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BITTON Parish.

Although Bitton is only 6 miles west of where I live, I know very little about its history or geography. The following was given to me by a Bitton resident keen on local history. "The Parish of Bitton stretched to the boundary of St. Phillips and St. Jacobs and included the Forest of Kingswood. The River Boyd, running from Codrington about 7 miles to the north-east, passes through the centre of the village of Bitton before joining up with the River Avon near Keynsham. Bitton village was mentioned in the Domesday Book. There was a church on the site in the year 800. The present Ladychapel was built in 1299. Apparently there were several flour and grist mills along the River Boyd which no longer exist today.

It was mainly an agricultural area, animal farming being the most prevalent, though in the 17th and 18th centuries there was a business called Champion which worked in Brass and Copper at the Pond in Bitton. Wool dying was carried out nearby at Swinford and two coal mines existed in Golden Valley close by."

In 2004 I volunteered to help the Bristol & Avon Family History Society & Bristol Records Office combined, with a Parish Registers Transcription Project and when I got the Register entries (on CD of course) discovered I had got the marriage registers for the Parish of Bitton from 1837 onwards. From the occupations listed it is clear that in more recent times there was a Hat industry, Coal Mining, Cotton Weaving, Quarrying, Shoemaking and Pin making among other things. According to our son Clive who has done walks in the vicinity, one of it's earliest existing buildings was supposed to have been one of the ancient Hunting Lodges used by early Kings.

(The next bit was extracted from SAMUEL LEWIS'S "Topographical Dictionary of England 1859.")

BITTON (St. Mary), a parish, in the union of KEYNSHAM, Upper division of the hundred of LANGLEY and SWINEHEAD, W. division of the county of GLOUCESTER; containing, with the chapelries of Hanham and Oldland and the district of Kingswood, 9338 inhabitants, of whom 2413 are in the hamlet of Bitton, 6¼ miles (E.S.E.) from Bristol. This parish is

bounded on the south by the river Avon, and comprises by admeasurement 7602 acres; the surface is varied. The substratum abounds with coal, which is worked to a considerable extent; large quantities of iron-ore are found, and copper is rolled at Swineford: the manufacture of hats, pins, and paper, is also carried on. A railway runs through the hamlet for the conveyance of coal to the Avon; the *Via Julia* also passes through it. The living is a discharged vicarage, valued in the king's books at £18. 15/-; patron, the Prebendary of Bitton in the Cathedral of Salisbury. The tithes of the hamlet of Bitton have been commuted for £310 and £265, payable respectively to the impropiator and the vicar: the glebe consists of 7 acres, with a residence. The church is a large and handsome edifice, partly Norman and partly in the later English style, with a finely ornamented tower. There are separate incumbencies at Hanham and Kingswood; a chapel of ease at Oldland; and places of worship for Independents, Moravians, and Wesleyans. At Field Grove is a mineral spring.

COALEY

From SAMUEL LEWIS'S "Topographical Dictionary of England 1859."

COALEY (St. BARTHOLOMEW), a parish, in the union of DURSLEY, Upper division of the hundred of BERKELEY, W. division of the county of GLOUCESTERSHIRE, 3 miles (N. N. E.) from Dursley; containing 979 inhabitants. It comprises 2463 acres, of which 1900 are pasture, 300 arable, 90 woodland, and 81 common or waste. The living is a discharged vicarage, valued in the king's books at £8.2. 2., and in the patronage of the Crown; impropiator, S. Jones, Esq. Tithes were commuted for land and a money payment in 1801; and under the recent act, impropriate tithes have been commuted for a rent charge of £56. 14., and vicarial for one of £300. There is a place of worship for Wesleyans.

COALPIT-HEATH.

(Extracted from SAMUEL LEWIS'S "Topographical Dictionary of England 1859.")

This is an ecclesiastical parish, partly in the parish of FRAMPTON COTTEREL, hundred of LANGLEY and SWINEHEAD, and partly in the parish of WESTERLEIGH, hundred of PUCKLECHURCH, union of CHIPPING SODBURY, W. division of the county of GLOUCESTER, 1½ mile (S. by E.) from Frampton Cotterell; containing about 2300 inhabitants. It lies on the banks of the river Frome, and on the Bristol and Birmingham railway; and the road from Bristol to Sodbury passes through its centre. There are seven coal-pits, in the possession of the lords of the manor, who derive a large revenue from the estate. The parish was constituted in 1845, under the act 6th and 7th of Victoria, cap. 37; and on the 9th October, in that year,

the church, called St. Saviour's, was consecrated. It is in the early decorated style, and consists of a nave, chancel, north and south aisles, and tower; the chancel paved with encaustic tiles, many of the windows are of painted glass, and there is a fine organ: the cost of the edifice exceeded £3000. The living is a perpetual curacy, in the patronage of the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol; net income, £150.

PARISH of DYRHAM & HINTON

(Descriptions from *The National Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland* (1868)). Transcribed by Colin Hinson ©2003

"**DIRHAM**, (or Dirham cum Hinton) a parish in the lower division of the hundred of Grumbalds-Ash, in the county of Gloucester, 4 miles N.W. of Marshfield, and 7 N. of Bath station. It is situated on the river Boyd. This was the scene of a battle between Ceawlin, the Saxon, and the Britons, in which the latter were defeated, and two of their kings slain. The living is a rectory in the diocese of Gloucester and Bristol, value £520, in the patronage of Colonel Blathwayt. The church, dedicated to St. Peter, is an old structure with square tower, in the early English style of architecture. There is an endowed school for boys and girls. There are remains of what is supposed to have been a Saxon camp in the neighbourhood, called Barhill Camp."

"**DYNHAM**, (sic - recorded as such but almost certainly relates to Dyrham) a parish united with Hinton, in the hundred of Lower Grumbald's Ash, in the county of Gloucester, 4 miles S.E. of Chipping Sodbury. It is situated on a tributary of the river Avon. This place is mentioned as the scene of a contest between the Britons and Saxons at the close of the 6th century. There are some remains of a camp at Hinton Hill. The living is a rectory in the diocese of Gloucester and Bristol, value £501, in the patronage of W. Blathwayte, Esq. The church is dedicated to St. Peter, and contains two monumental brasses. The parochial charities produce about £100 per annum, the principal of which is for Langton's schools. This is a meet for the Beaufort hounds.

"**HINTON**, a hamlet in the parish of Dirham, lower division of the hundred of Grumbalds Ash, county Gloucester, 1 mile N. of Dyrham, and 3 miles S. of Chipping Sodbury. Until recently it formed a distinct parish."

Dyrham Camp, otherwise known as Hinton Hillfort, is best seen from high land in Dyrham Park (National Trust) Dating from the Iron Age, it was the likely site of the Battle of Dyrham in 577 AD when the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that the invading Saxons under "Cuthwine and Ceawlin fought against the

Britons and slew three kings, Coinmail, Condidan and Farimail at the place which is called Dyrham; and they captured three cities, Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath"

FRAMPTON COTTERELL.

(Extracted from **SAMUEL LEWIS'S "Topographical Dictionary of England 1859."**)

(St. PETER) a parish, in the union of CHIPPING SODBURY, Upper division of the hundred of LANGLEY and SWINEHEAD, W. division of the county of GLOUCESTER, 5 miles (W. by 8.) from Chipping Sodbury; containing, with the hamlet of Wickwick, 1991 inhabitants. This place derives its name from being situated on the river Frome, and from Cotel, the name of an ancient proprietor, whose family were possessed of the manor until 1245. The parish comprises about 1400 acres, principally laid out in pasture; it is intersected by the road from Bristol to Sodbury, and is distant about two miles from the railroad between Bristol and Gloucester. The soil is in some parts a red grit, and in others a deep clayey loam; the surface is undulated, and the scenery varied and picturesque. **The manufacture of hats, which is extensively carried on, affords employment to a great part of the population;** and there are some coal-pits and stone-quarries in full work. The living is a rectory, valued in the king's books at £11. 16. 0½., and in the gift of the Duke of Beaufort: the tithes have been commuted for £530. 10., and the glebe comprises 60 acres. The church is in the later English style. There are places of worship for Independents and Wesleyans.

"The History of the County of Gloucestershire updated to 1803 (Vol 2)" by Rudge (and Printed in 1803.)

In ancient times Frampton Cotterell was known as Frantone. Also, and I quote, "The Hat manufacture is carried on here and supplies employment for a great many hands."

In the **A.A. illustrated Road Book of 1967** it says:- "In the church is a chained copy of Jewell's "Apology". (I have never heard of it before but I doubt if it is still kept there in these days of vandalism and theft!)

The following item about the Hatting Industry of Frampton Cotterell is of interest. It comes from the BristolFamilyHistory website run by a Mrs. D.P Lindegaard.

"15/2/2009. A ramble around Winterbourne and **Frampton Cotterell** on "The Hatters' Trail" with Chris Heal and Bernice Peglar. Chris is the expert on the subject and Bernice's ancestors, the Shorts, were hatters of long-standing. My interest is because of my great-great-great grandfather John Pillinger, 1772-1848, "hatter" or "hat maker" who lived at Leather Heaven, Oldland in 1841 and sadly died in Chippenham Workhouse.

The rule of thumb for hats, was "Wool, Beaver, Rabbits", the last creature coming in when the supply of beavers ran out. The hatters required a good supply of top quality skins, four to each hat, hence the rabbits being "farmed" in warrens by a warrener and killed in numbers at various times of the year. (I had always imagined my forebear, "John the hatter", hung about with small animals, like Urk Starkadder, which shows how wrong you can be.)

The hatters' houses can be easily identified, being built in "steps" one gabled roof behind the other, and the factories with rows of tiny windows. The work was hazardous. If the mercury, used to raise the scales of the fur to lock them together, called "carrotting", didn't get you ("mad as a hatter") then pneumoconiosis from the fibres in the air might well do so. Hands were likely to be deformed from the agony of being dipped in boiling water: if mercury penetrated any cuts, they would not heal.

The fibres would then be cut from the rabbit skin - my great-great grandfather, John's son, Stephen Pillinger was a fur cutter, as was his daughter Hannah Clark. The fibres would be placed on a bench over which was suspended a bow, like that from an oversized violin, and the vibrations separated the fibres which formed into a mat, called "the batt." The batts were moulded into a cone and reduced by boiling and rolled to create felt. The felt would then be sent to the hatter for shaping.

Urine could be used to speed up the felting process and one of the more intriguing places on the walk is "Penny Lane" where, said Chris, the inhabitants would line up with buckets of urine, to be sold for a penny. This was also one of my Dad's gems of information, so I don't think Chris was joking.

Chris said that fur cutters would most likely have a hatter nearby to whom they could take the batt. Sure enough, when I consulted the census of 1861, living near to Stephen's family in Hanham Lane was William Fudge, a hatter, who was teaching the craft to his son, Robert, aged 13. Alas the trade was in terminal decline, and by 1871, Robert was a miner, though his father was still hatting.

The hats were unlikely to have been of the posh kind as seen on the heads of Admirals in film and TV epics, but strictly functional: a round beanie with a wide brim to keep off the rain."

OLD SODBURY, Gloucestershire

The reason I have included Old Sodbury is the result of learning that my earliest known ancestor, John Cope, so far known as "Yeoman of Pucklechurch", had a bit of a secret until we obtained an Indenture for a lease by John Cope for the land at Leigh Farm, Pucklechurch. In that document it is clearly stated that John Cope was "of Old Sodbury". I have included descriptions from two sources:-

- 1. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.)**
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_Sodbury

Old Sodbury is a small village to the east of [Chipping Sodbury](#) and [Yate](#) in [South Gloucestershire, England](#). Its name is recorded in [Anglo-Saxon](#) (in the [dative](#) case) as *Soppanbyrig* = "Soppa's fort".

The name may refer to the Iron Age hill fort just to the north of the village. The fort, perched on the edge of the [Cotswold](#) escarpment, is enclosed on three sides by two parallel earthworks, and is open to the west, commanding an impressive view of the [Severn Vale](#) and the Welsh mountains. The earth walls enclose an area of 11 acres (45,000 m²), and are usually kept mown by the local farmer (the fort is in private hands, but accessible). The fort can be reached by footpath from the [A46](#) road, and from below via the [Cotswold Way](#). Below the fort are a group of ancient pillow mounds which are supposed to have been created by people who hoped rabbits would develop warrens here - providing a source of meat.

The [Romans](#) strengthened the fort for use as a camp to support their western frontier. In AD [577](#) the Saxon army used the fort as a camp before the [battle of Dyrham](#), a few miles to the south. [King Edward IV](#) camped here in 1471 before attacking the army of [Margaret of Anjou](#) at the [Battle of Tewkesbury](#).

It has two primary schools (Old Sodbury CE Primary School, and the privately run Overdale School), a church (the 900-year-old Church of Saint John the Baptist), a hotel, and a pub, The Dog Inn. The village also has a post office (which also acts as the local shop), a petrol station, a football pitch and a playground. The east of the village lies on the [Cotswold Edge](#) and is on the Cotswold Way.

Inside the Church of Saint John the Baptist are two effigies of knights. One is 14th century, carved in wood, and the other is 13th century, carved in stone, and featuring a very large shield. These two are considered to have been lords of the local manor.

In the churchyard at Old Sodbury are a number of old bale-tombs; these were tombs for rich merchants. Some of the gravestones date back to the early 19th century. Just outside the churchyard on the hillside is a topograph, a large stone with an engraving that shows Old Sodbury in relation to its geographical surroundings.

There is a crenellated tower on the hillside above the village, visible from the main road, that performs the function of a ventilation shaft for the [Chipping Sodbury Tunnel](#), on the main line from South Wales, via [Bristol Parkway](#) to [London Paddington](#)). This shaft was designed by [Isambard Kingdom Brunel](#) for the [Great Western Railway](#), which runs through the village and under the hill above it. The nearest station is [Yate](#). The village lies on an old coaching route, and is

older than its nearby neighbour, [Chipping Sodbury](#) and hence the name 'Old' Sodbury.

**2. (Extract from *The National Gazetteer*
(1868)**

"OLD SODBURY, a parish in the lower division of Grumbald's Ash hundred, county Gloucester, 1½ mile E. of Chipping-Sodbury, and 3 miles E. of the Yate railway station. The village, which is chiefly agricultural, is situated on the western side of the Cotswold hills. The soil is of various qualities, with a subsoil of clay and limestone. Numerous fossils, including Nautili and Belemites, are found on the side of the hill. In the vicinity is a Roman encampment. The road from Bristol to Chippenham here meets the Bath and Cheltenham road at the "Cross Hands" inn, which owes its name to an ancient Roman coin discovered in the encampment, and bearing the legend, "Caius Marius, Imperator, concordia Militum".

The living is a vicarage* in the diocese of Gloucester and Bristol, value £460, in the patronage of the Dean and Chapter of Worcester. The church, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, is an ancient stone structure with a square embattled tower containing one bell. There is a National school for both sexes. The Wesleyans have a place of worship. Lye Grove House is the principal residence. W. H. H. Hartley, Esq., is lord of the manor."

Old Sodbury Hillfort submitted by [Thorgrim](#)

See also the following website:

www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=1641963423

Old Sodbury hillfort is an impressive Bronze to Iron age encampment atop the Cotswold Ridge, alongside the A46 road. The fort is approx. 11 acres in size and is made up of a double set of ditches and ramparts. It's location is a mystery due to it's relative difficulty in access and lack of fresh water supplies locally, but is thought to be connected with the much ruined Horton hill fort nearby.

Local legend claims the Romans refortified the camp after the invasion, and it was almost certainly utilised during the wars of the roses. Old Sodbury hillfort is private property, but two foot paths run through and across the site. Please stick to these paths, and be wary of grazing live stock. As it is a private monument, metal detecting is strictly not allowed. See also Horton Hillfort, Chipping Sodbury, and Grickstone Mehir.

"CROSS HANDS, a hamlet in the parish of Old Sodbury and lower division of the hundred of Grumbalds Ash, in the county of Gloucester, 2 miles E. of Chipping Sodbury."

**THE PUCKLECHURCH HUNDRED &
BITS ABOUT SOUTHERN**

GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

The Hundred was an ancient administrative division, supposed originally to comprise 100 families, no longer exists. In early medieval days it was quite a large area encompassing what are now the Parishes of Westerleigh, Pucklechurch, Siston and Wick and Abson. See extract of 17th Century Robert Morden Map on page 7.

Down through the ages, Pucklechurch has been spelt in many ways, i.e. Pulcrucence, Puclancy, Precela's Church; old English name for Goblin. Definition by Braine in his history of Kingswood Forest - "Beautiful Church". The most likely definition is thought to be "Church on a windy plain" as in the Domesday Book. The hundred, as it was called in those far off days, consisted of several villages grouped together under one King, Prince or Lord. Each village had its allotted work, thus keeping the King, oft times quite wealthy, from their own labours, leaving very little for their own sustenance. Actual villagers would be very few, they wielded authority over the rest who were serfs or vassal slaves. Pucklechurch itself had only seven villiens, as they were called, with ten or twenty of plow tillages, which were strips of land under the plough growing mostly grain for bread or beer. The seven villiens were:- Codrington, Cold Ashton, Doynton, Siston, Wapley, Westerleigh and Wick.

These villages were all in what was known as The King's Forest, stretching from Old Market in Kingswood along what is now known as the Bath Road up to Yate (which is Saxon for Gate) and as far west as Downend, Stapleton and Fishponds. Westerleigh was mainly farming and coalmining as were the others except Wick, which had to provide 90 bars of iron from the rolling mills on the river Boyd. This must have been very hard work as scrap iron was worked into a solid mass by tilt hammers and called puddings. This way of life continued with smelting furnaces made from forest wood until King Edmund's death in 940 A.D. (assassinated by Leolf or Leofa).

The Hundred was held by the Monks of Glas-tonbury from 940 - 960 A.D. when they relinquished them on condition they could elect their own Abbot. Annexed to the See of Bath & Wells until the reign of Edward VI, who in the second year of his reign (i.e. 1549) exchanged them to Sir Nicholas Pointz of Iron Acton, affording no profit, were let at a small rent and by letters patent granted to William, Earl of Pembroke, granted then to Maurice Dennis who sold them to the Codringtons, who afterwards sold them to another branch of the Dennis family. William Halliday is the next holder who by his daughters marriage they passed to Edward Hungerford of Corsham. We next hear of them being possessed by the Duke of Rutland who sold to the Berkeleys.

I have read several books about southern Gloucestershire and although some facts may be repeated they cover slightly different aspects so I'd like to quote extracts from them (mostly verbatim). The first is:

"Portrait of Gloucestershire" by T.A. Ryder (Published 1966), Chapter XIII. "The Bristol Fringe".

"Villages in South Gloucestershire close to Greater Bristol have been swallowed up by the Bristol Overspill. This is likely to continue but in a more controlled manner because of the Bristol Green Belt. The area is very varied geographically. It extends from the Severn shore to the foot of the Southern Cotswold scarp just north of Bath. In the centre of this is a long narrow elliptical outcrop of coal measures from Hanham northwards to Cromhall and West from Westerleigh to Winterbourne. The population growth in the NW of Bristol, especially in the earlier days of Kingswood's growth, (18th Century and earlier), was due partly to the fact that the district around Coalpit Heath and Frampton Cotterell lay on the coal measures, so coal mining developed in these areas. That industry started in this area way back in the 13th Century! It was a cause of considerable quarrelling as I shall mention later. The Saxon Kings had a Hunting Lodge at Pucklechurch and there in May 946 King Edmund was murdered by the hand of Leolf, a notorious robber, who had been banished for his villainies. He had however had the nerve to seat himself at one of the Tables in the Hall where Edmund was at dinner. In a scuffle with Leon, the King's Sewer who had attempted to apprehend Leolf, the King interposed and received a stab in the breast with a dagger from the hand of Leolf - who is said to have made his escape. As a distant reminder of the former existence of the Royal Hunting Lodge, the oldest extant Brass memorial in Gloucestershire (situated in Winterbourne Church) records the death of Lady Bradeston in 1370. Baron Bradeston was a major landowner in the area, in particular Kingswood Forest and Chase. This land passed to Sir Baynham Throckmorton in the 17th Century. Back to the quarrels. Mining was carried out in a small way in the 14th Century because the land Barons wouldn't give the Miners permission to develop and extend their areas. This caused all sorts of quarrelling and eventually the Miners outnumbered the Foresters and in the 15th Century there was an expansion of mining. (48 collieries in Westerleigh alone in the early 1400's). Mining continued to expand right into the 18th Century and in fact the last pit, at Frog Lane just NE of Coalpit Heath, did not close until 1960. (Yes, only 40 odd years ago). Transport for the coal was a problem until in 1828 a tram road was laid from Coalpit Heath to the River Severn just north of Bristol. The wagons were horse drawn until steam came along of course. Mining of another kind continues in the area just East

of Yate (in the Tries marl) for Celestine (Strontium Sulphate) one of the rarest of minerals. The Lords of Berkeley once had a Manor House at Yate and lived there during the Reigns of Henry VII and VIII and Edward VI. It came about like this:-

"In 1485, William, Lord Berkeley, gave his Castle, plus 11 Manors, to the King in return for his MALE heirs being made Marquis of Northampton, so they had to find another home. In 1553 the direct male Royal line came to an end with Edward VI's death and so the Berkeleys got their Estates back.

There is a large rectangular area of unspoiled countryside between the coalfields and the foot of the Cotswold scarp, bounded on the north side by the road running eastwards through Chipping Sodbury and Yate, and on the south side by the road from Bristol through Wick to Chippenham (the A420). It contains several interesting small villages like Dyrham, Doynton, Siston, and Abson which, with Pucklechurch, have most of their older houses built of stone with reddish pantile roofs. These villages all date from Saxon times."

PARISH OF PUCKLECHURCH

Extract from "The History of the County of Gloucestershire updated to 1803 (Vol 2)" by Rudge (and Printed in 1803.)

Not far from the Riverside is seen Pucklechurch, anciently a Royal Village called Pucle-Kerk, where Edmond, King of England was killed with a dagger.

Extract from "The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire" by Sir Robert Atkyns and published in 1712.

"This Parish lies in the Hundred of Pucklechurch, to which it gives name, 5 miles distant west from Marshfield, 4 miles south from Sodbury and 26 miles south from Gloster. It being so called from the Latin word Pulcher it being a fair church, and has a fair prospect. The Parish is 10 miles in compass; it consists most of Pasture, and some Woods; the River Boyd which runs to Bitton, passes by this place. Great store of Coal is dug in this place. There are 60 houses in this Parish, and about 250 inhabitants, whereof 8 are Freeholders."

(From Camden's Britannia)

"There was a market formerly held here but has long since been disused." "A great abundance of coal is dug here and the poor have some employment in the manufacture of Felt Hats. A blue clay stone is also dug here which takes a good polish but has nothing unusual to distinguish it from others of the same nature."

All I know about the present day village is that one of Bristol's Remand Centres is located there. We went there to see if we could find Edmund's Well and although it has been covered over, what remains of it is located at what is now a Garden Centre.

I have also purchased a copy of a "**Then and Now**" book of photographs called "**AROUND PUCKLECHURCH**" (but which includes **Westerleigh**). It compares photos taken around the turn of the century with modern photos taken from the very same spot and is available for just £6.00, including postage and packaging, from the author Mr. I.S. Bishop of 32 Henfield Crescent, Oldland Common, South Gloucestershire, BS15 6SF. In it's introduction it mentions a further item that hasn't been stated before: "In Saxon times Pucklechurch stood at the edge of a great Royal hunting forest and was the site of a King's Palace although, today it would be regarded as nothing more than a large wooden hall, where much feasting and debauchery took place. The reputed site of the "Palace" is now covered by a Farmhouse situated behind the Star Inn.

From Samuel Lewis's "Topographical Dictionary of England 1859."PUCKLECHURCH (St. THOMAS A BECKET), a parish, in the union of CHIPPING-SODBURY, hundred of PUCKLECHURCH, W. division of the county of GLOUCESTER, 7 miles (E. N. E) from Bristol, containing 862 inhabitants. This was the site of a palace of the Saxon kings of England, in which Edmund received a stab from Leolf, a notorious robber, which caused his death. The parish comprises 2400 acres: coal is found. A market formerly held has long been disused. The living is a vicarage, with the livings of Wick and Abson, and Westerleigh, united, valued in the king's books at £14. 13. 4.; patrons and appropriators, the Dean and Chapter of Wells. The tithes have been commuted for £765. 8., and there are about 60 acres of glebe, with a house. The church is partly Norman. The Rev. Henry Berrow, in 1718, founded a free school, of which the annual income is £52. 10.

PARISH OF WESTERLEIGH.

**The 1st item is from SAMUEL LEWIS'S
"Topographical Dictionary of England 1859."**

WESTERLEIGH (St. JAMES), a. parish, in the union of CHIPPING SODBURY, hundred of PUCKLECHURCH, W. division of the county of GLOUCESTER, 3 miles (S.W. by W.) from Chipping Sodbury; containing, with the hamlets of Coal-Pit-Heath, Henfield, Kendalshire, Mayshill, and Nibley, 1776 inhabitants. This place anciently formed part of the parish of Pucklechurch, and was not invest-

ed with parochial rights, nor had a church till the fourteenth century. The parish comprises 4009 acres, of which 577 are common or waste land. Coal is procured in considerable quantities, and conveyed to Bristol by railway. The living is united, with that of Abson, to the vicarage of Pucklechurch: the church is a handsome structure in the later English style, with a lofty tower, and a stone pulpit. There is a second church at Coalpit-Heath. Sir John Smythe, Bart., in 1715 gave an annuity of £20 in support of schools. Edward Fowler, Bishop of Gloucester, a theological writer of the 17th century, was born here.

Next a visit to Bath Reference Library and to Mrs. Millhouse, a churchwarden at Westerleigh has produced a lot of information both about the church, the village, the parish and its inhabitants from the 17th century onwards. There was so much information that I decided to devote a separate Annex A to the subject at the end of this Chapter. However, I include a couple of photographs in Plate 3 at the end of this Chapter. Although Westerleigh Parish comes under the Archdeaconry of Gloucester these days, it is not the Gloucester Records Office that keeps the Parish Registers etc for Westerleigh and adjoining Parishes; they are kept in the Bristol Records Office, presumably because they are now virtually Bristol suburbia. It is such a pity these records were not properly looked after when they were kept by the Church. Those before the mid 1600's are virtually unreadable.

EXTRACT FROM "THE PERAMBULATION OF THE COALMINES IN THE PARISH OF WESTER- LEIGH ON THURSDAY NOVEMBER ye 5th 1691."

"..... the great vein in a ground called by ye name of Nichols in Westerleigh Street. There wrought to ye depth of fourteen fathom northward athwart ye highway that leads from Cophill to Dodmores Green called Streambridge Lane to the said brook that runs athwart ye aforesaid Thomas Hobbs meadow and southward athwart Westerleigh Street into formerly Matthew Parson's garden and there the cole (sic) ended."

"The Great Vein in Harespitt. There wrought about thirty five years since in Pitts and Tipps to ye depth of seventeen fathoms by ye late Thomas Robert's father (but ye vein was first found by one John Simonds deceased but his wife now alive) and ye work was taken from ye said Simonds by ye said Thomas Robert's father, but ye said Simonds wife (if she had been suffered) would have cutt the rope when ye said Thomas Robert's father was going in ye Pitt to view ye cole therein and for ye joy of finding ye said cole our bells were caused to be rung very merrily). The cole hold good northward to Dennis Hollister's Coalpitt cage which is about forty yards in length."



"PRESENT STATE OF GLOSTERSHIRE" by Sir ROBERT ATKYNS, Published 1712.

"This Parish lyes in the Hundred of Pucklechurch, 6 miles distant West from Marshfield, 2 miles south from Sodbury and 24 miles south from Gloster. The Manner did belong to the Bishoprick of Bath and Wells and was granted to Sir Nickolas Pointz, died sayed of this manner (4 Mar) and left Nickolas his son and heir 21 years old.

John Roberts, Alderman of Bristol, purchased the Manner off Nickolas Pointz. John Roberts was the Lord thereof in the year 1608. It afterward belonged to Sir Samuel Astry. Simon Harcourt Esq., is the present Lord of the Manner in right of his wife who was widow Sir Samuel Astry. He keeps a Court Leet (see inset) and Has a large Manner (sic) house called the Says. The Chapel of Westerley and a messuage called Sherwick did belong to the Dennys's. John Dennis had livery thereof granted to him. The Church is in the Deanery of Hawksbury and is annexed to Pucklechurch. Mr. Benow is the present incumbent. The Church is large and has an aisle on the south side and two chancels of an equal bigness and a high tower at the west end adorned with battlements and pinnacles.

There is a raised tomb in the Churchyard in memory of Mr. Edward Hill who dyed 1619 and gave a £100 to this Parish, half the interest was for the use of the poor and the other half for 10 sermons to be

preached yearly, this money has since been laid out to advantage, by the purchasing of waste land which is settled on trustees for the same uses.

Thomas Roberts Esq.

formerly Lord of the Manner lies buried in the Chancel who dyed 1673. There is a handsome monument in the same place for Mary the wife of William Jones and daughter of Thomas Roberts, Esq. she dyed 1661. There are several other inscriptions for the same family. John Roberts, Alderman of Bristol, gave the Church House and a cottage called Butt Hays to lessees, for the benefit of the Poor.

The Parish is 16 miles in compass: it consists most of pasturage, and of large Commons; it has a Fair yearly on the 8th day of September; it is full of Coal-Mines. A small Brook runs thro' this Parish into From River. There are divers hamlets in this Parish:

1. Westerley (containing 30 families)
2. Nibley
3. Mayshill
4. Henfield
5. Wottons End
6. Coalpit Heath contains 40 families and lies 2 miles from the Church.

There are 120 Houses in this Parish, and about 400 inhabitants, whereof 14 are Freeholders. Yearly births 15, burials 13.

Published 1802.

Rudder comments: "In 1779 it consists chiefly of Pasturage with large tracts of waste land, or common, and abounds in coal; so that a great part of the laborious inhabitants are employed in mining. There is also a manufacture of felt hats carried on in the village, which seems to be improving." "Westerleigh is a large Parish; the name signifies the "ley" or up hill pasture west of the principal place - in this case Pucklechurch. Westerleigh was anciently a member of the extensive Manor of Pucklechurch; as a part of which it was given to the Church of Glastonbury and passed through the same revolutions till it was sold by Nicholas Poyntz to John Roberts, Alderman of Bristol, who was Lord of the Manor in 1608, as was Thomas Roberts Esq., at the time of his death in 1673. Sir Samuel Astry, Knt, died possessed of it in 1704 and on the death of his widow the Manor descended to his 3 daughters. Elizabeth, wife of Sir John Smyth of Long Ashton; Diana, wife of Richard Orlebar, Esq., and Arabella, afterwards married to Charles William, Earl of Suffolk. By 1803, one moiety (a part-share) of the Manor of Westerleigh belonged to Hugh Smyth and the other to Henry Lord Middleton and Edward F. Colston. "The Church is spacious and consists of a nave and south aisle with a

lofty tower at the west end ornamented with handsome battlements of open lacework and ten pinnacles, not finished. Grotesque figures are placed for spouts and at the end of the nave is a turret for a Saints bell. The pulpit is of stone, elegantly supported on a single pillar. In the chancel is a recess of tabernacle work where was probably placed the image of St. James the patron saint. The separating arches are pointed and the pillars plain octagon. The church exhibits the architecture of the early part of the Tudor period (1485-1603) the windows being, with few exceptions, finished in the square Gothic style.

Westerleigh was not a separate Parish, nor had it any Church, 'til the fourteenth Century as it does not appear in the P.N. Tax.

Very extensive coal works are carried on under the direction of the Lords of the Manor in many places but principally at Coalpit Heath. The coal in some places lies near the surface. At Serridge the coal is within 60ft. (18m.) The strata dip to the East and generally at 1 foot in 25. The deepest pit is 50 Fathoms (90m.) though the average is 30 - 40 fathoms. The veins vary in depth, some 5ft thick; on these a

Court Leet.
This is a special kind of court of record which the Lord of certain Manors were empowered by Charter or prescription to hold annually or semi- annually. This appears to have been a judicial gathering at which offences and allegiances were discussed and considered.

man's labour is 80 bushels a day, but on shallower veins of 2 - 3 ft thickness called "holly-bush", 60 bushels or 30 "Heaves" a day. The coal is small and burns much like Newcastle. It entirely wastes and leaves no cinder. A quarter, or 8 bushels, weighing 7 hundredweight is sold at the pit's mouth for 2/6d."

I cannot remember where the following snippits came from!

"The whole of the Parish (of Westerleigh), or nearly so, is either in immediate possession of, or held by lease under, the Lords of the Manor.""On Westerleigh Heath is found the Flowering Fern *Os-munda Regalis*."

"Four Freeholders voted in 1776 and there were 235 inhabited houses. The benefice is annexed to Pucklechurch to the Vicar of which a mortuary of 10/- (50 New Pence) is due from the Executors of all householders who die in this Parish worth £40 or more."

According to Arthur Mee's guide of 1966, the Church is interesting and the village grouped around its green with a granite War Memorial. By the Church Gate was the stump of a Giant Elm planted in 1686."

NOTE by Michael. That's an interesting date because it was about the time that HART COPE'S Great Grandparents (William Cope of Westerleigh and Joanna Woodward) were married; I thought at first in Westerleigh church but then discovered it was at Wapley Church nearby! I visited Westerleigh in September 1991 and had a pleasant lunch at The Olde Inne. The Church was locked but it is obviously interesting and the Porch is very old. The Church is described in great detail further on. The remains of the Elm stump are no longer visible but remnants exist, though covered with some kind of Ivy. Some of the roots are still obvious but I gather they have been cut back to give the hearse more room when it comes through the gates. I visited again in 1997 to see Mrs. Millhouse and apart from a great "hump" of Ivy, there is no evidence of any tree stump.

THE PARISH CHURCH of ST. JAMES THE GREAT (Westerleigh).

Westerleigh was given to the Monks of Glastonbury, in return they pray for the soul of King Edmund slain at Pucklechurch at a feast given to his Thanes (companions in Anglo Saxon times) in AD 946 (time of Dunstan). The Monks relinquished their claim to the Manors of Pucklechurch, Abson, Wick and Westerleigh to Joceline, Bishop of Bath and Wells in the 7th year of the reign of King John on condition they would be granted the election of their own Abbot. Westerleigh continued as part of the See of Bath & Wells until after the reformation.

In the 2nd year of the reign of Edward VI it was taken from the Bishoprick by the King, but in the

6th year of Elizabeth the Manor was granted to Sir Nicholas Poyntz of Iron Acton, who in 1608 sold it to John Roberts, an Alderman of the City of Bristol, who thus became the Lord of the Manor. The Church is built in the early English and perpendicular styles with some addition in the decorated style. It is a neat building supported by eight octagonal pillars and two pillasters. However it seems the tower is of a later date - possibly the 16th century. At the west end of the church is a gallery erected at the expense of the parish in 1771 and beneath this minstrels or musicians gallery appear the names of Churchwardens and the date 1638. A study of the gargoyles at the top of the tower reveals that the angel on the west face is holding the arms of William Jones, husband of Mary Roberts, one time Lord of the Manor. A further inscription on an old piece of timber from the belfry mentions Thomas Roberts her father and this suggests that the tower may have some connection with this family. In the tower are six bells, these were cast and re-hung in 1936. Heaviest bell 1 ton 281bs, the cost being defrayed by the Revd. Richard Stevens and his sisters. The tower rises in three stages crowned with pinnacles and a spire; upon the pinnacles is carved the Benedictale. The date of the earliest foundations and its founder are unknown but the Norman font gives the key to its approximate age. The tower is reported to have been struck by lightning and the church partly burnt down on the morning of March 2nd 1863 - (entry no. 562 in the baptismal register.) The pulpit, reputedly early English (13th Century), is one of the few stone pulpits to be found in the country, is formed to taper off to a slender shaft towards the base. (There being only sixty of these in the country found mostly in Somerset, Gloucestershire and Devon) In the window on the north side of the pulpit may be seen fragments of old stained glass. The Communion, plate given by Revd. Thomas Trigge in 1668 consisting of a large silver Flagon and other plate was sold at Christmas in 1959 to help defray the cost of the restoration (approx £1,700).

A more detailed and technical architectural description of the construction of the church is available in the church and this starts off.... "of 13th century origin (north side of nave), largely rebuilt in the 15th Century with 17th and 18th Century alterations; chancel rebuilt in 1879-81 by Ewan Christian and restored in 1896 by Sedding."

What follows is the text of a leaflet picked up at the Church when I visited it with Marjorie Mitchell, 2nd cousin from New Zealand, in 2006.

Welcome

St James was a fisherman who became one of the first followers of Jesus. He is called St James the Great to distinguish him from St James the Less, another of the twelve apostles. He was the first apostle to die! be-headed by a King Herod in Jerusalem in AD44. When his body was taken to Santiago de Compostela in the

early middle ages the city became a popular place of pilgrimage, and St James the patron saint of pilgrims. The scallop shell worn by pilgrims, is his symbol.

Perhaps this church was built as a staging post for pilgrims on their way to Spain via Bristol. The original church was consecrated by the Bishop of Worcester on April 16th 1304, as a chapel of Pucklechurch. It consisted of the north aisle, chancel and sanctuary. The south aisle, tower and porch were added in the fifteenth century.

In 1863 lightning struck the church, and fire damaged much of the building. Some restoration work was undertaken in 1875. In 1885 Richard Stevens became curate. The next year he established Westleigh as an independent parish, built a vicarage (now The Arches at the north end of the village) and undertook a series of major works of restoration. He died in 1935 aged 93 or 94.

Charles Luscombe succeeded him, followed

after his death in 1949 by Alfred Lowers. After his retirement St James became part of the ecumenical parish of Yate New Town and has been served by a succession of team vicars, the last of whom is now Hon. Curate.

We welcome you to our lovely old church, and pray that as you look around you will find strength, peace and hope for your personal pilgrimage. By **Revd. David Wilcox, Hon Curate.**

The porch.

The niche above the entrance held

a statue, possibly of St. James. Marriages used to be solemnised in the porch .. It is a symbol of God's sheltering care,

The north Door.

This door, and its stone surround date from 1304. The two carved heads were disfigured at the reformation or in the seventeenth century. Think of the thousands of people who have come in and out through this door, seeking God's welcoming love.

The font.

Probably seventeenth century, imitating a Norman pattern. Here children and adults are baptised and become followers of Jesus, like James. As water is poured over their heads they enter into God's forgiveness and the new life of his Spirit.

The tower.

The entrance was put in place by William Prigge and Thomas Rudge, Churchwardens, in 1638. The tower, built in the fifteenth century, was restored by the Roberts family, the Lords of the Manor, in the seventeenth century. There are six bells, two of them medieval. Today there is an enthusiastic band of ringers.

NOTE about 2/6d.

That's 22½ pence in today's money and although today's equivalent value is more than 50 times what they were then, the cost of coal now is many more times costly than that!

The tower can be seen for miles around. It points heavenward, calling us to lift up our hearts in worship to God.

The minstrels gallery.

Erected in 1771, this was where musicians led singing before the installation of an organ.

"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice",

The nave, north aisle. As well as the door, the stone moulding surrounding the arched window next to it comes from 1304, as does the niche high in the wall opposite the door, where an image of St James probably stood. The other windows are of late fifteenth and sixteenth century date. The octagonal pillars and arches were put in during the fifteenth century extension. The ribbed wooden ceiling is typical of this locality. The three sections nearest the tower are all that survived the fire of 1863.

On the wall by the door are boards and notices commemorating some of the church's benefactors. In the days before social welfare, the church was an important source of financial support for needy people.

The fine stone hour-glass pulpit from the fifteenth century shows the growing importance of preaching. In the window next to the pulpit is some painted glass by Michael Lassen commemorating the church's 700th anniversary and donated in memory of Joan Derrick, a local singer.

The lectern was donated by Emma Stevens, sister of Richard Stevens in memory of Hermione Goodrick, a faithful worker in the church. It probably dates from the 1920's.

The word "nave", like "navy", comes from the Latin word for a boat. This is the ship of the church where through the centuries people have gathered in sunshine and in storm to hear God's word of love and grace, and to respond in thanksgiving and prayer.

The "Chancel" comes from the word for "lattices". Until the reformation a lattice-work wooden screen stretched between the nave and the chancel, with pictures of the saints painted on it, and a large cross above it. Through it the congregation could glimpse and hear the priests offering worship. The chancel, including the choir stalls, was restored in 1906. The stall on the left is occupied by the vicar. Above it is a memorial to Richard Stevens, and near the sanctuary another to his successor Charles Luscombe, who died in service. The organ was built by J. G. Haskins and Son in 1910. Music and singing have always been an important part of Christian worship. "Let all the world in every corner sing, my God and King". (George Herbert)

The Sanctuary is the holiest part of the church. The altar has a marble front depicting Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God carrying his cross. At the altar the priest consecrates bread and wine and they are shared by the

congregation as a Holy Communion in Christ's body and blood.

The Sedilia on the right would have seated three priests in the late middle ages. It has some lovely carving on it.

"Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace".

The Vestry behind the organ used to be known as the Roberts Chapel because of the memorials to members of the family there. Richard Hollister is also commemorated by a Latin inscription. We give thanks for all those who have supported the church down the centuries.

The nave, South aisle

The table probably replaced the altar after the reformation.

The lectern is double sided to carry copies of the Old and New Testaments. This area is available for you to pray and be still.

The royal arms of 1755 is extraordinarily large. It was restored in 2004. Notice the little lion at the top. Is it a caricature of George II? All parish churches were required to display the royal arms from the reign of Henry VIII until the nineteenth century.

Brass plates and stone tablets in the floor commemorate men and women who died in the seventeenth century. Three more on the wall at the west end date from the eighteenth century.

The west end has been used as a vestry, a Sunday School and now a meeting place for refreshments. The glass case contains books and artefacts from the church and village. Today St James the Great continues to be a loving fellowship at the heart of a vibrant village community.

Outside The tower clock was restored in 1999. There are many old tombstones in the churchyard. A bench by the north east gate commemorates Jim Williams, resident of the village.

**HISTORICAL GLEANINGS FROM THE
CHURCH REGISTER 1693 - 1797 by kind
permission of Mrs. M.M. SELICK (1972).**

Between 19/8/1711 and 6/1/1718 there were 37 burials due to Smallpox, 14 of which were in the first year. There were several deaths from smallpox in most years, except 1738, 1739, 1742, 1746 and 1747. There were another 13 deaths in 1736, 11 in 1749 and from 1773 - 1776 there were 26 deaths from the disease. (*I must say I had not realised quite how ravishing it was in small communities.*)

"There being a dispute, a seat in which women who came to be churched were used formerly to be placed in is immediately behind ye reading deske a locke lately having (as I am informed) being put on ye seat by Mr. William Thomas or his wife in order to exclude such women who shall come to give thanks to God for their safe delivery. Mr. Daniel Showering

and James Holder who have a right as they have ye seat immediately before ye reading deske have both (as I am told) kindly consented ye such women may be placed in order to their churching in ye same fee reserving their right notwithstanding."

Mar 2nd 1713-4. Henry Benow, Vicar.

"In the year 1886 the Parish of Westerleigh was made into a separate ecclesiastical district and the then curate in charge Revd. R. Stevens was appointed the first Vicar."

"An Act was made imposing stamp duty of 3d. on the Registry of each Burial on 2nd October 1783. This was followed by a similar duty on Christenings commencing 12th October 1783." "Duty taken off Baptisms and Burials on the 2nd October 1794". There is an interesting listing of burials between 1693 and 1796 but strangely there is no mention of a Cope. (I think because the person who selected entries for the listing was not interested in the name.)

For example:-

- 1700 John Bush buried 28th Sept killed by ye fall of a stone upon his head in a cole pitt.
- 1701 John Parker, Victualler, buried 25th April - exhumed 5th July (no reason given).
- 1704 Simon Purle - a stranger.
- 1705 Job Willis killed with ye fall of a bucket in a cole pitt at Prinham.
- 1706 Stephen Humphrey, a rag gatherer of Wotton-under-Edge buried 11th Oct.
(Presumably rags were used in the local felt making industry.)
- 1707 George Nichols killed with a fall from his horse.
- 1745 Robert Davis aged 67 drowned in a gravel pit.
- 1746 Mr. Richard Farrar - drowned in ye river From.
- 1749 Joseph a stranger found dead near Nibley.
- 1751 John, son of Thomas Cook accidentally scalded to death in hot Wort, buried 14th January. (Wort being beer before malting.)
- 1759 John Butler - Coalminer drowned at his work in a coal pit in 1743 - his bones were likewise buried 24th November.
- 1764 Ann, daughter of Thomas Smart, killed by lightning.
- 1774 Stephen Humpheries (Hatter)
- 1783 George Nott who was killed by a fall from a Mare in Kendleshire.
- 1791 Willian, son of Femando Nichols, burnt to death.
- 1798 Jacob Knole a travelling Pedlar's child overlain by its Mother at the Golden Hart Kendleshire buried 29th December. (This is the 2nd mention of Kendalshire - a hamlet just over 1 mile west of Westerleigh)

1801 James Tayler a boy accidentally killed with a wagon in Yates Heath, buried 3rd July.

1805 Joseph Ralph found dead in his bed.

1805 William son of William Simmonds accidentally scalded to death.

1806 Ann Batchelor accidentally drowned.

1833 -1934 Cholera killed 27 people.

1834 one Esther Dando interred at 2 hours past midnight on Feb 8th aged 43 years.

1854 Job Witchell died suddenly in Freeman's shop. Inquest held at New Inn (Freeman's shop is now Ruffs).

1854 Henry Whenit aged 59 years shot himself lying in wait for a fox. Buried 26th July.

1857 William Summers died by drinking boiling water - aged 2 years. Inquest held at the New Inn.

1864 Whilst burying Hester Luton on January 11th, William Bryant who raised the Knell (Death Bell) fell down dead whilst doing so. Buried 14th January aged 25 years.

TRADES AND LOCAL INDUSTRY.

The Felt and Felt Hat Industry (Old Oak House.)

From 1695 there must have been a thriving FELT Industry in the village carrying on until at least 1797, as in 1695 we read of the death of Luke Parker, feltmaker. We also have discovered that HAT MAKING was flourishing in the Old Oak House, as in 1774 a Hatter is listed - and several more after - which would suggest a subsidiary to the felt works. Westerleigh's business was probably a subsidiary of operations in Winterbourne where felt making flourished between 1595 and 1865. 43 Feltmakers are mentioned between 1695 and 1802. Also 7 Hatters are named between 1767 and 1786. (*This ties in roughly with what we suspected but Hart Cope and his father, William who were both Hatters, were certainly working there before 1767 and are therefore not listed*). The Old Oak House still exists - see pictures on Plate 1 of this Annex.

Many Trades are listed, such as:-

Blacksmith, Carpenter, Butcher, Inn holder, Victualler, Mason, Tiler, Journeyman Feltmaker, Coalminer (56 are listed by name between 1700 and 1812), Cordwainer.

Bakers - first listed in 1752. There must have been bakers before that date. The village Bakehouse, dated about 1559, was on the right hand side of the village street, and formerly known as the village stores. It was still being used as a bakery early this century, then became a grocery store. Now it is a private dwelling house called The Old Stores - two baking ovens having been removed.

Butchers.

The butchers shop was in the outhouse attached to Brooks Farm (which still exists), the dozens

of hooks found there suggests that the joints were hung from the ceiling. Mrs Sellick says the animals were butchered in the same room and the resultant blood washed into the street. There are some reservations about this theory as, at Mr. Ruff's shop there was a slaughterhouse with stone runnels for the blood.

The Cooperage.

This was opposite the Blacksmiths on the side of the old house. The iron stone where the metal hoops were set on the barrels is still to be seen in the yard, also of course the iron rims of the wheels of the farm wagons. Only 2 coopers were mentioned in the registers - one in 1765 and the other in 1788.

The Smithy.

The names of many blacksmiths were recorded between the years of 1725 and 1919, the last being Alec Selby, with his brother. The smithy was closed on the death of Alec, the brother going to the smithy at the Swan Inn at Yate. The smithy was located where Mr. Ruff's store shed is now.

Quarrying.

There were two quarries in Westerleigh, one at Kidney Hill, the other where Carey's builders yard now is. The last houses to be built from the local stone were Bella Vista and Mrs. Danby's House. Five Masons/Rough Masons are recorded in the registers between 1741 and 1800.

Pubs and Inns.

The Parish is well blessed with these even today, but in the 1600's it was even more so when there were eight! The King's Arms or Olde Inne dating from 1270, The Dolphin (now a private house). The Golden Hart at Kendleshire, the Ring o' Bells at Coalpit Heath, The New Inn at May's Hill dating from 1580, the White Hart (The Barton) now gone. The Swan at Nibley dated just before 1700, and the New Inn at Westerleigh Green.

Farms.

Box Hedge Farm, Bryces Farm (1569), Brook Farm (1600), Cliff Farm, Dodmore Farm (the old house), Oatleigh Green Farm, Henfield Farm, Rodford Elm Farm, Westerleigh Hill Farm, Nibley Farm. A farm that belonged to Malmesbury Abbey and used as a rest home for the monks has been pulled down. Says Court Farm at May's Hill shown at the very top of the map on Plate 2 at the end of the Annex. This was the original court of law where sat the members of the law to pass sentence on felons, villagers etc. the Lord Say and Sele was the Earl of Sandwich and Lord Privy Seal. Baron Montagu was a Kinsman of the Trotmans, one of Cromwell's chief followers and descended from the ancient family of Fines of Shipton Oliffe in Oxfordshire. Edward Fines was Lord Clinton of Say in the 35th year of Henry VIII, holders through marriage of Siston Court.

Yeomen.

32 are named in the church registers between 1707 and 1811, but disappointingly no mention of a

Cope! It seems to me that John Cope's sons must have given up the land after 1702.

Householders.

40 householders are mentioned between the years of 1710 and 1743 (again no mention of a Cope.) These were quite important people in those days. Unlike the main working class who rented their homes or lived in tied cottages, they had bought their houses and held them freehold, or as it was then known as "Fee Simple".

INFORMATION COLLECTED IN 1972 FROM JOAN, A VILLAGE ELDER (?).

There were several coalmines in the Westerleigh area. Hurst Pit in the long hill was a one man affair. The houses in the long hill are known as Hareswood Cottages. When Joan was young they were called Hurstpit. Old Dudley mine was situated to the south west of Cliff Farm. The Parkfield mine is south again, at the site of the old chimney near the M4 motorway. In the early 1930's the miners of Parkfield broke through into the old Dudley and found it dry and clear aired as good as the day it was left. Not so the Parkfield, which had to close due to flooding, the miners were up to their waists in water; even pumping at 1,000 gallons a time the pumps could not keep the water down. Joan has seen the lane that ran along the north side of the coal tip deep in water and boiling hot at times. When she asked where all the water was coming from she was told that they had struck an underground sea. If this were true or only conjecture she did not know, what she did say however, was that only a few weeks after closure, the water was half way up both shafts. The railway tested it for re-filling their shunting engine tanks but found it too dirty. Today the motorway cuts through the tip and over the top of the place where Joan's father's signal box (Westerleigh South) stood. When at school Joan knew many of the Parkfield miners who lived in the village. They walked to work taking a path beside the council houses at Kidney Hill and then walking along the side of the railway. They once told her that there was plenty of coal and that they were mining under the long hill and the Church. She asked them how they knew that and was told they were guided by map and compass. The weighbridge man, just below Box Hedge Farm, also an engine shed with two little tank engines, one called General Roberts. These took the wagons up to the coal pit twice a day, early morning and afternoon. Many a day did the children run down the hill from Sunnybank to talk to the drivers and sometimes get a ride on the engine. They used to hunt for odd bananas from the banana wagons, which were shunted up the branch when the sidings were full. Most of the men who lived locally were shunters, platelayers, wagon tappers or signalmen. Joan's father was on the railway for 49 years starting at 14 at Bournville station (Cadbury's).

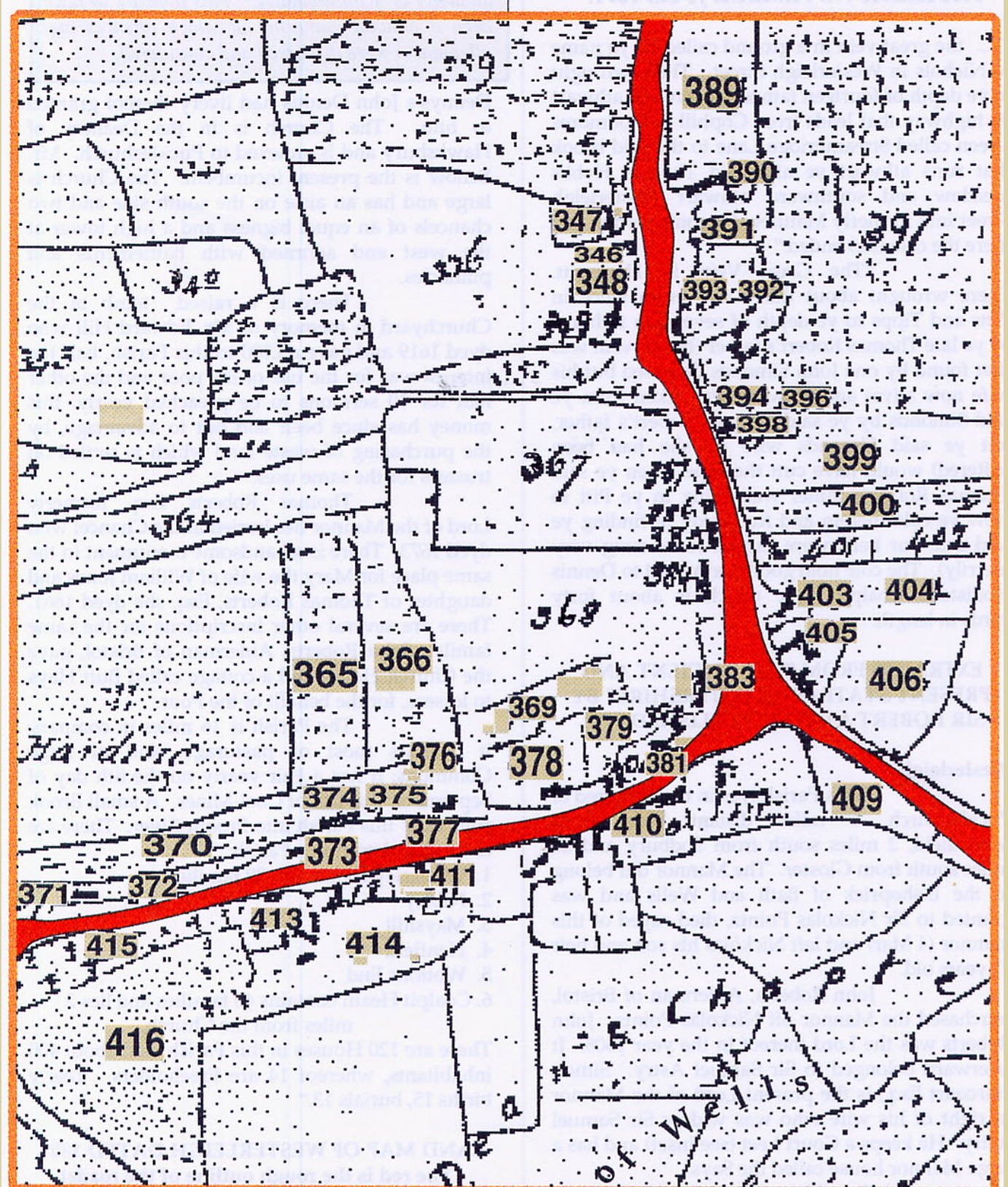
Westerleigh sidings had 13 up and 12 down roads and during the 2nd World War was very busy. The railway brought many people to Westerleigh. We read in 1862 of one John Highnam being killed on the line - 15 years old. Many more have been killed during the passing years. Mr. Jack Offer's grandfather was killed in the cutting when Joan was a child. Mrs. Lottie Ruff committed suicide by putting herself under a train, the south side of Westerleigh bridge 1928-9. We also read of Robert Batten dropping dead while working on the line in 1870 aged 60 years. If you study the on Plate 2 you'll see quite a lot of railway lines around Westerleigh and so understand the importance of the Great Western Railway to the villagers.

YATE

**extract from SAMUEL LEWIS'S "Topographical
Dictionary of England 1859."**

YATE (St. MARY), a parish, in the union of CHIPPING SODBURY, Upper division of the hundred of HENBURY, W. division of the county of GLOUCESTER, 1 mile (W.) from Chipping Sodbury; containing 1057 inhabitants. It comprises 4042 acres, of which 656 are common or waste enclosed under an act passed in 1842: the substratum abounds in coal, of which some mines are in operation. The Gloucester and Bristol railway has a station here, 10½ miles from the Bristol terminus. The village is a polling-place for the W. division of the county. The living is a rectory, valued in the king's books at £30. 18. 11½., and in the gift of W. S. Goodenough, Esq.: the tithes have been commuted for £685, and the glebe comprises 154 acres.

On Pages 15 and 16 are a Land Map of Westerleigh dated 1801, together with a list of owners/lessees.



"LAND MAP OF WESTERLEIGH DATED 1801." (The red is the rough outline of the roads)

The plan below is part of a larger one showing the parcels of property with identification numbers. These are referred to in the Key that follows and shows what the property consists of and the name of the lessee. Where known the lessee in 1776 is also named. The Parish Church and graveyard lie just to the south of the road junction between the plots numbered 409 and 410. Nowadays there is a large green and a War Memorial on a grassed "island" in the centre of the junction.

**NAMES OF LESSEES plus RENT PER ANNUM of the NUMBERED PLOTS
ON THE MAP.**

1801

1776

410	The Old Inn	Joseph Gibb - £14 per annum	Bluett Jones (Kings Anns)
	Plots between 410 and 411 belonging to the Dean & Chapter of Wells		
	a) House, garden/Yard and land beyond	- Thomas Sherbome	
	b) House garden, yard and land	- Joseph Gibbs	
405a	The New Inn)	
406	Garden & Paddock	) - William Gibbs - £15 p.a.	William Gibbs
405	House, Malthouse)	
403	House & Garden	) - John Church - £6 p.a. Thomas Noble	
404	Yard)	
398	Tenement	- Widow Clarke	
399	Tenement	- Widow Clarke	
400	Cat Croft		
392	House,	) Part of the Estate	
393	Yard,	) called Dodmoor.	
394	Land	) - Thomas Hathaway	Ann Hollister
396	Outbuildings)	
389	House & outbuilding)	
390	Malthouse	) - William Pincott & G. Stibbs - £15 p.a.	
391	Yard & Garden)	
346	House, Outhouses)	
347	Mead	) - William Pincott & Stibbs	
348	Garden)	
369	Paddock)	
376	Oorchard	) - John Williams - £6 p.a.	
377	House & Garden)	
370	Long Paddock)	
371	House & Garden	) - William Offer - £6 p.a.	
372	Orchard)	
373	Carpenters Shop	) Part of Estate	
413	House, garden & yard	) called	
414	Home patch	) Martimas	
365	Home cage	) (78 acres)	
366	Williams Mead	) - Joseph Gibbs-£110 per annum	James Sparrow
415	The Orchard)	
374	House & Garden	) - Robert Offer - £10 p.a.	
375	Shop)	
411	House, Garden & shop	- John Offer - £4. 4. Od. p.a. J. Wilkins	
381	Two tenements	- Abraham Highnam- £3. 3. Od.p.a. Gregory	
383	Parish	- John Harvey	
378	Two Tenements	) - Cordy & Newman - £7. 7. Od.p.a.	
379	Two Tenements	) - Cordy & Newman - £7. 7. Od.p.a.	
409	Four Tenements	- Thomas, Sherman & Batten	Hannah Batten
		£6. 6. Od.p.a.	