

## Clifton Past and Present

*L.E. Gardner, 1955*

Clifton, as its name would imply, stands on the side of a hill – ‘tun’ or ‘ton’ being an old Saxon word denoting an enclosure.

In the days before the Norman Conquest, mills were grinding corn for daily bread and Clifton Mill was no exception. Although there is no actual mention by name in the Domesday Survey, Bishop Odo is listed as holding, among other hides and meadows and ploughs, ‘Three Mills of forty one shillings and one hundred ells, in Dadintone’. (According to the Rev. Marshall, an ‘ell’ is a measure of water.) It is quite safe to assume that Clifton Mill was one of these, for the Rev. Marshall, who studied the particulars carefully, writes, ‘The admeasurement assigned for Dadintone (in the survey) comprised, as it would seem, the entire area of the parish, including the two outlying townships’.

The earliest mention of the village is in 1271 when Philip Basset, Baron of Wycomb, who died in 1271, gave to the ‘Prior and Convent of St Edbury at Bicester, lands he had of the gift of Roger de Stampford in Cliftone, Heentone and Dadyngtone in Oxfordshire’.

Another mention of Clifton is in 1329. On April 12th 1329, King Edward III granted a ‘Charter in behalf of Henry, Bishop of Lincoln and his successors, that they shall have free warren in all their demesne, lands of Bannebury, Cropperze, etc. etc. and Clyfton’.

In 1424 the Prior and Bursar of the Convent of Burchester (Bicester) acknowledged the receipt of thirty-seven pounds eight shillings ‘for rent in Dadington, Clyfton and Hampton’. The Rev. Marshall writes, ‘Sometime after the death of Prank Basset, Bishop of London, which occurred in 1259, Philip Basset his brother, the son of Alan, became a benefactor to the Prior of Bicester. He gave to this foundation, all the lands and tenements which he had in Deddington, Clifton and Hempton, and which he had obtained from the enfeofment of Henry de Stampford in 1271. There was a family connection with this priory, for it had been founded by his uncle, Gilbert Basset. The gift is recognised in the abstract of the earlier Rolls of the Hundred in 1272, in which it is stated that the Prior of Bicester held one third part of the Manor. In the compotus of the Prior in 1425, the income from Deddington was returned at £37. 8. 6d received from rents in Deddington, Clifton and Hempton, with the farms of the Manor and the Mills of Clifton, with the perquisite of courts and tolls’.

The Priory of Bicester, having a less annual revenue than £200, was dissolved by an Act of Henry VIII, passed in 1536. A 'Court of Augmentation' was established for the valuation and disposal of the property which fell to the Crown, and Sir Thomas Pope of Deddington was appointed treasurer of this Court. In the following year, the Manor of Deddington, late of the Monastery of Bicester, was granted by the King to Sir Thomas Pope.

William Pope, father of Sir Thomas Pope, is mentioned in one other connection with Clifton. There formerly existed a Chapel at Clifton, to which there is a bequest in the Will, of William Pope of Deddington, proved May 11th, 1523, in these terms: 'Item to Clifton Chapel, vj<sup>s</sup> viij<sup>d</sup>'. Johnson's *History of Banbury* translates this amount to 6/8d. The Rev. Marshall writes, 'No other mention of this Chapel has been met with in records which usually mention such foundations. It is therefore probable that it was neither consecrated nor endowed and fell into decay'. But it is rather strange that there should be no mention of this Chapel. Could it not have been dissolved with all other religious bodies in the reign of Henry VIII by the Dissolution Act of 1536? Beesley, in his *History of Banbury* dated 1841 writes, 'Clifton is a hamlet, and was formerly a chapelry to Deddington. The Chapel stood near the road leading to Deddington'.

It is a pity that Clifton history is so lost in obscurity, for the surrounding country is rich in antiquities. We have the Port Way only a mile away. The Port Way is a track used by the Ancient Britons two thousand years ago in their journey overland from the river at Port Meadow near Oxford. The Port Way runs along the top of Aynho and Souldern. Then, three miles away, we have one of the oldest English Settlements in England – Ilbury Camp. Ilbury Camp lies a little to the south of Hempton. Another old English Camp – Rainsborough – lies about three miles in the opposite direction, between Aynho and Charlton. Only eight miles away was a well-known Roman road. This Roman road – the Akeman Street – crossed England from Verulamium (St Albans) on the Watling Street, to Corinium (Cirencester) on the Fosseway. Much of this road has completely disappeared, but it crossed the road by Sturdys Castle, to continue down what is now a lane. And we have good reason to believe that we are only about a mile from a Roman Villa.

It is rather strange that there is not more evidence of Roman occupation around us, for we are in a triangle of well known Roman roads, with the apex at High Cross, just north of Rugby.

We have proof from two very good sources that Clifton was once very much larger than it is now. On an old map of 1605, the size of Clifton is on a par with that of Adderbury, and judging by these instances, it was evidently in the 17th century that Clifton must have been at its zenith. Most people have heard of the window tax, but few people know that in the 17th century there was a hearth tax, which was repealed in 1689. This tax was of French origin and was introduced into England at the time of the restoration. In 1660, a yearly allowance of £1,200,000 was

granted to Charles II. The estimated yield from different sources failed to reach the desired figure, so it was found necessary to levy additional taxation. In 1662, it was ordained that 'every dwelling or other house etc. etc., shall be charged for every fire hearth and stove within each house, the sum of two shillings by the year to be paid in two half yearly instalments'. Under the Act, certain types were exempt from payment – those who did not contribute to church and poor rate, by reason of their poverty, or who were in receipt of alms themselves, whose houses were worth less than twenty shillings a year, or those who had land, goods and chattels of less value than £10. Even so, in 1662 there were 54 hearths from 24 houses, taxable in Clifton. The names of the taxpayers will convey nothing to the present inhabitants – they are mostly unfamiliar names – nor will the actual taxes, for they ranged from ij to iiij. But it will be seen from this alone that Clifton has shrunk considerably in the last 300 years. The 24 householders would include only farmers, publicans, shop-keepers and perhaps a few tradesmen. The window tax was first levied in 1697 and repealed in 1851. Every house which had more than six windows or doors, and had a rental value of more than £5, had to pay a tax on every window.



*A postcard combination*

It must be remembered that though there must always have been a track of some kind between Aynho and Clifton, even before the turnpike days, the village through the winter months must have resembled a pudding-bag place. It would be inaccessible through flooding from the east; consequently, all business from the village, including that of the

Mill, would be dependent upon the roads and lanes leading westward. Perhaps that was why a right of way existed, running from the top of the Mill hill, northwest to join the Tithe lane. This would certainly be a short cut to Adderbury and Banbury from the Mill, and would be necessary for the disposal of the surplus farm products, from the village. Banbury would be then, as now, the nearest market town. Ever since the beginning of civilisation, mills have been the pivot of industry, consequently all roads and lanes radiated from them. The lower parts of the valley would, for obvious reasons, be avoided. Bakers Lane would most probably have been the southern exit from the village. Another right of way existed at the top of Clifton leading southward. The purpose of this track seems rather difficult to define, as it appears to end at a hedge not far from the river, and is almost parallel with Bakers Lane. It was only when Parish Councils were commanded to complete surveys of rights of ways for Ordnance Survey Maps, that the existence of this path was discovered. It was completely forgotten by even the oldest inhabitants.

The name 'Maynard' *will* keep cropping up in local history. It is first referred to in 1455 when a 'Guild or Fraternity of the Holy Trinitie and St Mary of Deddington'

was instituted. Letters patent to found or establish the Guild, were granted to several people, among whom was Richard Maynard of Deddington. This Guild possessed considerable land in Deddington and Clifton, but was dissolved nearly two hundred years later in 1635. In Mr Stilgoe's possession is a deed of sale executed in May 1635, whereby John Lane and Frances his wife, of Clifton, purchased some of the property and land to the value of £350, and some of the land concerned was, at the time, in the tenure of Edward Maynard. In 1937 when some old property in Clifton was being demolished, a priceless old letter was discovered in a wall where it had apparently fallen from a cupboard. This letter was addressed to Mr Thomas Maynard of Clifton, in beautifully clear handwriting, complaining, of a firkin of oysters sent to Mr Maynard – but not received by him, and half accusing 'that knave of a carrier'. The letter is plainly dated 1618. Then in the hearth returns of 1660, the name John Maynard crops up again – this time as one of the Clifton taxpayers. It will be quite safe to assume that the Maynards lived in the house where the letter was discovered, as it is well known that it was an important farm-house at one time, and probably a fair sized gentleman's house before that.

Copy of the letter dated 1618 and found in Clifton in 1937 in very good preservation. In modern spelling it reads:

To my loving friend, Mr Thomas Maynard, gent, at Clifton.

Mr Thomas Maynard, my hearty commendation with you and your wife, trusting of your health, etc. etc.

Sir, I did send unto you in Michaelmas term last, a firkin of oysters and a letter whereof I was very desirous to have had an answer, for it was about a boy which I would have out of your county, but I never heard any answer of him and therefore I am in doubt they never came to your hand, but if you can help me to a boy fit for my farm, I shall be thankful unto you. I would have the boy to be quick and nimble, true and trusty and of good parents, and to write and read, for my other boy goes out of his term at or about Easter. My wife has sent a score of oranges and lemons to you and your wife and so have her kindly commended to you. Hoping to hear from you with as much speed as may be, we commit you to the protection of the Almighty who ever preserve you.

London, this 20th day of January 1618.

Your assured loving friend

Thomas Gresham

*Postscript:* 'If the carrier has played the knave in not delivering the firkin of oysters, I pray you send me word, for the carriage was paid for'. (At the time the letter was written, oranges and lemons were highly expensive commodities in this country.)

Part copy of a Deed of Sale inrolled from Mr Thomas Wickham to Mr John Lane and his wife, dated 1st May 1635:

This Indenture made the ffirst Day Of May Anno Domini 1635 And in the Eleaventh yeare

of the Raigne of our Sovaigne Lord Charles by the grace of God of England, Scotland, ffrence and Ireland Kings Defender of the faith, etc. Betweene Thomas Wickham of ffield in the County of Southton Esge, on the one pte And John Lane of Clifton in the pish of Daddington als Deddington in the County of Oxon, gen. and ffrances his wife on the other parte. Witnesseth that the said Thomas Wickham for and in consideration of the Sume of Three hundred and fifty pounds to him before hand payd by the said John Lane and ffrances his wife and the heirs of the said John, All that the Guild or ffraternity of the Holy Trinitie and St Mary of Daddington als Deddington in the said County of Oxon lately dissolved, etc. etc. etc. To have and to hold the said Guild or ffraternity Messuages lands tenemts here-ditamts and premises and evy pte and pcell thereof with their apptennces (except before excepted) unto the said John Lane and ffrances his wife and the heires of the said John Lane for ever. In witness whereof the said ptyes to these psent Indentures Interchangeable have sett their hands and seales the Day and yeare first above written.

There is, unfortunately, no evidence as to where the Lanes lived in Clifton. Strangely enough, there is no mention of John Lane in the hearth returns for Clifton, but there *is* a John Lane of Deddington mentioned. The Lanes were evidently a notable family, for a descendant of theirs, who followed the medical profession has his coat of arms and crest sculptured on the south wall of Deddington Church, just above the Lane tomb.

### HEARTH TAX PAYERS IN CLIFTON, 1662

Thomas Bate	Henry Churchill	William Hanwell
William Tey	John Maynard	John Mercer
Ann Busby	Widdow Novell	John Churchill
Tredwell Bate	Thomas Tipllett	Anthony Prentice
Nevill and Alexander Hatten discharged by poverty.		

### CLIFTON ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO



*The entrance to Clifton on the Deddington road, Appletree Farm on the right, which was destroyed by fire, and Home Farm beyond*

Let us now try to visualise life in Clifton 100 years ago. Entering it from the Deddington Road, we should still see the magnificent view of the Cherwell valley, with its green fields and meadows. Some of the finest pasture land in Oxfordshire is here, but the roads would appear to us to be in a deplorable condition. There was no road fund then, and the Turnpike Trusts did little to help repair the roads, so everything

that was done, was done locally. The roads of those days would compare very badly with even the lanes of today. The high crown in the centre of the road with



the deep ruts on either side, would, in the winter months be ankle deep in mud.

Before drainage was introduced, the depressions on either side were necessary to carry the rain water to the river. In front of each house or cottage, a large flat stone spanned this depression – a necessity to get to the road at all. But let us suppose that it is a fine day. After passing the first two farm-houses and a few cottages, we should find ourselves on the village green. It was a fair sized green, extending from the garden hedge of Manor Farm, to the three cottages that face eastward, and bounded on the south side by the cottage and barn (now the White Cottage), the village pond and the Manor Farm house. The school, of course was not built until 1870. In those days of 302 inhabitants, there were probably well over 70 houses. So, with an average of two adults to each house it leaves 160 children of all ages. As there was no school for them to attend, we can safely imagine quite half of them playing on the village green.

On the opposite side of the green, across the road and facing south, were two or



*Main Street*

three old cottages. They were situated high on a bank where there is now a barn, and were reached by a flight of quite a few stone steps. These cottages were demolished in the 1920s, and the beams and stones were utilised by Lady Denbigh for enlarging the White Cottage opposite.

At the top of the lane, close by these cottages, was the Coal

Barn (see page 11). By the side of Manor Farm hedge and close upon the road is a depression in what was once part of the green. Here, 100 years ago, stood a cottage – a shepherd's cottage connected with the farm. Nobody remembers this cottage, but the Wright family often spoke of it. A little farther down the road, in front of what is now 'The Orchards' was a fair sized barn, and at the back of the barn, a farm-house complete with outbuildings. Without a doubt, it was in this old farmhouse that the Maynard family lived years ago. Later, the house was altered into three cottages, and finally pulled down altogether in 1937.

These cottages were obviously very old, and when eventually pulled down, revealed many interesting facts. It was in the walls of one of them, that the old letter was found, written in 1618, denoting conclusively that the house formerly belonged to someone of note, who could both read and write – a rarity in these days. Also within the walls were recesses, no larger than cupboards, but certainly large enough to hide anybody. One recess was fashioned after the style of a chapel, with pointed niches, which may, quite possibly have been piscinas, and suggest a secret place of worship used perhaps during the Reformation. These

recesses and niches were found in sealed attics, on the east side of the houses. Next to these cottages was the plot of ground given by Mr J. Gardner as a site for the Church. This was originally a clump of elm trees, with Mr Gardner's rickyard behind where there is now an orchard,



*Main Street*

St James' Farm which could only have been named after the church was built, was originally a public house called 'The Swan'. Nobody remembers this and the writer is indebted to Mr W. Knibbs, a relative of the Wright family, for all this information. (Mr Tom Wright loved to tell of all that his father and grandfather had told him.)

The beaver hat factory – owned by one named James Hall – was at the side of the



*St James' Farm (left): the railings were removed as part of the WWII effort*

'Duke of Cumberland's Head'. The house on the hill called 'Caldicut' was a farmhouse and here the Wright family lived before they moved to St James' farm.

Opposite Caldicut, where Mr Homans' house now stands, was a neat row of cottages called 'Malt Row'. They were demolished in 1938 in consequence of a road-widening

scheme, and the present pleasing looking house is the result. The brick-built house on the top of the hill was probably the 'Crown'. It is a fitting name for it as a public house and certainly in December 1851, a licence was granted to 'John Coy, of the Crown, Clifton'. The brick built houses on the corner, called Chase Villas, built in 1886 were originally a row of small cottages, as were the next block, and in Pepper Alley, was another row of four or five cottages, the remains of which are still visible. It was in Pepper Alley that the remains of what appeared to be a Roman Catholic chapel was unearthed. As we have proof of the existence of a chapel before the Reformation, it is quite possible that this is where it formerly stood. There is no record of why 'Pepper Alley' should be so named. Years ago it was 'Church Way', which is just another proof of the existence of a church in this locality ages ago. One of the cottages due for demolition was, until recently, called The Tabernacle. This was once a small mission hall, and very small it certainly must have been. This tabernacle was not used exclusively for religious purposes. In between Missionary services and Salvation Army meetings, it occasionally did duty as a Boxing Booth.

Pepper Alley and its neighbouring alley, must have been the most thickly populated part of the village years ago, for where there is now a garage, once were houses and at least eight old cottages have been pulled down in the last 100 years. Pepper Alley's neighbouring alley – now designated by some as 'Cut Troat Alley' [*sic.*] once led to a yard called 'Jail Yard' and the cottages bordering on this yard were known as 'Jail Cottages'. The buildings are still there, but are now garages or barns or cowsheds. The two cottages at the entrance to Bakers Lane, facing north, were obviously one farm-house. There are the farm 'buildings handy and plenty of evidence in the cottages to confirm the fact. It was the barn adjoining this farm-house that was once used as the Church. Before 1853, all services were held here and the ironwork is still visible where the bell was hung over the door. We have evidence of this church from a sermon preached by the Rev. Risley in 1903 when the present church was 50 years old. He said that he could remember, when a boy, the services being held in a barn down a lane. The present chapel was originally a thatched building, but whether it was ever a house or barn, there is no record, but there was certainly a pond by the side of it. There is no evidence that the plot of ground called the allotments (on the corner of Bakers Lane) was ever used for building, though it is rather strange that a piece of ground in the centre of the village should be left vacant, when it would make a splendid [*sic.*] site for houses. The plot of ground opposite Mr Homans' house was once a sale ground, and old coins have occasionally been found there. The sale ground for this area was then moved to Aynho Station, but since the 1930s, the centre for the sale of all livestock, has been the Midland Marts, at Banbury.

### **THE DOG SPRING**

In a field quite close to the river, was a spring known as the Dog Spring, so called for its medicinal properties for dogs. Dr Plot, whose History of Oxfordshire was first published in 1676, 'was much perplexed to discover even with all the pains he could take, the real nature of two springs in Deddington and one at Clifton, which appeared to him strongly impregnated with sulphur'. In 1677 Dr Plot wrote: 'A salt spring there is also at Clifton, near Deddington, in a Quoits cast of the river side, but its saline particles are so subtilised in the water, that they scarcely can at all be perceived by the palate and yet it lays them down, plentifully enough on the stone and earth over which it passes. What sort of salt this is, I care not to determine, because it will be difficult not to mistake, for upon evaporation of about a gallon, it yielded a salt of a urinous taste, which at first I must confess was so surprising to me, that I could not but think that during my absence, some waggish fellow had either put a trick on me, or else that I must have used some unfit vessel. Whereupon I caused a new earthen pot to be bought, well glazed, and then repeated the experiment very carefully, but found in the end, all had been honest about me, for I had a salt again of the very same taste. How this should come about I cannot devine unless from the sweat of the bodies of animals, it being much used in cuticular diseases, but this I think neither can well be, because



'tis a constantly running spring and would, sure carry off what might be left of that nature. I therefore wholly leave it to the readers great perspicacity, and shall content myself with the satisfaction that however improbable the thing may seem, that in the meantime 'tis an improbable truth'.

C.D. Faulkner of Deddington writes, 'There is a spring at Clifton which used to be kept locked up by a former miller, William Merry, to which people took dogs to dip for the distemper'. The very fact that the spring could be locked up proves that it existed in the nature of a well with a cover. This has completely disappeared, although the cover of the well may still be there, but covered now completely with earth and grass. If the cover was originally of green oak, there could be no danger of the wood rotting. There is a vague memory in the village, of a talk of several medicinal springs, but all trace of these are lost, if indeed they ever existed. The definition for 'distemper' in one old dictionary, is 'bad temper and ill humour', so might not these springs have been applicable to human beings in general and dogs in particular!

### THE BRIDGES

After the battle of Cropredy Bridge in 1644, King Charles I journeyed from Aynho on the Hill, crossed the Cherwell and proceeded to Deddington. There was probably some sort of a bridge at the Mill then, for the river at that point is rather too deep to ford. (This was one of the instances when a reigning King has travelled through our village. During the Second World War, the late King George VI passed through on his way to Adderbury.) The centre of the bridge is the boundary of Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. Years ago there were also two more bridges crossing the river, one north and one south of the Mill bridge. The north bridge connected Hazel Hedge Farm with Nell Bridge Farm. Both farms were owned by a farmer named Wilson, and the bridge was substantial enough to carry farm waggon. The south bridge connected a field over the other side of the river, which was once in the Parish of Clifton. This bridge has now disappeared and the field called 'Golden", now belongs to Souldern. Beams of oak, still as hard as stone, are now doing duty as posts and rails. These posts are all that is left of the bridge.

### TITHES

Until the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836, the maintenance of the Church and



*Tithe Lane, with Holly Cottages on the left*

Church schools depended almost entirely upon tithes and voluntary contributions. Since there were neither schools nor church, this did not affect Clifton a lot. The tithes in Deddington were commuted for land in 1808 and the Vicarial tithes were commuted at the same time. Two farms in Clifton, however, still continued in 1851

to pay tithes to the Vicar, one for £45 and the other for £20. It is not known which these farms were, but John Gardner farmed Hazel Hedge Farm, and his son, Joseph Gardner farmed St James' Farm, and what is known as the tithe fields (in Tithe Lane) lie between these two farms.

It was William Merry (the miller) who, in a document held by Christchurch, complained that the 'fines (he must have meant tithes) were too high. He maintained that the 'fine' in 1789 was £14, but by 1817 it had risen to £151. 19s 6d.

### THE TURNPIKE

Like almost every other village, Clifton once possessed a toll-gate. Indeed, less than 100 years ago, the old toll house and gate stood sentinel at the eastern extremity of the village. It was apparently demolished in the 50s or 60s. Apart from the evidence from maps, all record of this building is lost. From the Wilkins map belonging to Clifton School, we deduce that it was a small double-fronted cottage, a little farther eastward than the Mill, although on the same side of the road. The building was actually in Northamptonshire. As we say, all record of it is lost, but we know that it was still a toll house when the present Church was built in 1853.



*Aynho Park Station at the time of its opening in 1850, later renamed 'Aynho for Deddington'*

### THE RAILWAY

The G.W.R. line from Oxford to Banbury was opened on 2nd September 1845 and it runs along the valley by the side of the canal. The canal was begun in 1769 and completed in 1790 and is 91 miles long. The 'new' line was opened in 1909 and it was while the 'new line' was in progress, that the mobile army of labour, known as the 'navvies'

invaded the village. The word 'navvy' is derived from 'inland navigation' and they moved from place to place constructing the embankment and tunnels for the railways. Soon after the G.W.R. was opened – in those days the carriages were open trucks and an umbrella was necessary if it rained – there was a local train accident. Very slight it must have been, for one of the claimants for compensation, was Hannah Drinkwater of Clifton, and the claim a new bonnet!

### THE FOUNTAIN

Thomas Larner was a very busy, clever man. He is described as machine and pumpmaker, millwright and manufacturer of agricultural implements. In addition, he kept a public house in Clifton – an off licence. He must have had some idea of a spring by the Mill, for in the 60s he bored down 50ft. to find it, but he was unsuccessful – his 'tackle' broke! He made some more and bored another 10ft, and up gushed the water, now known as the fountain. It flows at the rate of about

320 gallons an hour. It is beautifully soft water, completely contrasting with the hard harsh water we are forced by the local government to use. Incidentally, Oxfordshire, with the exception of one other county, has the hardest water in England and the highest number of appendicitis cases. Can the hard water be responsible?

### THE COAL BARN

Until the beginning of the present century, a barn stood at the top of Tithe Lane. Not a very imposing building, in fact, a smallish brick building with a slate roof, but remembered by the oldest inhabitants as the 'Coal Barn'. It is first referred to in an announcement in 1850 that 'Mr Joseph Gardner's offer to find a place to put the coal in at Clifton be accepted with thanks'. And again in the same year, a bill was received for 1/6d by the Parish for 'a lock for the coal house at Clifton'. This barn housed the Charity Coal and it was sold by ticket from the Charity Trusts at Deddington to poor people in Clifton, for 6d a cwt. Forty people were supplied weekly with this coal and John Knibbs – a relative of our Mr Knibbs – used to come down to Clifton each week to weigh out the coal. Offertories at Clifton Church were occasionally given to the Coal Charity.

### WAGES

Extract from a letter dated Sept. 5th 1766: 'Harvest is now pretty busy with us in



*Clifton Mill, George Robinson, the last miller at Clifton, with his wife and daughter, Elsie*

many parts of this neighbourhood, 1/6d a day is given for labourers, which in this part is looked upon as extravagant wages'. In 1837 the average weekly payment for farm workers was less than 10/6d and that was an increase of 8d since 1824. In 1860, it was 11/6d, but in 1872, Richard Jefferies wrote 'The commonday labourer receives 10/-, 11/- or 12/- a week according to the state of supply and demand for labour in various

districts, and if he milks, 1/- more, making 13/- a week'. By 1920 the wage had risen to 50/- a week. Then in 1923 came the agricultural slump, which resulted in wages dropping almost overnight to 30/- or less. Today (1955), they are between £6 and £7.

### MARKET PRICES IN THE TIME OF ELIZABETH I

Cows 32/-, Sheep 3/6d, Pigs 6/8d, Hens 4½d each, Geese 10d each, Eggs 7½d for 120, Beef 3d a lb, Butter 3d a lb, Cheese 1d a lb, and Beer 5/- per barrel (36 gallons). Bailiffs and chief servants received 40/- per annum (plus a few shillings for livery). Ordinary labourers 6d a day (winter), 7d a day (summer), 8d to 10d

a day at harvest time (without meat) and 5d a day (with meat). Women reapers received 3d a day.

## DRESS

As regards dress, Richard Jefferies writes in 1872, 'They [the labourers] are better clothed now than formerly. Corduroy trousers and slops are the usual style. Smock frocks are going out of use, except for milkers and faggers. Almost every labourer has his Sunday suit, very often really good clothes, sometimes glossy black, with the regulation 'chimney-pot'. For ladies, it was the age of the Dolly Varden, chignon and parasol, and bonnets once the size of a coal-scuttle at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign, dwindled till they were not much larger than a half crown.'

## THE FIRST REAPING MACHINE

On Thursday, 14th September 1851, an interesting experiment was tried with the new patent reaping machine, invented by C.H. McCormack, an American. It is strange but true, that the farm workers distrusted anything in the way of labour saving in the last century. Possibly they thought that it would react on their own heads and result in their unemployment. One farmer (it is thought he may be William Malings) contemplated buying a reaping machine, but feeling ran so high amongst the workers, that he had to abandon the idea. They threatened to fire it if he bought one. It was William Malings of Clifton to whom the Royal Farmers Insurance Office paid, in May 1850, the sum of £51. 8. 0d for damages to his crops by hail. Apparently in 1843, during a very severe hailstorm, farmers in Oxfordshire



*Cottages in Main Street, the Post Office on the right*

sustained losses exceeding £30,000.

## THE PENNY POSTAGE

The penny postage was first introduced in 1840. Until that time, communication between towns or villages was an expensive business. George Herbert, in his *Perambulations of Banbury*, writes, 'The cost of postage at this time (1836) for

a letter, was 1/- from London' and if for a greater distance, more, and it was only the weight of a sheet of foolscap, and if the sheet happened to be a thick one, they would charge it as a double letter. But if you took the letter back to show that it was a single sheet, they would tear the half sheet off and keep it and return the extra postage'. Clifton Post Office was first opened on 17th September 1912. The first Post Mistress was Miss Grantham, and the office was the corner house of Chase Villas.





*Farming at Welford's farm  
in days long gone*

*Jim Whitlock with one of the horses he  
cared for at Welford's farm and (below)  
with John Henry Welford's threshing  
machine, c. 1910*



*A flock of geese outside Clifton  
Mill cow shed ... and hay-making*



*Sheep shearing*



*Mr and Mrs  
George Robinson  
of Clifton Mill, in  
their horse and  
trap*



*Fred Drinkwater,  
milking by hand*

## THE CHURCH

The first intimation that a Church was to be erected in Clifton, came from the *North Oxfordshire Monthly Times* dated June 1850, in these words:

We allude with much pleasure to the beneficence of the Rev. W. Wilson, Curate of Deddington, in recently setting up at his own cost, two Chapels of Ease in the Hamlets of Clifton and Hempton, where Divine Service now regularly takes place. The Rev. F.G. Wilson, Assistant Curate, zealously officiates at both chapels. It is in contemplation to erect new Chapels of Ease in both Hamlets, suitable to the adequate wants of each, the present buildings being only fitted up for temporary use. We hear that to accomplish the object, the Rev. W. Wilson will, in a true spirit of Christian philanthropy, defray the whole expense of erecting one at Hempton and that towards the erection of one at Clifton, our late Vicar, the Rev. Colton Risley [*sic passim*], has promised the handsome sum of £100, and Mr Joseph Gardner, a most eligible site.

This was exactly three years before its completion. In September 1851, another little announcement appeared, reading 'The Church at Clifton is now in course of erection and we understand that a corner stone will be laid on Monday, 15th, by Mrs Colton Risley. A little form of worship suitable to the occasion is in the course of printing'. The next month, October, 1851, saw the laying of the corner stone. The whole of the population of 300 odd, must have turned out for this, together



*Clifton Church taken from St James' farm*

with 200 from outside. It makes one wonder where they all stood. It is described as follows:

'The ceremony of laying a corner stone to the pretty little Church, now in the course of erection at the Hamlet of Clifton, took place on Monday afternoon, the 8th at 4 o'clock. Probably not less than 500 persons were present. The Corner Stone was deposited

in its place by the Rev. W. Colton Risley. A Hymn was sung and the Rev. William Wilson, D.D. delivered a brief address to the people. The Church when finished will accommodate nearly 200 persons. Mr Joseph Gardner of Clifton, gave the ground for the site – a circumstance to which we allude with the greatest pleasure, since such instances of liberality are very rare among farmers who are owners of land – and nearly all the materials have been drawn by the farmers of Clifton. The stone, dug from the Aynho pit, was freely given by W.C. Cartwright, Esq. The whole timber, consisting entirely of oak, is presented by the Rev. Colton Risley, and the remaining expenses will be defrayed by public subscriptions. It is only just, however, to add that Mr and Mrs Risley are the chief contributors'.

An announcement in another paper in 1852 states that 'Owing to the inconvenient distance from the Parish Church, it was deemed necessary, by gentlemen anxious



for the spiritual care of the population, that an Episcopal Chapel should be erected in Clifton’.

But Friday, 10th June 1853 was surely one of the red-letter days in the history of the village. Under the heading of ‘Consecration of Clifton Church’, was the following, which will be of interest to all Clifton people: ‘This interesting ceremony took place on Friday the 10th. The Bishops of Oxford and Nova Scotia, accompanied by the Rev. Thomas Walpole as Chaplain, and J. M. Davenport Esq., the Bishop’s Registrar, arrived at the Aynho Station of the G.W.R. by the nine minutes past twelve train, and having entered the carriages waiting to receive them, immediately proceeded to Clifton, which is about half a mile from the station. Upwards of thirty Clergymen, who appeared in their surplices, were in attendance amongst whom were – and here followed about thirty names. The prayers were read by the Rev. W. Colton Risley, late Vicar of Deddington; the lessons by the Rev. Dr. Wilson and G. Venables. The Bishop of Oxford preached a most appropriate sermon. The collection at the offertory, towards a repairing fund, amounted to upwards of £50. The Deddington Church Choir attended under the direction of Mr E. Marshall of Oxford. Miss Faulkner presided at the harmonium, kindly lent for the occasion by the Banbury Masonic Lodge’.

The Communion Plate (from Hunt & Hoskings, London), together with the Altar and Pulpit fittings (from Willis & Co. Birmingham) were the gift of a gentleman and his family. The seats are open and all free, and the Church has been built almost solely at the expense of the late Vicar of Deddington. The architecture is in the pointed style of the 13th century, with plain lancet windows on the sides; a triplet at the east end and a trefoil in the gable over, containing painted glass by Hardman. There is a bell turret at the west end, supported by buttresses. It contains two bells, cast by Taylor of Oxford, and is surmounted by a gable and cross. The walls are of the kind of masonry called rangework and the dressing is of Aynho stone. There is a porch on the south side of the nave and a sacristy on the north side of the chancel. The roof, which covers the nave and chancel is of steep pitch, consisting of a substantial frame of oak, including an arch in each pair of principals springing from the stone corbels. The font, near the west end, is of Painswick Stone and contains amongst its ornaments the escollop shell – the emblem of St James the Great – to whom the Church is dedicated. The seats in the nave and chancel are plain and substantial specimens of oak work. Indeed, the quality of this material, which is of English growth, and the liberality with which it has been supplied, are worthy of admiration, and the sedilia, pulpit, reading desk and font cover are beautiful specimens. No deal timber has been used.

The Architects were Messrs Buckler & Son, High St, Oxford, who gave the design gratuitously. The Builder was Mr Robert Franklin, of Deddington. The font, which is a beautiful piece of workmanship, was executed by William Hopcraft, son of James Hopcraft the mason.

We must not omit to mention that the rich and poor to the number of nearly 400 were bountifully entertained by Mr and Mrs Risley, with good old English Fare – roast and boiled beef and plum pudding and a plentiful supply of ale from Messrs. Hall, Tawney and Taylors Brewery, Oxford. Unfortunately there is no record of where this bountiful spread took place. If in Clifton, then it must have been in a barn. The schools were not built until 1870. The Rev. James Brogden, M.A. was Vicar of the Parish at the time. The Rev. Colton Risley resigned in 1848. There is a brass tablet in the Church, close by the Pulpit, inscribed with these words, 'In memory of the Rev. Colton Risley, M.A. who built this Church and for fifteen years



*Bloxham Brass Band at a Sunday School anniversary celebration*

herein officiated. He was born October 22nd 1798 and died June 1st 1869'.

A Confirmation was held in Clifton Church in 1864. St James' Day, July 25th, was always a great day for everyone in the village, with a Church service and the Choir singing (on at least two occasions) the Hallelujah Chorus, and

there was always a band in attendance. Each year there was a Choir Outing for the Choir boys. In 1886 the trip was to Rhyl in North Wales, and the return fare was 5/-. Evidently the Church has always been beautifully decorated for Harvest Festivals, just as it still is, for a Parish Magazine for 1891 states, 'The Church at Clifton was decorated in its usual neat and chaste manner, for which it has for so long been famous'. A new Dorsel of 'rich looking velvet with wings and brass fittings, the gift of Holford C. Risley, Esq. was placed in the Church at Easter, 1892. Holford C. Risley was the son of the Rev. W. Colton Risley, Vicar of Deddington.

On two different Sundays in 1882, the Vicar the Rev. Thomas Boniface, preached on the open space near the Inn at Clifton. 'There was a good number of attentive listeners'. It is interesting to learn that on St James' Day in 1897 at a public tea, 'a handsome gift of a tea service for 60 persons was presented to the village by Mrs Hall (of Boulderdyke), and Mrs Gibbons, in memory of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee'.



*Tea Committee Chapel anniversary (l to r): Elsie Robinson, Daisy Sykes, Polly Brain, Mary Wright, Sarah Wright, Ellen Welford, Mrs G Drinkwater, Sarah Drinkwater, Mrs Smith*

The tea service, though much





*Coronation Tea party  
preparation: Mary Wright,  
B. Welford, S. Wright*

depleted, is still used for Jumble Sales, Whist Drives, etc. Jumble Sales have been held in the village to obtain money for tuning and cleaning the organ (at a cost of £8); new cassocks (through the efforts of Mr and Mrs Woolgrove and Mr and Mrs Hone); and oil lamps to replace the candles in Church. The lamps cost £11, and were introduced into the Church in 1902. In June 1900, 'the walls of the interior of the Church were cleaned and fresh coloured, and the roof and interior parts overhauled

and repaired and a new cross erected on the east gable. The expenses were defrayed by money collected at the opening in 1853 and retained for the purpose of repairs'. In June 1903, the Jubilee of the Church was celebrated with a tea, to which 146 people sat down. The following is an extract from the *Deanery Magazine*:

It is interesting to record that at any rate, one copy of the service used at the laying of the foundation stone has been preserved, and it is hoped that when the centenary of the Church is celebrated, some of the younger ones, who took part in the Jubilee, will still have their copy of the form of thanksgiving service, and that they will remain true to their Church as Mr J. Drinkwater, who, though in his 79th year, is still 'doorkeeper to the house of his Lord' and as Mr T. Hone, who has been in the Choir ever since the Church was built.

A handsome Prayer Book, for the use of the officiating minister was presented to the Church by the parishioners, to commemorate the 50th anniversary. Two white alms bags were made and presented to the Church as a Jubilee gift, by Miss Mary Williams, of East Ham, who was granddaughter of Mrs Harris, late of Boulderdyke. Clifton Church Choir, under the leadership of Mr Woolgrove, assisted at several outstanding events at Deddington, for instance, at the consecration of the new Churchyard in 1907, and at the consecration of Deddington's new Church organ in 1912. Incidentally, the Rev. Dr. W.M. Richardson, late Bishop of Zanzibar, who consecrated the organ, officiated for some time at Clifton. The Clifton organ, by Hill & Son, was added to the Church some time before the eightys. There is no reference of any kind to the organ in the *Parish Magazine*, which first started in 1879. An electric blower was installed in 1942.

A tablet has lately been erected in the Church to the memory of the two lads of the village who lost their lives in the 1939–1945 war. To our everlasting shame, no tablet or memorial of any sort was erected in Clifton Church to the seven lads who never returned from the 1914–1918 war. It is true their names are on the war memorial at Deddington, but in years to come, who will know that they came from Clifton? Their names are:

A. Gomm, J.P. Hawkins, B. Hawkins, A. Adey, W.F. Bolton, J. Godfrey, and P. Pinfold.

The two lads whose memorial is in the Church, are F.B. Garrett, and E.B. Dumbleton.

The centenary service was held on June 10th 1953 in a well-filled and nicely decorated Church, and the Rev. Smith, Vicar of North Aston preached an appropriate sermon. The roof was repaired and the walls recoloured in 1953 at a cost of £167 3. 0d.

When the Church was consecrated, the Vicar was the Rev. James Brogden. He died in 1864. The Rev. James Turner was instituted in 1864 and resigned in 1877. The Rev. Thomas Boniface was instituted in 1878 and resigned when the Rev. Maurice Frost was instituted in 1924.

Boys were boys in the past century, even as they are today. One of our oldest inhabitants is fond of chuckling over the times in Church, when he would slyly drop peas into an old gentleman's top hat, then watch *and* listen for the result as the old gentleman left the Church!

### **LIVING CONDITIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY**

In the 80s Income Tax varied from a bare twopence in the pound to a mere sixpence halfpenny, and in those days it was still called 'shameful', 'detestable' and 'immoral'. In December 1852, the tax was 5 1/4d in the pound. Today (1955) it is 9/- in the pound. In 1851, one in every six families comprised ten or more children.

Coffee was the fashionable drink until Charles II's reign, when tea was introduced, but tea was generally accepted as 'rather expensive' for the poorer classes and it is no wonder that workers everywhere resorted to beer. In the 1820s, Hunt Edmonds & Co. of Banbury, commenced brewing a lighter quality beer – and the charge – 2d a quart. In one book of 1834, an author bewailed the fact that publicans retailed their porter at 8/- per 6 gallons, when it could be made at home with the minimum of trouble, for 4/-. Brandy in those days was 16/- a gallon. In 1846 Grimbley Hughes of Oxford, advertised Sparkling Grape Champagne at 2/- a bottle and port wine or sherry, at 1/6d a bottle.

Children's shoes are perhaps the biggest headache a mother can have nowadays. In *Hunt's Directory* for 1846, R. Baxter of Parsons Street, Banbury, advertised children's shoes from 7½d to 1/6 a pair.

With regard to food, sugar was 1/4d per lb, meat 4d per lb; cheese 3d per lb; herrings were 2d a dozen; and in Banbury one could buy a halfpenny worth of fish, a half penny worth of chips and a halfpenny worth of peas. A good meal for 1½d. Rents varied from 9d to 2/6d a week. Coal was 12/- per ton.

Prices fluctuated even in those days and a local farmer writes in April 1813: 'Pigs of six weeks old, which sold two months ago at 4/- each are now worth 10/-'. 'Hats, clocks, gloves, soap, windows and hearths have all been taxed in their turn and it is interesting to know that the family allowance for children existed 150 years ago,

but it was abolished in 1806, because of the 'astounding official increase of large families'.

In the *North Oxfordshire Monthly Times* for 1851 was the following announcement. 'We understand that the usual liberality of William Appletree has again dealt out to many of the poor inhabitants of this parish, especially Clifton, a quantity of flannel'.

Whatever else they lacked, Clifton people possessed a free and independent spirit. In February 1836, a case was tried at the Assizes between Deddington and Clifton. Clifton wished to be a separate parish. Apparently they lost the day, so they refused to pay any rates. We regret that history leaves us in the dark as to the result – a pity, for we still have to pay rates!

Despite its nearness to 'drunken Deddington', it is gratifying to find that there are no cases of drunkenness recorded in the old chronicles, but we regret to say several cases of assault resulting in fines from 3/- to 5/- are recorded. The death rate amongst the children in those days was certainly high, but apparently, if they could survive their childhood, all stood a fair chance of longevity. Between 1811 and 1881, 23 people in the parish reached the age of 90 years or over.

## **HYGIENE**

Evidently hygiene was unheard of in the last century. Clifton abounded in ponds, there being no less than seven or eight, and the wells, chiefly on the sides of the roads, left much to be desired. They were all more or less uncovered, and it was nothing exceptional for a cat to get in and be drowned, or a child to fall in and be fished out again. Still the villagers had never been used to anything else and took it as a matter of course until the 1920s, when standpipes were erected in place of the wells; and by then, most of the ponds had been filled in. Let us hope that Clifton people were cleaner than in some places, for Arthur Bryant, writing of 1795, says 'In those days many of the poorer classes did not wash at all, while of the sweeps, it is recorded that they washed three times a year'.

## **PAUPERS**

In 1854 'out of a population of 2,000 in the Parish of Deddington, there are not less than 1,500 paupers'. This amazing statement appeared in the *North Oxfordshire Monthly Times* issued in 1854, and at first glance appears to reveal an extraordinary state of affairs, but the statement is rather misleading. An American observer writes in 1830, 'The term "pauper", as used in England, and more particularly in agricultural districts, embraced that numerous class of society, who depend for sustenance solely upon labour of their hands'. This was perfectly true, for in 1795, some magistrates met together in Berkshire to fix a minimum wage for rural workers. Instead, they decided to supplement wages with poor relief. Wages were driven down and down. Employers knew that however little they paid their men, the difference would be made up by the parish. Within a generation the population had been reduced to pauperism. This payment of rates in aid of

wages compelled the labourers to become paupers even while in full employment. So it will be seen that 75% of Clifton population (amounting to 300 odd), were classed as paupers, although they were earning a wage for a full week's work. So conditions were not so bad as the statement would imply.

Old people were not provided for as they are in these days, and it is distressing to read in the Parish records of so many old people – many of them Clifton people – dying in the Woodstock Union – a fact which speaks for itself. According to Gregory King, in 1888 nearly one fifth of the whole nation was in occasional receipt of alms. But what of today? There are more than 2,000,000 people in the country receiving national assistance.

But despite the pauperism and lack of money amongst the majority of Clifton people, they were extremely generous in the last century. As for instance, 'A meeting at Clifton in 1851 of the North Oxfordshire Church Missionary Society contributed £2.0.11d at its doors'; and again a collection from Clifton schoolchildren for a Hindoo orphan, amounted to 4/6d and another collection for an orphan at Banda, 6/2d. And a lot of water has run under Clifton Mill bridge since 1854 when a writer complained that 'there is an excessive number of paupers, lunatics and idiots in Oxfordshire'!

### **CLIFTON PEOPLE IN THE LAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS**

As with most villages, the names of some of the families live on and on. Four of the names mentioned in the records of 1851 are Drinkwater, Welford, Woolgrove and Wright. Although the last two mentioned names have regrettably died out, descendants of the other two still remain in the village. Another name well known in the village until 1917 was that of Parish. The Parishs, father and son, occupied the same cottage for well over 100 years. Parish senior was known in the village as 'Waterloo Parish'. He took part in the battle of Waterloo and was prisoner of war for some time. Parish junior was the 'dilling' of a family of thirteen. He was 6ft tall and died at the age of 90.

The Woolgroves are always remembered with the greatest respect, the last representative being for many years Choir Master and Church Organist. There were Woolgroves mentioned as carpenters and wheelwrights in 1846, and still followed the same occupation until 1934. Another well known name is that of Knibbs. Although not mentioned in the 1851 records, we have reason to believe that the Knibbs family lived in Clifton 100 years ago. The Elstons were farmers in 1851. They, and later the Spencers lived at the Manor Farm for over 80 years. Before the Elstons, the Manor Farm was occupied by a Mr Kilby (Mrs Spencer was Mr Elston's daughter), Mr F. Whitlock has occupied his present house for over 70 years. He was born in Clifton and moved to his present house when he was three years old. Another family well known and still represented in the village is the Sykes family. A grand old man was Ramsay Sykes, and three of his family of thirteen still live in Clifton.





*Home Farm*

A family well known in the Show world lived for a time at Clifton, Curtis, of round-a-bout fame. When living in the village, he made a set of wooden horses. The Garretts have lived at, and farmed the Home Farm for about 70 years. The Drinkwaters were shopkeepers in 1851. In 1909, Mr John Drinkwater 'fell asleep at the ripe old age of 85'. He fulfilled the office

of bellringer in Clifton Church for 50 years from 1861 to 1908. He was an ancestor of our Mr Drinkwater. The Mr Joseph Gardner, who so generously gave the site for the Church, was no relation to the Mr C. Gardner now at Manor Farm.

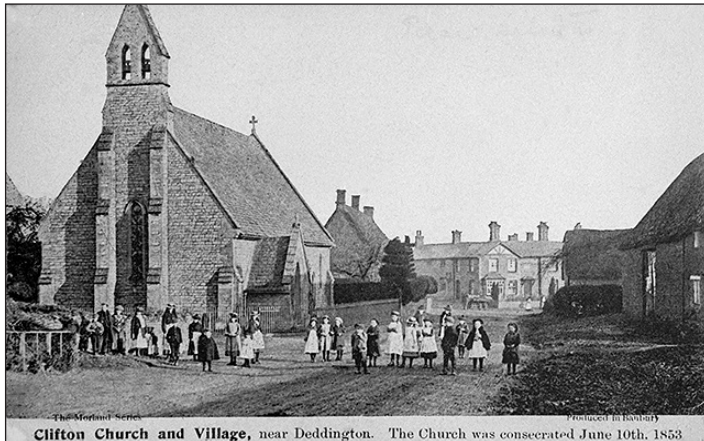
There is no possible doubt that at one time, and not so very long ago, the village was almost entirely self-supporting. Apart from grocers or general shops, there was a fishmonger, a basket-maker, a hat maker, a baker, a blacksmith and shoe-maker, to say nothing of the manufacturers of agricultural implements. There were also three public houses. There is no actual evidence of a butcher's shop, but there was certainly a slaughter house. Not far from the river was a pottery shed where the old fashioned brown earthenware pans, still used in country districts, were made. People in those days could not afford fresh meat, but almost every householder kept a pig, which ensured a plentiful supply of bacon, ham and fat, and with the various farms supplying milk, eggs and butter (margarine was unheard of then), they all managed to live very comfortably. As an instance of the changing of the times, the writer knew an old lady who declared that she scarcely knew the taste of fresh meat when she was a girl, but that she used to be 'sick of the sight of ham'.

Corn was ground at the Mill and the majority of people would go leazing after the harvest was gathered and have their own little bit of leazed corn ground for themselves. Some of the cottages still retain their bread ovens by the side of the chimney corners, although a stove or oven grate now replaces the old time open stone fireplaces.

The old days are sometimes referred to as 'bad old days' and sometimes as 'good old days'. There were few advantages if there were many disadvantages. Money was certainly not plentiful to the farmworkers; on the other hand, farmers could be, and were, a great deal more generous then. For instance, the last little pig of a litter, called the 'dilling' in Oxfordshire, was often given to one of the workers, and one could buy, in Clifton, a quart of milk (skimmed) for ½d. Wood was a great deal more plentiful and the charity coal 6d per cwt, and one has only to live under a thatched roof to know its advantages over slate or tile. Thatch is unequalled

for warmth in winter and coolness in summer. Although the cottagers may have had little enough in the way of blankets to cover them in bed, their low ceilings and thatched roofs, to say nothing of the thick walls, must surely have compared

not too unfavourably with the present day jerry built places called houses.



*St James' Church after its consecration in 1853*

## EVENTS IN THE PAST ONE HUNDRED YEARS

Of all the events in Clifton history, surely the most impressive and spectacular must have been the service and supper after the consecration of the Church.

There may probably have been some sort of occasion for the opening of the school, but there is no record of it. After the School was built in 1870, innumerable concerts were held there, and in 1882, the annual Christmas treat for the Church Sunday School was attended by 54 scholars. What a decline in the numbers of school children today! The most we can muster up altogether now is about fourteen or fifteen.

In 1880 there was a Temperance Drive. Pledges could be signed on application



*Clifton school children 1912 ... and in 1926*



to the Vicar. Meetings for the Band of Hope for juniors were held in the school each month. Clifton held several Flower Shows in conjunction with St James' Day. Here is an account of the second Flower Show, held on Monday, 16th August, 1880, in Clifton School. (St James' Day is 25th July, but it fell on a Sunday that year, so the celebrations were held a few weeks later). 'On Monday, August 16th, a second flower show was held in the schoolroom. In the afternoon, the mothers of the children attending St James' Sunday School, were provided with a capital tea at the residence

of Mr Day (the schoolmaster). A number of races were afterwards held in a field, the winners afterwards receiving their prizes in money. Repeated cheers having been given for various friends, the company adjourned to the schoolroom, headed by Hones Band. The room in the meantime had been lit with numerous Chinese lanterns which shed a pleasing glow on the flowers, fruit, etc. A few songs having been given, most of the company made their way to a barn, where dancing was kept up with much spirit for some hours'. These flower shows continued until well into this century, but the advent of the motor car caused the death knell to all the village fetes and flower shows. Towns claim the attention of the villagers now.

Every year there was a Christmas treat for the scholars in the schoolroom. The following is an account of one of these Christmas treats: 'The annual Christmas treat for St James' Sunday School,

took place on January 31st. At four o'clock the teachers assembled in the schoolroom, and by half past four, the little room was well filled with 54 scholars, who seemed heartily to enjoy their feast of tea, cake, and bread and butter. The tea over, their parents accompanied them to feast their eyes on a fine Christmas Tree, covered with useful presents, each scholar receiving one. After this, Mr Day kindly showed his Magic Lantern, always a source of amusement. The entertainment finished with the producing of a Bran Pie, of which each scholar had a share. On going out, each child received a bun and orange'.



*Clifton in the snow, pre World War II; the cart has fodder on it for animals*

Both the Victorian Jubilees were celebrated 'right royally' in Clifton. The 1897 jubilee in particular was celebrated with feasting, a precession [*sic*] and fireworks. It included a dinner and tea in the barn at the top of Tithe Lane (it could have been the Coal Barn) with sports in the field adjoining.

The coronation of Edward VII in 1902 was also a similar affair. It consisted of a dinner for men (!), tea for women and children, and supper for all. Sports were provided and cups were given to the children. A drum and whistle band was in attendance and it is interesting to note that the amount collected for the celebrations in Clifton was £18 13s 0d. The coronation of George V, 1911, was on the same lines with 'the repast' in Mr Welford's' building in Bakers Lane, and sports in Mr Spencer's field. Mr F. Garrett was secretary for this. Mr F. Garrett was treasurer for the coronation celebrations of 1937 which included a dinner for all in Mr Welford's barn in Tithe Lane, and a tea for the children, with a presentation of cups. There were sports of course, and beer and minerals were provided for all. The amount collected for this coronation was £32 16s 0d.

The relief brought by the ends of both world wars found its outlet in teas for the





*Flags for an earlier jubilee or coronation celebration, Roseville, Chapel Close*

children, and fancy dress parades. The 1945 celebrations in particular, consisted of a parade of over 40 inhabitants in fancy dress. Nearly every nation was represented.

The last event of any significance was the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. The weather was particularly unkind, but it failed to dampen the enthusiasm of adults

and children alike. There was the usual tea for children with the presentation of cups, and a grand supper at night for adults. Mr Garrett again was treasurer, and the amount collected for this was £250. A bus shelter is in the course of erection from the proceeds, after the expenses of the Coronation celebrations have been paid. The shelter is to cost £200.

Unfortunately there was no census in the 17th century, when Clifton was probably at its zenith, but as has been stated before, there were many more inhabitants than in this century, and although there is no record of any outstanding events, it is not beyond the powers of reasoning to imagine many hey-days and jollifications in the village. The Armada, for instance, could have been the scene of a bonfire or beacon, for on the high ground above the village, a fire would be seen for miles around. A village with a green such as Clifton had, must surely have been the centre of numerous May Days and various Saints' Days. Saints Days in the olden times were always celebrated with feasting and dancing, and what visions May Day conjures up, with perhaps the old time maypole and probably a fiddler in attendance. and who knows, perhaps dancing later on, by the light of horn lanterns on the green. Those were the days!

### **CLIFTON AT THE PRESENT TIME**

There is no doubt that almost every village in England has altered considerably in the last few years, and Clifton is no exception. The first farmhouse from the Deddington end was burned down in February 1946, in one of the two disastrous fires in Clifton during the present century. This was one of the farms occupied by the Malings in 1851. It was thatched at the time of the fire, and the land is in the occupation of M. P. Hiorns of the Duke of Cumberland's Head. The next farmhouse is occupied by Mr Garrett and has been in their family since the 80s. This farm was also occupied by the Malings in 1851. The next few cottages – three facing east and one facing north – are farm cottages. They are occupied by F. French, J. Garrett, A. Stephens and A. Sykes respectively.

The White Cottage stands back from the road, and the present owner is Mr H. Goddard. This was originally one cottage with barn or outhouse adjoining, until the early part of this century, when Miss Emmett, later Lady Denbigh, bought the



land and made it into a fair sized cottage. Later on still, it was further enlarged until it eventually developed into quite a country house, with a Roman Catholic Chapel adjoining and no fewer than four bathrooms. The garden at the back was delightfully old world, with a splendid view across the Cherwell valley. It was, and still is, reed thatched, with picturesque gables, reaching almost to the ground. It was the thatch which caused the other disastrous fire in 1941 which destroyed completely a whole wing of the house. Consequently, the house is very much smaller now. Years ago, hops grew at the back of the house abundantly. In the 1920s, Lady Denbigh purchased a piece of land adjoining her garden, and erected a bungalow on it for her gardener. This was an ugly looking building, but whatever faults there were with the outside, it certainly redeemed itself during the Second World War, for during the bombing of London, it housed literally dozens of evacuees. It was a roof over their heads and a respite from the bombing. It was demolished in 1953.

We next come to the schools. Built in 1870 on a site given by Mr Cartwright of Aynho, it must have many happy memories for some of the Clifton people. To the disgrace of the educational authorities, it has been closed since 1945. A perfectly good, well-built school fast going derelict. The first register of the school is still preserved, and contains well-known names in Clifton, such as Welford, Wright, Drinkwater, Knibbs and Whitlock. Not many people are aware that it once boasted a gallery, but no trace of this gallery exists today, for in 1899 it was removed in order to improve the accommodation for the infants, and the present glass screen was erected. There have been innumerable concerts held in it, including Glee and Madrigal concerts in 1880. A Band of Hope for Juniors was formed in 1879, with the meetings held in the school. There were concerts for the surplice fund, organised by Mr Day, the schoolmaster. (Surplices were first used in Clifton Church on Easter Sunday, 1879.) Children's Christmas parties were always held there, with Christmas trees and the room lit with Chinese lanterns. Mr Day was schoolmaster for many years, and apparently he was a very worthy master, for a report received from Her Majesty's Inspector in 1880 states: 'The school continues to be well taught and disciplined and Mr Day seems to have taken pains to develop the intelligence of the children'. Mr Day lived in the brick house at the top of the hill, now called 'Sedgehill'. He is believed to have left Clifton for Norwich, where he rose to the position of Cathedral Organist.

Between the White House and the Manor Farm was the village pond. It is hard to imagine a pond at that particular spot, but we have proof of it from the Wilkins maps. The pond was filled in when the school was built in 1870.

Next is the Manor Farm, an old house dated 1585. Obviously a Manor House at one time with lovely stone windows, which have been replaced by wooden frames. No doubt the present windows are much larger than the originals, but it has completely spoilt the old look of the house. The west wing is the oldest



Manor Farm

part. The most notable feature of the house is the front entrance, with its stonework porch and heavily studded door, with wooden bolts and latch. This front entrance is very similar to Sulgrave Manor entrance – onetime home of George

Washington – the two

houses being built within a few years of each other. The barn at the back of the Manor Farm was burned down years ago by a vindictive servant girl. The walls still show the marks of burning, for apparently the barn was full of corn at the time. Until 1940 there was a clump of fifteen elm trees in the paddock at the back of the house. Very old these trees must have been, for when they were eventually felled because of their unsafe condition, they were found to be completely hollow. What is now an orchard in front, was once a part of the village green. The date on the front of the house reads T.W. 1585. Unfortunately there is no record of any T.W. It is occupied now by Mr C. Gardner. Next to the Manor Farm garden is a cottage now occupied by Mr Taylor. It was here that the Drinkwaters lived for about sixty years. This house has one of the quaint projections, common to all country cottages at one time. The bread oven in the kitchens made them necessary, but as bread ovens are unused nowadays, these picturesque projections are fast disappearing.

A barn lies between this cottage and the next two or three cottages. The first one is occupied by Mr T. Tustain. The other one was once two if not three cottages. It was used as a school before the present school was built and when each child had to pay for the privilege of going to school. Mr Plaisted is the occupier.

Opposite to the Manor Farm and facing west, are two houses which were certainly one farmhouse once. All we know about it is that a member of the Wright family lived here years ago. One of the occupants, Mr F. Whitlock has lived there for well over 70 years. Mr Bowerman lives in the other. Then there are three neat looking houses with tiled roofs, facing south. These were originally small cottages and the Wilkins maps show the projection on the outside, as mentioned before. It is on the end house (Mr Pinfold's), and this years ago was a bakehouse. Mr Hucker and Mr Knibbs live in the other two houses, and it was in Mr Knibbs' house that Fincher, the blacksmith, mentioned in 1846, lived. It was in the next house that the Woolgroves lived for so many years. Hannah Drinkwater was a relative of the Woolgroves, and she lived there also and kept a little shop. The Woolgroves as carpenters and wheelwrights were mentioned in *Hunt's Directory* for 1851.

The Mary Drinkwater of 1846 may possibly have been the Hannah Drinkwater of 1851. Our Mr Drinkwater is a descendant of Hannah. The house is owned now by Mrs Dewhurst. Could the next three cottages, which are thatched, have been one house at one time? At present they are all three more or less alike, but a doorway can plainly be discerned on the stairs of the end cottage, and some stone steps appear to lead from the middle cottage to the next one. There was another outside



*Mrs Jennings, the postmistress, outside the Clifton Post Office*

projection between the first two, which shows up plainly on the Wilkins map. The cottages are occupied by Miss Butler, Mrs Plumbe and Mrs Jennings. The end one is our Post Office, and Mrs Jennings our Post Mistress. It was in the middle cottage – Mrs Plumbe's – that the Parishes lived for over 100 years.

The next house, called the 'Orchards' on account of the orchard at the back of the house, is owned by Mr Chadwick. Until 1936, this was three old cottages, and before that, one farm house. The Maynards lived here, and the barns and outhouses show on the Wilkins Map.

Next comes the Church, which is described on a previous page. It was at the next house, once 'The Swan', and afterwards St James' Farm, that the Wright family lived for so many years. Mr Joseph Gardner, who gave the site for the Church, lived here until the 60s. The name 'St James' could only have been named after the building of the Church. We have been unable to trace its name before 1853. In a field at the back of St James' is still the old Funeral Wagon, used at all funerals until the advent of the motor car. Mr Wright expressed a wish that it should never be used for any other purpose. St James' now belongs to Mr Woodhull.

James Hall was the licensee of the Duke of Cumberland's Head in 1846, but by



*Duke of Cumberland's Head inn on the left, Chase Villas on the corner, with the village shop beyond*

1868, James Harris lived there and he was described as grocer, and baker as well. It was James Hall who carried on the business of Beaver Hat making in addition to being the licensee. The beaver hat in those days was the universal headgear, and though the business was only a family affair, it was well known in the neighbourhood, and the Halls managed to make a good living out of it. Inset in the

wall, by the barn door is a stone figurehead. It may be the original figurehead of

the Duke of Cumberland ~ who knows! Mr F. Hiorns is our worthy publican now and he also farms Appletree. The house next was once a farm house. The Wrights lived here nearly 90 years ago, but the barns and outhouses have been pulled down. 'Caldicut' as the house is called is owned by Mr Adams. Between this house and the Mill is the old time sale ground. Apart from the farm buildings recently restored and improved, the sale ground looks just as it did in Wilkins' day.

The Mill buildings are no doubt, quite old, though the Mill house is considerably



*Clifton Mill from the Aynho direction*

less old. It belonged to the Cartwright family for over 300 years. Though not used anything like as extensively as formerly, we have proof that it has been in use for well over 800 years. What was it like in the reign of the first Elizabeth? What was it like when King Charles passed by in 1644? Was the miller a Royalist and did he cheer his King? Was he one of

the taxpayers mentioned in 1662? Alas we have no record. Mr R. Vincent occupies the Mill house now.

On the opposite side of the Mill, a barn has recently been pulled down, and years ago a horse pond existed on the same side as the barn. It fell into disuse with the disappearance of the horse. The pond is still there, but so weed covered that it is now scarcely noticeable. This pond (at the bottom of the hill) took the place of the horse trough, a usual feature of nearly every village.

The house half way up the hill is owned by Mr Castle. Now it is named 'Fourwinds', but until the beginning of this century, it was called the 'Mill Cottage'. Its nearness to the Mill makes it quite possible that it was originally connected with the Mill.

The next house is owned by Mr Warren and now called 'Sedgehill'. This must have been 'The Crown'. It was certainly a public house, and in 1846, John Coy lived at 'The Crown'. Mr Day, the schoolmaster lived here, but at the beginning of this century, the house was a private school kept by Mr Boffin, who was also basket-maker. Later on Mr Boffin moved the basket making business a little farther up the village.

Mr Homans' house, built in 1939 is a vast improvement on the row of cottages called 'Malt Row' that existed on the site until they were condemned and pulled down in 1938. Some say that Malt Row was originally a Malt House and it probably was, although all record of such a house is lost. Malt Row faced south and consisted of four cottages of the pudding-bag type.

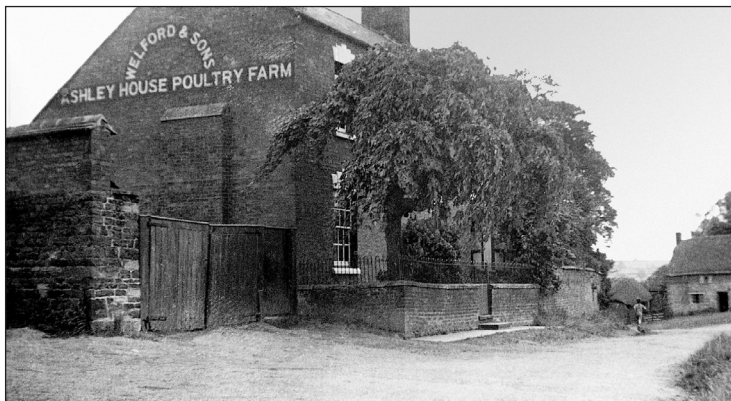


Next is the barn belonging to Mr Drinkwater. This barn has served many a useful purpose. It has been used for jumble sales, and for some time it was a fish and chip shop. It joins Mr Drinkwater's house and shop – our one and only general shop where one can procure anything and everything. Articles absolutely unprocurable in towns during the war blazoned themselves unblushingly on the shelves of our village shop.

Next are 'Chase Villas' built in 1886 on the site of several old cottages. They belong to Mr Tustain who lives in the corner house, with Mr Bowerman next door.

Pepper Alley comes next. Mr Plaisted lives in the only house left standing on the left. A mission hall – called 'The Tabernacle' – lay at the end of the Alley, but years ago this was a row of small cottages. Mr Hartwell's house was the beginning of yet another row of small cottages, of which all but two have been demolished. They are occupied by Mr Callow and Mr Fox.

The house belonging to Miss Welford (a descendant of the 1851 Welford), and the neighbouring one belonging to Mr Hook, were also small cottages. This is evident from the Wilkins map. There were 302 inhabitants in Clifton at one time, and a fair proportion of them must have lived in this small area.



*Ashley House, home of Welford & Sons Poultry Farm. The little boy running away (bottom right) is Donald Welford*

Now we come to Ashley House, owned by Mr Welford. This was the house which was once occupied by Thomas Larnier. It was an outside licence house, but there is no record of

the name of this licenced house. Larnier is mentioned in 1846 and 1851, and also in 1868. Then there is gap in our records till 1879 when Larnier must have died or left the district. The 1851 Welford is an ancestor of our Mr Welford. (Larners used to brew their own beer, but it is said that the water from the fountain was never used – the beer wouldn't keep.) Thomas Lardner – there is a 'D' in the name, died in 1877.



*Yard at Ashley House, Donald Welford in the pram*

Boulderdyke, an old stone and thatched house, is situated on high ground with a remarkable view along the Cherwell valley. This, of course, was a farmhouse, and in 1851 was occupied by John Harris. Different legends are connected with this house, and some maintain that



*Chapel Close, with Manor Barns at the end of the lane*

an underground passage runs from the house to the old Catholic Chapel that certainly existed years ago. Another legend attached to the house is that years ago it was an old Priory; but of course this is all conjecture. The house is now divided into two flats, Mr D. Welford living in one of them. The other is occupied by Americans.

Facing north, on the side of the lane, are two farm cottages. These were obviously one farmhouse with barns and buildings adjoining. They are occupied by Mr G. French and Mrs A. Bowerman.\*

To the west of these cottages, through some iron railings and past the Chapel, were three small cottages. Two of the cottages are occupied by a grand old couple, who have lived in Clifton for most of their lives. Mr French's wage at the time of his marriage was 13/- a week, and that was quite the recognised wage at the time. In fact, in those days, large families were brought up on ten or eleven shillings a week. Mr French's house also has a thatched projection. A new dwelling has lately been added and is a continuation of one of the cottages.

As before mentioned, the Chapel was once a thatched building, but the actual age is unknown. There was considerable alteration to the interior in 1869, at a cost of £158. Pewter collection plates belonging to the Chapel are inscribed with the date 1869. It was redecorated in 1910 at a cost of £40, and redecorated again in 1955 at a cost of £102. It was at the side of the Chapel that the pond lay. People were more religiously minded years ago, and the established Church and the Dissenters were often at war with one another, resulting sometimes in free fights, and during these skirmishes more than once, the seats of the Chapel have been dragged out and thrown into the pond.

Though the present garages belonging to Mr Sandals may possibly have been houses years ago, the Wilkins map shows a fairly large barn. The houses to the north of the garages belong to Mr Sandals, one of which is condemned. Mr Sandals lives in the larger one. The two cottages at the back of these houses are due for demolition.

Referring to the Wilkins map again, we find that not one house has been added to Clifton in the past 90 or 100 years. The new houses that *have* been built, are all on the sites of two or perhaps three old cottages. In the past thirty years, at least fifteen cottages have been pulled down or condemned.

## **ACREAGE AND POPULATION**

In 1851 the acreage of Clifton was listed at 670 acres, and the rateable value

£1,828, the number of inhabitants being 302. In 1801 the population was 226 and in 1891 it had dwindled to 166. Now it has further dwindled to 130. *Hunt's Directory* for 1846 mentions that the population of Deddington, Clifton and Hempton was 2,025.

Names mentioned are: (Clifton)

Thomas Fincher	Blacksmith	John & Joseph Gardner	Farmers
John Harris	Farmer	William Malings	Farmer
John Coy	The Crown	William Matthews	Stonemason
Thomas Larner	Pumpmaker	James Hall	Duke of Cumberland's Head
Jeremiah North	Grocer	Mary Drinkwater	Grocer
William Merry	Miller		

The *Gazetteer* for 1851 mentions: (Clifton)

W. Woolgrove	Carpenter	James Hone	Farmer
J. Mathews	Shopkeeper	W. Hollis	Blacksmith
J. Hall	Duke of Cumberland's Head and hat maker		
Hannah Drinkwater	Shopkeeper		

Also mentioned are Welford, Larner and W. French

Some inhabitants in 1868: (Clifton)

William Elston	Farmer	John Harris	Farmer
Mr Malings	Farmer	Edward Wilson	Farmer
Thomas Wright	Farmer	W. Woolgrove	Carpenter & Wheelwright
James Harris	Grocer, Baker and Vict. of Duke of Cumberland's Head		
John Mathews	Mason	George Holtby	Cattle Dealer

Also mentioned – W. French, W. Welford, T. Larner

Some farmers in 1851 (Clifton)

W. Elston (Manor Farm)	W. Malings (Home and Appletree Farms)
J. Harris (Boulderdyke)	T. Wright (Caldicot)
Joseph Gardner (St James)	James Hone (Hazel Hedge)

Hazel Hedge Farm, once definitely in the Parish of Clifton, was originally called 'Clifton Grounds' and was farmed by John Gardner, father of Joseph Gardner. John Gardner died in 1850, 'at an advanced age' and later in the year his live and dead stock was offered for sale by his son Joseph. Evidently the Hones lived there for a while, for Mrs Hone died there in 1854. By 1868 it was farmed by Wilson, and by then it was named 'Hazel Hedge'.

In 1928 the village allotments were moved from New Road (quite a mile away) to Tithe Lane, but in the 70s they were in a little field two or three hundred yards away, on the right, on the Deddington Road.

## THE WILKINS MAPS

There were originally three maps drawn by Wilkins. One belongs to Clifton school, one is in the possession of Mr French of Deddington, and the other one cannot be traced. Wilkins was a clever, self-taught artist who lived in the Style at Deddington. He died in 1891 at the age of 70. The Clifton maps were obviously drawn before the 70s, as the pond on the green is clearly shown on one of them. The pond was filled in when the School was built in 1870.

## HERBS

Medicines are and always have been, made from herbs and whereas nowadays we are accustomed to getting everything in the medicine line already made up for use, our poor ancestors had to make their own.

All herbs are governed by some particular planet; thus the hawthorn is under the domination of Mars, and the fig under Jupiter.

The following interesting remedies are taken from a book dated 1792, written by one Nicholas Culpepper, Gent., and is a book of medicines made from English Herbs, being 'An Astrologo-Physical discourse of the Vulgar Herbs of this nation, containing a complete method of Physic, whereby a Man may preserve his body in health or cure himself, being sick, for Threepence Charge, with such things only as grown in England, they being most fit for English Bodies'. (The whole book is written with the long s's and in some places requires a bit of translating):

The Common Alder: 'The said leaves gathered while the morning dew is on them and brought into a chamber troubled with fleas, will gather them thereunto and rid the chamber of those troublesome bedfellows'.

Hawthorn: 'The seed bruised and boiled in wine and drank, is good for inward tormenting!'

Thistles: 'The Juice of common thistles, bathed on the place that wanteth hair, it being fallen off, will cause it to grow again speedily'.

Willow: 'The burnt ashes of the bark, being mixed with vinegar, taketh away warts, corns and superfluous flesh, being applied to the place'.

For pains and wrigglings (or wranglings) of the Stomache: 'Take 50 kernals of peach stones and 100 kernals of cherry stones, a handful of elderflowers and three pints of muscadell. Set them in a closed pan into a bed of horse-dung for 10 days after which distil in a glass, with a gentle fire and keep it for your use'. Onion: 'Being baked in the embers and taken, they are a remedy against a surfeit of mushrooms'.

Mint: 'The eating of the leaves of Mint has been found by experience to cure the leprosy'.

Periwinkle: 'Venus owns the herb and it is said that the leaves eaten by man and



wife together, cause love between them’.

Elm: ‘The water that is found in the bladders on the leaves of the elm, if put into a glass and let into the ground, or else dung, for twenty-five days, the mouth being close stopped and the bottom set upon a lay of ordinary salt, that it may settle, and the water become clear, is a singular sovereign balm for green wounds’.

Lily of the Valley: ‘The flowers being close stopped up in a glass, put into an ant hill and taken away again a month later, ye shall find a liquor in the glass being outwardly applied, helps the gout’.

Ivy: ‘If one has got a surfeit by drinking of wine (!!!) his speediest cure is to drink a draught of the same wine wherein a handful of ivy leaves, being first bruised, have been boiled’.

Figs: ‘They say that the fig tree is never hurt by lightening, as also, if you tie a bull, be he ever so mad, to a fig tree, he will quickly become tame and gentle, but some authors say the eating of figs do make people lousy’.

Hannah Parish, wife of ‘Waterloo Parish’ was considered a ‘rare ‘un’ in her day for making up various herb drinks and herbal medicines.

\* (p. 30) The following additional information was supplied by George Harris, now living in Australia:

My father worked for Mr T Wright, who was the tenant farmer for these cottages and the farm buildings at the rear. Dad lived in the left-hand cottage with mother and children for many years until vacating in the early 1970s to move to the Paddocks at Deddington. I don’t think the cottages had any further tenants; they were demolished soon afterwards, the stone being used to add to that of the barn to build a modern house. Alice Bowerman and my mother Mary were sisters and lived side by side in these cottages until mother died in 1945. I would say that the little cottages were always separate, specifically for the farm hands. As far as my memory serves me, the Frenches did live in the cottages behind the chapel (as mentioned).

*Layout Mary Robinson*

*I am grateful to Jean Welford for the loan of many photographs  
and for checking the accuracy of captions*