

“SUTTON POYNTZ MAKES THE NEWS” ANNEX

Here are a number of topics that might be of interest that I could not fit into my talk.

VILLAGE NAME

Looking back at the oldest newspaper cuttings, from around 1800, our village was always called Pointz with an “i”. I rather expected to find some definite decision at some time that the name would be changed, presumably to match the spelling of the Poyntz family - in early times spelling was fairly random, but at some time over the centuries, the family name had settled with a “y” and the village name with an “i”, and I guess that was thought unauthentic.

There does not seem to have been any firm decision on the matter, but over a period of about 80 years, from 1820 to 1900, Pointz was gradually replaced by Poyntz as the dominant spelling. The earliest example of the new spelling in a newspaper cutting was in 1818, in a legal notice concerning the estate of the late Richard Lillington, the farmer at Northdown Farm. Adoption of the new spelling was slow over the next 60 years - by the 1870’s about 70% of newspaper cuttings still used the old spelling. After that, the preferred spelling switched rapidly, with the new spelling being strongly dominant in the 1890’s and almost universal after 1910.

And the very last example of the old spelling? One might almost guess without being told that the last newspaper cutting using Pointz with an “i” would be in a Church of England notice, in 1937, announcing the appointment of a new Vicar to the parish of “Preston-cum-Sutton Pointz”. Conservatism for you!

THE LETTER BOX

A newspaper article in October 1901 reports on the annual Dinner of the Post-master and his staff. Among highlights for the year, the installation of Sutton Poyntz’s letter box is reported. The letter box has a Queen Victoria insignia, which may allow us to date the installation of the letter box to some time between October 1900 and January 1901, when the Queen died.

RAILWAYS

A number of newspaper articles between roughly 1845 and 1890 gave notification of proposed applications for railway routes, most of which never saw the light of day, but included possible routes through Preston cum Sutton Poyntz.

- November 1844: The first such proposal was not to reach Weymouth from Southampton, but rather by linking to the London to Salisbury line a few miles east of Salisbury. From Salisbury, the planned route initially followed the route later actually built as the Salisbury and Dorset Junction Railway (built in 1866 and closed in 1964), from Alderbury to Fordingbridge. At Fordingbridge the Salisbury and Dorset Junction line then went further west, unlike the 1844 proposal which went south to Ringwood, and then turned west through West Moors, Wimborne, Bere Regis, Puddletown and Dorchester, and then south to Weymouth.

This scheme seems not to have gone ahead as planned, because next year approval was given for the Southampton and Dorchester Railway, which extended the already existing London and Southampton Railway westwards to Dorchester. This was a rather more logical route than the earlier proposal, although its rather meandering route led to it being called *Castlemain’s Corkscrew* (after Charles Castlemain, its primary proponent). From Southampton it ran west to Totton, then south to Brockenhurst, north-west to Ringwood, south-west to Wimborne, south to Hamworthy Junction, south-west to Wareham and then west through Wool and Moreton to Dorchester. At that time Bournemouth was insignificant, and the present route from Brockenhurst to Poole via Bournemouth was not opened until 1888. The Ringwood line closed in 1965.

This line did not initially run to Weymouth; the line from Dorchester to Weymouth opened in 1857, as a joint Great West Railway and London & South Western Railway venture, running dual gauges. In the meantime, however, there was another application to Parliament for a Weymouth link, which is the subject of the next newspaper cutting.

- November 1845. This proposal suggested a branch off the Southampton to Dorchester line, running to Weymouth. The proposed route would have joined the Southampton and Dorchester Railway somewhere between Wool and Moreton station, from where it would run south-west towards Weymouth. The newspaper article does not make the route clear, but it would have come through the ridgeway by tunnel somewhere between Sutton Poyntz and Poxwell and along or close to the River Jordan before skirting the ridgeway on its route to Broadwey and then south to Weymouth, terminating at or near Radipole Park.

At this time the so-called Gauge Wars between GWR and other railway operators had not ended, and it was important to London and South Western Railway to obtain a route to Weymouth that was independent of GWR's planned route via Dorchester West. The Gauge Wars were effectively ended in 1846 by an Act of Parliament which favoured the Standard Gauge over GWR's Broad Gauge, and gradually cooperation became possible.

It appears that surveys had been commissioned to define the route of this proposed railway spur. I have not seen the more detailed plans that were drawn up, but they were used by the County Council as part of the evidence when they investigated the claim for a footpath at the top end of Verlands Road.

- November 1846. A more detailed amendment to the above proposal was submitted to Parliament. The junction with the Southampton to Dorchester line was to be situated close to Moreton station. The terminus at Weymouth would be close to the Dorchester to Weymouth turnpike road, near a terrace called Belvidere. The OS Series 1 6" map from circa 1890 shows that the terrace called Belvidere was on the esplanade in Weymouth, just north of its junction with King Street. It is therefore almost certain that the location specified in this application for Weymouth's station was indeed the place where its station was eventually built.
- 1883 to 1888. Proposals were discussed, but never got very far, for a Mid-Dorset Railway, which would run from London and South Western Railways' Exeter line, near Gillingham, south-west to Sturminster Newton (with a junction to the Somerset and Dorset Railway route from Bath to Bournemouth), then south through Puddletown to West Stafford (with a junction to the London and South Western Railway line to Dorchester), and then via Broadmayne and Preston to join the main Dorchester to Weymouth line. It was acknowledged that the most expensive feature of the proposed new line would be the tunnel through the hills somewhere above Sutton Poyntz.

It was suggested that the cost of obtaining Parliamentary approval would be about £7,500, and landowners along the route were invited to subscribe at the "modest" rate of one shilling per acre of land held, with tenants also contributing 6d per acre. This scheme never came to anything, so I suspect landowners and their tenants looked at the proposal and gave it a thumbs-down. It does not seem that any survey or detailed planning of the route was carried out.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

A number of newspaper articles describe activities of the Preston and Sutton Poyntz Women's Institute between 1923 and 1939. This WI branch was apparently formed in 1922 (there was a report in January 1930 of its ninth annual meeting), and met monthly. The branch had a folk dance group, which participated in the annual folk dance festivals run by the Dorset Women's Institute Federation. Preston and Sutton Poyntz competed in the "small WI" grouping for WI's with fewer than 50 members, and were mentioned in a number of newspaper reports. They won the group in 1928 and 1933.

The WI ran the village fête in 1923 (most of the village fêtes were run by the Reading Room Slate Club). The report in the newspaper records that Mrs Harriet Saunders, on whose field the fête was held, was Vice-President of the WI branch, with Mrs Beatrice Colquhoun as President. They were later succeeded by Mrs Mary Chappell and Mrs Ellen Galpin respectively. This report gives a number of names of other women who were presumably members, involved in running the fête.

A couple of WI social events were recorded. In 1923, the WI gave a concert, at the Scutt Memorial Hall. This raised nearly £7, which was donated to the Scutt Memorial Hall Men's Club (who were presumably thought incapable of raising money for themselves). The WI seems to have organised annual picnics, with the 1930 picnic at Lulworth Cove. Setting out at 2 p.m. by motor coach, the members spent time on the beach before tea, with a tour of the village and folk dancing on the green afterwards. The group arrived home at 9 p.m.

THE VILLAGE HAVING FUN

A couple of examples from the 1890's. First, a report of the village Queen Victoria Jubilee celebration in 1897. A party of 170 sat down to tea in a field lent by Mr Albert Bailey (Sue Wintle's great-grandfather, known as the "Ploughman Poet"). After tea, a toast was proposed to the Queen, and everyone rose to sing "God save the Queen". Further toasts were then proposed to the Prince and Princess of Wales, the rest of the Royal family, the Bishops and Clergy, and the Donors (presumably those whose generosity had made the event possible). At this point the journalist ran out of steam, for he merely reported that there were "other toasts". Afterwards, sports, followed at the end by another singing of the National Anthem.

And secondly, an 1892 report of an even organised by the local Conservative Association, consisting of an Association meeting, followed by a smoking concert. This was held in the first floor of Sutton Mills, which had been lent for the occasion by the miller, Barnard Meech, and had been "most tastefully decorated" by a group of local ladies. The meeting

started at 7 p.m., and the concert at 8, starting with a toast to the local MP, and a second toast to the "Success to the Preston Working Men's Conservative Association". A third toast was proposed to "The Ladies", responded to by Mr Edward Macey, on the basis presumably that the ladies could not be trusted to respond on their own behalf. Other toasts followed to the Association Chairman and Secretary, The programme was then as follows: Piano solo by Master Meech; a piano trio selection by Mr and Mrs Ralph Gollop and Arthur Macey; a song, "Nancy Lee" by Barnard Meech; a song, "Harry the Tailor" by Edward Macey; a song, "Drink, Puppy, Drink" by Edward Pope; a violin solo, "Dresdina" by Ralph Gollop; a song "La-di-da" by Mr Galpin; a song "Beaconsfield", by John Guppy; a song, "The Menagerie" by John Randall; a song, "Jemima Brown" by John Francom; a song "Little Old Cabin" by Arthur Macey; a selection from Weber by Mr and Mrs Gollop and Arthur Macey; a song "Minute Gun at Sea" by John Sargeant; a recitation by Mr Hodges; a song by Edward Norris; a song "I won't tell you her name" by George Puckett; and finally a song "Balaclava" by Mr W Squibb. The National Anthem was sung at 10.30 after what the newspaper said was "a most enjoyable evening".

CAN'T KEEP THE STAFF

Many of the newspaper entries that I have found are advertisements for staff, both domestic and farming. Among these are a number of advertisements for cooks, brackets "plain". I think this is not a warning that the lady of the house doesn't want a cook whose appearance might over-excite her husband; rather I think it means "none of your foreign food, please, boiled beef and turnips will do very nicely, and definitely NO GARLIC". Mrs Henry Pope seems to have placed lots of advertisements along those lines, so maybe the applicants weren't plain enough. Another person who sought a domestic servant who could do plain cooking was Mrs Kimber of Wyndings, in 1937 which was about a year before Dorothy's birth.

Another person who kept putting in advertisements for domestic staff was a Miss Bull of Sutton Poyntz, who between 1927 and 1938 put in 7 advertisements for an experienced general maid or housekeeper, with a knowledge of cooking. Each advertisement was repeated numerous times in a variety of newspapers. Good wages and comfort were offered, and outings, and the advertisements stressed that buses were available to many places. Clearly either she or the various applicants did not suit, as no one seems to have stayed for long.

Other advertisements were for a variety of farming skills, including dairymen, shepherds, thatchers, carters, and labourers. Very frequently the advertisements would give the expectation that the man would bring a working family with him, so the farmer would get several pairs of hands for the price of one. So, for example, a general labourer wanted, with a couple of working boys. It only seems to have been times of manpower shortage, in the Boer and then First World War, that changed this expectation and led to advertisements that had more to say about what was offered to the worker. So in 1915 Mrs Saunders at Northdown Farm advertised for a carter, offering a good house, large garden, and good wages.

On the subject of job advertisements, there was a neat example of cause and effect in 1899. A Carter driving the Sutton Mills cart was summoned to court for being asleep while in charge of his waggon and two horses. The policeman said he walked 50 yards alongside, and called the carter several times before the carter woke up. The carter got off with just a warning, but the very next week the Western Gazette carried an advertisement for a carter for Sutton Mills, so evidently the carter did not completely escape.

DOMESTIC HARMONY

In 1892, a gardener called William Scriven was taken to court, accused of stealing money from his employer, Jacobina Long. He admitted having taken the money, but said she had invited him into her house, given him beer, and shown him the money box. He also said that Miss Long had said that if she were ten years younger, she would have wanted them to get married. This she emphatically denied. Looking at Census returns for the time, he was aged 27 at the time; her age was 86. So even subtracting 10 years from her age would leave a difference of almost 50 years - someone was guilty of slight over-optimism!

On the more positive side, an 1812 cutting reports the marriage of Mr Robert George, who for many years had been the "faithful and trusty servant" to Mr Thomas Willis, farmer of Sutton Farm, to Mrs Moon of Whitcombe near Bath. The report says the couple were attended by "four young ladies, and the same number of young gentlemen, just entering their teens" and that "the day was spent in mirth and joyful festivity". As Mr George and Mrs Moon were aged 80 and 52 respectively, we can only hope the joyful festivity was not too strenuous.

A 1924 cutting recorded a court hearing, caused by dispute between neighbours living in the adjoining cottages in White Horse Lane. There seems to have been an argument which came to blows in the shared wash-house, between Mrs Kate Rose and her neighbour Mrs Elsie Thorne. According to Mrs Thorne, Mrs Rose came in and made offensive remarks, mainly about the fact that Mr & Mrs Thorne had no children. Mrs Rose was said to have struck Mrs Thorne and slapped her face with a dish-cloth. The local policeman gave evidence, and said these two women quarrelled frequently.

Both women were bound over to keep the peace.

The court next heard a case concerning a fight between the two husbands, Frank Rose and Walter Thorne. It seems that when the summons was served on Mrs Rose, her husband said he would murder Mr Thorne, and went next door where a fight followed. Mr Thorne said that Mr Rose had been threatening him for the last seven months, saying he would swing for him as the doctor had said he (Mr Rose) had not long to live anyway. Mr Rose said Mr Thorne had hit him with a bicycle chain. Both were bound over, in the same way as their wives had been.

Another court case, in 1861, concerned a serious assault by Richard Randall, a baker, against his brother-in-law, William Squibb. William Squibb had gone to the bake-house, to complain to Richard Randall about his mistreatment of Mrs Randall, William's sister. Mr Randall said it was none of Mr Squibb's business, and took up a large three-pronged fork with which he stabbed Mr Squibb, causing serious injury, exposing the skull and causing Mr Squibb to faint three times when the doctor attended the wound. There was also an axe at the bakery door, which Mr Squibb got hold of and threw away to make sure it could not be used. A passer-by managed to take the fork from Mr Randall, and there was some sort of fight between Mr Squibb and Mr Randall. The evidence included some disagreement about how much beer Mr Squibb had consumed at The Ship before visiting Mr Randall, and a possible meeting at the pub with the village policeman in which the policeman might or might not have expressed hostility to Mr Randall. Mr Randall suggested the whole thing was a conspiracy between William Squibb, his father Robert Squibb, and the policeman. The court in the end found Mr Randall guilty of a common assault and bound him over in the sum of £50 for 12 months.

AGAPEMONITES, ABODE OF LOVE

One of the 1861 newspaper reports referred to above noted that Richard Randall was a "Starkeyite". An earlier newspaper report, in 1854, related a trial concerning a theft of barley from John Scutt, farmer of Preston and Sutton Poyntz. During the trial, the lawyer representing the two accused men asked Mr Scutt if he was a believer of Mr Starkey's doctrines. Mr Scutt responded that he was a believer in the doctrine of the Bible. The question seems to have related to John Scutt's ability to take the oath before giving witness.

"Starkeyite" seems to have been a local Weymouth term for a sect known more generally as "Agapemonites". This sect was founded in 1846 by a Somerset clergyman, Rev. Henry Prince, who at the time was working as a curate in the parish of Charlinch, near Bridgwater, where the parish priest was Rev. Samuel Starkey. Henry Prince seems to have had great charisma, and one of the first converts to his beliefs was Samuel Starkey, along with a number of Somerset locals. The sect seems to have believed in an imminent second coming of Christ, and to have practised a degree of free love and wealth held in common. "Agapemonite" is supposed to be a Greek word meaning "abode of love", and one of the journalists made a neat joke to the effect that Richard Randall himself had rather failed to make his own home an "Abode of Love".

The sect's beliefs were too extreme even for the Church of England to be able to absorb, and both Henry Prince and Samuel Starkey were sacked. For a short time they ran what they called the Charlinch Free Church, and then used some of their believers' wealth to create a base (the Agapemone, "Abode of Love") at Spraxton, a mile or so from Charlinch. Henry Prince moved for a short time to Suffolk, until he was ejected by the Bishop of Ely. Prince then set up a mission in Brighton, and Starkey one in Weymouth. The Weymouth mission was the more successful, and after a time Henry Prince joined Samuel Starkey there. Henry Prince, known by the believers as "Beloved" and "The Lamb", died in 1899 after which the sect's core moved to London, where it did not finally disappear until 1956.

Extraordinarily, both Rev, Henry Prince and Rev. Samuel Starkey (along with Ellen Starkey who was presumably Samuel's wife) were shown as guests of John Scutt and his family, in the 1861 Census. There were four other visitors recorded, from Dorset and Somerset, in what was therefore a large household, almost certainly at South Down Farm on the hill overlooking Lodmoor. Seemingly Preston and Sutton Poyntz were for a time the heart of this strange "Abode of Love" sect.

OIL IN THEM THAR HILLS

In 1933, there were reports in the Daily News, a London newspaper, of experiments by a Dr Marco Antonio Marconi on extracting oil from Dorset shale deposits. There were two reports next year in The People. Dr Marconi said he had invented a secret process, and was planning to set up a factory at Sutton Poyntz, for which he had agreement from the Weld estate. He said there was enough shale in Dorset to power the whole of Britain, and that oil could be produced at 2¼d per gallon. The first article in The People began "A couple of inquisitive ducks peered round the half-open door, quacked disgustedly, and waddled away. From an adjoining pigsty came a chorus of disapproving grunts. After all, who ever heard of a chemist's laboratory in a farmyard!" Dr Marconi, it seemed, had been working in a laboratory in Sutton Poyntz, where he said the shale deposits were unusually rich, Within a few months he hoped to be able to start building his first experimental factory.

Devastatingly for Britain's future, the second report in *The People*, two weeks after the first, reported that Dr Marconi's laboratory equipment had been vandalised. "Months of work have been wasted", he said, "but I am not discouraged". "I have known for a long time that there are people who are not anxious for my discoveries to be developed commercially". "It is obvious that if Britain can produce her own petrol at 2¼d a gallon, other markets must suffer, and I believe that my laboratory was wrecked in an endeavour to find a clue to my process".

From other reading, this was actually just one of a series of attempts to turn shale into oil, starting in the mid 19th C. None were remotely successful, but some did manage to produce some quantities of oil, which was said to be detectable by its dreadful smell 5 miles away. The very high sulphur content in Dorset shales was a problem that no one has been able to solve.

Next year, it seems that Dr Marconi was accused of obtaining money by false pretences, but was acquitted and recommended for deportation instead, back to Italy where it was said his wife was anxious to trace him.

OTHER ACCIDENTS AND DEATHS

An inquest was reported in 1899 into the death of a bricklayer, Henry Plowman, aged 55. Some of you will remember a sketch by *The Two Ronnies*, entitled "The Complete Rook", which Henry Plowman's death is painfully reminiscent of. From evidence given by Henry's widow, Elizabeth, Henry had eaten stewed rooks for breakfast, rook pie for dinner, and then rhubarb tart for tea. In the evening he said he did not feel well, and complained of wind in the stomach. He was restless over night, and in the morning a doctor was called for, but before the doctor arrived, Henry was dead. The doctor's opinion was that "partaking of rooks so freely" ... "was the cause of death". In the words of *The Two Ronnies*, "Rook's off!"

In 1834, two men, William Galpin and John Brett, were tried for the murder of Mary Ann Walters. The evidence was that the two men fired a pistol, which so greatly alarmed the lady, that, three weeks later, she died. It's perhaps not a surprise that the two men were acquitted, although the Judge took time to say their action had been thoughtless and they should not do the same again.

Several deaths were caused by runaway wagons and their horses, as well as other injuries. In 1829, a boy called William Squibb was riding the shaft of a wagon, fell and was crushed by the wheels. This newspaper cutting was repeated in the *Dorset County Chronicle* in 1929, under the title "DORSET A HUNDRED YEARS AGO". A quite similar accident happened in 1871 to Thomas Thorne, a carter working for Henry Pope at Sutton Farm. He was returning from Weymouth with a loaded wagon, and the horses were restless. He got down on the shafts, intending to step down and stop the horses, but slipped and was run over by the wagon wheels. He was 31, and left a widow and five young children.

TRUMPET MAJOR

The Trumpet Major was published in 1880, and quite quickly started being used in newspapers in references to Sutton Poyntz; the earliest such reference was in 1903 in an article in the London magazine *Cycling*, about cycle routes on the Dorset coast. There were several such references in cuttings about the Weld Estate sale in 1925, although the newspapers were more interested in the sale of Woolbridge manor (where Tess had her honeymoon in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*) than of the sale of the manor of Sutton Poyntz.

Over the years, there were several newspaper reports of military exercises held in the hills above Sutton Poyntz. One such, in 1926, noted that the hills where 3,000 soldiers held a pitched battle were the same as the hills occupied by the troops referred to in *The Trumpet Major*, over a hundred years before.