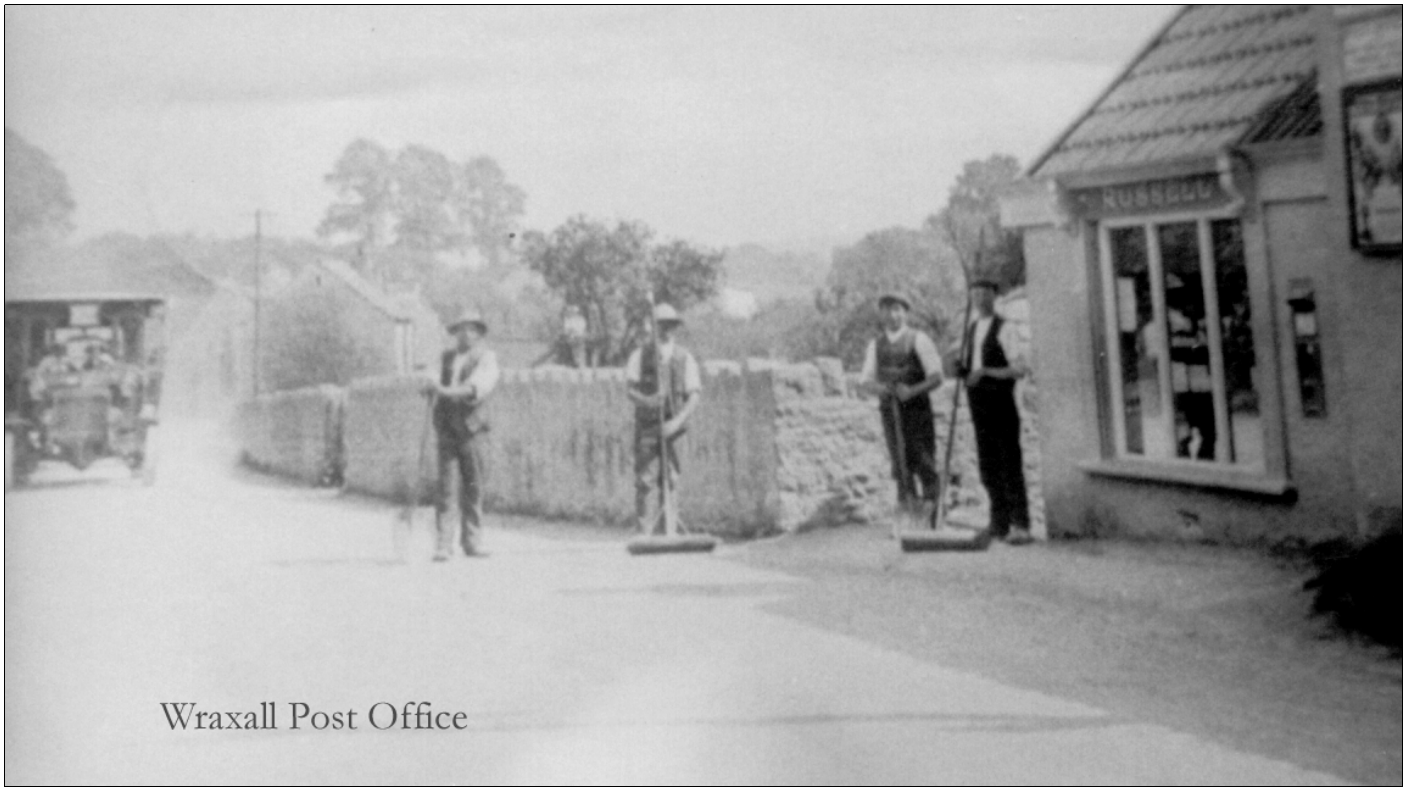
Wraxall is now part of a 'Green Belt' for Bristol. This means it is difficult to get permission to build or even improve existing houses. In some ways this is a good thing, as it prevents the countryside from being swallowed up in bricks and cement, but it means also that it is difficult to get permission even to alter an existing house to make it more comfortable.

Perhaps in the future Bristol, which appears to be the Authority which decides what is best for Wraxall, may decide to make more changes (for its own convenience) and permit a larger housing development, in which Wraxall will again suffer change. I feel we are on a knife-edge again, now that further development has been stopped in Long Ashton --- will they try here? It's the trouble that was forecast when the County Council, which was country based, was replaced by one which was city based --- everything now is judged through the townsman's eyes.

They call it Progress. We cannot stop it; we may be able to soften the blow, but change will continue, and it's no good crying for things that are past. All we, as local historians, can do, is to see that our memories are recorded for others to judge in the future.

'The moving finger writes, and having writ
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it'.

THE WHITE HOUSE (Photo: Mrs Waite)



WRAXALL POST OFFICE

WRAXALL HOUSE

NAISH HOUSE

THE ROCKS WRAXALL

WILF REW