

VICAR'S RECORD BOOK, PARISH OF BISLEY, 1935 – 1938 INCLUDING EARLIER MEMORANDA

This is a battered but formerly handsome hardback exercise book complete with pages labelled alphabetically at the beginning. Someone – presumably the Vicar, Mr Piper – went to some trouble to use these for a good index to the content of his records, but I have not transcribed it as most of the references will be to material that I have omitted from this synopsis. His notes finish about 1938, but he pasted in an amazing amount of historical material, usually press cuttings, covering subjects such as the Kebles' funerals, or archaeological digs, or the restoration of the church fabric, or long-standing myths and legends.

This book came into my hands more or less accidentally. In the spring of 2018 I found it nestling at the bottom of one of several boxes of paperwork entrusted to me by Dr Malcolm Lambert, who amongst many other projects alongside a distinguished academic career put a lot of work into recording the history of Eastcombe. Knowing that the proper place for such a book was Gloucestershire county archives, or perhaps the Cathedral, or primarily Bisley Vicarage, I decided that before relinquishing it I would type up a copy for our own Eastcombe archive. Indeed, some time later Dr Lambert wrote that rediscovering the book had taken him somewhat aback, and he too wants it passed to a proper home. The book is too unwieldy, the Victorian cuttings too dim and fragile for me to scan them, so I set to work.

As is not unusual for me, this enterprise came to grief. I put in many hours of effort, spasmodically, but one day in September 2018 I mistakenly pressed who-knows-what on my keyboard and the whole document disappeared. Completely and apparently irretrievably. I had wanted to record the whole thing. I found it fascinating. Of course, the doings of the church in Eastcombe formed only a very small part of the whole, but it seemed to me that it is good to be reminded that we are part of Bisley parish, and in the old days had a much more intimate relationship with our neighbouring village. The documents recorded in this book were a detailed reminder of how much Eastcombe owed the Kebles, and the Doringtons of Lypiatt Park, for the economic turnaround that they achieved throughout the nineteenth century. Moving from dire poverty and – sorry – ignorance, people found they had a chance of improvement as churches and schools were being provided for them together with opportunities to work. Following the energy of the nonconformists who had already brought religion and education to this area, the Kebles – father and son, uncles and nephews – created a huge difference in all the villages of this parish as they and their friends followed their own sincere beliefs. They were apparently both kind and generous.

Well, I cannot face retyping all that I have lost. This time, I shall produce mainly a synopsis of all this book contains, but give in full (and bold) just the matters pertaining to Eastcombe. Let's hope it's done by Christmas!

Page 1. In 1935 the Rev W J Clay resigned on 29 February. He was Vicar of Bisley 1903 – 1935. The Rev G A Piper, Vicar of Nailsworth, was inducted 24 June. The Bishop of Gloucester in his address asked the congregation to consider raising enough money to pay an assistant curate, and also recommended training lay-readers.

All Saints' Day was celebrated, there were visiting preachers, and the Diocesan President addressed the Mothers' Union.

The Parochial Tea was revived in the WI Hall on 7 November.

Pages 2 and 3. **'In Eastcombe a Church Committee has been formed, with Mr Leslie Roberts as Secretary. Mr Leslie Roberts is also Assistant Secretary of the Parochial Church Council. Several members have done voluntary work, eg Mr Baker, Mr Lewis, Mr Roberts, Mr Bert Davis, in painting the Church and in cleaning the Churchyard.**

Sister Charity [from St Elizabeth's Orphanage] and Miss Lewis have taken the Sunday School on Sunday afternoons, and Mr W P Magor a service at 11 am which is mainly for children. Mr W P Magor has the permission of the Bishop to conduct the services at Eastcombe and to take occasional services at the Parish Church.

Holy Communion at the Orphanage usually on Tuesdays and on Saturdays.

A Wednesday evening service at Eastcombe Church, started by the Rev Turner Long during the vacancy, has been carried on regularly – 7.30pm.'

Page 4. In 1936, the Parish Magazine was revived.

Canon Hawkins ran a Bible Class for Men on Sundays during the first three months of the year **and was assisted on some Sundays by Mr Pilling [of Honeyhill, Bismore].**

The Vicar conducted a three-hour service on Good Friday. The PCC had agreed in February that the Easter offerings would go to the Vicar **and a similar resolution was passed in Eastcombe.**

18 March Mr Thomas Stone died – a manager of Bisley School, a sidesman and a church councillor.

22 February. Mr Harry Skinner died – a manager of Bisley School, and a one-time choir man and a bell-ringer..

Page 5. In April, Mrs Woolley presented the church with an oak psalm board.

'The Sisters of the Church presented Eastcombe Church with a set of coloured stoles and did a similar kindness to the Parish Church, with a suggestion that the Bisley Church people make a small donation to the Friends of their Society (The Church Extension Society).'

The altar frontal and hangings were cleaned, a committee undertook to mend cassocks and surplices.

At Bisley School Miss Nation and Miss Restall resigned, the LEA reduced the staff by one, and Miss Gardiner was appointed.

Page 6. **'The departure from the Parish (Eastcombe village) of Mrs Wall and the Misses Ellen and also of Mr and Mrs Crooks means a great loss to us.**

The Eastcombe Church endowment consists of an income of £34pa derived from a sum of £1000 (less £128 Estate Duty) entrusted by the late Sir John Dorington to the Diocesan Trustees. It is invested in GWR 4% Stock, and it is to be devoted towards payment of a Clergyman or Layman for conducting one full service every Sunday in Eastcombe Church when circumstances permit. The Vicar, who receives this money, is now paying it to the Church Council, who have made themselves responsible for the stipend £55pa of Mr W P Magor.'

The Bisley Sunday School this year sent £2 0s 8d to the charity supporting a schoolgirl in India (money has been sent for several years for a girl named Monorana.)

Page 7. Still in 1936: **An SPG Travelling Exhibition visited Bisley on 12 May and Eastcombe on 13 May.**

Mrs Dyson collects for the ACS, Miss Hawkins for the Diocesan Moral Welfare, and Miss Brandon for the C of E Waifs and Strays Society.

A Sunday School Festival was held in Eastcombe Church on 12 July and in the Parish Church on 26 July.

There is a cutting, probably from the Parish Magazine, about the Ascension Day Well Dressing.

Page 8. The Archdeacon of Gloucester preached in the Parish Church on Trinity Sunday. **The Eastcombe Church Choir assisted the Parish Church Choir.**

'On Tuesday 26 May, St Augustine's Day, Eastcombe kept the Church Patronal Festival. Holy Communion was celebrated in Eastcombe Church at 7am, a Parochial Tea was held at 6.45pm, and Festal Evensong followed at 8pm.'

Easter Day morning service was celebrated, with a collection for the Diocese of Lemombo, and an afternoon flower service ('the flowers and the children were charming') resulted in flowers being taken to the homes of the ill and aged 'to wish them a happy Easter.'

Page 9. Still in 1936: The Parish Magazine printed a letter from the Vicar asking parishioners to support a forthcoming 'Mission Visit' by a friend, Mr N D M Crossman, together with an explanatory letter from Mr Crossman. The Vicar continued by giving the times and venues of four talks, and concluded with 'Holy Communion will be celebrated in the Parish Church on Sunday, October 25th at 8am and midday; Monday, October 26th, and Tuesday, October 27th, at 8. **On Sunday, October 25th, also at Eastcombe Church at 8.'**

A further cutting comments on the enthusiasm engendered by Mr Crossman's visit and records the formation of a Parochial Guild to increase interest in work done at home and abroad, with more than 40 people enrolling at the start 'and nearly 40 missionary boxes were taken.'

Page 10. The magazine gave service times from the Patronal Festival on 1 November through Armistice Day on 11 November to Remembrance Sunday on 15 November. 'The Vicar of Stroud was unable through illness to proceed. Mr Meek, his Assistant Curate, preached.'

'The Eastcombe Church Choir assisted the Parish Choir at 6.30pm on All Saints' Day, and had also assisted on Oct 4 at 6.30pm (Harvest Festival).'

The Bishop administered Confirmation in the Parish Church on Mon, Dec 7, at 3pm.

A cutting from the Parish Magazine records that the Sunday School Teachers' Committee recommended the PCC pay £4 10s 0d out of Sunday School funds towards the Monorana scholarship that had previously undertaken by the last Vicar.

'Our Parish Magazine has a circulation of 220 copies, of which 60 are taken in Eastcombe and Bismore. In this large and scattered parish the Magazine is a most useful and necessary means of communication between the Vicar and parishioners, and the Vicar is very grateful indeed to the District Visitors who deliver it so willingly month by month.'

Page 11. Still in 1936: From Christmas Eve a Christmas tree was placed in the church, and was dressed with candles and about 250 toys. These were later sent to the Social Services Committee at Cinderford, who distributed them to the children of unemployed people in Yorkley Wood.

'Miss Gilmour is Secretary of the Parochial Guild and Miss Blake is Missionary Box Secretary.'

The numbers of communicants are listed. **In Eastcombe these were, in 1936, 44 on Easter Day, 31 on Whitsunday, 31 on Christmas Day; in 1935, 46 on Easter Day, 23 on Whitsunday, and 34 on Christmas Day; in 1934, 36 on Easter Day, 26 on Whitsunday, and 23 on Christmas Day. On St Augustine's Day, presumably in 1936, there were 16 communicants at 8.30am.**

Page 12. The services taken by laymen through 1936 are listed: Mr W P Magor (7); Mr B Prime(?) (1); Mr J W Rowbotham (1); His Honour Judge Woodcock (3). 'Mr J W Browning has frequently addressed the Children of the Sunday School in Church.'

Moving into 1937, the Vicar listed the 'District Visitors who deliver the Magazine: Mrs Bailey, Miss M Banyard, Miss Branton, Miss Cockett and Mrs Parsons, **Mrs Munden (Eastcombe, with Miss Lewis, Mrs Weare, Miss Hollies, Miss Curtis)**, Mrs H Nation, Miss Nation, Mrs Portlock, Mrs Sadleir, Mrs Simmonds, Miss Stephenson, Mrs Trinder, Mrs Woolley and Mrs Workman,

'Eastcombe Church Wed Feb 3. The service that is short Evensong to the 3rd Collect has been held regularly with a good show for nearly two years. There is a small and keen congregation. It is proposed from now onwards to concentrate more on Intercession for Parish, Diocese, Country and Overseas.

Page 13. There is a longer than usual, rather pained entry about chancel repairs, which at that time were the responsibility of the Lay Rector who used an agent in Surrey. The PCC and the Diocesan Registrar received no reply to repeated letters requesting payment for roof repairs. 'We can get no evidence that the Lay Rector is fulfilling his responsibility for insuring the Chancel.'

Average attendance for the morning and evening services, and holy communion, are listed and in **Eastcombe these were 24, 45 and 10.**

Page 14. 'Some impressions. The people give a general assent to the teaching of the Church – there is a real belief in God, in the claims of the moral law and in the spiritual background. A deep sense of mystery – weak hold of sacramental truth – a rather narrow outlook. Not emotional. Not critical. Very friendly. Feb 18, 1937.'

'The Parish is now a Corporate Member of the Friends of the Cathedral. Feb 1937'

'The Communicants in the Parish Church on Easter Day numbered 113, and there were 4 Private Communicants; in **Eastcombe Church 47, and Private Communicants in Easter week 5.**'

The Ascension Day ceremony of blessing the wells is described. Unusually, 'The Rev G H Crossland, Wesleyan Minister, read the lesson in Church, and **the Rev S G Johnson [Pastor of Eastcombe Baptist Church] read the Lesson at the Wells.**

Page 15. 'Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on Mar 12. The service in our Church was at 9.30pm [?] on the Sunday previous, Mar 9, we had a service of Prayer and Dedication of ourselves to God, and the preacher was the Rev Robert Nott, formerly of Ebley Chapel.

Something called the Egg Service was held on April 11th at 3pm. '4000 eggs. Address given by Dr Coode.' WHAT?

Whitsunday communicants 60 in the Parish Church and **'in Eastcombe Church 26.'**

Two cuttings from the Parish Magazine follow. Firstly a June meeting of the Parochial Guild, promoting fellowship, is described. **'But the membership of the Guild will not be limited to Communicants. It will be open to all the congregation in the Parish Church and in Eastcombe Church... At the Sunday School Festival in Eastcombe on July 11th and in Bisley on July 18th all the children received a Certificate as a memento of the Festival. The picture on the certificate represents our Lord Jesus**

Christ when He was a boy in the Temple Court, and saying to St Mary and St Joseph: "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

We appreciate very much the visit of the children of Eastcombe who walked over to attend the Bisley Sunday School Festival. Our children ought to go to Eastcombe next year for the Eastcombe Sunday School Festival. Thanks also to Eastcombe for lending us their Sunday School Banner.'

Page 16. The Parish Magazine published the Vicar's letter addressing the problem of All Saints' Day falling on a Monday in 1937. 'It does not seem right that we should let that day pass without Holy Communion for Church Workers. The question of suitable hours is perplexing. **I think it will be best to fix the hour of 8am for a Celebration of the Holy Communion at the Orphanage (some people could get there by car),** and also have another celebration in the Parish Church... [etc]. The Vicar then addresses the question of why one should take communion on the Patronal Festival.

Later he says that again there was a Christmas tree in Church, with 230 presents that were then sent to 'the Cinderford distressed area.'

Page 17. On Christmas Day there were 99 communicants in the Parish Church and **31 at Eastcombe Church.**

Pages 18 and 19. The rest of pages 17,18,19, and 20 are cuttings from the Parish Magazine. The first give an account of the death and funeral in Edenbridge of Mr William James Clay, the previous Vicar of Bisley (for 33 years). There are details of a service held simultaneously in Bisley Church, sympathy sent to Mrs Clay, and several appreciations of Mr Clay's ministry from people who knew him. 'Mr Clay was a friend of long standing, and many remember him as a real personal friend. One had only to ask to be sure of his ready sympathy at all times in trouble, distress or bereavement, many times his help being of a very practical nature. He was also a most judicious adviser in times of perplexity, being greatly helped by Mrs Clay. They were both so loyal and true.'

A year later a memorial window given by Mrs Clay was unveiled in the Church by Mrs Sheppard during the Children's Service. The Rev H P Barchard, Vicar of Bussage, gave an address about the Good Shepherd. **'And the most supreme moments of William James Clay's life were when he stood at yonder Communion Table or at Eastcombe, and having offered up the Sacrifice, walked down to the Altar rails to give the spiritual food to his sheep.'**

Pages 19 and 20. A rather random entry about the Victorian restoration of the Chancel follows, I think by Mary Rudd, and then a Vicar's letter of February 1938 in which he reflects on Mr Clay's life and death, and what entry into Paradise means.

Pages 21 and 22. These two pages are taken up by a lengthy cutting from a local (presumably Stroud) paper. It is headed 'An Old Bisley Parish Family' and details what was known about the Handcocks or Handcox or Hancox family, then currently represented by Mr Richard Hancox at Lillyhorn House, near Oakridge. The Bisley parish registers list members of the family from the 1530s onwards, though some were centred more on Sapperton church. They were farmers, wool raisers and clothiers, active for Parliament during the Civil War, with one branch living at Daneway House from the sixteenth century onwards. There is an account of the attack upon Mr Thomas Handcocks of Frampton Place, for which one attacker, Berriman, was hanged. There is an account of George III's (locally) famous visit to the canal under construction at the Daneway – and also a brief mention of an archaeological dig at the Roman villa found on Hancox land at Lillyhorn in 1841.

Page 23. A fairly short cutting from a *Stroud News* of May 1911 [I think], signed by 'The Scribe,' quotes an article published in *Country Life*. This relates an old legend about the 'Bone House', a sculpture in Bisley churchyard near the south door of the church, that says that a workman named Pearce fell into the well beneath it and died. He was startled by the church bell striking and called 'There's one' as he fell, leading to a famous Gloucestershire saying (which I have certainly never heard.) One of the theories about this churchyard oddity is that it covers a sort of charnel pit of old bones – and one fact seems to be that the church's original font was found perched on top of the structure, and restorers removed it back into the church.

Page 24. From a local paper again, dated November 30, 1934, there are 'Notes on the Local District' by 'Cotswold.' This is a lengthy and fairly inaccurate account of Bisley's history, moving from 'the Second (Augusta) Legion of Rome' through to 'Gone are all those days. Bisley lives happily where the rooks caw in springtime in its atmosphere of peaceful quiet, and (alas for local tradesmen!) goes to the multiple shops and stores of Stroud by the modern motor-bus for the supply of its bodily needs.'

Page 25. From a different paper – maybe – is a cutting with the subheadings 'An Old Bisley Legend' (Pearce in the well again), 'Mediaeval Lantern Pillars' (a possible but improbable theory about the Bone House).

Page 26. 'An Old Glos Saying' (more about the supposed well), 'Seven Wells' (the source of the stream that formed the Toadsmoor Valley), 'Ascension Day Ceremony' (the well-dressing), 'The Bisley Well-Cross' (a glance at a Girl Guides' pageant), 'Gloucestershire's "Virtuous" Springs (nearly every well in Gloucestershire has its own local traditions)', and finally 'A 13th Century Relic' (a cross 'near the south-west end of the church').

Pages 27 and 28. The *Wilts and Glos Standard* of 2 Jan 1937: a column entitled 'The Church of All Saints, Bisley'. This is a rather more scholarly article which describes the present building as probably put up by 'Edmund Mortimer (relative of Edward I by marriage) between 1272-1307.' It describes the original layout, and the Victorian restoration by Rev W H Lowder (when it was discovered that the fabric included Roman fragments, thought to have been brought from Lillyhorn). The following subheadings are 'Composition of the Chapel at Stroud,' 'Ordination of the Vicarage of Bisley,' 'The Excommunication of the Churchyard,' 'The Chantry Chapel,' and 'Kateryn Sewell.' The Sewells lived at Ferris Court and Katherine died in 1515 after producing seven sons and five daughters. Her husband Thomas married again, and to farming added a clothier's business in Stroud. 'He died possessed of fulling mills and gill mills in the vicinity (probably at Toadsmoor) and seems to have been a man of considerable substance.' [I would like to make a claim for the Swilley below Ferris Court as a mill site: Bismore Bridge looks as though the water was used for a purpose there, and the acreage at Bismore has traditionally gone with the demesne of Ferris Court.]

Page 29. The above article was continued the following week under the same heading. The first part is 'A Bisley Churchwarden's Account for 1630', as written by John Hancox of Daneway. It lists a few charitable pence here and there to wounded soldiers or poor clerics, and payment for repairing the clock and the cock [weathervane?] and the churchyard gate lock – and indeed a new gate – as well as money for the bread and the wine, and for 'fetching' them; and it also lists 'a bill of what mony I recd' from Nathaniel Yeate, William Restell, William Emily, Isacke Restell, Robert Ridler, William Stephens, [?] Mason, and Richard Vaisi – a pretty representative list of surnames still current in Bisley today.

Page 30 and 31. The following subheadings are 'Richard Britton' (a vicar who was actually imprisoned during the Commonwealth), 'The Smart family of The Grays' (a large house

near Thorougham Slad that was demolished towards the end of the nineteenth century).

A separate cutting from May 31st 1935 is headed 'Some Local Church Legends,' again recounting the idea that Lillyhorn Roman villa material was incorporated into the church (though repeatedly removed overnight by the Devil). It also repeats the story of poor Pearce being startled by the bell and falling into the well, adding further speculation as to the true origin and purpose of the Bone House.

Page 32. The Parish Magazine in 1937 reprints a 'Memoir' (1829) of Rev Edward Mansfield, the predecessor (1806-1826) of the elder Rev Thomas Keble. The writer says that at that time Bisley (ie, the extensive parish) had a population of about 6000 and was perhaps one of the poorest in the kingdom. Mr Mansfield soon 'became very attached to the people,' he always held two full services every Sunday, worked hard to establish Sunday School 'but he was not an advocate for gratuitous education, beyond that that is religious and moral.' 'He regularly visited the aged and afflicted; and spared no pains in making himself acquainted with the religious state of the parish... He also had prayers, and read a sermon every Thursday and Sunday evening to as many orderly persons as wished to attend. This was first done in his own kitchen...The Church was generally well attended, particularly on the Sunday afternoon. The number of communicants gradually increased.' The memorial plaque in the church says of Edward Mansfield, 'As a Divine well grounded in the doctrines of salvation through Christ, which are fruitful in good work as a Preacher, affectionate, spiritual, practical. Exemplary in the various duties of a master, subject, husband, father: a sincere and constant friend. Zealous, in the support of charities and religious institutions: a bountiful father to the poor. Yet he was deeply humble: he disclaimed all merit in himself. And found in the Saviour alone, living and dying, a never failing refuge.'

Page 33 and 34. The Parish Magazine in April 1937 also printed a memoir of 'Thomas Keble of Bisley.' Contributed by the Rev Richard Nott, the article sketches in the pious Fairford family background of the Keble brothers (born in 1792 and 1793), and says that when Thomas arrived in Bisley in 1827 'It was a bad time in the Stroud district, and, indeed, all through the land; there had been serious financial distress and he "found Bisley scattered and poor in every way."' Keble's long ministry is described: he 'built three consecrated churches and a consecrated chapel of ease...they have done their work and are dear to many.' The Parish Magazine in March 1937 advertised the imminent Annual Joint Meeting of the Vestry and the Parochial Church Meeting, saying the election of churchwardens was about its only remaining power. The writer harked back to the previous centuries when the Vestry worked on the relief of the poor. There was a workhouse in Bisley, and in 1783 the warden was paid 2 shillings weekly for every person in the workhouse. She had to 'find all the necessaries for the Maintenance of the said Poor (except Clothing, Bedding, and Physick) after the following proportions. Every Person in the said House of 16 years of age and upwards, one pound of Beef or half a Pound of bacon weekly; and to every such Person one and a half pounds of good bread daily with three pints of Beer brewed after the same Proportion of Malt as formerly. The Children to be given of Bread, Beer, etc, in the Proportion their years may require.'

Page 35. The magazine of March 1937 had a contribution by Mrs S Cockett who referred to carvings of musicians in the church, saying they were 'ancient survivals of the old Church' that were a reminder of 'the brightness of worship' in earlier times. She goes on to state that the site of the church was thought to be a 'mark-place' at the crossing of Stone Age tracks, and she described the routes she thought these took. 'We are told that Patrick, Bishop of the Hebrides, gave orders for a church to be built wherever the upright mark-stones were found.'

Page 36. In the Parish Magazine of January 1937 there is reference to the old galleries in the church. In his 1779 survey of the county Samuel Rudder reported 'The Church has been lately seated in a new manner.' The galleries were later rendered unsafe by Isaac Williams and his fellow curate Robert Gregory so that they could convince people to have them removed. There is also an account of Thomas Smart whose memorial plaque is in the church, saying of his house, The Greys at Througham Slad, that there were associated legends of 'the Roundheads, that passed that way onwards to assault Lypiatt and take it from the Royalists... and those of us who love to dwell in the past regret the disappearance of a fine old house that was perhaps built by William Compton in the reign of Henry VIII.' It was also pointed out in that issue that a century previously large numbers of people were likely to die of hunger and cold. 'Three of the charities, which are now distributed, owe their origin to the keen desire of good people to come to the rescue of the poor in the early years of the 19th century, eg the Townsend, Ballinger, and Ollney charities.'

'The Vestry in their task of relieving distress gave special assistance by providing looms, which remained the property of the Parish. **In the Minutes of the Vestry we read a note that there was a loom at Eastcombe, the property of the Parish, bought at £2 2s 0d by order at a Parish Meeting in the year 1800.**' By 1829 twelve broad looms were owned by the Parish.

In that year £10 was advanced to support a family emigrating to New York, and in 1837 it was resolved that £500 would be borrowed to form a fund to facilitate the passage of people who had decided to emigrate. 'The late Mr A Playne in his "History of the Parishes of Minchinhampton and Avening," has an interesting note about this effort: "On August 31st, 1837, sixty-eight persons sailed from Bisley, and the cost of these sixty-eight persons was £191 3s 1d.' [As usual, this refers to the *parish* of Bisley.]

In the Parish Magazine of December 1936 there is the following paragraph. 'We quote an interesting note from the Parish Magazine of December 1902. "A Winter Long Ago. We are told by one who can remember it that the winter of 1813-14 was a very hard one. The frost lasted for 13 weeks. In order to give people work that winter the road from Nash End to Bisley was made, and men were employed upon it at 1/-, and women at 6d, per day. It was poor pay, and we reap the benefit of their work."

And in ?January 1937 'FGK' again repeats the known facts about Thomas Smart of The Greys, whose memorial plaque is in the church.

Page 37 is blank.

Page 38 has stuck to it a double-sided cutting – a whole page, in effect – from the Parish Magazine of May 1937. It is a fairly long article by the Vicar of Tissington describing Derbyshire's tradition of well-dressing. I [MB] always supposed the Kebles introduced the Ascension Day ceremony after the Derbyshire example, but if so it seems to have become established pretty quickly.

Page 39. There are three Parish Magazine cuttings on this page. March 1937 saw a poem from the early 18th century commemorating Hester and John Mills. In June 1936 'FGK' was thanked for sending information about violence during the Wars of the Roses that led to a 15th-century closure of the graveyard. An 1882 article in the *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* looked at 'The Ecclesiastical State of the Diocese of Worcester during the Episcopate of John Carpenter 1444-1476', ending with 'The burial of the dead was prohibited until the churchyard had been "reconciled", and for this the parishioners paid the sum of five marks'. In July 1936 Mr George Dowdeswell and Mr W Banyard were congratulated and thanked for long service as bellringers. The 1936 band was listed as Mr G Dowdeswell, Mr W Banyard, Miss Una Skinner, Mr A Cooke, and Mr H Dancox [sic].

Page 40. The magazine in August 1937 printed a lengthy section about the ringers, and then goes on to the subject of epitaphs, citing not only unusual but also some popular ones. How about this one? 'I preach as here I mouldering lie, And here is my text, "Prepare to die."

Pages 41 and 42. A newspaper cutting, an article by Frank A Burford, from 24 March, 1935, headed 'Roman Remains in Bisley Parish:' the subtitles are 'Roman Remains in Bisley Church,' 'The Bisley Roman Villa,' and 'The Roman House.'

Mr Thomas Baker, who lived at Watercombe House but owned the land at Lilyhorn where the villa was discovered, had a little building placed in his garden to house relics, and indeed incorporated some into the building material.

Pages 43 and 44. These contain a lengthy cutting, perhaps from a local paper, that gives the text of a memorial of Thomas Keble senior that appeared in *The Guardian* 'under the well-known initials GP' (Sir George Prevost was a Bisley curate who went on to become Archdeacon). This gives a fairly exhaustive account of Bisley's most famous vicar.

Pages 45-47 contain an even more exhaustive account of TK's funeral, which has possibly never been surpassed in a village for ritual, attendant clergy, detailed ceremonial, and genuine mourning by parishioners.

'He effected great things in his parish, and, I may say, in this neighbourhood. He went to that parish a young man... He was laid in his grave yesterday an old man of over four score years, and the great gathering which assembled showed how those principles he held triumphed over suspicion and dislike, as indeed the truth must always triumph. There was no gloom, there was no despair, there was no inordinate sorrow at that funeral. All was bright, all was cheerful, all was hopeful...'

Page 48 has attached to it six pages of the Parish Magazine of February 1903, which describes the funeral of Thomas Keble junior, a handsome echo of his father's. Again there were umpteen clergymen (not just all the ordained offspring and in-laws but also, for example, the vicars from surrounding villages whose churches all sprang from Keble efforts).

Five clergymen were pall-bearers and 'The bearers were Messrs Fred Clarke, Arthur Dangerfield, George William Ractliffe, and William Walsh.'

'The following Choir-men and boys were present: Messrs Thomas Ansloe, George Roe, Harry Skinner, Charles and Ernest Freeman, William Roe, Reginald Lugg, Levison Randall, Edward Stacey, Harold Pocketts, Tom Clark, Herbert Wilkins, and Harry Nation; Mr W C Ellis of France Lynch; Alfred Chew, Frank Lewis, William Dean, Cuthbert Randall, William Chew, Earle David, Albert Liddicott, Walter Woolls, Jack Fewster, Alfred Hook, and Charles Niblett.

His old and valued friend, Mr David [Headteacher], was at his post at the organ.'

There is a long list of others present, beginning with the churchwardens (Sir John Dorington and Jesse Freeman) and finishing with 'the Sisters from the Bussage House of Mercy.' 'Besides these, all the men employed on the Lypiatt estate.' Members of the Parish Council, the bellringers, and the parish overseers, were also listed. The wording on 25 wreaths was given, including those from '**The Children and Teachers of Eastcombe School**' and '**S Augustine's Church Choir, Eastcombe**' and '**Sister Elizabeth**' of the orphanage at Eastcombe, presumably.

There is a letter of thanks from Mrs Keble, and a lengthy 'Short Memoir' by Sir John Dorington.

Mr David wrote to publish the letter of thanks to the choir from the Keble family, and texts favoured by the late vicar were listed.

There is then a timeline of his years in the parish, which I shall give in full.

BISLEY, 1827-1902

- 1827 Rev Thomas Keble instituted Vicar.
- 1829 Church spire repaired.
- 1832 Vicarage House built.
- 1835 Rev John Keble, Vicar of Horsley, married Miss Charlotte Clarke. The easternmost window in the north aisle of the Church, which portrays the marriages of Isaac and Rebecca, and of Ruth and Boaz, was given by the Rev Thomas Keble, sen, in commemoration of his brother's, and later, of his daughter's, marriage in this Church.
- 1837 Oakridge Church built.
- 1841 Chalford Church consecrated, and the Parish divided (ecclesiastically).
- 1842 Chalford Schools built.
- 1846 Bussage Church built.
- 1848 Bussage Parish formed, and Schools built.
- 1849 Oakridge Parish formed.
- 1851 Chancel of Bisley Church restored.
- 1854 Bisley Schools built.
- 1857 France Lynch Church built.
- 1862 Bisley Church restored.
- 1863 Bisley Wells built.
- 1868 Eastcombe School, Chapel, and Schoolhouse built.**
- 1874 France Lynch Schools built.
- 1873 Rev Thomas Keble, sen, resigned the Living. Rev Thomas Keble, jun, instituted Vicar.
- 1875 September 5th – Rev Thomas Keble, sen, died.
- 1876 France Lynch School enlarged.
- 1883 New Clock presented to Bisley Church.
- 1890 France Lynch School enlarged.
- 1891 Bisley Church Bells rehung.
- 1894 France Lynch Parish formed.
- 1896 Bisley Church Steps, sometimes called 'Jacob's Ladder', repaired.
- 1896 Bisley Church Spire restored.
- 1899 Lych Gate restored.
- 1901 Iron Church at Eastcombe built.**

'It is difficult to record how the money was obtained for all these undertakings, but we know that the names of Jeffreys, Champernowne, Gregory, Swayne, Williams, Prevost, Pyddoke, and Dorington were associated with the name of Keble, and should be kept in grateful remembrance as benefactors of the Parish. The money to build Bussage Church was given by a set of young men at Oxford.'

The Parish Magazine of August 1936 draws attention to the Church of St Peter, Bournemouth, as having an association with John Keble, who died there in 1866.

Page 49. The Parish Magazine of August 1936 continues the habit of providing historical information: 'Two interesting events of 130 years ago.' The first was that in 1806 Edward Mansfield became Vicar when the Parish consisted of Bisley, Bussage, France Lynch, Chalford and Oakridge [oi, what about Eastcombe?], with a total population of 6000. He was Vicar till 1826 – ie, was the immediate predecessor of Thomas Keble senior. The

second matter of interest was that the country was under threat of invasion by the French, and everywhere people armed themselves voluntarily. The *Stroud News* said that there were 7943 volunteers enrolled in Gloucestershire, with 73 men joining the Longtree Bisley Cavalry 'which suggests the predominance of landed interests in that Cotswold area.' A note was added by the Vicar, W J Clay, to the Service Book of 1903. 'In the musters of the Bisley Hundred Oct 1542 there were 102 Archers, Billmen and Horse Harness.'

'Another interesting event to record is the visit of the Rev George Keble, a son of the late Canon Keble, on July 12th last, when he preached in the Parish Church at the morning service. It was a delight to see him again in his old historic home.'

The Vicar's letter of this month sent greetings to St Lawrence, Stroud, in respect of its patronal festival – using the opportunity to point out that St Lawrence was founded early in the fourteenth century as a chapel to Bisley, and suggesting that Bisley Church should also keep St Lawrence's Day. He also wrote that Bisley Church would celebrate St Bartholomew's Day 'and we will offer our intercession at that time for God's continued blessing on Oakridge.'

Pages 50-56 are blank and attached to them are three-and-a-half pages written by Mr Clay – I think – copied from the Parish Magazine of June 1898. I will give them almost in full, and apologise in advance for mistakes but the writing is hard to read.

'It is a remarkable thing about the Parish Registers at Bisley, that there is no break in them: they have been carefully kept from the year 1548 to the present time. One would naturally expect that there would be no entries during the Commonwealth, when clergymen were forbidden to use the Prayer Book, and a great many were ejected from their livings. We cannot tell how Richard Brittain, the Vicar of Bisley, kept his place. He was instituted during the reign of Charles I – on the 18th of October, 1641 – and all through the stormy years that followed, he baptised, married, and buried the inhabitants of Bisley, apparently without any hindrance. Besides this, Mr Brittain and Lord Coventry, the Lay Rector of the Parish, before the Bishop's Court at Worcester, for the Tithes which were due to him during his incumbency, and judgement was given in his favour.

The following are extracts from papers relating to the suit between Mr Brittain and Lord Coventry. "Richard Brittain, Clerke, did in the year 1665 exhibit an English bill into this Court against Lord Coventry, thereby showing that he is Vicar of the Church of Bisley in the County of Gloucestershire, and that the Parsonage of the said Church is a Rectory impropriate, held and enjoyed by Lord Coventry, and that the said Parish there is an ancient Vicarage, endowed with an ancient house (here follows a list of Tithes in kind, due to the Vicar) and that the Complainant and his successors should have and receive all the tithes before mentioned, for which the said complainant and his successors are to officiate in the said Church. Further sheweth that the Parish of Bisley is a great Parish, and hath within it diverse Chappells of Ease, and consisteth of a great number of Communicants, and the gift of the Vicarage hath always been in the Crown of England, and is now in his highness the Protector, and that the Complainant was, about 20 years ago, lawfully presented to the Vicarage, and continued there ever since, and doth officiate the Cure there, and is accountable for the first fruits and tenths, and yet Lord Coventry doth endeavour to deprive him of the small tithes. Lord Coventry receiveth the whole benefit thereof. The Complainant is obliged to pay his Tenths and first-fruits, and the Vicarage not worth £20 per annum besides the Tenths so obtained."

Judgement was given as follows: - "It is this day ordered by the Court that the Defendant, Lord Coventry, shall forthwith satisfy and pay to the Complainant the Tithes arising from the Parsonage if, and detained from the Complainant, from the time of his

Institution, to 18th of October, 1641, until the 18th of October, 1656.”

Under the date April 1899, the Vicar gives the following records of the work done on Bisley Church during the nineteenth century.

1829, top of the spire repaired, and again in 1896 – before the conductor was put up there were several lightning strikes which did not do much damage. High pews put in late in the eighteenth century, and galleries, disfigured the church. From the proceeds of his book *Plain Sermons* the Rev Isaac Williams gave money for restoration including the installation of 'the present altar.' The roof that was 'propped up by a large fir pole' was removed, walls rebuilt, clerestory added and roof raised and replaced. High pews and galleries were removed, and the knight's effigy moved. In the north aisle a wall painting was discovered under Puritan whitewash, with St Michael as Justice and St Mary as Mercy, but this was destroyed when the wall had to be taken down. The theme was preserved in the south light of the east window, where Christ is shown sheltering souls under his robe. 'An old fresco painting on the same subject may be still be seen in South Leigh Church in Oxfordshire. As we have mentioned before, some heathen Roman stones were found built into the walls of the Church, which it is supposed may have been brought with other stones from the Roman Villa in the field called 'Church Piece, near Oakridge, at the time of the first building of the stone church at Bisley. These were afterwards sent to the British Museum. Some old stone coffin lids, of unknown date, but apparently very old, were also found: they may now be seen on the inside of the north wall. The present roof is very heavy, and when it was finished, it was found that the pillars were being crushed down by the weight of it. The arches had therefore to be shored up, and grey sandstone was substituted for the softer stone. The spire was at that time left untouched, but, becoming unsafe, it was restored in 1896. Some of the stones near the top had very much tumbled away, which is not to be wondered at, as they must have stood for about 500 years.'

Page 57 is blank.

Page 58 has attached to it a handwritten note about the Vicarage, saying that when Thomas Keble senior arrived in Bisley the Vicarage was tumbledown and inadequate, to the extent that his predecessor, Mr Mansfield, had been living in his own house while the assistant curate lived in the Vicarage, close to the Rectory which was at the top of the garden, towards The Bear. 'There is a note in the register to say that the front part was reported to have been built by Mr Sedgwick, who was Vicar from 1625 to 1635. Mr Keble exchanged another piece of land for that on which the Rectory stood, and the present Vicarage garden was made: the old Vicarage house was pulled down and the present one was built in the year 1832.'

The Parish Magazine of December 1937 said that the builders forgot to put in a staircase, so they made a hole in the ceiling and 'squeezed in the present winding staircase. It was an afterthought and an inspiration.'

Page 59 is blank.

Page 60 has stuck to it a page in the same handwriting, on the same paper – presumably a record written out by Thomas Keble junior for the Parish Magazine of March 1899, extracted from an article by the Rev W Lowder for the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society. It describes Bisley's pre-Victorian Church, the dilapidated state of its fabric, and the alterations and restoration he supervised during his curacy under Rev Thomas Keble senior.

Page 61 has a piece from the Parish Magazine of October 1936, repeating historical 'facts' about the unusual stone 'well-head' sculpture in the churchyard. Additionally, a paragraph headed 'About Pigs' says that apparently an eighteenth-century incumbent named Rev

Stephen Philips was so inconvenienced by the stench from the Rectory pig sties that he wrote to the absentee Lay Rector's wife, Lady Coventry, to ask that she should take the matter up with her tenants...

Page 62. Another page written by T Keble junior quoting an article that appeared in the Parish Magazine of February 1902. Headed 'About Sheep,' it points out the old importance of the wool industry and says 'The Sheep Fairs which were held at Bisley twice in the year, on May 4th and November 12th, were important events, and the place must have been very lively and crowded, for besides the real business there were gingerbread stalls, etc, to entice those who had no interest in sheep. The corner between Bear Pitch and the New Inn [The Stirrup Cup] was filled with sheep pens, which also extended up Bear Pitch, and farmers came from all over the country to buy and sell. This is the reason why the public houses have such large rooms attached to them, and it is to be feared that they were very much used on those days.

After the fair was over the hurdles were put away in the old Market House which stood where the Court House now stands. It was probably the introduction of railway traffic which took away the business of the fairs, and they gradually dwindled to the selling of a few pigs.'

Pages 63 and 64. With no source given for the cutting attached, there is a newspaper report that has the title 'Induction of Bisley's new Vicar' and the subtitles 'The Bishop and the Need for a Curate,' 'The Bishop's Sermon,' 'The Clergy's Position,' and 'Laity to Preach Gospel.' There is also a much shorter cutting from (I think) a different paper that describes 'Rev G A Piper's farewell to Nailsworth.'

Page 65. A fairly long column from the Parish Magazine of May 1938 reflects on why the parish celebrates Ascension Day, and how, asking people to bear in mind – in church and in the procession to the Wells – that it is a church festival that is being perpetuated 'with thankful hearts.'

Page 66. I will give this extract from the Parish Magazine of April 1938 in full.

'The Bisley registers have been most carefully kept from the year 1547 to the present time. And this is remarkably surprising. One is amazed that during the time of the Commonwealth, the entries of baptisms, marriages, and burials were regularly made. During these years the use of the Prayer Book was forbidden, and many of the Clergy were deprived of their livings. Richard Brittain was then Vicar of Bisley. He was instituted in 1641 and he remained in his office without any break until 1678, when he died. He appears to have been a loyal supporter of the Throne, for he spent a few years in Gloucester Jail – perhaps from 1658 to 1662. There does not appear to be a break in the entries during Richard Brittain's ministry, except in the year 1663, when a note is made that many names were lost during the months April to October. And this was the year after Charles II's restoration. We suggest that the Churchwardens carefully kept their lists while Mr Brittain was in gaol, and that Mr Brittain copied them into the registers when he returned home, for the entries every year from 1641 to 1678 are in the same handwriting. Possibly the excitement of welcoming their old Vicar home caused the Churchwardens and the Vicar who was responsible for the entries, and so they were lost.

There was a note in the magazine of July last about the Bisley Parish Registers. We refer to it in order to apologise for and to correct an inaccuracy. The first Parish Register does not contain the notes alluded to. They were recorded in a transcript which was most carefully made some years ago. These notes were:-

“Coronation of K Edward VI on Sunday, February 20th. 1546/7.”

“Order of a Royal Visitation, September 1st, 1547. Articles to be inquired herein: For

parsons, vicars, and curates, whether they have one book or register safely kept, wherein they write the day of every wedding, christening, and burying.”

It was 400 years ago, ie in the year 1538, that Parish Registers for births, marriages and burials were ordered by a State injunction to be kept, and the decree was renewed again in 1547, and again in 1559. A writer in *The Times* has suggested that the order of 1538 met with opposition in fear of some underlying new taxation, and that there was consequent hesitation in early compliance with the requirements, and that with a view to stir up laggards the decree was renewed. Bisley Parish was one of those that were stirred up successfully in 1547.

“The registers,” Miss Rudd says, “begin in 1547 and up to 1700 are contained in one volume in excellent preservation. As far as one can tell they are complete down to the present time with the following exceptions as recorded in the registers.”

“1589. Here are many Christenings through negligence omitted.” About 1589 “order was given throughout the Diocese of Gloucr for the providing of a Register Booke in parchment according to the late Canon.”

No marriages are recorded in 1627, no registers at all in 1628-29-30 and 31, and only one in 1632, namely the burial of the Vicar's wife, Katherine Sedgwick. In 1635 only two marriages are recorded. 1644 - “The Christenings of the month of May was lost by reason of the troubles of the times.” 1663 - “By a mischance there were many names lost of this year, of baptisms. Many of the weddings were lost of this year.” 1673 - “Many Christenings lost this year. I know not how.”

Also attached to page 66 is a cutting from the Parish Magazine of April 1938, with the note that it was quoted from Bisley Parish Magazine 1898.

‘The first entry in the Bisley Register is the Baptism of “Margerit, the daughter of Richard Lye.” Margaret and Joan seem to have been the most favourite names for the girls of Bisley in the 16th century. Here and there one comes across Christian names which we never hear now. Tibolta, Tybulla, Tibatha, following one another consecutively in one place. Isoda and Moda are other curious names. Of the surnames, a great many are unknown in the place now, but there are also a great many well known here still, among them are Little, Hunt, Stevens, Davis, Halliday, Cooke, Twissle, Pearse, Gay, Lugg, Tayloe, Smart, Lyddiatt, Hancox, Butt, Mason, Webb, Ridler, Workman, Restall, Ireland, Hale, Boulton, Mayo, Aldridge, Whiting, Pegler, Wilkins, Tanner, Dangerfield, Allen, Anslow, Cox, Nicholls, Young, and others. The name “Verinder” also occurs many times, and it was doubtless from the family of Verinder that Verinder's Draft took its name.’

‘Miss Rudd notes other curious names: Abisag, Annage, Culpersandy.’

Page 67. The Parish Magazine of August 1936 told parishioners of three ‘interesting events in 1873.’ Thomas Keble junior was instituted as Vicar of Bisley. Mr Tom Ansloe became a member of the choir (and remained one for 63 years), and in the same year his mother became Cleaner of the Church. She did that work for 42 years, and her daughter followed for the 21 years up to 1936.

The Parish Magazine of May 1938 had a fairly lengthy obituary of this William Thomas Ansloe. He was an all-round cricketer, his job for many years was road foreman, he was Secretary of the Holloway Benefit Society, Conservative and Unionist branch chairman, a Choirman, a School Manager, a Parochial Church Councillor, a Sidesman and a Bellringer. His family could trace its Bisley origins back to the early 17th century at least.

Pages 68-70. Three pages of old typescript are pasted in here, probably dating from the nineteenth century. They list internal and external church features of interest to historians – a ‘Schedule of ancient survivals in Bisley Church, Glos.’

Pages 71, 72. Two more old typed pages, this time headed 'The Church Plate of Bisley.' Commencing 'In the year of 1890 there were found in Bisley Churchyard fragments of a Sepulchral Chalice and Paten of lead,' there follows a detailed description of the five pieces found. This is all, apparently, quoted from J T Evans's *Church Plate in Gloucestershire*, pp 22 and 23. **This work also mentions 'A Chalice and Paten of electro-plate, and two cruets' belonging to St Augustine, Eastcombe.**

Page 73 has a handwritten (Victorian) list of Bisley bells, and page 74 has a typewritten version of the same information. The handwritten details give the diameters and weights of the 'six new Bells which were brought home to Bisley Nov 1st 1748' followed by the same information for the recast treble and the additional two bells hung on Nov 13th 1864. The typewritten list gives the bells' inscriptions: 1 – 'HOLINESS. TO THE LORD. CAST BY JOHN WARNER & SONS. LONDON 1864.' 2 – 'ANGELS MUSIC HEARD BEYOND THE STARS CAST. BY JOHN WARNER & SONS. 1864'. 3 – 'PEACE AND GOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD. 1864' 4 – 'PROSPERITY TO THIS PARISH. A[a bell]R 1742.' 5 – 'W.M.TAYLOE ESQR. & THOS. ROGERS CH WARDENS A[a bell]R 1742'. 6 – 'Wm.SEVAL AND THOS. HANCOK CH: WARDENS A[a bell]R 1747'. 7 – 'STEPHEN PHILLIPS VICAR. A[a bell] R. 1742'. 8 – 'I TO THE CHURCH THE LIVING CALL AND TO THE GRAVE DO SUMMON ALL A[a bell]R 1742'.

[AR refers to the Gloucester bellfounder, Abel Rudhall, who cast the earlier bells.] This list also, under 'Daughter Churches', mentions that Bussage, France Lynch, and Oakridge at that date had one bell each.

Pages 75, 76. More pasted-in typing, this time quoting from *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*. The first page (from Vol ii, p193) gives a biography of Rev Edward Hawkins, Vicar of Bisley 1782-1806, 'youngest son of Sir Caesar Hawkins...presented [to the living] by his father's friend, Lord Thurlow.' The second page, from Vol iv, p493, quotes from *Munk's Roll of Physicians: Gloucestershire names*, Vol iii p226. 'Francis Hawkins, MD (1823), born at Bisley in Gloucestershire... [practised in London] and filled several important offices [connected with the College of Physicians. He was registrar there 1829-1852] when he was chosen registrar of the General Council of Medical Education and Registration. This office he resigned in 1876, and died 13th December, 1877. His portrait is in the boardroom of the Middlesex Hospital.'

Page 77. Another page of (I think) T Keble junior's handwriting, which I will give in full.

'Bisley

Baptisms from 1548 to 1598. 50 years.

Average per year 29-30

Burials Do 17-18

Baptisms from 1814 to 1828. 14 years.

Average per year 157

Burials Do 67-68

Making due allowances

the Population of the Parish temp. EVI

was about 920 being in 1828 (say) 5500

Roger Mortimer snr [Lord of the Manor, I think] was hanged at the Elms. Nov 29. 1330

Stroud made a Parish 1360.

The Mortimers also had Miserden & Brimpsfield & Winston.

Sir W Nottingham had Saperton abt 1460?'

Page 78. These random historical notes were made, perhaps, as an aide-memoire for a vicar new to his parish. To this page is attached another handwritten note, this time in an entirely different and possibly feminine hand. Headed 'Historical Memoranda,' it quotes in full an English translation of the passage in the Domesday Book which refers to Bisley, and attempts definitions for 'hide' and 'demesne'. Over this handwritten page is another pasted in, a printed version of the same information but this time adding definitions also for 'villein,' 'bordarii,' servi,' ancillae,' radchenister,' and 'hundred.'

Page 79. This is another quotation from *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, vol iv p517, saying that in Rodborough Church there is a memorial to William Mansfield, son of the Vicar of Bisley, 'who was one of the heroic Lucknow Garrison and died of cholera on the 13th of September 1857, only 12 days before the first relief.'

To *page 80* is attached the Parish Magazine of May 1906. Black-bordered, it marks the passing of James David who had obviously been a dearly loved schoolmaster, organist, and choirmaster. It describes his death and funeral, the half-muffled ringing and the inscriptions on an incredible number of wreaths – rivalling the Keble funerals – and publishes a letter devised by a committee of local great and good, asking for subscriptions to a permanent memorial: 'the late Mr J David, who for 45 years was Headmaster of the National School, Choirmaster and Organist of the Parish Church, Hon Secretary of the Bisley Lodge of the Mid-Gloucester Benefit Society, besides being the holder of numerous other public appointments, and being a generous supported of every good work in the parish.'

After giving details for Easter Day and Easter Vestry there is a section for Eastcombe. **'Organist and Choirmaster – Mr W G APPERLEY. Verger – Mr J Flight. Sidesmen – Mr G Phipp and Mr Edward Berryman. Services: Holy Baptism 4th Sunday in the month, 2.45pm; Holy Communion, 3rd Sunday in the month, 8am; Evensong on Sundays, 6.30pm; Children's Service, 4th Sunday in the month, 2.45pm. Offertories'** I will not type these out in full but the total for five services in March was 15s 11d and for seven in April £1 2s 3d. Different times, different money!

Page 81. Here Mr Clay copied out something written by a nun and published in the Parish Magazine for June 1936. **'The Orphanage, Eastcombe. This Home was built by Miss Newton for a small girls' orphanage 50 or 60 years ago, but after a few years she gave it up, as she wished to go out as a missionary (where she was afterwards put to death by her servant), and she offered the house to our Mother Foundress, who accepted it for the Sisters of the Church, and it was used by them as an Orphanage sometimes for boys and at other times for girls. Then for a few years it was lent to our Sisters at our Birmingham Centre for a Convalescent Home for boys. Then it was needed for some of our orphans, and in 1912 Sister Frances brought 12 children and she has been here ever since. Many of the children she has had have been very delicate and this air has done them great good. They send many such down from Kilburn and they receive children from various parts of the country – two came from Bisley [Madaline and Kay Woolls]. There will be a Garden Sale in aid of the orphanage on June 26th, to be opened by Lady Marling, and funds are greatly needed to carry on the work.'**

Page 82. In the Parish Magazine of January 1938 Miss Rudd wrote about 'Bisley's lost crosses' of St Mary's Nash End, and Litteridge, saying that in their time they would have been well known landmarks. Mrs S Cockett followed this up in March 1938 with her own theories about their probable sites, and cross-country tracks.

Page 83. Miss Rudd contributed a short article to the Parish Magazine of March 1938 on the subject of 'the Chantry Chapel formerly existing at the east end of the south aisle of the Church, and the desirability of its restoration.' July 1939 gave some information from the

old Churchwardens' Accounts – for example, the 17th-century Vicar, Mr Brittain, gave a weekly sermon in Stroud, and the records of that parish show that £1 14s 8d was paid for him to have a dinner [at an inn?] each week through 1657. The Bisley Churchwardens' Account of 1630 showed that 15 shillings had been paid to 'maimed soldiers' and 2s 6d to a 'Poor Preacher.'

Page 84. This time the cutting from the Parish Magazine of January 1938, also referring to Miss Rudd's work, speaks of prehistoric remains in Bisley Parish. Two long barrows at Camp are mentioned, with a discussion about a trepanned skull that had been found. A Miss Burt gave a lot of information about prehistoric surgery. Returning to Miss Rudd's work, the article says '**Eastcombe people, who like treasure-hunts, will be interested in a paragraph about Manor Farm, etc. "In the neighbourhood of Money Tump and also in the fields at Manor Farm, Eastcombe, and in a field adjoining the accommodation road at France Lynch, a large number of flints have been found, amongst them some very good specimens of arrow heads."**' After that the Nash End Cross is again discussed, examining the idea that Nash End had some sacred significance in early times.

Page 85. Here the Vicar wrote in a note that his predecessor, Rev W J Clay, had made in the Service Book of 1903. '1659. R Britton was arrested during the rising occasioned by Colonel Massey [Roundhead]. In the Parliamentary proceedings Britton is reported to have induced a Mr Window of Stroud to help Col Massey. Britton was imprisoned in Gloucs, and on Dec 7, 1659, "obtained further time to call witnesses on his behalf, who however were not required owing to the return of Charles II".'

Page 86. I do not know the source of this pasted-in printed article. I will give it in full. 'Bisley, January 16th, 1836.

The attention of benevolent Persons is requested to the present condition of the Weavers and others in Chalford and its Neighbourhood, including the most populous parts of the Parish of Bisley.

In consequence of the failure of work since the autumn of last year, the resources of very many families are entirely exhausted, and almost all are suffering extreme privations.

In numberless instances parents have been compelled to part with necessary articles of furniture and clothing, to provide a meal for their children; and though benevolent persons have rendered some aid, still it is certain, and *can be proved*, if required, that many pass whole days without food, *and that some hundreds of individuals (including children) have not sufficient to support them from day to day, and are literally*, at this moment, half-famished.

In this emergency, the plan has been adopted of administering temporary aid to those most in need, by providing, at a cheap rate, flour, potatoes, and coals. It is also most desirable to find work for some of the unemployed men, which could immediately be done, if sufficient funds can be obtained.

The Rev T Keble, Mr Joseph Jones, and Mr Thomas Hall, have undertaken the management and distribution of any sums which may be contributed for the above purposes; by whom Donations will be thankfully received, or may be paid to the account of the Rev T Keble, at the Old Bank, Stroud, or at either of the Cirencester Banks.'

Page 87. There are two cuttings on this page. The first, from the Parish Magazine of December 1894, is entitled 'Division of the Parish', describes the boundary of the new Civil Parish, and emphasizes that the boundaries of the ecclesiastical parishes within that boundary would remain unchanged. The second is from a Parish Magazine of 1898 gives 'the news of the sad death of our old friend [Walter Garnett Lyon] ... He was on his way to minister to the goldseekers of the Klondyke region – a work for which he was specially fitted...' His brother had written to describe how a canoe overturned with Mr Lyon and his servant 'and the recovered bodies were buried at the side of the lake by the mounted police.'

Page 88. A folded card is attached to this page, and loose is a folded handwritten page of very brief notes for the article. The card has columns of newsprint pasted to its four sides, with a photograph of the church in its hilltop setting and the heading 'Notes on the History of Bisley reprinted from "Bisley Parish Magazine".' A lot of these historical essays have been given earlier, but a brief look at the contents of this article yields what is known or speculated about the Norman church, the text of Bisley's Domesday entry, and details of the Mortimer family's rather lurid history from Edward I's grant of the Manor of Overcourt to

'Edmund Mortimer on his marriage to a Spanish lady, a kinswoman of Queen Eleanor' through to Roger's imprisonment in the reign of Edward II 'for his rebellious practices', and his escape to France followed by his subsequent return and execution.

It is pointed out that Edward IV could be considered a Mortimer, so he inherited the Manor and it became on his accession the property of the Crown. Henry VIII eventually gave it to his daughter Elizabeth, and her successor James I passed it to the Duke of Buckingham. The Tayloes were his tenants, and then became the owners.

The article goes on to remind readers that Stroud was formerly subsidiary to Bisley but became a separate parish in 1360, and then lists the building of Oakridge, France Lynch and Bussage churches in the 19th century.

'Eastcombe School Chapel [St Augustine's] was built in 1866. The present ecclesiastical parish of Bisley includes Eastcombe, Bismore, Hawkley, Elcombe, Througham, Bideford [Bidfield?], and many scattered farms and houses. The population is about 1300.'

Again the whole legend of Pearce falling in the churchyard well is given, with the subsequent ban on burials and their temporary banishment to Bibury.

The next section is 'The Hills Surrounding Bisley During the Time of the Ancient Britons' and describes the various known barrows and tumuli, with what is known of the various excavations and discoveries.

The most interesting find during the Lillyhorn villa dig was a pot containing 1223 coins which formed a complete series through the reign of Valerian to the end of Diocletian – about AD 253-304. The writer theorises that the villa owner fled from Lillyhorn to Woodchester – on the tenuous basis that later coins were found there – and then his subject matter leaps abruptly to the subject of the Witten Tree (the name surviving 1000 years apparently at the site of the Bisley Anglo-Saxons' outdoor council chamber), and the fact that there are two Anglo-Saxon charters surviving about Woodchester in which Bisley is also mentioned.

Pages 89 and 90 have attached to them the printed leaflet entitled 'Bisley Inclosure' and signed 'One Favourable to the Inclosure'. It is what was circulated in the late 1860s as the Doringtons of Lypiatt Park attempted to convince the district that enclosing 'the waste lands' would ultimately prove universally beneficial despite some few donkey-owners losing their right to free grazing. This right was to be considered equally with those of tenant farmers.

'From an Inclosure they will derive the positive advantages of increased layout, cottage allotments, recreation grounds for each division of the Parish, affording greater facilities for games than any ground now on the Common on account of being better kept, and reduced poor rates' – all of which proved true but forgotten, whereas what is still quoted locally is the election jeer popular 160 years ago: 'Who stole the donkeys' dinner?'

Page 91. Stuck in here is a small printed form that I have not come across anywhere else.

'BISLEY ENCLOSURE

To Mr John Bravender, the Valuer acting in the matter of the Enclosure of Nashend Common, or Bisley Common, Oakridge Common Bournes Green, Nottingham Scrubbs, Custom Scrubbs, Dunkite Hill, and all outlying pieces of Common Waste, situate in the Parish of Bisley.

I of in the Parish of Bisley in the County of Gloucester, do hereby claim to be entitled to the Common and Pasture upon and throughout the said places above mentioned, for Two Donkeys from the 1st of May to the following February of any year on the ground of ancient usage.

Dated this day of 186

Page 91. Attached to this page is a small double-sided handwritten sheet – I think in John Dorington's handwriting (he wrote ss as an Eszett), though it could be by a Keble, or indeed any other local interested in the future of those living in Bisley Parish. I will type it out in full as I am not aware of having seen a copy anywhere else. The date is from seven or eight years before the actual Bisley enclosure.

'Thoughts on the Proposed Enclosure of Bisley Commons. 8 May 1861

1. Every house within reach of the commons is more desirable (& therefore more valuable) in proportion to its nearness to them, or any of them. The proposed enclosure will render such houses less desirable – the consent of the owners therefore should be obtained.
2. But this consent can only be *expected* on two grounds. Either (i) a full confirmation of the disadvantage sustained, to be guaranteed – or (ii) the benefit to the *public* (as in the formation of the Railways, etc) to be plainly shown.
3. "The rights of the poor are undefined" – but so also are the rights of the landowners – & therefore also the rights of the Lord of the Manor. And it may fairly be assumed that these commons would have been (not enclosed, but) cultivated, 3 centuries ago (or perhaps 4) unless there had been some special circumstances which prevented it. And possibly some similar circumstances may have existed at Minchin Hampton & Rodborough, where there are still extensive commons.
4. It seems that anciently the whole parish was covered with wood, chiefly beech and juniper; that by degrees clearances were made & land cultivated in "common fields" divided into what they called plow tillages. Of these "common fields" there seem to have been 5, viz. Stancomb field, Battlescomb field, Througham field, Bidfield, & Westfield. Of the rest of the parish, the greater part was woodland, & of this the tradition is, that some Lord of the Manor granted the poor inhabitants the right of cutting wood without stint & and this right seems not to have been questioned & though the commons are laid bare, the right still remains, & is acknowledged.
5. The proportion of pasture land in comparison with arable is very small indeed, in this parish – & it is to be considered what will be the effect of breaking up 800 acres or more.
6. Nevertheless, *if it were possible* to grant (under certain conditions) an allotment of a $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre to anyone who desired it – & the rest were let to the best advantage – & the whole produce paid over to the Parish Officers toward the poor rates – the proposition for an Enclosure might *perhaps* be entertained.'

Page 93. Another scrap of paper in probably the same writing is pasted in here, and underneath it Mr Piper wrote 'The above note found in Rev T Keble's papers in Churchwardens' box, in torn condition.' Other papers on Enclosure [were] in Bisley Churchwardens' box. This paper follows.

'Memo. B Enclosure.

An Ancient Tradition exists that Ld Mortimer or some one gave the Commons to "the poor" of Bisley.

We may suppose this to mean, gave them a right to *wood* growing on the Commons especially to Juniper, trees and roots.

Proofs of this are (i) the undisputed right of cutting wood on any of the Commons (ii) the actual cutting & carrying away of wood at this, say, from the Scrubbs (iii) the cutting and digging up of Juniper bushes & roots on Oakridge Common, by the people living near it, in hard winters, without hindrance or objection.

Granting then the existence of such a right, it must of necessity be recognized in the Enclosure – otherwise all Trees, Hedges, Rails, & wooden Fences found on the ground purposed to be enclosed will become the property of "the poor of Bisley" & may lawfully be used by them as fuel.'

Page 94 is blank.

Pages 95 and 96 deal with Bisley's charities – the left-hand page is a handwritten copy from 'Resumé and Service Book 1903' and the right-hand page is the printed version of this from the Parish Magazine of November 1908. The days of distribution are given – St Thomas' Day for the Townsend, Colonel Olney and Butcher Charities, New Year's Day for the Wise Charity, January 26th for the Caleb Tanner Charity, Easter for the Woodfield, Ballinger, Barksdale, Allen and Butler Charities, with the Ridler and Colonel Paine Charities accounted for no particular day. A note at the foot says the Olney, Butcher, Tanner, Woodfield, Butler and Paine Charities were for Bisley only; the Townsend, Wise, Ballinger, Barksdale, Allen and Ridler Charities were divided between Chalford (three-fifths) and Bisley (two-fifths). The derivation of the money in each case was given, the yearly amount, and what it covered ('how disposed'). Bread, coal, blankets, linen, sermons, woollen coats, educating poor children, and the discretion of the Vicar are all mentioned.

Pages 97 and 98 have a handwritten spreadsheet giving against the names of donors the dates of the original gifts through the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries (the latest being 1887), again giving the amounts and where the investments were but this time also naming the trustees (the churchwardens, generally). The sums look tiny to us now, but the Bisley charities were rationalized into two funds and these still do good work.

Page 99 is blank,

Page 100 has attached to it the black-bordered Parish Magazine of May 5th 1911, with the handwritten heading 'Sir John Dorington RIP.' The Vicar was Rev W J Clay, the Churchwardens Mr J W Cleaver and Mr G J Gardiner, the Organist and Choirmaster Mr E Bloodworth, the Verger Mr Josiah Wood, and the Sidesmen Messrs Jesse Freeman, W Taylor, T Ansloe, D Hook, G Dowdeswell and W Mason. The month's calendar of services is given, and then the April entries in the Registers. Cecil, son of Fred and Sarah Clarke was baptised; and Norman Edgar, son of Edgar George and Florence Mary Hitchings; and Harry William, son of William and Emma Bailey. Henry Charles Williams and Kate Matilda Davis were married. Mary Fawkes died aged 88. Offertories for the early service (given to the 'sick and needy') totalled 14s 2d over six services, and £2 13s 8d at the 11am and £1 10s 10d at the 6.30pm (these were used for 'church expense'). Two and a half pages were devoted to Sir John's obituary, with details of the funeral. 'In time of bereavement it is impossible to adequately express all we feel. Sir John was such a true friend of the parish, and such a generous supporter of our Church and its work, that we shall never cease to miss him. Our loss is indeed irreparable.' The full text is given of laudatory addresses made at the next meeting of the County Council – Sir John had been 'the chief organizer' there for more than 20 years, and of course before it was instituted he had been a Justice of the Peace. He seems to have been very much respected for his integrity. The last page of this issue reports that on Easter Day there had been 204 communicants (in Bisley 149 and in **Eastcombe 55**). The Vestry meeting reported an 'adverse balance of £5 15s 10d – but Lady Dorington had sent a donation of £10 and this put matters right for the beginning of the next financial year. Three churchwardens were to attend the 'Ruri-Decanal Conference'.

Page 101 is blank. *Page 102* has attached to it pp 3 and 4 of – presumably – the Parish Magazine, with no date given. This says the 'Health Lectures' were well attended, and then goes on to describe the (totally unrelated) legend of the 'Bisley Boy'. This crackpot story (of Princess Elizabeth dying when staying at Overcourt, and terrified residents producing as imposter a local red-haired boy) apparently surfaced, to my complete astonishment, in *Famous Imposters* by Bram Stoker. I had always blamed a vein of mischief in the Keble family... *Stroud News* sent a reporter to Bisley to look for a story, and the resulting (quoted)

article published on January 27th 1911 says 'As a matter of fact, Mr Stoker paid a visit to Bisley last year and inspected Overcourt.' What can I say? And, finally on p4,

Eastcombe Offertories – Church Expenses February 5 6.30pm £0 4s 4d

" 8 8am £0 1s 8d

" 8 6.30pm £0 4s 0d

" 19 6.30pm £0 5s 3d

" 26 8am £0 1s 10d

" 26 6.30pm £0 3s 9d **Total £1 0s 10d**

Page 103. Stuck in here is a typed list of inscriptions on mural tablets attached to the inner south wall of the church tower. They are (in Latin) a 1720 plaque for Robert Pool of 'Brons Hill', and Sara Crump. In English, two verses for John Mills who died in 1718 and his wife Hester. Then 'In vault, underneath this monument are deposited the remains of William Jayne, eldest son of Thomas Jayne, of this Parish, Gentleman, who died the 29th July, 1730, aged 14 years. Also Sarah, the wife of the said Tho. Jayne, who died the 30th March, 1744, aged 49. Also Thomas, the youngest son of the said Thos. Jayne, who died ye 1st October, 1746, aged 28. Also Frances, the wife of Henry Jayne, of this Parish, Gent, who died the 22nd December, 1758, aged 30. Also Sarah, ye daughter of ye said Henry Jayne, who died the 10th June, 1760, aged 5 years. Also of Thomas Jayne, Gent, who departed this life, Jan 26th, 1762, in the 77 year of his age.'

Page 104. Part of a page of the Parish Magazine of October (?)1910 continues the memorial record. 'Also of William Butt, their son, who departed this life 23rd October, 1752, aged 45 years. And also of Ann, his daughter, who died October 12th, 1744, aged 5 weeks.' The article continues: 'Underneath this monument are deposited the remains of Thomas Stephens, Esquire, Barrister at Law, Steward of the Sheriff's Court and Deputy Town Clerk of the City of Bristol, younger son of Thomas Stephens, of Over Lypiatt, Esq, who in several Parliaments served as Knight of ye Shire for the county, and was lord of ye Manor. His great candour and benevolence justly entitled him to the esteem of all that knew him, and he was not only an ornament to his profession, but also to the worthy and ancient family from whence he descended. He died, greatly lamented, the 7th day of December, in the year 1745, aged 46 years.'

'Underneath the outside of this door, lies the remains of William Tayloe, of Chalford Bottom, in this Parish, Esqr, who served the Office of High Sheriff in the year 1742, and was an acting Justice of the Peace for the County. He died 30th day of May, 1749, aged 64.'

'Adjoining to the same grave, in a new vault, lies deposited the remains of William Taylor, of Hert. Coll. Oxon, only son and heir of the said William Tayloe, by Hester his wife. He died the 24th day of October, in the year 1773, aged 27 years, greatly regretted, being a gentleman of the most promising hopes and expectation and highly esteemed by all his neighbours and acquaintance. The said Hester Taylor, his disconsolate mother, out of pious regard to her husband and son erected this monument. She died February 17th, 1790, aged 77. In her, society lost a benevolent and useful member, but the poor in particular a constant and ready friend.'

Page 105. The Parish Magazine of September 1894, recorded the death of Rev E Pyddoke in Tewkesbury. 'He was laid to rest on Saturday, in France Lynch churchyard by the side of his little daughter, who died in 1870, and under the shadow of the sanctuary he loved so well and had done so much to beautify. He had been a great benefactor both in Bisley and France Lynch, building the schools at both places, chiefly at his own expense, paying for much of the costly interior work in the Church at France Lynch, building the organ chambers, and helping towards the endowment when the district was made a Parish.'

Page 106 has a handwritten piece taken from the Parish Magazine of May 1896: 'The

Church Steps.' 'We rejoice to chronicle that the Church Steps are repaired, and that the barriers which for some little time have prevented our using that familiar footway were removed on Easter Eve, when, at the thoughtful suggestion of some of the parishioners, a suggestion kindly carried out by the Vicar and Mr David, a procession was formed, and just before Evensong the Vicar and Choir, in surplices, ascended the steps, singing Hymn 224 (AM) 'Oh! Happy band of pilgrims,' a verse being sung at the foot and on each platform, the last verse on the way to the Church porch. Our best thanks are due to Mr Wiggall, by whose kind energy and supervision the work has been so satisfactorily accomplished. He was able to announce that the whole of the sum, £45, had been collected. Contractor for the work, Mr Freeman, the Camp.'

Page 107. Two notes are handwritten on this page.

'Closing of Bisley Churchyard. Order in Council. April 12, 1859 to close Jan 1st 1860.

June 6th 1859 to close July 1st 1860, afterward extended to Oct 31st 1860, and subsequently to January 1st 1861 (not [?] Mr Keble.'

'Parish. The total area of the ancient parish of Bisley was 7399 acres, and the population 5171. The portion of that area over which the Parish Council of Bisley exercises jurisdiction is 6299 acres, the population of which is 2048. The area of the jurisdiction of the Parish Council of Chalford is 1100 acres, and the population 3123 – taken from Gloucs Comms draft about 1896.'

Finally there are two loose items: a very faded postcard with a small photograph and description of the 'Bone House' sculpture; and a printed prospectus headed 'All Saints' Church, Bisley.'

'The ancient and spacious Parish Church of Bisley, in Gloucestershire, having shown serious symptoms of decay in the roof and walls, an attempt is about to be made to restore and partially to rebuild it.

Towards this good work, which will of necessity require a large expenditure, a friend has offered not less than £600, on *three* conditions. 1. That a Vestry and Organ Chamber shall be placed on the North Side of the Chancel. 2. That the seats throughout the whole Church shall be rearranged, unless in the case of any *faculty-pew*, so-called. 3. That the Church shall effectually be warmed, by means of an apparatus for the introduction of hot air, or otherwise.* If these conditions are complied with, there is already a prospect of obtaining considerable addition to the sum above-mentioned.

Donations will be received by the Rev T Keble, Bisley Vicarage, or at the *County of Gloucester Bank*, Stroud.

Nov 27th, 1858

* This Church is situate on the highest level of the Cotswold Hills, and has at present (beside seven casements) *eleven* doors, or door-windows, as entrances into it. See, Preface to *Durandus on Symbolism*, Neale's Edition.'