

THE HISTORY OF the KILVE DISTRICT

Part 4

Photographs and Illustrations

December 1998

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NOTE

This document was scanned in 2023 from a printed original which contains a lot of images that were reproduced at a rather low quality (see below). The scanning process inevitably reduces this quality even further to the point that it was felt that it was not worth copying the images into this extracted copy, the purpose of which is to provide the text in an easily accessible and searchable format.

If you wish to see the scanned images, please refer to the original scan which contains both un-extracted text and images.

(ORIGINAL) PRODUCTION NOTE

The reproductions contained in this booklet have been made by using photocopiers of the best quality available at a reasonable price for short printing runs. They are not as good a quality as could be obtained by normal photographic printing methods. The latter method, however, is unrealistically expensive for a short run volume in a village, and it was decided to reproduce 30 photographs in this way rather than 2 or 3 with higher quality.

Most of the reproductions have been made using photographic copies which 'Mac' MacCormack has made from originals. These will still be available for inspection in the history file at Kilve Court. Current photographs have not been used for comparison as they will probably feature in Kilve's Millenium collection of pictures.

THE LOCAL HISTORY OF THE KILVE DISTRICT

Following the publication of Part 1 in March 1995, Part 2 in January 1996, Part 3 in January 1997, this Part 4 publication concentrates on visual records.

It is intended to continue publishing 'The Local History of the Kilve District' by parts from time to time, and the original plan to include education and industry within this volume has been changed so that this part is devoted to photographs and illustrations.

Documents and photographs are available in files held at Kilve Court, and any resident may have access to them at reasonable times in arrangement with Kilve Court.

Compiled, edited and produced by Olaf Chedzoy

Printed at Kilve Court

THE COOKE-HURLE FAMILY

The Cooke-Hurle family originally lived on the outskirts of Bristol, in Brislington Hill House. That house was built in 1755 by John Hurle, whose niece married Joseph Cooke in 1805. Their son took the name Cooke-Hurle in 1855.

Joseph Cooke-Hurle was born in 1859, and was first married to Lilian Margaret. They had five children - four daughters and a son. She died of consumption in 1906 at the age of 38. His second marriage, in 1915, was to Norah Lilian Fry, of the chocolate manufacturing family.

The family moved to Kilve Court in 1921. The house at Brislington was converted into flats, but in 1941 was bombed and had to be demolished, and nothing of their original house or grounds remains.

MRS COOKE-HURLE

Mrs Cooke-Hurle graduated from Newnham College, Cambridge. She became a great educationalist, a pioneer in nursing and mental health and a benefactor to Bristol University, serving on their Council for almost fifty years. She played a very important part in founding the Somerset Nursing Association in 1902, and was the first woman councillor on the Somerset County Council in 1918, the first woman alderman in 1932 and one of the first women J.P.s. She was instrumental in securing the passage of the Mental Deficiency Act in 1913. She was also involved in the management of several hospitals and research establishments. She died on June 2nd, 1960, in her 90th year.

KILVE COURT

When the Cooke-Hurles moved to Kilve Court, Biddicks of Bridgwater handled the transfer of the furniture, and W. J. King of Bishops Lydeard provided the steam engines to effect the move.

Kilve Court has been the 'big house' of Kilve for many years. The photograph of Kilve Court shows clearly the lunette window of the sewing room, and the polished Humber Super Snipe waiting outside. Comparison with the photograph on page 2 shows the absence of a creeper on the wall.

Mrs Cooke-Hurle was very fond of her garden, and she exchanged a number of plants with Lord St. Audries. On Sundays, she would regularly walk over to East Quantoxhead Court House, with an exchange visit usually taking place on alternate weekends. Sir Geoffrey Fry often visited her from Malmesbury.

Mrs Cooke-Hurle used her chauffeur driven car for official working visits, but locally, she preferred travelling by bus, often on the 8 am to Bridgwater. She once reprimanded the driver for picking up a passenger on a school bus run: she was the passenger!

Always keenly interested in education, it was on one of her visits to a Bridgwater school that she was knocked over accidentally by one of the boys, and damaged her hip, which was the start of her medical problems. Overall, the summary of those in the village seemed to be that she was 'firm but fair', and there was no doubt that she was highly respected and appreciated.

HERBERT THOMAS KNIGHT

Mr Herbert Knight, aged 68, came of a very old family of Brislington, Bristol, and first made his acquaintance with Kilve, the village which was to become his home for the rest of his life, in 1921. He had been in the service of the Cooke-Hurle family, and came with them as chauffeur when they moved to Kilve Court. He immediately entered into village life in a most helpful way, and one of the tasks he applied himself to was the revival of the Quantock Rangers Football Club, whose success in the years following must have been very heartening to Mr Knight. He became hon. sec. of the Club, and continued for some years. He also managed a boys' football team, thus providing a useful nursery for the main club.

Perhaps the British Legion may be considered to have provided Mr Knight's most notable contribution. He was a member of the Kilve branch for over 30 years, and for 17 of them was the hon. secretary, covering the great period in the branch history when they won all the Legion honours in succession and brought the name Kilve into the national limelight. The S.W. Area Shield and the County Cup were won, plus numerous certificates of merit, and then in 1932 came the crowning achievement. The branch had landed the national award, the Haig Cup. Members were very mindful of the part Mr Knight had played in the triumphs, and in 1933 he was presented with a replica of the Haig Cup. This personal trophy also commemorated the other honours which had fallen to the branch. The following year, on the recommendation of the County Legion Committee, Mr Knight was awarded a national certificate of merit, and in 1950 his branch made him a life member in recognition of his services to the movement in general. In the 1930s the branch sponsored the annual flower show in Kilve, and Mr Knight, beside carrying out secretarial duties, exhibited with such success that he won the championship cup five years running. Mr Knight was for many years a trustee of the Village Hall and also hon. treasurer.

Obituary published in West Somerset Free Press, January 17, 1953

BRITISH LEGION BRANCH, 1934

The following were the members in the photograph, named by Mr Knight of Holford in 1994. They correspond to the positions shown below. Question marks indicate visitors. Suffixes: K- Kilve, H- Holford, E.Q.- East Quantoxhead, B - Bridgwater, St - Stogursey, Sp - Spaxton, L - Lilstock, W - Williton.

THE KNIGHT FAMILY

CHAUFFEURS AND THEIR CARS

It must be rare for two close family units associated through the roles of employer and employee to make such an impact on a village as the Cooke-Hurles and the Knights made on Kilve.

The period between the wars was an era for chauffeurs who had specialised ability in driving and looking after cars. The Knight family was prominent in this respect, for in the photograph taken outside the Hood Arms, three members are there with their vehicles.

On the left is Herbert Knight, who was Mrs Cooke-Hurle's Chauffeur, and who drove a Daimler. Herbert Knight came with the Cooke-Hurles as their chauffeur - and that was a full-time job. In fact, it was often more than a full-time job, for both the Cooke-Hurles had many posts connected with official bodies and committees. Often this would mean taking Mr Cooke-Hurle to the County Offices at Weston, and Mrs Cooke-Hurle on to Bristol University. Maintaining the car, which included always starting the day with a clean vehicle, as well as driving, was demanding. For cleaning the top of the vehicle which was clearly large - there was a special ladder.

In the centre was his son Leslie, who was Mr Luttrell's chauffeur. Whilst Col Geoffrey Luttrell had a number of properties on his estate which he needed to visit often, the demands on Leslie as a chauffeur were less, and sometimes he was able to assist in other duties. The car is an older Armstrong-Siddeley.

Nearest the camera is his other son, Arthur, who was chauffeur for Captain Ann, of Ge-Mare Farm, and he is seen beside a modern Armstrong Siddeley. Captain Ann was the son of the owner of a clothing firm in Derby. Arthur describes him as a caring employer, certainly in terms of ensuring that he was well looked after with food and accommodation during visits, although he had a weakness for drink.

ARTHUR AND LESLIE KNIGHT

Arthur Knight remembers: "My first experience of country life was when my brother and I were told that Mr Fish of Parkhouse farm was cutting corn near Park Wood. We set off up Fuzz Ground and down to Lower Hill, where we found the field and all the men who had been working from early morning, changing the horses two or three times. On completion, late evening, 120 rabbits had been caught. Both Leslie and I got a good ticking off for getting home so late!"

Arthur ran a taxi service, initially based on a Morris Oxford, then a Humber, for 4 years until joining the RAF. He remembers one fare which he received to take Feltham family to London for the day and he charged £15! Sir Noel and Lady Ashridge were evacuated to the Hood Arms and often hired the taxi. Sir Noel was the chief engineer to the B.B.C. in London. He had quite a variety of requests for the taxi service. The most unusual was early in the Second War. Nurse Simon asked him to take her and an expectant evacuee to the Mary Stanley Hospital one night. Nurse assured him that everything would be alright as she had dealt with births before. When they reached the Quantock Road cemetery, Nurse asked him to pull up, and the baby was born in the car.

He was probably one of the first owners of an Austin 7, registration number YC 123. acquired during his 8 years with Captain Ann. He later worked for Mrs Cooke-Hurle, St. Audries Garage and Hinkley Point.

He concludes: "I married my late wife Violet at Crowcombe in 1937. The cricket team were due to play at Kings Brompton that day, but they had phoned to say that they would be late as they wanted to attend the wedding, where they kindly formed an archway using cricket bats. Unfortunately, they used my head as a ball!"

Arthur and Leslie's sister, Audrey Prole, also was very active in the village, being a prominent member of local groups such as the Drama Club, the Red Cross as well as working at the School.

THE REV. D. HARTWELL JAMES

A simple list of incumbents of St. Mary's, Kilve, states that the Reverend Hartwell James was rector from 1910 until 1938. He was one of the few rectors to have an obituary in The Times rating a substantial part of a page: possibly the only Kilve resident to do so!

Hartwell James cut a powerful figure in the pulpit, as Frank Stevens has recalled.

"I was deeply impressed by his emotion, when, from time to time, he wiped the tears from his eyes. Whether he was weeping for his own sins or those of his flock I was never quite sure. We all loved him. Why, he played cricket and soccer for the village!"

There is on record the occasion during a cricket match when a ball was lost in long grass and Frank Stevens set off to run as many as possible. By the time someone shouted 'Lost Ball' they had run eight, and the rector, at about 50 years of age, was out of breath!

He was one of the true Jack Russell breed of sporting parsons, shooting pheasants in the winter and fishing for trout and salmon through the summer months. It was for his prowess at fishing that he was renowned and which probably justified his obituary in The Times. There's one story that Frank recalls. One day, the rector came back from a fishing excursion, and showed William Crocker, the local blacksmith and churchwarden, the pride of his catch, a whopping two-pound trout. "Ah, that's a good fish, rector," said William, smacking his lips. "I'll bet 'ee I'll eat 'un in one sitting - leas'twise, I wull if you'll pay for the beer to wash 'un down wi'."

"Done," said the rector.

The fish was cooked and the meal served in the kitchen of the smithy. The blacksmith won his bet, but how much beer he drank at the rector's expense remained a secret between them.

THE CENTRE OF KILVE

Looking West

There have been a number of postcards of Kilve over the years, suggesting a number of visitors passing through the village: the coach service between Kilve and Bridgwater existed from an early date.

The first of these postcards on page 18 shows what is now the Post Office Stores, and the Hood Arms on the right: there is a separating wall between the properties, and a wall around the outside of what appears to be a garden. Outside the Hood Arms is the baker's delivery cart, while beyond it, behind the notice, is an old chapel, known as St. George's Chapel. Further still along the road are two trees which help to date the photograph, while on the left of the road is the old toll cottage which stood at the entrance to the present car park. The chimney of this cottage is particularly noticeable in other photographs. Nearer to the camera on the left of the road is the end of the original Kilve Court Cottages: these were replaced in the early 1990s. The date of the photograph is around 1900 it was postmarked 1906. Another postcard of about the same date is in our possession. The lower photograph on Page 18 is probably a year or two later. A family is gathered around the front of the chapel: they show more clearly in the original.

The upper photograph on page 19 shows some noticeable changes, although the road doesn't show as far to the west. The signs outside the Hood Arms and the Post Office have changed, and there are now telephone posts and wires where there were none before. The most significant change, however, is that the chapel has been removed - it was replaced by a garage/workshop, which sold Pratt's petrol (see photograph on page 14) There is a pole to the left of the garage entrance and also a Starkey's sign outside the Hood Arms.

The lower picture on Page 19 was taken in 1954, and this shows all the walls removed apart from the one adjacent to Sea Lane: it also shows changes in signs.

Looking East

The top photograph on page 22 is the earliest one we have come across and may date at around 1890. The top single-storey building on the right is the Smithy which was taken over by Miss Dickenson of the Pardlestone Weavers (formerly at Higher Pardlestone, and later Quantock Weavers at Plainsfield) and subsequently became the bakery. The two-storey one just below that is the building that became the baker's shop. A little further down the road again, is the toll-house (which can also be seen in the top photograph of page 18) identified by the chimney. The last occupants of the toll-house were Mr and Mrs Hurley and their daughter, Fanny, who was the school cleaner. Behind the man with the wheelbarrow is the Village Hall, and beyond that are Kilve Court Cottages, adjacent to the road,

The lower picture on that page was probably taken around 1930 - note that there are fewer telephone bars on the pole than in the corresponding westward looking picture where they are just visible. The toll-house is clearly visible, but the two-storey house adjacent to the former smithy appears to have been re-roofed and had bay windows installed. The appearance of the Hovis sign signifies that it is a bakery at this time.

The photograph on page 23 appears to have been taken in the early 1950s. The old toll-house is still there (the Village Hall can just be seen beyond it), but the most significant feature are the cottages seemingly in the middle of the A.39. The cottages were known as Hillside Cottages, and stood where there is now a green verge: they were demolished about 1970. Its position shows up in the map on page 26. Just beyond the cottage on the right, is clearly still a farm with a Dutch barn which was part of Putsham Farm (see the photograph on page 27). This was sold for the development of the Putsham Mead estate in 1973. In the foreground on the left is a general store which existed up until the early 1980s.

PUTSHAM GATE TOLL-HOUSE

The Putsham Gate toll-house was used to collect tolls on the Minehead to Nether Stowey turnpike. Originally, the route from Minehead was turnpiked as far as Black George (where the Rydon refuse disposal road leaves the A39) in 1807, but the route east of Black George was turnpiked under the 1828 Act. This route ran through Rydon, St Audries estate (just to the north of the main building) to Perry. Above Perry, the route crosses the present A 39 and runs south of it for about 1/2 mile, joining the A 39 between Knowle Wood and Higher Street, after which the A39 has replaced it, running on to Holford.

There was also a further turnpike loop road which ran to Nether Stowey via Stringston. The tolls were abandoned in 1878 as the Trust had been wound up. An unsuccessful application was made for the Stringston loop road to be the main road.

The Putsham Gate toll-house, seen in some of the early postcard photos on page 18 - 23, was positioned on the Minehead to Bridgwater turnpike. The tolls, which do not show clearly in the reproduction, identify a single 'horse, mare, gelding, mule or ass' drawing a 'Coach, Landau, Marine, Chariot, Chaise, Chair, Phaeton, Curricule, ... or such Carriage or Hearse' or alternatively a 'Waggon, Wain, Cart or other such carriage' was charged 4½d. If two or more horses were involved, the charge was 6½d, provided that the width of the 'Fellies' (rims) of the wheels was more than 6 inches: if the fellies were between 4% and 6 inches, the fee dropped to 5½d, while for less than 4½ inches, the cost was just 4½d.

'Droves' of animals attracted charges by number in the herd or flock. Oxen, cows or 'Neat' cattle cost as much as 1s. 3d. per score, while calves, hogs, sheep or lambs cost half that amount.

Lower in the notice, a scale of charges for hauling timber was shown to be 1s. 9d. for a ton and a half of timber. The notice was dated 24th June, 1824.

PUTSHAM FARMHOUSE AND OUTBUILDINGS

This aerial photograph of Putsham Farm with its outbuildings, backed by Pardlestone Lane running around the boundary wall of Kilve Court, was taken around 1970. At this time, Hillside Cottages (last occupiers were Mrs Chilcott and Mrs Cook), at the bottom right of the picture, but seemingly in the middle of the road on page 23, still existed and the Dutch Barn, also clearly visible in the same photograph, in the foreground had not been removed for road widening and the subsequent development of Putsham Mead estate.

KILVE CHANTRY

Kilve Chantry was founded in 1329 by Simon de Furneaux, but in 1850 it was destroyed by fire, and the ruins have remained ever since. Kilve was a famous spot for smugglers. The pill, the church tower and the Chantry buildings all served as places for concealing kegs of wines and spirits,. It is said that the fire was aggravated by the ignition of the smuggled spirits.

The two pictures are all that remain which tell us what it looked like at the time: the upper one is believed to have been painted around 1820, while the lower one by Wheatley was painted in 1847. The pictures show clearly the pond in front of the Chantry, where now there is only a stream. A reference guide book, published in 1904, and reprinted unaltered (and probably unchecked) in 1922 mentions the ponds as being remains of monks' fish pools: when they fell into disuse is uncertain.

Since the fire, the only thing that has changed is that ivy is that ivy has from time to time grown over the walls, and been removed but there has been some crumbling of the walls.

KILVE and DISTRICT RED CROSS

The Red Cross Unit was formed during the Second World War. The unit members met at the Club Room every week and was disbanded some years later after the end of the war.

Included in the picture are:

Mrs Hole, Mrs E Thorne, Mrs Rowe, Mrs D Lyddon, Miss Joan Sully, Miss Audrey Knight, Miss Phyllis Sully, Miss Wyatt and Miss Hilda Beremore (a land-girl).

THE DRAMA CLUB

The Drama Club was one of the village clubs which particularly thrived during the period after the war. A number of plays and pantomimes were produced, with many of the scripts being locally written. Mrs Crawhall Ellis was prominent amongst the writers, with others such as Steve Farmer also playing their part.

The photograph shows Audrey Knight as Dandini, Rita Knight as Cinderella and R. Tabrett as Buttons: the carriage was made by Steve Farmer.

Other photographs show scenes from Aladdin, and names quoted include P. Knight, C. Farmer, S. Tabrett, S. Knight, R. Tabrett, R. Davis, M. Coles, F. Merson, G. Tabrett, R. Hodge - and also Mrs C. Lock leading the singing.

KILVE GALA

In the period after the second war, the late 1940s and early 1950s, there was a general resurgence of community activity which had been frustrated during the wartime. It was in this period when Kilve Gala seemed to have been created and flourished for perhaps ten years or so, before television and car ownership became common.

It seems that the whole village took part in a Gala Week, during the first week of August which included Bank Holiday. It was held in the field at the back of the Village Hall, with a skittle week, sports, quizzes, cricket match, and culminating in a Fancy Dress Parade in which members of the Drama Club were prominent.

Kilve Gala participants included:

Back Row:: Mrs Heady, Miss Perret, Mrs Crawhall-Ellis, Mrs Elliot, Miss Walland, Mr Kinsay, Mrs Hawker, J. Passmore, C. Lock, J. Lock, A. Giles, A. Lewis, L. Lyddon, C. Knight.

Middle Row:: Mrs Lock, Mrs Lyddon, Miss N. Biffen, Miss D. Lock, S. Farmer & monkey, F. Merson, Mrs J. Lock, Miss O. Knight, Miss B. Marchant, Mrs H. Summerhayes, Wendy Baker.

Front Row:: Clive Cooper, R. Chilcott, C. Farmer, J. Summerhayes, R. Wine, M. Coles, P. Tabrett, L. Lemon.

KILVE AND EAST QUANTOXHEAD SCHOOL

Kilve and East Quantoxhead School, on the A.39 between the two villages, was opened in 1875.

The foundation stone of the new school for East Quantoxhead and Kive was laid on New Year's Day by Master John Whitehead, eldest son of J. N. Whitehead, Esq., of Kilve Court. The children of the two parishes about 120-were given a tea with plum cake at the Hood Arnis Hotel, Kilve.

From W. Somerset Free Press, January 9th, 1875.

Children and staff in 1936→

Back Row: Ena Packer, Vera Davis, Edwina Hole, Joan Webb, Vera Bailey, Joan Sully, and the teacher Miss Alice Bonner.

Middle Row: Stella Thorne, Sylvia Tuckfield, Rita Davis, Gordon Tabrett, Raymond Thorne, Michael Street, Peter Collins.

Front Row: Harold Neathay, Albert Napper, Maurice Adams, Sammy Thorne, Roy Parsons. With the photograph is a note to say that Fred Davis was absent!.

Children and staff in 1959-60 →

Back row: Mrs Frances Napper, Pat Braben, Michael Moggridge, Leslie Dinham, Sylvia Trebble, Shirley Cobb, Roger Clarke, Miss Miriam Hughes. Next to Back Row: Gillian Hunt, Michael Trebble, Marlene Sweet, Peter Hamilton, Raymond Pearse, Veronica Davis.

Next to Front Row: Christopher Routley, Christine Thompson, Janet Duncombe, Geoffrey Routley, Anne Laybourn, Stuart Hamilton, David Trebble.

Front Row: Alan Davis, Michael Knight, Maureen Thompson, Wendy Routley, Peter Prole, Linda Chilcott, Yvonne Davis, Debbie Clarke.

KILVE AS A HOLIDAY PLACE

Wordsworth may have made the first mention of it as somewhere he may have made the first mention of it with an attractive shore in his poem "Anecdote for Fathers", and that was some 200 years ago. However, a later writer, Sir Walter Besant, is on little record as exclaiming "let us say as little as need be of the sea shore at Kilve".

Wordsworth's line is quoted in the picture postcard which appears to have been produced about 1920, although cards were often reprinted over a period of ten or more years, and other postcards carried a similar photograph.

Certainly, the stories about the Hood Arms suggest that it wasn't only travellers who used it at the beginning of the century, and there are instances of visitors coming to stay for vacations. There was a horse-drawn bus from Kilve to Bridgwater in the morning which returned to Kilve later in the day. This made visiting Kilve easy and it was referred to in a number of advertisements.

The advertisements offering lodging from early in the century also suggest that coming to Kilve for a non-working paying visit was well established.

THE OIL RETORT

Kilve's one clear industrial archeology monument is the remains of the oil retort by the Pill. Even that is not old, and dates back only to the 1920s.

In 1916 the presence of oil in the shale of Kilve Beach was noticed, although it wasn't until the early 1920s that commercial interests considered exploiting it. There were two factors which were crucial to the exploitation of the oil. First, there was the extent of the oil reserves in the shale. The estimates suggested that there were 8,000 acres of shale, and with an oil content of 40 gallons per ton, there was a potential output of 5 million gallons a year. The second factor was the viability of the method of heating the shale using other solid fuels such as coal to release the oil. Oil production from Kilve would be profitable as long as income from the oil sales exceeded the costs of coal and its handling.

The first factor was never challenged, for the second factor proved unrealistic before any production could be seriously started. The whole commercial initiative occurred when oil in large quantities was discovered at various places throughout the world and where the extraction methods which could be used were much cheaper.

A detailed account of the history of the Kilve Oil Retort is available in the Kilve History File, and may be published in a later Part of the History of Kilve.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the many people who have loaned photographs to copy for the records, They are extremely valuable in conveying real images of the past. I'd also like to acknowledge John 'Mac' MacCormack's work in making excellent copy photographs.

Many people also have given useful verbal recollections and written pieces of Kilve History: they have all made the collection richer. In particular, however, we are very fortunate in being able to call on reminiscences of a number of senior citizens who were born and bred in Kilve and who still live in or near the village. Phyllis Lemon, Audrey Prole, Grace Thorne and Arthur Knight are among the many who have been extremely helpful, but there must be a special word of thanks to Frank Stevens and Steve Farmer, for without their clear memories these informal Kilve History booklets would probably never have been compiled.

Olaf Chedzoy