

Notes from History Society Meeting - 3 March 2015

Geoff Parcell shared the work he has done on his family tree. In the 1840s the Parcell name was restricted to Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire, with a few unconnected Parcells in South Wales. By the end of the 20th Century the distribution was much broader.

He showed connection 5 generations back to the Gadd family who had become Mormons and emigrated to America and taken an arduous handcart trek across the Prairies to Salt Lake City only to lose the father and two sons on the journey, due to lack of food, early snow and the effort of the journey. He also shared a link to a Convict, Hall Parcell, transported to Tasmania for stealing 5 bushels of potatoes to feed his family. He received his Ticket of Leave 21 years later, but none knows where he went then or where he died.

On his paternal grandmothers side he discovered that his Great-great-grandmother, Sarah Perfect or Parfitt was christened in Pen Selwood. He was totally unaware of this when he moved to the village. Thomas Parfitt was a mason and brick maker. He had five children, 3 of whom were christened in St Michaels church. He was born in Bourton and his wife Pamela in Silton. In 1831 he fell foul of the Poor Law. At that time it was the responsibility of each Parish to look after those unable to fend for themselves. 20% of the population were likely to be care for in this way. The Parish Of Pen Selwood obtained a court order to move the family to Silton.

Geoff also shared the common surnames present at the time of the first census in 1841 and the names from the birth and marriage Parish records.



Heather Doe shared her memories of people of Pen illustrate with many old photos. Her parents were both brought up in the village and attended the village school. She deferred to Bryan and Olive for memories of schooldays as she was only 7 when it was closed, but she has an abiding memory of the cupboard full of hazel twigs that the headmistress used to cane them with!

She remembers "The Hut" which was a Nissen hut in the grounds of the Rectory and used as the Village Hall prior to the school becoming the Village Hall. Parties, plays, concerts pantomimes and the men's club were all held in it.

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The first rector she remembers was **Rev Claude Hiscliffe** who lived in half the Rectory, renting the other half to the Rose family. She recalls he had a bad chest and used to choke and cough through half the sermon.

Jim Stacey, the village blacksmith and Heather's grandmother's great uncle made the church gates.

There was a Sunday school outing to the Weymouth once a year in the Summer, the only time most children got to the seaside. The church paid for the bus and the **Rev Peter Clear** bought all the children fish and chips on the balcony of the Dorothy cafe. The night before in anticipation, all the children would meet on the field for a game of football. That field is where Queens Grove now is. Pete Clear also paid for the children to go to the pantomime in the Theatre Royal in Bath.

Farmer & Mrs Hembury at Bleak farm would always find work for the children, whether weeding the Kale or sweeping the yard, so they could earn a few pennies.

The village shop and post office, now Coombe Head, was a good meeting place. The man who ran it also provided a taxi service. Close by was the Queens Head, the village pub. The landlord was **Sid Padfield**, as was his father Fred before him. They had a darts team and a skittle alley. Heather remembers Sunday evenings in summer when the whole family would go for a long walk and as long as they behaved themselves on their return were allowed a glass of lemonade and packet of crisps sitting on the lawn in front of the pub.

Olive Moldram's mother was known to all as "Grandma". She'd sit with seriously ill people to give the family a rest. She also laid them out if they died.

Sir Arthur Bliss, the Queen's Master of Music, lived in Pen Pitts house. He had a separate music room in which he composed his music. As a child Heather remembers sneaking up as close as she could to have a peep.

She used to go with her cousin to get milk from **Wilfred Butt**. As well as keeping a few cows, he made the pews for the church.

The **Herrick family** lived in the village for many years and together with Miss Chatteris produced the early concerts in the village hall. Mrs Herrick's youngest daughter married David Checketts who was equerry to the Duke of Edinburgh and also Prince Charles. **Prince Charles** once visited Pen incognito, staying with Trish Herrick.

Andrew Jenkins talked about **Jerry Fray** who used to live at Leigh Common. Andrew is writing a biography of Jerry's life particularly his wartime experiences.

Frank Gerald (Jerry) Fray was born in Bristol in 1920. Jerry and his rugby team mates volunteered to join the Territorial Army one Saturday afternoon after a rugby match just before the outbreak of the Second World War. He joined the Royal Engineers Barrack in Chatham and was soon sent with his company to France to maintain and build an airfield for an RAF unit.

By May 1940 the German troops were invading France. Jerry and his comrades were ordered to destroy all the equipment left on the airfield and pull out. After being dive bombed and shot at by German Stukas on the beach near Dunkirk he shipped out on a very unstable Thames barge to Dover.

He transferred to the RAF on 24th May 1941 and he joined Photo Reconnaissance near Blackpool. This was where his dream came true – a flight in a Spitfire. He learned that reconnaissance pilots were sent out in planes with a watch, a compass, cameras and extra fuel in tanks that replaced the guns which were removed to give extra range. This meant they had no guns to fight back with if they were attacked.

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Andrew shared some of Jerry's extraordinary photographs, including before and after photos of the Mohne Dam, Eder Dam and a V2 launch site. Andrew's text can be found on the History group pages of the website.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 29 April at Woodlands (courtesy of Jeremy Cox). We will be treated to **Oral History** - Memories from some of the longest residents in Pen Selwood - Bryan Young, Olive Moldram and Charles Buckler.

Charles Buckler is also investigating if we can make a site visit to the castle at Castle Orchard possibly in May or June.