

Postman's Walk Tuesday August 19 2014

Barbara Farquharson & John Torrance (we wrote separate accounts and then spliced them. We put the new information we gathered in bold), Emma Rouse added additional observations and pictures.

(Photos by courtesy of Marilyn Woolland)

Barb: Scudding clouds, blue sky, warm sun. How many people would turn up? We knew that sixteen or so were coming, but after that? At Hole House, waiting with Phil Planel, we laid bets – John: 25, Barb: 28; Rose (grand-daughter) 30. And then they came, some walking in from the village, some by car. About 45!

Nearly all villagers (the 'outsiders' were: 4 from Colyton, 1 from Beer, my 2 grand-children from London). A lot of the old villagers – Edwin (Purchase), Norman & Jean (Brimson), Marie (Dowell), Sid (Sweetland), Ross (Wilmington), Linda (Hughes), Ralph (Cox). The rest older or newer incomers – Old Vicarage, New Vicarage, Vicarage Hill, Thatch Barton, Hill Arrish, Bottoms, Gays ...

Emma: I noticed immediately how the conversation flowed differently with all the locals – several different groups sharing information and recollections collectively- makes it more difficult to capture the stories though

Barb: Phil and Emma, in fluorescent yellow, our marshals. Marilyn and Jenny née Saunders our guides. Jenny explains about their relationship to Harry Layzell, about his many occupations – blacksmith, chimney sweep, postman, and describes the ways he took to deliver the post – on foot, on bike, often with Jenny and Marilyn on his shoulder, or in the basket of his bike.



John: I gave a quick rundown on the history of Hole House and we turned into the courtyard, courtesy of Roger Marvin.

Barb: ... For those who didn't know it, the lovely moment of

discovery when they find the chequerboard flint wall of the south wing.

Emma:amazed by the chequerboard flint wall – is now looking out for examples of the use of the material on the Chase



*John: I proposed the theory that perhaps the flint was a by-product of lime-burning at Hole Pits under the Bartletts. **Questions about whether this was a local C17 fashion (Cadhay, Colyton) or a more general fashion: more research needed.***

Barb: Stories about Lethbridge – his excavation of the midden, and his paranormal interests. Ralph Cox telling stories of the friendship between Lethbridge and his father, Charley, who was a great water diviner. **Stories we've half heard, but heard differently this time.** Straggle down the hill to Hole Bottom and the mill.

*John: Rod Hart (who owns the mill) led us down the drive, pointed out the leat, now dry, and showed us **an early C20 watercolour of Hole Mill. The overshot wheel was on the north side of the mill (shaded from drying effect of sun) and the used water ran down through the present garden to the stream. The interior layout was similar to Manor Mill. Milling ceased about 1914. A track ran from Wobble up the valley and past the mill to Hole Bottom.***

Barb: People remember Mrs Norris who lived at the mill - kind hearted, red coated and a great believer in ghosts.

Emma: Great Ghost Stories – of the lady in red and seeing a previous version of someone who was still alive

*John: Returned to Hole Bottom. Rod Hart said that **the end of the nearer cottage (now called The Linhay) was a linhay for storing***

grain for the mill. Nobody knew why the cottages had been named York and Lancaster. Mark, who rents York Cottage, said he'd found no trace of Selway's smithy there. **There's a broken millstone of French burr(?) laid as a threshold to his house. People remembered that both cottages had burned out twice in living memory. Angela Lambert showed a watercolour of Bottom Cottage with York Cottage behind.** We know from the census who lived there.

Barb: Angela shows the Neolithic chert axe that came out of her stream, Tony reads out details about it supplied by Tom Cadbury (Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter). Angela has some wonderful lumps of flint with sea urchin fossils. Who brought them there? People remember this and that ... but, equally, they're happily talking to people that they know about quite other things. It's a walk, histories, memories, encounters ...

*John: Up at Hooknell I distribute copies of the 1793 and 1840 maps showing the extent of the farm and farmland, and explain my theory that it grew out of two medieval holdings, etc. People examined remains of walls. Ross Wilmington said **that Woodhouse owns the fields east of the lane and farms those west of it, that the field marked Baker's Field in 1840 still has the same name, and that the track up to Locksey's lane is called Baker's Lane.** Marie Dowell knew that Ike's uncle William Dowell lived there before the Salters (1920s).*

Barb: Ross remembers his gran telling stories about her gran fetching bread from Woodhouse farm. Tells us he's found the old bread oven at Woodhouse and also a fine carved beam.

*John: Further along the lane to Beckham Ross shows us that **we had misidentified the track and site of the cottage, which are about 50m further north, now in woods. Some traces said to remain there (to be examined).** He remembered it being known as **Keeper's Cottage** (this may have been where Skinner the keeper lived in the 1880s, although he is also placed at Beckham in the records and, more generally, there seems to have been some confusion in the records between Beckham and the Hooknell cottages).*

Emma: Death of a track with the death of a cottage – memories bought up of the postman taking the short cut we used because the track was no longer in use and taking the back way into Hill Arrish through the kitchen(?) gardens to deliver the mail

Barb: Down across the field, across the ford. Ross gallantly carrying the small elderly lady from Colyton. To the humps and bumps in the little copse that are the remains of the disappeared farm at Little Hooknell. The old track that Harry Layzell had taken to Rockenhayne still visible.

*John: I explained about the Lees who had lived at Little Hooknell, but (Phil being at the dentist) the connection with Lee's cottage at Southleigh, excavated by Phil, was not pursued. Of the last names known for this site, Emmanuel Robert Davey, ag lab (1929) got no response, but **Norman Brimson said that Thomas George Oliver, bus conductor (1947-1954), given this address in the Parish Register, had lived at Beckham, so Little Hooknell may have been deserted by the time of WW2.***



Barb: **Angela remembered the story that Oscar Pike once told her** of the old woodcutter who was outside chopping wood with his wife and child sitting close by. A small chip flew up and went into his wife's eye and blinded her. I found part of an old glass stopper. People talking about the landscape and how it had changed. People talking about quite other things!

Straggled up the tussocky hill to Hill Arrish for tea. The warning had gone ahead of the numbers involved. A lovely spread in the big kitchen. I hadn't realised how pleased people would be to see the new house, to peer in on the greenhouses, to sit out on the terrace to have their tea and cake and look down the valley to the sea. Clearly it was an important part of the walk.

Emma: Fascinated by the social history of the old Hill Arrish – and the politics involved and local considerations of telling such a story



Emma: Cider press preserved at Hill Arrish which came from another property

A sudden squall and everyone sheltered, and then lovely late afternoon sun as people made their way down the garden, past the geese, over the ford (the elderly lady lifted again, and, this

time, photographed!) and back to Hole Bottom.