

AMPNEY CRUCIS

**A
COTSWOLD
GEM**

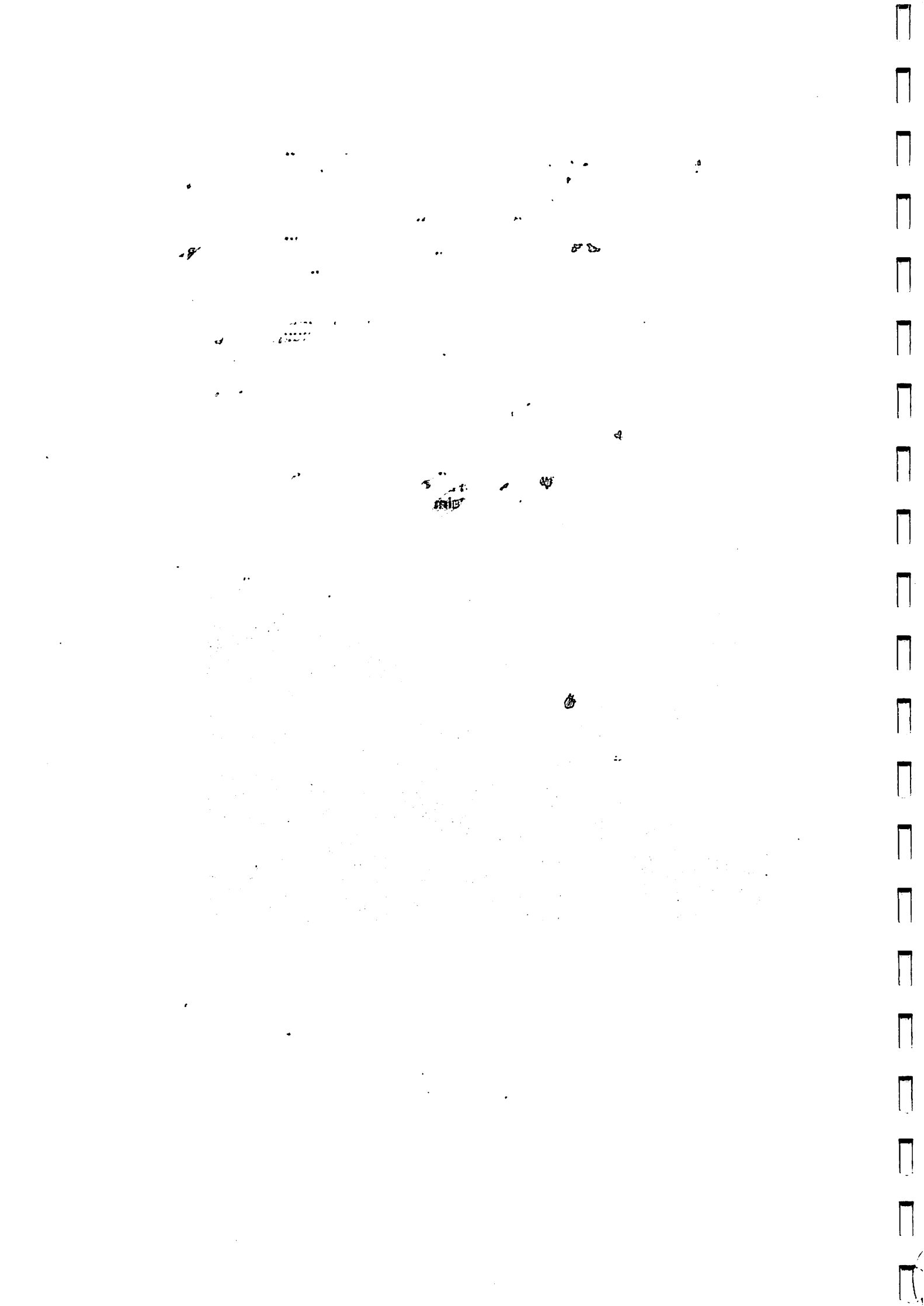
AMPNEY CRUCIS VILLAGE

A COTSWOLD GEM



Written and Produced By
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Collated and Printed by
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(AC Computers Ltd)



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Some articles were added after first publication and hence the sub-pages as above and on the previous index page.

THE BOOK OF AMPNEY CRUCIS

This book was originally written and put together by Peggy and Paddy Thompson, of 2 Durncourt Cottages, Ampney Crucis throughout the years up to 2005. They have gone to extremes to place all their thoughts about the village which they quite obviously love a great deal. Whenever I spoke with them about the village it was easily seen that they really knew their stuff and could go to great depths about the characters and buildings of Ampney Crucis. They did explain to me that owing to their senior age and time available they were unable to put these works to print, so I have done it for them as a gift to them.

Paddy (born in Belfast) first met Peggy (born at Calmsden, Glos) while he was serving with the Royal Air Force at RAF Fairford. They met during a dance at the Palmer Hall in Fairford. They informed me that Paddy proposed to Peggy whilst on his bicycle and eating fish and chips!



They were married on 4th December 1948, and the marriage cost £90 and £9 for the buffet meal at the wedding! Their first home was at Oakham near RAF North Luffenham where they went in 1949 and later was at Hilcott End in Ampney Crucis then at 40 Stonegables and later at 2 Durncourt Cottages where they are today (2005). His first pay, he tells me, was only 6/- per week!

Peggy was educated at the Cirencester Grammar School from 1939 until 1945 and still attends the re-unions that are held in the Bingham Hall almost annually.

They both worked at RAF Kemble for many years where Paddy was very active with the Unions there.

They have become very active in Ampney Crucis and are presently caretakers of the Village Hall. They have also come into the 21st century in that they own a modern computer and are active in producing documents and historical data about the village.

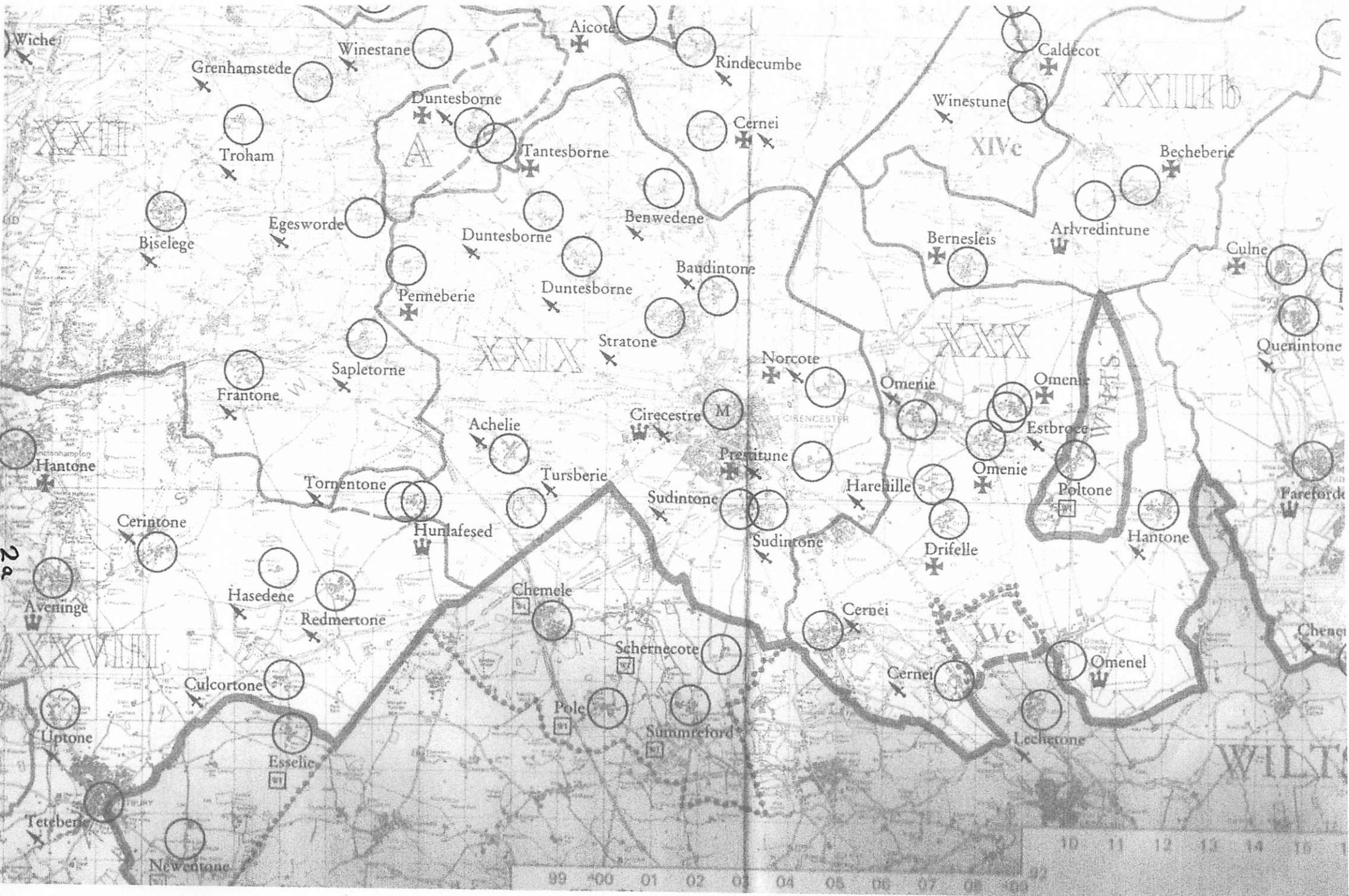
I have collated all their notes together into this volume as I feel that these notes have considerable historical value. Each page of this book is filed and saved on a CD located inside the back cover should there be a need to make copies of the book or selected pages.

I have thoroughly enjoyed putting this document together it has shown me a great deal about life in this village which is a very pretty place indeed. All previously typed and handwritten pages have been transformed into editable text using Optical Character Recognition and scanning processes. The final copies were printed using MicroSoft Word with an Epson RX500 printer for all text and pictures.

I dedicate this book to you both and hope that you have many happy hours of nostalgia in reading its pages.

My Fondest Regards

Tony Clack



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AMPNEY CRUCIS AS IT WAS AND AS IT IS TODAY

Ampney Crucis today is a much bigger and more prosperous village. Most of the old cottages belonging to Sir Frederick Cripps when he was Lord of the Manor have been sold and modernised and there are many new buildings most of which have to be erected according to strict planning regulations and in keeping with the character of the village. We are lucky to still have our village school which has enough numbers to keep it thriving and viable. The schoolhouse was sold some years back which does mean that the head schoolmaster does not live on site as happened in previous years. We were unlucky enough to lose our village pub recently which is now a private house, the 'Butchers Arms' was the venue for many a Bonfire Night celebration and is sadly missed. However, the 'Crown of Crucis' our other pub is thriving, the restaurant on the main Cirencester/Fairford road attracting many villagers and outside people especially on the long summer nights. It is especially nice to sit outside near the river quaffing a glass of something cool and maybe a bar meal to follow.

The houses all possess bathrooms which were very rare even going back to the 1940's but whilst gaining materially, the community has lost some of that close knit spirit it had then, probably because of the fact that most families have to have two bread winners to pay the bills! Life has drastically altered in the last fifty years, there are not so many children in the village nor as a matter of fact, in any village now. The Squire provided most of the employment in the village then with the big House needing many servants and at least two gardeners. There were also the farms which needed more people to run them than today, when one or two can run a big farm!

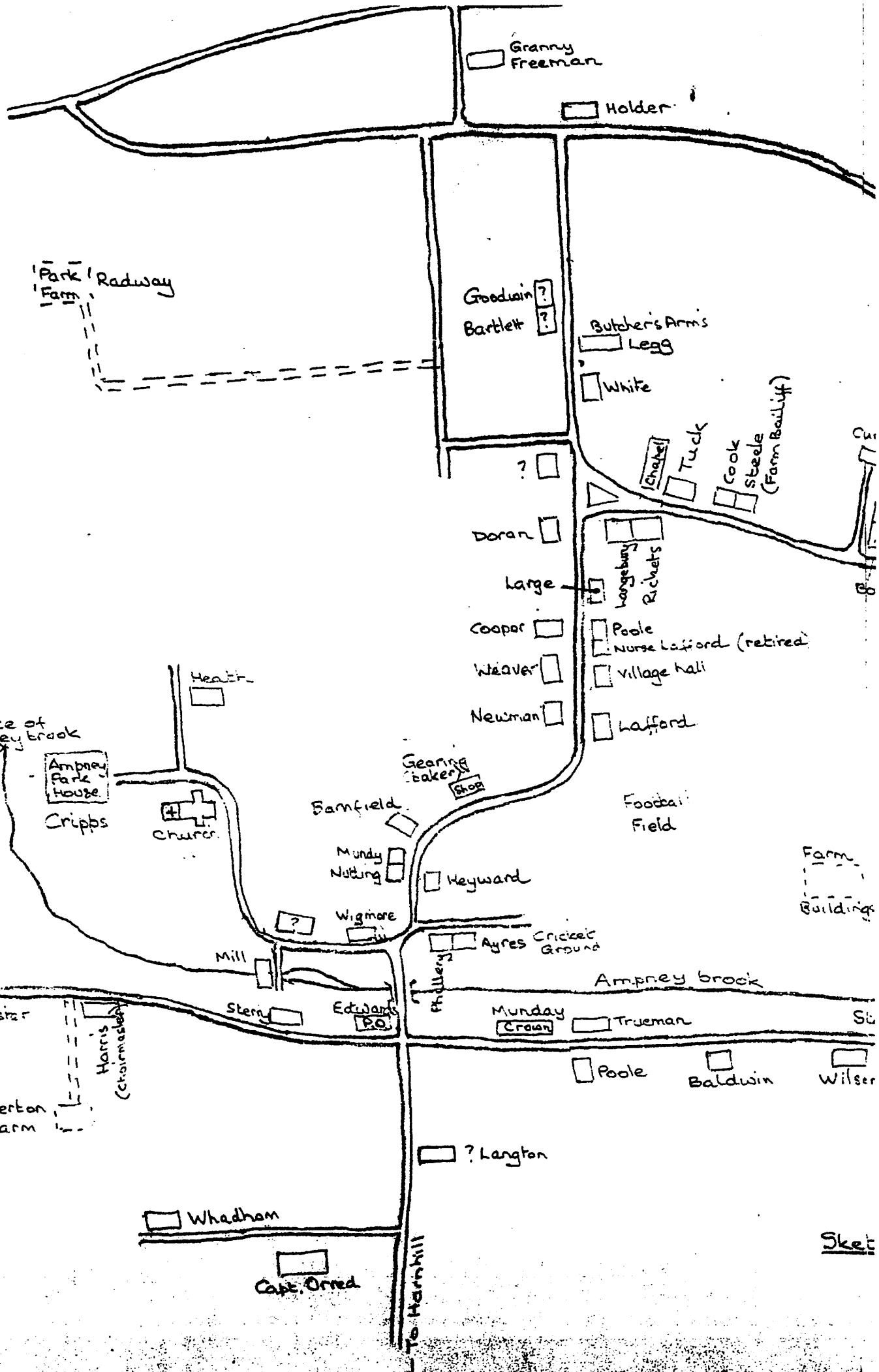
Today, most villagers and bread winners commute either to Cirencester, Swindon or even further afield. Most households own a car or two so the village bus is not used so much. The fare from Ampney Crucis to Cirencester picking up on the main road used to be 4d (pre-decimal coinage)- now it's over £1.00 return.

Ampney Park used to be the focus of the village but now there is no actual focus as such. In the census of 1851, there were 126 people employed by the owner of Ampney Park. The village had its own undertaker, baker, cobbler, blacksmith and other people necessary to make Ampney Crucis reliant on its own resources. In my lifetime, Frank Barnes was the village undertaker and carpenter, the Gearing family had the village shop and bakery and Jack Edwards' father was the local blacksmith. Against that, Ampney Crucis is designated a very desirable area to live in and is a very lovely place to reside - most of the gardens are beautifully kept and when some are open to the public it is a pleasure to wander around them. The village and post office shop have been closed and we all miss the neighbourliness of gathering there to shop and catch up on all the happenings in the village.

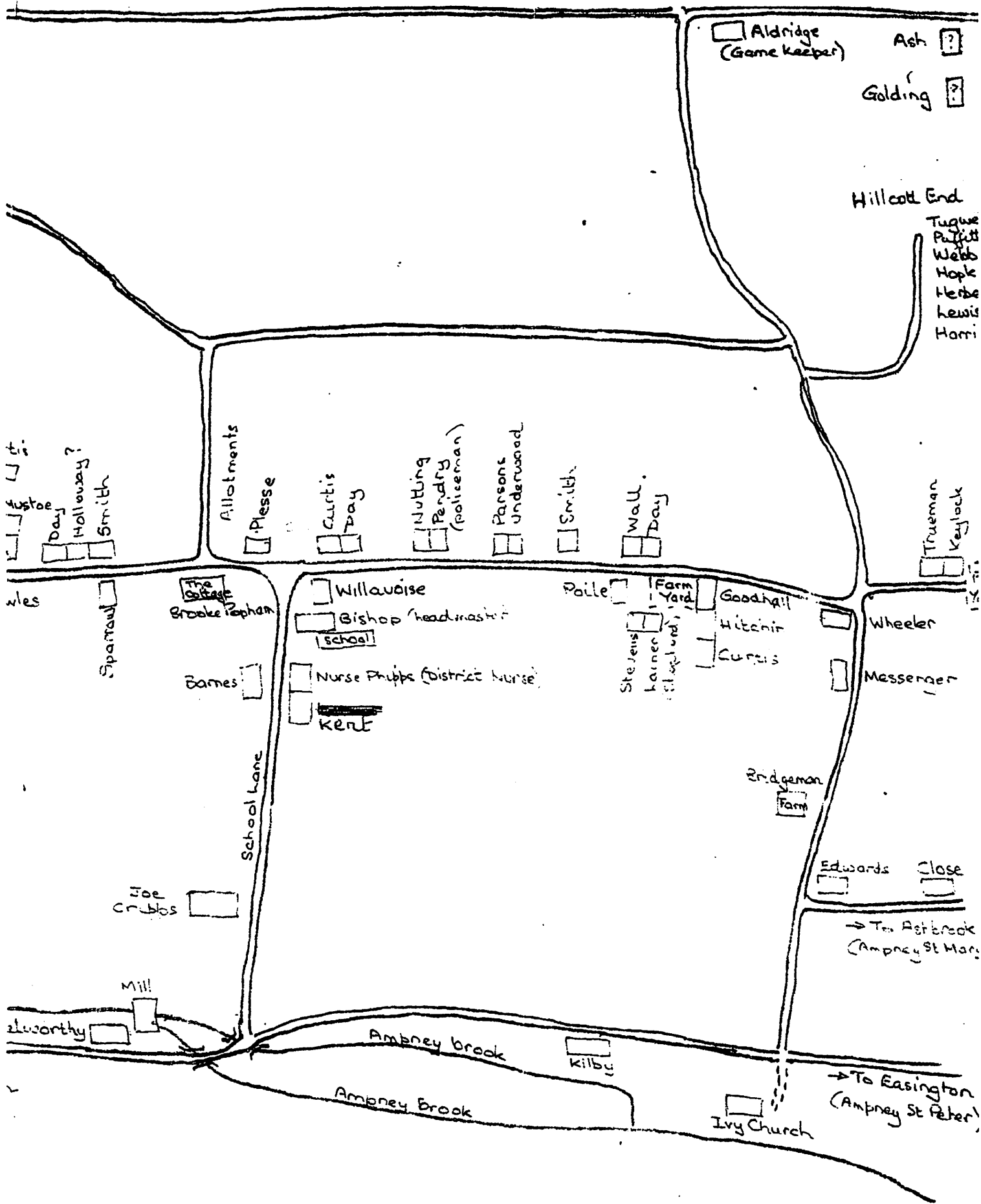
There are new estates - the Donkey Field which was originally designated as an overflow for the cemetery, the Dudley Corner complex which replaced the old farmyard there, the Pleydells which was just a big field and the Ampney Estate yard where paints, timbers etc were stored for use on the Ampney Estate which was basically the whole village apart from six Council Houses.

We still have our village hall which is used extensively by the village organizations, Brownies, Youth Club, Gardening Club, 60's Club, Royal British Legion Women's Section, and Save the Children functions to name a few.

Now most of the houses in Ampney are connected to the mains water system - the village way-back was served by water pumped up from the river - there was a water wheel and engine at Winterwell in Ampney Park and at least 3 taps, one at the Pound Tree, one on Hunts Hill and one on the side of the road opposite where the Mustoe's live. There were wells in most of the cottage gardens, some with a pump, but most of the wells have been filled in. One can't help wondering what would happen if there was a war and we couldn't get water?



Sketch



Map of Ampney Crucis showing house occupiers c. 1983

Not to Scale

AMPNEY CRUCIS 1886-1896

A Walk through the village with the Squire's Daughter

In the cottage at the Cirencester end of the park wall lived Cole, the foreman of Estate Repairs. He drowned himself in Ampney Brook – “it can't have been for want of money, for he had a cheque book in his pocket!”

At the other end of the park wall, we come to the Mill which as Kipling stated, ‘has clacked beside the busy brook, has ground its corn and paid its tax, ever since Doomsday Book’.

The Doomsday Book tells us that there was a church and mill in Ampney Crucis and this mill is probably on the same site. Mr Sterry was the miller and his son, Bob Sterry, still grinds corn there by water power, although he now can run it by electricity if water-power is lost. His house, which has the date 1675 on the east gable, (which is an addition), is probably about 100 years earlier.

In the next house on the corner lived Mr & Mrs Edwards. He was the blacksmith - the forge on the west side of the house was a long low building full of the implements of his craft. On the door many strange shaped horseshoes were nailed - among them Roman horseshoes and mule shoes. This door is now in Cirencester museum.

Mrs Edwards kept the Post Office but all you could buy there were 1d and ½d stamps, which, in spite of perforations, she always cut with a large pair of scissors. In the front room lived Mrs Radway, the grandmother of Mr Edward Radway of Park Farm.

Except for the War Memorial and the additions made by my father to the rectory (so that Ampney should always have a vicar) the village green remains exactly the same to this day. Watson the butler, lived in the lodge.

The cottage in which the Clacks and Aldridges now live were built by my father about 1893. He once told me that they cost £500 each. Two very old cottages facing the road were pulled down to make room for them - but they were uninhabited.

A row of large old elms lined the road up to the next cottage which was occupied by Truman the builder, who followed Cole as Estate foreman for repairs. The cottage on the left was occupied by the park coachman and

Mrs Lafford had the one next door. Mr King Radway lived in the next house and farmed a few pigs. The village shop was kept by John Haines and the southern part of the house was a storeroom. The house and garden remains the same including the box trees.

On the left, the line of elms continued from the Trumans to the Laffords (the house is still occupied by the Laffords). In the Old House lived Ashley Newman - he had a grass farm, and Mabel Newman gave us lessons for a short time. We often went to tea there, and she gave us eggs with our tea.

The cottages behind were his stables and barn.

There were two old cottages where the village hall stands - they were flush with the road, and a Mrs Jeffries lived in one of them. Opposite lived John Radway, the village brewer - the yew hedge was there but not so high as it is today. The cottage where Mrs Sparrow lived was part of the brewery, other buildings stretched back behind it. High up in the gable facing the road five bottles of beer are built into the wall. The three cottages beyond the hall was the Malt House. Next comes a house flush with the road occupied by a Mrs Cumberland, and her daughter, Mrs Turk Simmonds was in the next cottage.

In those days, the Pound Tree had all its branches, but I remember that one branch fell, and this had to be cut to make it safe. The new Post Office takes the place of 4 old cottages - three in a block and one separate. Beyond the Pound Tree the row of elms continued to a square house, on the far side of which lived old 'Arkle' who fought in the Crimean War. Some people called Russell were in the near side. The Butchers Arms was kept by the Leggs (and still is). The buildings in the Timber Yard are only 50 years old. Cook lived in the cottage next to the chapel - it had a stone roof and low ceilings.

My father built the next pair of cottages in 1898. The Cottages at the Lake were occupied by (1) Boles (2) Day (3) Mustoe (and still is). In Mrs Curtis' house, which is behind these, lived Woodward, who was in the pig trade.

Opposite, Mrs Herbert in Mrs Bartlett's house, old Rueben Smith, the village shoemaker lived who made shoes for the Pleydells charity schoolchildren. Mrs Wilson who had a market garden took their wares into Cirencester to sell on a donkey and cart. Before the last 38 years, the front room was used to vaccinate the babies. The registrar, Mr Wade came to register the babies. Opposite lived Mrs Herbert- a 'maiden' lady - rather frightening to children.

My father lived in Ampney Cottage, which belonged to his uncle, Frederick, when he married in 1871. All we four children were born there. It was Cripps property as were the Home Farm and Dudley Farm. My father built on to the cottage which is now called Ampney House.

The Cripps family bought Ampney Park in 1889, and nearly all the village. He became a kind of Father Confessor to the villagers, who all came to him with their troubles and problems. One woman came and asked him to speak to her husband. "What has he been doing?" asked my father?. "Well, you see he will come to bed in his boots." He did and I never heard of her coming back!

Opposite the Cottage was the Village Pound - a small walled off corner of the field, on the left of the Barnsley Road. The allotments were on the other side of the lane. The tradition was that the tree on the three cornered piece of grass by the school was planted in honour of Queen Victoria's Coronation.

At the school a few of the children (about 6 boys and 6 girls) were selected for Pleydells Charity. They went to the school with the other children, but the boys wore blue coats with brass buttons, and the girls wore capes - blue serge in the winter and checked cotton in summer. The children objected to being marked out as charity children so the trustees gave money instead of clothes.

Mr Ricketts was the village carpenter, before the Barnes. He married his housekeeper because he told my father "I owe her a sight of money and I thinks it would be a lot cheaper if I married her!"

Mrs Price lived in the cottage opposite the tree - she kept a shop and sold candles and sweets, small groceries, and the most delicious acid drops for 1d. Next to the school lived Wellavise - he looked after the pumps etc. on the estate. Mrs Goodall lived in the cottage on the right after the

cemetery with four children - Ernest, Ada, Jim and Jo - the last two went to Canada. An old man called Bartley Wilson lived in the next cottage on the right with Miss Wilson. In the cottage now occupied by Mr Ernest Goodall for the last 38 years, was the Estate Office and Mrs Williams looked after the fowls there. Beyond lived Mr Ayres, the foreman – ‘Old Thomas’ as he was known - he could neither read nor write, but gave a perfectly accurate account each Saturday to my father.

My father gave the ground for the cemetery, and built the tiny chapel.

The bungalow was built by my father for his shepherd (Ash) - the Tin House where Mrs Godwin lived!

Dudley House was an old Elizabethan house at the end of the village on the left. My father was most anxious to preserve it and put it into repair, but the architect told him that the foundations were hopelessly unsafe, and very reluctantly he had it pulled down. The remains of the gatepost can be seen on the wall opposite the lane, which was its drive, with an avenue of elms.

Birts Farm has belonged to the Bridgmans for three generations. Mr and Mrs Bridgman can remember their father had oxen to plough with, and the ox-stables, with wooden collars on gates that shut down over the oxen's heads to keep them on. Dudley Farm also had ox-stables.

Mr and Mrs Bridgman's mother was a Miss Newman from the Malt House, and she remembers the drays drawn by horses, starting out at five in the morning to take the beer to Cheltenham and getting back late at night. Mr Bridgman told us he had heard that the clergyman at Ampney St Mary Who had lived in their house about 200 years ago.

Mrs Shepherd?? remembers her father had the first steam engine (with coal) used for ploughing. Mr Smith who lived in the Dudley Yard used to drive it.

Social Life

Men - British Legion, Cricket

Ladies - Mothers Union (since its foundation), Women's Institute.

Both have been strong branches and are still going today, as is the Women's Branch of the British Legion

Notes on the Village of Ampney Crucis

Produced by Peggy Thompson (née Clack)

on 18th July 1986

Ampney Crucis itself means “The Village of the Cross by the River Ampney” and it is reputed that there were Roman settlements here during the time of the Roman occupation. One theory is that the Roman settlements were actually sited on what is now the boundaries of the village.

Just after the signpost for Ampney Crucis, there is a turning for the “Crown of Crucis”, one of the two public houses (today there is only one) in the village. This has been modernised and converted whilst still retaining the olde worlde atmosphere, and boasts a restaurant which serves very reasonable priced well cooked meals. In the summertime, this inn is always packed with people from outside the village as well as the villagers themselves, being situated on the main Cirencester to Fairford road.

As you come into Ampney Crucis, you first come over a bridge spanning the River Ampney and if you stay awhile and look across from this bridge you can see a lovely old house —originally Ampney Mill (one of two in Ampney Crucis) the last owner who actually used the mill itself was Mr. Robert Sterry. When Mr. Sterry died, the mill was sold to a wealthy man who modernised it, spending a great deal of money but keeping the olde worlde appearance of the building whilst conserving the rare trees and abundant wildlife abounding in the vicinity. One of the builders actually involved in this operation tells me that there is one room with a glass floor where you can see the fish swimming underneath, as, of course, the actual mill was built over the river.

There are trout in the river as well as eels and many years ago, I personally found crayfish. Also every year there are a pair of mute swans which come to the river to breed. These are very tame and glide gracefully along the river, stopping on summer nights when the “Crown of Crucis” is conducting its business to hopefully wait for tidbits from patrons at the inn. Unfortunately, Henry the cob died a couple of years ago due to lead poisoning but the pen came back last year along with Henry II. This is quite a phenomenon as swans usually mate for life. We did notice that Henry II seems very protective towards his partner and is not quite so tame as Henry I. Perhaps some of the pen’s anxiety after losing her first mate was communicated to the new husband. Residents of the village living alongside the river are very sympathetic towards the swans and wildlife in general, and “No Fishing” signs are prominently displayed where these houses own the fishing rights.

The village itself is designated “a very desirable area” — most of the houses are built with the very beautiful Cotswold stone although some have slate roofs. New buildings are built of materials designed to fit in with the surrounding countryside and soon fit in as though they have been standing there for years. Most of the old barns around the village have been snapped up and converted into private residences which command very respectable prices if sold.

Ampney Crucis church (*see further data on pages 18 to 50*) is sited at the lower end of the village near Ampney Park. It is a very old church — there are records of the vicars and incumbents going back to 1300. The impression as you enter the church is of coolness in summertime and extreme cold in wintertime. There are still traces of old paintings — figures and flowers on the walls near the tomb of the Crusader Knight in the chancel to the left as you walk up the church. The tomb itself is made of white stone or marble and is quite impressive with figures of his sons and daughters around the sides of the edifice. His sword is suspended above the figures of himself and his wife. There is an old picture near the font at the back of the church — “The Martyrdom of St. Erasmus” — whereby they are doing gruesome things to the gentleman in question — he is suspended in a sort of rack and his insides are being slowly wound out of his body. This picture is slowly disintegrating due to the damp and should be preserved somewhere where it can be taken care of. There is also a case with old wind instruments inside belonging to the church but these have been put in a museum so that they do not spoil with the damp. I can also remember when I was a child, being shown the “Beadle’s Staff” which was kept in a small room behind the pulpit, and which was used by the beadle to keep the naughty children in order during the church service. No-one seems to know anything about this, so unless it is in storage somewhere, this staff has sadly disappeared during the passage of the years.

The head of the cross in the churchyard is somewhat newer than the base itself — this is because this head was hidden during the Civil Wars to avoid destruction and was discovered sometime later hidden in the “Rood Loft” porch. There is a replica of this cross in the cemetery at the top end of the village.

Coming out from the church, the congregation or visitors can wander down the road towards the bridge by turning right or keep straight on down the “Church Walk” path. In the days when the Cripps family resided at Ampney Park, the ground on the left as you saunter down this path was cultivated and planted with flowers but is now overgrown with trees and shrubs taking over what was previously planted as a garden. At the bottom of the Church Walk on the left as you walk down, near the small gate, is an old Cross called “The Preachers Cross”. Legend has it that if you walk round each layer of the cross three times and also on the top portion, then if you put your ear to the stonework you can actually hear the Devil. I did this many times when I was a child but did not hear any Satanic whispers or roars of rage.

Towards the middle of the village as you walk up the main street, is a small grass island known as the “Pound Tree”. This is situated in the middle of the road where the road branches off left to the second village ‘pub’, the “Butchers Arms” (now defunct) and bears right carrying on up the village. There is a legend in the village that when the “Pound Tree” falls down or dies then no more babies will be born in Ampney Crucis. This actually did happen when the Dutch Elm disease struck in 1975/6 and the old “Pound Tree” had to be cut down as it was unsafe: for two whole years no babies were born in Ampney Crucis parish. However, a small sapling* (*see note at end of this article*) of the original roots of the old tree came up and flourished, and children started being born again and at this time, the birthrate whilst not rampant is stable. The

area of the Pound itself was the place where in olden times, straying animals were impounded until their owners came to collect them. The oldest house in the village is on Hunts Hill opposite Cobblers Cottage, itself a very old habitation which used to belong to the Bartlett family — Fred Bartlett was the village cobbler for many years and conducted his business in a hut up the garden path.

Another example of the oldest type of habitation was the Holder houses, alas no longer in existence as these were pulled down some twenty to thirty years ago. Ernie Holder is still alive today and lives on the Beeches Estate in Cirencester. He used to farm a smallholding with pigs, hens, etc., and his brother lived next door to him. Just around the corner from him on the road leading from the Butchers Arms to the Ampney Ridings is the site where Granny Freeman lived. I can remember her from my childhood days — we children thought she was a witch as she dressed in black clothes and we always ran away when she waved her stick at us. Children were even then, full of “Original sin” but in those days if caught by the village Bobby, you had a clip around the ear and then another from your parents if you were silly enough to go home and complain! Mrs Freeman had one of those “Ampney Apples” growing in her garden, and in Autumn had lovely red sweet apples on the tree. There appears to have been two varieties of the “Ampney Apple”, a sweet variety and a cider apple. The cider apples grew in the orchard owned by Mr. Newman. Going up the road and sited approximately in the middle of the village is the village Hall which is comparatively new — this was built about 1928 to commemorate the death of Richard Cripps, one of the Sons of Sir Frederick and Lady Cripps, the owners of Ampney Park at that time. The village hall is used regularly for the different functions, i.e. weddings, parties etc. as well as for meetings by the various village organizations, for example: The Women’s Institute, The Over 60’s Club and so on. It has been modernised so as to comply with the respective safety laws and is now heated by gas heaters which, in my opinion do not compare with the old solid fuel black stove previously used. The disadvantage of the latter, however, was that the stove had to be lit quite sometime before the hall was actually needed — however, when it started to get warm, the heat seemed to stay in the room for longer than when the gas fire is turned off. At the top end of the village, near the Village Shop, is the Village School (*see later article on pages 62 to 69*) which has been in existence for some 270 years and was originally started by the Pleydell family who did a lot to help the village. This is a Church of England school partly funded by the State, which means that although the church has some influence, the State helps out with funds. Actually the school does have some money invested as the School House was sold fairly recently and the monies invested, so that every year the interest on the capital is spent on the children for outings, equipment etc. This is very much a “Dame” sort of school with the children there all personally known to the teachers and the whole atmosphere there as one big happy family. Unfortunately, due to various factors (the drop in the birth rate for example) numbers have fallen drastically. Twenty to thirty years ago, there were about 90 children on the school register — today forty to forty five is the average number, in spite of the fact that children from the nearby village of Barnsley now attend Ampney Crucis school along with children from Ampney Crucis, Ampney St. Peter or Eastington, Ampney St. Mary or Ashbrook, Driffield, Harnhill, some from Down Ampney and a few from the village of Poulton whose school closed a few years ago. When the pupils reach the age of 11/12 years old, they are transferred to the Senior School at either Kingshill or Cirencester Deer Park where they stay until the

end of the 5th year at Kingshill or the 6th year if pupils stay on for the 6th Form at the Deer Park.

Further along the road towards Dudley Corner is the reputed site of Durncourt Manor. If you look at the wall on the left just before you get to Dudley Corner, you will notice what looks like gate pillars set into the actual walling, supposedly the pillars of the gateway to the entrance to this manor. Just opposite this is the “Green Lane” or “Pig Lane” as it is sometimes called, which leads down towards the main Cirencester to Fairford Road the A419 — again rumour has it that this was the carriageway or driveway for Durncourt Manor. The field at the back of where I live is called Durncourt Field and I live at No 2 Durncourt Cottages (a row of council houses now mostly privately owned), so most probably there is some truth in this. When my husband and I were living at one of the cottages now named “Stone Gables” we found a church dignitary’s ring whilst digging in the garden there, but this was lost when my handbag was stolen but this does bear out the supposition that there was a manor somewhere around this site. Stone Gables was originally four houses in bygone days (the newer part was added on at a later date). These four tiny cottages were converted into two dwellings occupied by employees working for the Ampney Park Farms and much later when “Stone Gables” came into being, was converted into the one dwelling. When the modernisations were going on to convert the two houses into one, a very old Tudor window was discovered and this has been left open to view with the original glass still set into this tiny window along with the old leaded windows.

To come back to the Village Hall, just across the road from the hall is a house called “The Malt House” which used to be a brewery in bygone days, hence the name!

If you walk down School Lane which is a very narrow lane leading down towards Ford Bridge and walk along the slip road going to the main road, from Cirencester to Fairford, you can still see the wild hops growing in the hedgerow — these could well be descendants of hops grown when ale was brewed in Ampney Crucis. From ale to wine — along this same road is a small field devoted entirely to growing grapes for wine. The Ampney wine, as it is called, is marketed and I believe is very palatable.

Not actually in Ampney Crucis parish is the very old Ivy Church. This is a very tiny church mostly used in summertime for services, and very occasionally for weddings and christenings although this is used at Christmastime for candle-lit services. The church is not wired for electricity but this adds to its olde worlde charm and quaintness. Legend has it, that the village of Ampney St. Mary or Ashbrook was sited in medieval times by the Ivy Church but when the plague struck the country, the villagers of the then village moved it stone by stone to its present site, leaving their little church where it is now. They believed that rats from the river flowing nearby carried the plague — this fact would be verified by present day medical circles. On a clear day, you can still see the foundations of the old village of Ashbrook in the field next to the Ivy Church, and these can be seen from the air when the visibility is good.

(See note on next page.....)

* Note: Sadly, this sapling — a descendant from the original Pound Tree reputed to be some 300 years old — was cut down a year later. Another example of Ampney Crucis' old history martyred by modern times. One wonders how the old legend will affect the village. Will it die as prophesied?