

MEMORIES OF AMPNEY PARK IN THE 1930'S AND 40'S

Opposite the back door of the manor house was the dairy. The Park owned a 'house cow' and one pint of milk daily - this was not tuberculin tested but we all remained disgustingly healthy - was part of my father's wages. He was chauffeur/gardener to Sir Frederick and Lady Cripps and the whole grounds and gardens were kept in immaculate condition by my father and Mr Cook.

The kitchen garden was sited on the ground where Sir Antony Bonham's bungalow was later built. A whole variety of vegetables and fruit was grown along with peaches and grapes etc in the greenhouses making the Park self sufficient. My father even had a hot bed in one of the greenhouses. The garden beside the Church Walk was also cultivated not overgrown as it is today.

Ethel Cooper was the cook then and the kitchen boasted a big Aga which was kept spotlessly clean. There was a special recipe called the 'Ampney Pudding' but no-one seems to know what became of it.

Miss Jones was Lady Cripps' personal maid and companion and I believe she is buried in the cemetery. The Cripps' also employed a butler - a Mr Hayward who lived in the house opposite the 'Nurse's Cottage'. He had his own small butler's pantry situated just off the main kitchen, where he polished the silver etc.

The Cripps' owned all the village as well as land in Driffild etc. They owned major shares in Cirencester Brewery in Cirencester and Sir Frederick was a big name on the Gloucester County Council. My father took him to committee meetings - often finishing up to 2am in the morning. When he came back and garaged the car, he then had to wash the car and still be at work early next morning. After these late nights, the family was usually given a big slab of farm butter made in the dairy. I can still remember the taste and flavour of that butter!

There was plenty of fallen trees lying round the village and it was a common sight to see village women with old prams laden with wood struggling back home. There was no central heating in those days - everyone had an open fire.

Lady Cripps always gave a big Christmas party for all the children at Ampney Crucis School and even those attending the Cirencester Grammar School from the village were invited. The girls in the kitchen - as they were called even though they were all over sixty or thereabouts - provided the food, jellies and all the delights enjoyed by the children. There was always a magician or conjurer to entertain us and then the highlight of the party! Father Christmas arrived on cue to deliver presents from the tree and his bulging sack to all the children present - all with their names on the parcel! These were lovely gifts - dolls, boys' toys, dictionaries for the older children, to name some of the presents given. No-one was forgotten!

Lady Cripps also ran a clothing club whereby the village mothers could go into Mitchells clothing shop in Cirencester (long since gone!) and buy sheets, clothes or whatever was needed. They would then pay Lady Cripps back so much weekly - a kind of Hire Purchase!

She would sometimes ask my father to take the 'girls' into the cinema in Cirencester and my mother would be included in the party.

The village children, including myself roamed everywhere - the only place out of bounds was the Church Walk when the birds were nesting in the spring.

The village was supplied by water from Ampney Brook by means of a water wheel and engine from a spring in Winterwell in Ampney Park. The river then was much deeper and I can remember my mother going down to the brook with a bucket and bringing it back full to the brim for our use.

Lady Cripps planted the Withy Bed which is at the back of the cricket field. This was done for Frank Day who lost his leg in the First World War so that he could weave baskets. I don't know if Frank ever took advantage of this to use the withies! I can remember as a child along with other friends making our tree houses there and nothing was ever said unless there was wanton damage which I can never remember happening.

Most of the village men were employed by the Park and lived in cottages owned by the Cripps' family so if any children misbehaved, the fathers' were soon made aware. The teacher at the school was usually selected by Sir Frederick as was the vicar so the Squire kept a tight hold on village life!

All children were expected to attend church regularly and any absentees were duly noted by Lady Cripps who in turn quizzed the parents as to the reason for non-attendance. Any schoolchildren who met Sir Frederick were expected to tip their hats and when talking to Lady Cripps you were supposed to say 'my lady' at least once during the conversation. There is a story that Hilcot End was originally built for the 'bad uns'! However, there is no basis for this tale.

Life in Ampney Crucis when the Cripps' owned the Park was very feudal but they were very good to the village and were good landlords. Children knew how to behave in those days and life was much gentler. If you couldn't afford something, you just went without!

Ampney Mill - Mr Sterry the miller, started milling early in the morning - he dropped the hatches to use the water and then opened them for Mr Stallworthy at the other mill, and the water was then used again for a mill at Charlham. Wages were very low by today's standards but prices were also lower. The bus fare from Ampney to Cirencester only cost 4d (old money) which is under 2p today. The Cripps family owned the whole village except for six council houses and rents were paid half-yearly in a room at No 39 Ampney Crucis and later on down at the 'Crown' as it was then called.

No 52 Hilcot End was kept as a starter home for the young marrieds of the village. My husband and I began our married life there - the rent was three shillings a week (rent and rates!) which is about 15p new money. There was no electricity when we first went there, but the Cripps paid to have it put on. The 'loo' was down the garden in a little shed, and a bucket which had to be emptied periodically, usually in the garden. Perhaps that is why we had such beautiful vegetables and flowers!

OLD-WORLD CHARM BESIDE THE AMPNEY BROOK

Standing on the delightful stone bridge where the village street of Ampney Crucis crosses the gentle little Ampney brook, it is difficult to imagine that those lazily-flowing waters below are destined to make their way under London Bridge out to the mighty sea. All is quiet as the graceful swans glide effortlessly along the approaches to the old village mill.

Yet only a few miles away, at Eysey, the peaceful Ampney is united with one of the most important waterways in the world, Old Father Thames himself. And still the bridge at Ampney stands in stately solitude, as if it were a million miles from the pulsating hum of activity which the Thames has meant to thousands ever since England became England.

Three villages stand clustered together near the source of the Ampney, each possessing an individual charm of its own. Officially each village bears a title combining the name of the river with the dedication of the parish Church. But among local residents, Ampney Crucis, as the largest village is always called plain 'Ampney'. And the others have names of their own. In the same way as Kingston-upon-Hull and the County of Southampton is universally termed Hampshire, so no one would ever dream of calling Ampney St Mary anything but Ashbrook and Eastington.

Typical Gloucestershire place-names those, and typical Gloucestershire villages they describe. For the Ampneys are really unspoilt little near-Cotswold communities. The main road from Cirencester misses each of them by a few hundred yards on the right, leaving them to slumber in

peace in this age of noise.

The ancient stone crosses of Ampney Crucis, the delightful little church at Ashbrook, the thatched cottages of Eastington could all be taken from their surroundings and placed, just as naturally, in the villages of centuries ago.

All three are mentioned in the Domesday Book. Ampney Crucis, where the chronicler made particular mention of a church and a mill, appears there under the name of Omenie Holy Rood—the church is dedicated to the Holy Rood, or Sanctae Crucis. It is not known how the letter 'p' crept into the name of the village, and it serves no purpose, being one of those silent letters which are the despair of the spelling reformers.

RECTOR'S STIPEND: £60
PER ANNUM

Not so very many years ago, each of the three Ampneys had its own incumbent—in one case a rector, another a vicar and the third a curate-in-charge. Today, they are united under one rector, the Rev. Philip Cowen, who lives at Ampney St. Peter.

Also within the past century, the rector at Ampney St. Peter's Church received a stipend of £60 a year, little over £1 a week. This must have been the princely salary paid to the Rev. Edward Andrew Daubeny, who served as a midshipman under Nelson, was wounded at the Battle of Copenhagen, and later entered the Church. He was in charge of the parish of Ampney St. Peter for 55 years, and lies buried in a shady corner of the village churchyard.

Each of the three parish churches is interesting in its own particular way, and it would be difficult to select one

as having greater claim to fame than its nearby sisters. The church at Ampney Crucis, for instance, is mainly noted for its old stone pulpit, complete with preacher's hour-glass, the charming sanctus bellcote over the chancel arch, and the still-visible traces of 14th and 15th century wall paintings.

Ampney church also possesses a piscina—the stone basin once used to hold the water for rinsing the Communion plate—and some fine dog-tooth moulding over the chancel arch. The styles of architecture range from Norman to Perpendicular and the embattled tower, which contains five bells including a pre-Reformation tenor bell, is over 500 years old.

Perhaps the most noted feature of all is the 13ft high churchyard cross, said 'to have been built by Abbot Parker about 1410, which has been restored and is still in excellent condition. This cross is a comparatively modern one, however, in comparison with another, the remains of which stand alongside the village street at the end of the church path.

Now only the base of this cross remains. Its date is unknown, but since it stands so near the ford by which the only entry to the village once lay, it has been adjudged to be the place around which early Christians worshipped before their church was built.

While on the subject of the church, we must not forget a fine old tomb which stands in the north transept. This bears the effigies of George Lloyd, who died in 1584, his wife Anne and their five sons and seven daughters. George Lloyd, who came from Monmouthshire, owned property in the area, and it was

by his petitioning Queen Elizabeth I that part of the endowment of Cirencester Grammar School, which had been taken away, was restored. The canopy over the Lloyd tomb was at one time removed, and 50 years ago it was discovered in the cellars of nearby Ampney Park. Above the tomb hang an ancient helmet and sword of about the 14th century. Opposite are 300-year-old memorial tablets to the Pleydells, once the great family of the district.

"ORCHESTRA" PLAYED FOR SERVICES

In the days before churches had organs, music was often "homemade" by members of the congregation. One such church was that at Ampney Crucis, where a "church orchestra" used to sit with their instruments in the gallery and accompany the hymns on the flute and oboe.

Three of the instruments used in those days, together with an old music book, are displayed in the church in a glass case. They were presented to the church 23 years ago by Mr. E. G. Herbert, of Aberdare, whose ancestors had lived at Ampney and passed down the instruments from generation to generation.

One of the original Norman remains still actually inside the church is the bowl of the font. Once this was inverted and used as the base, with a modern bowl, but quite recently the font was turned upside-down again, and the ancient bowl brought back into use.

But let us turn to another church, that of Ampney St. Peter. Built in the Transitional Norman style, it is quite a sizeable church for such a small parish. In 1873 it was extensively restored and enlarged under the direction of the famous architect Sir George Gilbert Scott.

Originally responsible for

building the church were the monks of the Abbey of St. Peter at Tewkesbury, hence the church's dedication. The living remained in the gift of the Abbey until the Reformation. - The chancel arch doorway and tower arch are examples of late Norman work, while the font and two windows on the south side of the nave are of the late Perpendicular period.

The lower stairs which once led to the Rood loft have been preserved, and opposite is a double piscina with trefoiled fringe to the canopy. An old Jacobean Communion table stands in the north aisle, and outside is another church yard cross.

There is something in the church even more ancient than the Normans, however this is a small sculptured figure let into the wall near the font, thought to be of Saxon origin and to represent a goddess of fertility. It is probably the solitary surviving remains of a pre-Christian Saxon temple which stood on the same site.

Another curious figure, possibly representing a Saint, stands in the north window of the sanctuary. This was found in a farmhouse which formerly stood opposite the church, and its origin is a Mystery.

Belonging to the church is a charitable bequest called the "Church Land," consisting of two acres which are let annually to assist with church expenses. At one time the letting was made to the highest bidder during the burning of an inch of candle, but this practice appears, to have died out some time before the last war.

Another old charity which has changed in character quite recently is that under which loaves of bread were once distributed to residents of Ampney Crucis once a year. The charity was carried on in its original form within living memory, but in common with many others of its kind has

more lately died out.

VILLAGE WAS MOVED, BUT CHURCH REMAINED

Why does the picturesque little parish church of Ampney St. Mary stand alone, surrounded by elm trees, in the meadows south of the Cirencester-Fairford road, when the village itself is over a mile away on the other side of the highway?

The explanation of this mystery is a rather remarkable one. It dates back to the time when the dreaded scourge known as the Black Death ravaged Europe and spread across to these islands, bringing death and suffering to millions of people.

Rivers were unhealthy things to live near in those days, and the villagers of Ampney St. Mary became alarmed at their proximity to the Ampney brook. They moved the complete village from its original site by the river to the higher ground where it stands today—complete, that is, except for the tiny Norman church among the elms, and there it remains to this day.

During a dry summer, it is still possible to see in the deeper brown of certain patches of the fields across the stream from St. Mary's Church where the road ran through the ghost village of centuries ago; and where the cottages stood. The church itself, originally Norman and Early English in design, was extensively restored between 1907 and 1913 after falling into disuse for many years. Today, it once again serves as the parish church during the summer months, beginning at Easter, though in winter it is closed because at the difficulty of access in bad weather across the fields

Behind the 600-year-old heavy wooden door, with its original ironwork, which guards the entrance to the "Ivy church" - its popular name among local inhabitants—one finds much

evidence of very early mural paintings, more easily discernable than at Ampney Crucis, the remains of a fine old stone screen, and a "zig-zag" font probably Norman.

It is not far from Ampney St. Mary church to the Red Lion Inn on the Fairford road, and just across the fields from here is what is probably the oldest feature of the countryside in all the Ampneys, the well-known "Ranbury Ring".

Consisting of earthworks in an irregular, roughly circular form, the Ring apparently marks the site of an Ancient British encampment. Probably the original inhabitants lived in huts inside the Ring. Later the Romans are believed to have taken over Ranbury and used it as a camp of their own.

What a variety of inhabitants the banks of the Ampney brook have known in their time! Home of Ancient Britons, campsite of Roman legionaries, worshipping place of Saxon pagans and early Christians, the estate of medieval landowners—these three little villages have certainly played a diverse series of roles down the centuries.

TWIN HOUSES WERE HALF A MILE APART

There can be few people in Cirencester and district who do not know Ampney Park, the mansion which stands just west of Ampney Crucis and is one of the finest large houses in that part of Gloucestershire. It has borne its present form for about 159 years, but stands on the site of another house of the period immediately following the first Elizabeth.

Still existing of the original house, and embodied in the present one, are the drawing room and hall. On the staircase is a window, now inside the building, but which opened on to the lawns of the earlier mansion.

The drawing room possesses a beautiful decorated ceiling, a

typical legacy of the ornate Elizabethan style of interior decoration, and a contemporary fireplace probably put in 50 years after the house was built. Round the room is exquisite carved paneling.

Ampney Park is at present the home of Major Sir Frederick Cripps, one of the best known public figures in Gloucestershire and a former chairman of the County Council. He estimates the date of the earlier house at about 1628, the year mentioned on a foundation stone in his possession.

But the stone was not laid a Ampney Park. It came from house about half a mile away is Ampney village which was in ruins when Sir Frederick Cripps was a boy, and of which only a rubble-filled cellar now survives. From the remaining external walls of the original house at Ampney Park, it appears that the two houses were practically identical, and it is most likely they were built by the same man.

The supposition that the old house in Ampney Park was built in the sixteen-twenties is thus a logical one. The only evidence of its "twin" today are the jambs of the little gate which led from the village street to the front door. Otherwise it is a 'Ghost House'.

Talking of ghosts brings us to another Lord of the Manor of Ampney, but of a much more distant age. He was known as Squire Blackwell, and village legend has it—though how, the tale originated we do not know—that if ever the brook under the bridge at Ampney Crucis dries up he will appear in Ampney Park on his white horse.

Of course, no one can remember the brook at Ampney drying up, even with the hottest of summers. So no

one has ever seen the ghostly squire demonstrating his equestrian prowess. That is one of the snags with these old ghost stories: the conditions under which the characters appear are so seldom fulfilled.

While in the drawing room at Ampney Park just now, we forgot one interesting possession of Sir Frederick's that is kept there. It forms the usual link with the old Cotswold wool industry that all these villages seem to possess. This link is in the form of three heavy wool weights embossed with the arms of Queen Anne and two of the Georges, which the wool merchants—perhaps these were Ampney men—used to carry with them on their business journeys.

CHILDREN WERE

EDUCATED AND CLOTHED

The little village school near the green in the centre of Ampney Crucis today caters for some 70 or 80 children from the three Ampneys, Harnhill and Driffild. But when it was founded and endowed by Robert Pleydell, Lord of the Manor of Ampney Crucis, in the year 1722, it was intended to provide for only a dozen, six boys and six girls.

The Pleydell endowment provided that these twelve children should be clothed and educated free. Sixty-nine years after the foundation, the present school building was erected—there is no record to tell us how the process of education was carried out in the intervening time.

There are quite a number of former pupils still living in the village who attended school in the original building half a century or more ago before it was enlarged. There were some large families about in those days, and although the school served only Ampney Crucis the infants' class alone numbered about 45.

Since then, the school has been

enlarged, but the 18th century building still forms part of the classroom accommodation. It is a much more attractive building than the average school, with a typical steeply-pitched Cotswold roof.

Education Acts of one period and another have somewhat out-dated Robert Pleydell's endowment of 1722, but the money provided for clothing is still used at intervals to provide clothing vouchers for selected scholars of both sexes.

While the area served by its school has widened, the commercial life of Ampney Crucis has tended to decline. A directory of 77 years ago shows that at that time there were a variety of tradespeople in the village, including a butcher, tailor and shoemaker. Today, builders and those in associated trades are practically the only surviving tradesmen.

An industry that has died out in Ampney is the brewing of beer. Until about the turn of the last century a brewery stood in the village street, and the last survivor of those who worked there died only a few weeks ago. At a time when many public houses brewed their own ale, the Ampney brewery used to supply malt to different parts of the county.

Hanging in the home of Mr. F G Bartlett, the present-day village shoe repairer, is a fine collection of horse-brasses, martingales and similar ornaments. These were won by the horses used in the transport of malt between Ampney and Cheltenham, and it was Mr. Bartlett's grandfather who used to make the journey on behalf of the brewery.

That gentleman, with his wagonload of malt, used to leave Ampney at midnight to reach Cheltenham by 6 a.m. in time for the early morning delivery. The return journey would be made the same day. On the way out, he would call

at the Colesbourne Inn at 3 a.m. to refresh himself with a drink.

BEFORE TRAVELLING WAS MADE EASY

Mr. Bartlett has of recent years revived the business carried on in Ampney at the end of last century by one Reuben Smith, shoemaker. Reuben, who is mentioned in the 1876 directory, used to employ four men, and had a workshop in the house where Mr. Bartlett now lives.

In Mr. Bartlett's possession is an interesting specimen of footwear which, besides the professional interest, has an additional appeal for him, being a kind of family heirloom. This is a pair of what were known as "pattens," each consisting of a thick wooden sole, with a sandal-like leather upper and an iron ring suspended underneath the sole. In the days before country roads were laid with tarmacadam and the rest of the things that has made travelling easier since, villagers used to wear these "pattens" to walk over the rough lanes in bad weather. The actual shoes themselves, of course, never touched the ground.

This actual pair were worn by Mr. Bartlett's great-grandmother. His mother well remembers that lady walking the three miles into Cirencester with them on her feet. The shoes were probably made locally by a combined effort of three tradesmen, the carpenter, the black-smith and the cobbler.

Well, the village trades are not the only thing that have changed a great deal of late years, so what of the village itself? Perhaps the last word can best be left to Mr. and Miss Bridgeman, a brother and sister, Ampney-born, who have been farming in the village all their lives.

From what they say, it is not so much the village as the people

who have changed. There have been changes in the village to a certain extent but mostly for the good, like the installation of electric light and the provision by the Cripps family of the Memorial Hall in place of the tiny reading room which formerly served as the centre of village life.

But the people—yes, they have changed. A large number of Ampney people still live in Ampney, but many, many more have gone away. And new blood has taken their place in the village.

A good thing or a bad? I leave that one to you. J.B.G.



Welcome to Ampney Crucis...

and the mammoth festival that this tiny Cotswold village is planning for the middle of the month. CHARLES LINES reports

Inevitably, the fantastic success of the recent festival at Rodmarton described in the July issue of *Gloucestershire Life*, must encourage similar events in the Cotswolds and, though organisers of this month's Ampney Crucis Festival insist that they cannot possibly emulate so magnificent an effort, there is little doubt that visitors will find their journey amply repaid.

Certainly, I spent a delightful day in the village, talking to some of the local people involved, and looking leisurely – by afternoon a trifle drowsily, for the lunch at Ampney Park was very good – at various historic features of this attractive place.

Ampney Crucis, a few miles out of Cirencester on the road to Lechlade, is not really one of the famous Cotswold villages, with its mixture of ancient and modern and a new housing estate just going up which has been causing a good deal of local anxiety lately. But the winding street – where roses and valerian grow in profusion and banks of lavender stretch behind the tall yew screen of the Malt House (once part of a family brewery) – had plenty of charm under a glorious sky and the hot sun of a belated summer.

Workmen were converting an old barn into a dwelling, transistor blaring of course! I found the Ampney Brook, bridges and mills, an inn, a dedicated craftsman and stone cottages dating back to the seventeenth century. Mrs. Esme Stephens took me on a tour of the village. Major Richard Lingard-Guthrie, re-

tired farmer and local historian, proudly showed me the parish church which stands close to the "big house" and its stables, in a lovely setting of trees. The church seems to have something of every era from Saxon to Victorian, including at least two historical treasures that alone should bring church-lovers here. One of these is in the church-yard – a remarkable cross of about 1410 (it is suggested) actually with its sculptured head which was accidentally discovered last century, hidden away on the rood loft stairs, the carvings being the Virgin and Child, the Crucifixion, a soldier and probably St. Laurence with his gridiron. (Incidentally, the church is that of the Holy Rood, which is most unusual in my experience). The other "treasure" is a very rare mediaeval sanctus-bell cote on the roof. In the deep south porch, with its well-marked Mass dial, a shallow recess – could it be for some long-vanished sculpture or was it merely a blocked window? – puzzled me. The dim, aisleless nave has much to offer including a lofty roof, a Saxon doorway and Norman windows, a rather handsome stone pulpit and a decorative Transitional Norman arch to the chancel.

Among the various memorials, I was particularly interested in the seventeenth-century tablets (south transept) to members of the Pleydell family, remarkable in recording the hour of death as well as the day and year. A monument to a Georgian Pleydell was signed by the sculptors, Edward Stanton and Christopher Horsnaile the elder, The armoured effigy of Elizabethan George Lloyd, or Lloyd, reposed beside that of his wife beneath a canopy, that misguidedly removed,

was found in a cellar at Ampney Park.

Another notable name occurring in the church is that of Radway. The Radways were yeomen and connected with the parish, especially Park Far, from 1615 to 1963 when Edward Radway died aged ninety-three. Major Guthrie told me the family played a large part in local affairs, holding such offices as churchwardens and overseers, and such a long span – as he said – was surely a record for a yeoman family.

Alas, the wonderful series of wall-paintings – found during a too, too severe restoration one hundred years ago – are sadly faded, but within the tower you may see a copy of that depicting the martyrdom of poor St. Erasmus, Bishop of Syria, under Diocletian. He suffered the ghastly fate of having his entrails painfully drawn out by means of a windlass.

A convenient gate took us into the Park grounds. These have been rescued from a "jungle" state with "only five part-time gardeners" – that is to say, the quite new owners, Mr. and Mrs. Brian Humphry and their three children! Apart from the Pleydells, who came from Coleshill, in Wiltshire, purchased the estate in 1593, and remained until well into the eighteenth-century, the house has been the home of the Blackwells and the second Lord Gifford, and in 1884 was bought by the well-known Cripps family.

A good deal of local land is still in Cripps' ownership, but the days when Sir Frederick and Lady Cripps lived graciously at Ampney Park with their maids and gardeners

continued overleaf

left Major Lingard-Guthrie and Mrs. Esme Stephens stand together on the village green discussing plans for this month's Festival

HISTORY OF AMPNEY PARK

The first record of individuals owning Ampney Park was in the Domesday Book-

Vlvi held the manor	1042 to 1066
Turstin from	1066 to 1087

1100 Ampney Park was then held by the Abbey of Tewkesbury whose abbey, by the grant of William II was seized of Court-Leet, Waifs & Felon goods in Amney Rood (15 ED1) which privileges were then allowed in a Writ of "Quo Warranto" (1272 to 1561) from Humphry the Chamberlain.

1562 The manor and Rectory of Amnet Holy-Rood was granted to John Playdel by James I. John Playdel was responsible for the tenor bell (the first bell in Holy Rood church).

1608 to 1642 Robert Playdel, fourth son of John and his heir by the death of his elder brother without issue - he came from the manor of Westcot to Holy Rood, Amney and became lord of the Manor in 1608. He was High Sheriff of the County in 1640, died in 1642 and is buried in Holy-Rood church. Robert presented the fourth bell in 1630.

1642 to 1678 John Playdell, son and heir to Robert married Rebecca Pimm of



Buckinghamshire and died without issue. He presented the second bell to Holy Rood church in 1660. Robert Playdell, brother and heir to John married Elizabeth Saunders, died in 1678 and is buried in Holy Rood church.

1678 to 1724 Robert Playdell, son and heir to Robert

married Sarah Sheppard of Minchin-hampton - he was High Sheriff of the county in 1682 and had one son and two daughters. His son and one daughter died without issue so the manor of Ampney Crucis and other several large estates descended to the youngest daughter, Charlotte Louisa, who married the Hon John Dawney, eldest son of Henry, Lord Viscount Downe in 1724. This name and family continued until 1765 when John, Lord Viscount Downe sold the manor and estate amongst other particulars to Samuel Blackwell Esq who was amassing extensive estates in South Gloucestershire. He, in turn, sold the manor and park to the well known Cripps family in 1884.

Picture gallery.



Sir Frederick & Lady Cripps.
They once owned most of the houses in the village
and lived in the Manor House.

AMERICAN RED CROSS

Queen's Hotel,
Cheltenham.

10th May, 1944.

Lady Crisp,
Ampley Park,
Ampley Woods,
Ea. Wiltshire,
Wils.

Dear Lady Crisp,

On behalf of the American Red Cross I wish to thank you most sincerely for your kindness and consideration in accepting members of the U.S.A. Forces on Monday, May 7th.

We appreciate the difficulties with which you are faced these days, and are therefore the more grateful for your kindly hospitality.

Everyone who attended the tour was very enthusiastic and the soldiers, both British and American, have asked me to thank you for your kindness.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Marie Tibbels
Marie Tibbels
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

AMERICAN RED CROSS

23 May 1945

Dear Lady Crisp,

It would be such a pity to write this letter if I did not feel such sincere regret at leaving friends which we have made during our stay in England.

As our Liaison Officer you have done so many tangible things for the U.S.A., making it possible for us to receive the wonderful "Bloody Bones" - "Telling us Johnny for the hundredth time" - giving us golf clubs (a priceless commodity!) - and countless other things. Your personal visits to the patients, both British and American, have been deeply appreciated by the men and by the staff.

Thanked as there had to be "a Yankee invasion" of Cirencester, it was our good fortune to have you as both a friend and comrade. Our liaison term for this is "a lucky break." Your many personal kindnesses and your generosity in sharing your home so frequently small comforts that will be cherished always.

With every good wish to you, your husband and family.

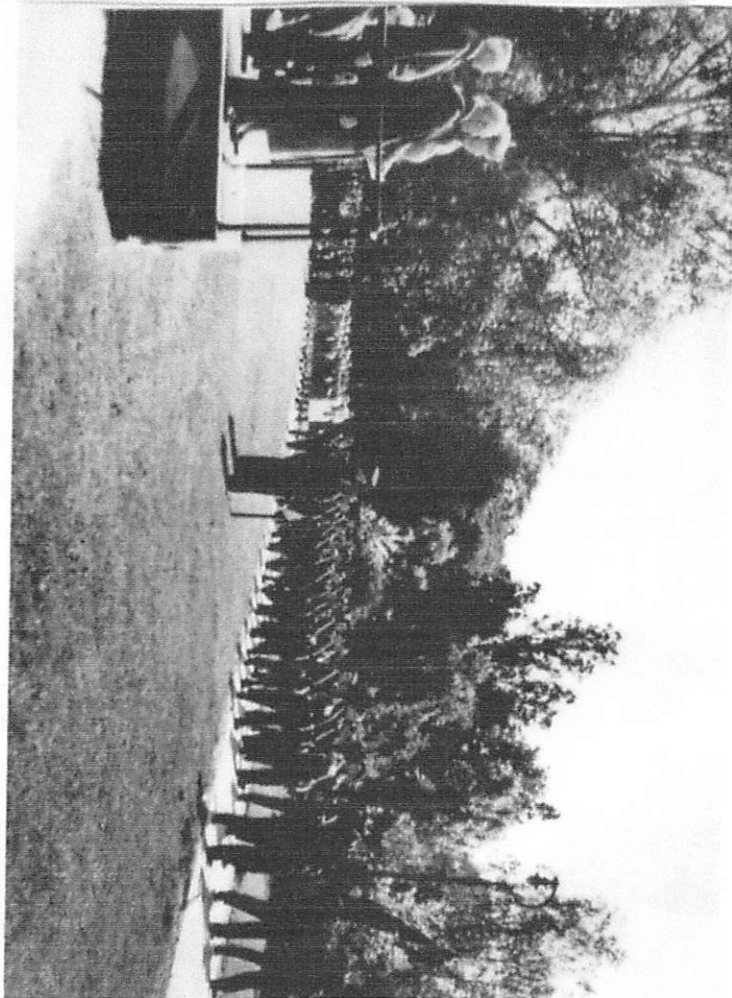
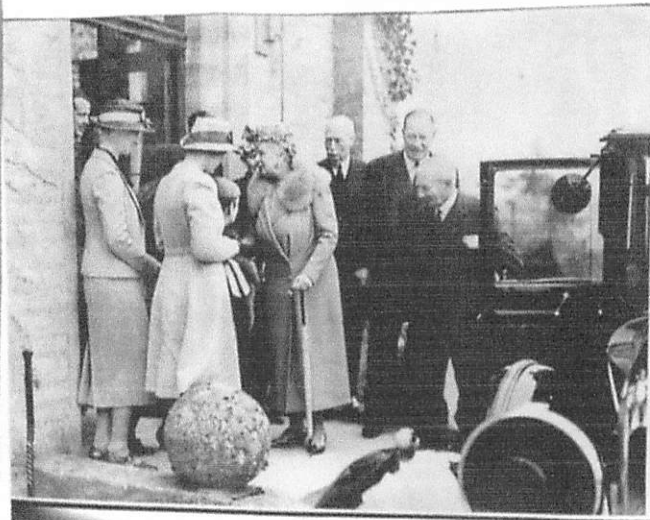
Very sincerely,

Paul Cary Fletcher

CHELTENHAM CHRONICLE AND GLOUCESTERSHIRE GRAPHIC, SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1949



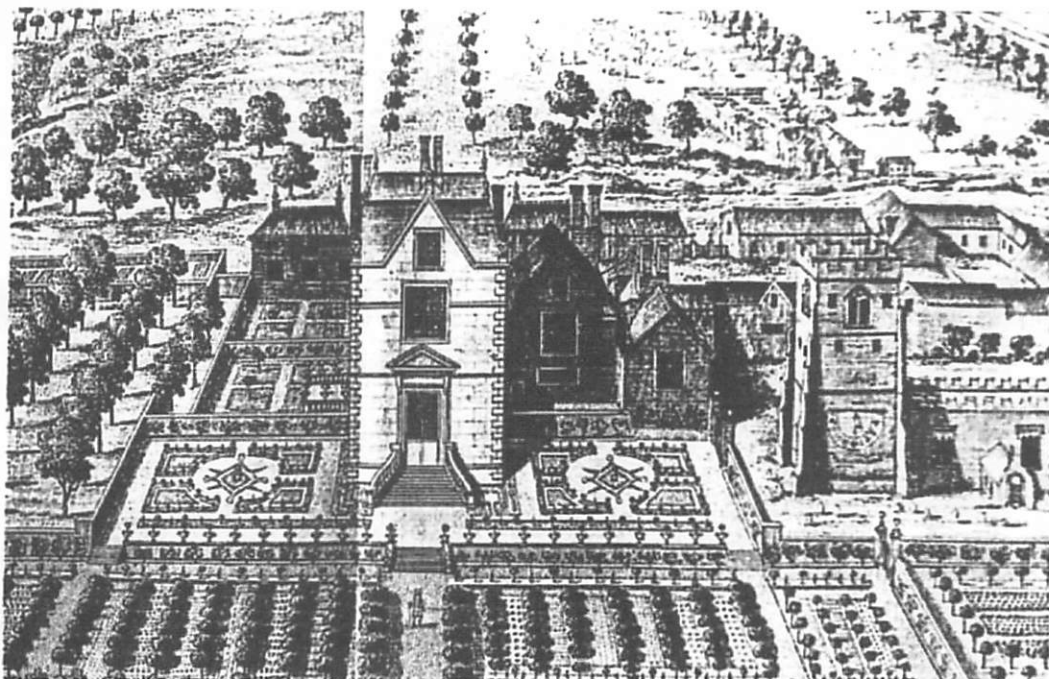
QUEEN MARY VISITS AMPLEY PARK



The following is a copy of extracts from English records of Estates. Pages 49,50 and 51.

AMPNEY PARK, AMPNEY CRUCIS

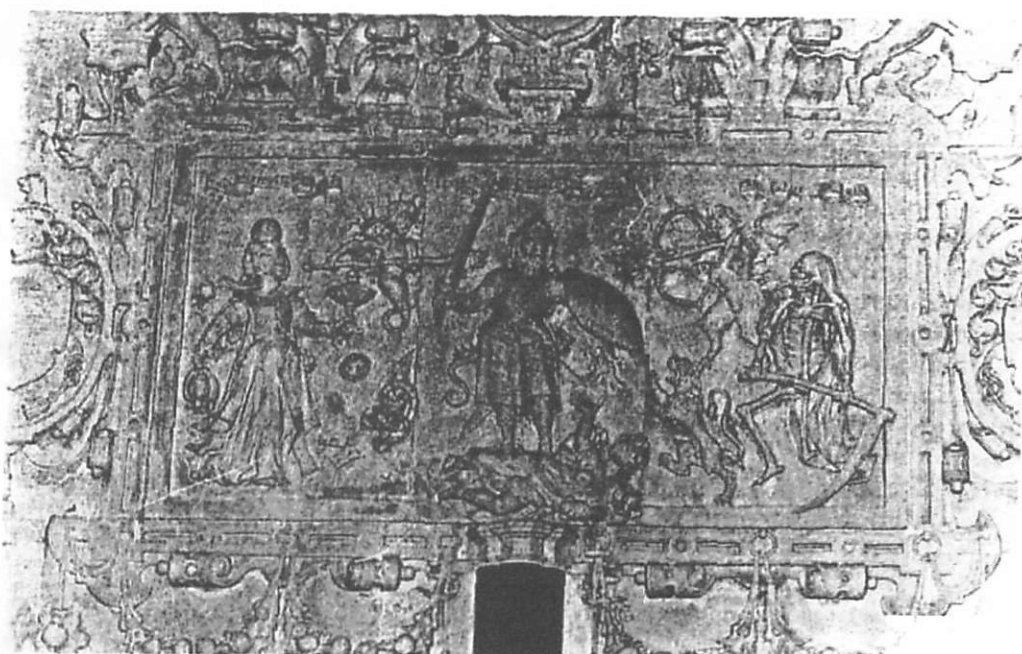
The manor of Ampney Crucis was granted to John Pleydell in 1562, and remained in the possession of his family until the early eighteenth century¹. The house of the Pleydells was depicted by Kip in Atkyns' *The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire* in 1712 [22], and obviously incorporated parts of the ancient manor house of their predecessors². The unusually tall gabled block which forms both the focus of Kip's view and the core of the present house is, however, reputed to have been built in 1628, and such a date fits its style well enough³. This block was apparently conceived as additional or replacement living accommodation, and probably contained a pair of handsome new rooms, parlour and great chamber, or one room and an open-well staircase. Later alterations have made the precise original arrangement debatable, but the parlour survives as one of the most perfect early seventeenth century interiors in the county, with a swagger stone chimney-piece, panelling and an ornate plaster ceiling [V]. The importance of the plasterwork in the overall scheme is unusual in Gloucestershire, but the panelling is also of exceptional quality, all the panels of the frieze depicting mythical beasts being individually designed. The stone chimney-piece is also unusually well carved, although in a distinctly freer style than the roughly contemporary examples at Lasborough and Miserden [23].



Ampney Park. A 16th-century or earlier house improved c1628 by the addition of a new block (which projects towards the viewpoint). The doorcase in the end of this block was probably a later 17th century addition.

Alterations to the house began as early as the late seventeenth century, for Kip shows a front door with classical doorcase in the end wall of the parlour, which cannot possibly have been the original arrangement. Presumably under this dispensation the parlour was used as a sort of hall, but there is no evidence to show how the rest of the house was organized.

In 1724, Ampney passed by marriage to the Dawnays of Cowick Hall in Yorkshire, and in 1765 it was sold to Samuel Blackwell of Cirencester, who was then amassing extensive estates in south-east Gloucestershire⁴. His family continued to own the property until 1891, and it was presumably George Graham Blackwell who was responsible for the replacement of the straggle of older buildings shown in Kip's engraving by the present rather plain north range. This has been called eighteenth century, but the gable over the projecting end bay and the numerous pointed archways in the house would seem to me to indicate instead a date c1830, and the general appearance of the range reminds one of Brockhampton Park as it was altered in 1832⁵. In the 1890s the new owner, Edmund Cripps, added a billiard room and other accommodation to the east of the house, and placed a bay window on the end wall of the parlour⁶. The house was the home of the politician, Sir Frederick Cripps, until his death in 1959. In 1982 Ampney was bought by Mr T. A. R. Eaton, who extensively altered the interior and converted the house into an hotel.



Ampney Park. The central panel of the superb chimney-piece in the parlour is an allegory of "The spiritual warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil".

1 Rudge, *Glos*, i, 220-21

2 Atkyns, *Glos*. plate facing p. 218

3 *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 26 November 1955

4 *Glos R. O.* D1740 T1

5 Rudge, writing in 1807, says simply "the manor house. . . is a building of ancient architecture", which may be negative evidence that the rebuilding had not then taken place. G. G. Blackwell was living at Ampney by 1828, and the house was described as a mansion in 1837 (*Glos. R. O.*- D674b B3-4)

6 *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 26 November 1955. For a modern plan of the house see *Glos R. O.* K700/2/1