

Redlynch & District Local History Society

Visit to St. Peter's Church, Plaitford

The Society met on a warm June evening for a tour of the churchyard led by Stephen Ings. The early village consisted of Manor Farm and 9 small farms of about 40 acres each. In the 18th century the population expanded when Plaitford Common (now National Trust) to the south of the village became the site of many squatters' cottages. In 1851 there were 50 cottages and a population of 350 but by 1881 the population had declined to 180; the rural economy had collapsed because of the increase of cheap imported food and many people moved from the village towards Shirley. The population today is still the same as in 1881 at 180. The village was in Wiltshire until 1895 when it was transferred to Hampshire. The church is 13th century and built of stone flint, it was restored in 1856 but not altered.

The earliest gravestones are for William Botley (1705) and Jane Gauntlett (1712) but the ones that we looked at with Stephen were 19th and early 20th century.

The stone for Jessie Curtis who died in 1899 was by J. Grace, Monumental Mason of Romsey whose yard was next to the station. Stone became more accessible with the advent of the railway in 1847 and was more widely used from then on. Jessie's grandfather Walter is buried next to him, he died in 1898 having been found with his horse and cart in Langley Wood.

James Hutchins was a farm servant at New Lodge who died after falling out of a tree during a gale. James would have worked from dawn till dusk, labouring on the farm and then coming into the house to cook for his employers.

Charles Bowles was a keeper for the Earl of Ilchester who owned the estate until 1912 and is supposed to have come to the Shoe Inn once a year to collect the rent from his tenants. The stone was erected by the Earl of Ilchester.

John Hurst who died in 1872 was a dealer; he bought surplus produce from the villagers and sold it to town dwellers. His wife Martha died while milking a cow, the Salisbury Journal reported that she fell off the stool and died very shortly, as often in those times it was recorded as "death by act of god".

Ellen Sarah Lovell died as a child in 1907 when she drowned in a stream near her garden. The report of her funeral in the Romsey Advertiser said that each child from the school sent a wreath and she was carried to the grave by four young women. By this time infant mortality was decreasing and the death would have had a big impact on a small village school.

George Bungay was a rick thatcher, he died in 1912 after falling off a rick, and Dr. Scallon was called out from Romsey by telephone and telegram but could not save him. The post-mortem was carried out by the G.P. and records that the deceased was 62, had an enlarged heart and pleurisy of both lungs.

Finally, we looked at a stone with no grave for Robert (Bob) Vincent Bowles. Bob was conscripted in 1918 and sent to France, he was hit by a stray German shell and his remains are in a cemetery in France. His parents put up the stone in his memory at time when the world and the old social order in villages were changing rapidly.

In a short time looking round the churchyard we discovered a fascinating cross-section of social history which must be replicated in many other local churchyards. The visit concluded with refreshments in the church and a chance to explore the building.

Our next meeting is 6 September at 7:30pm in Morgans Vale and Woodfalls Hall when a talk on "LIDAR, Modern Day Mapping" will be given by Lawrence Shaw. For further details visit our website www.redlynchlocalhistory.org. Enquiries to Carolyn Birch 01725 511583

