**A**

**Social History**

**Of The**

**Village of Abbotsham**

**1860-1978**

***Section 1 1860- 1880***

Sincere thanks are given to Mr Clifford Babb for all the time he has given towards the preparation of this study, and to Bideford College for the facilities it has afforded him

**ABBOTSHAM**

Many old parishes and their churches have had their history written by

learned scholars, others by enthusiastic locals, but despite the fact that I do not fall into either category, I have strangely been drawn to the village of Abbotsham, with its beautiful little church of St Helens. On approaching this building an outstanding feature is its very low tower - I wonder whether it was ever surmounted with a spire.

Many a person has visited this lovely little church with its well kept

churchyard, situated in what must be some of the best Devonshire

countryside. To me, the village seems to be always peaceful, people never

seem to hurry, and very little seems to have changed down through the centuries. .

Because of the fact that I am retired and live close to the village, I have been fortunate in being able to research and discover a great deal of information concerning the people who have lived there, how they were employed, and what activities they were involved in during their out of work time. One of the most evident features is that quite naturally people attended their parish church, but also the Baptist Chapel was a very well attended place of worship, with a very enthusiastic congregation.

Although today many of the inhabitants of Abbotsham have come there because of their employment, or have settled there in retirement, this has not

always been the case. Like many other such villages it boasted of quite a

close community, people belonged to the village, and were happy to be there.

I have always considered that every village churchyard can supply a wealth

of information regarding its former parishioners. Old gravestones contained

so very much more detail than those of today. But of course these details

deteriorate with time, especially when situated so close to a wind blown coastline. It is unusual to discover many such epitaphs much older than 300 years old.

I have been fortunate in being able toesearch the old copies of the “Bideford Gazette”, as a result of the diligence of the village correspondents down through the years. Accordingly I have extracted the happenings at Abbotsham, and I believe that the result will give quite a comprehensiveaccount of the day to day lives of the village people.

In addition I have been able to use some extracts from the “Abbotsham Parish Magazine”, which is such a source of valuable information. This

magazine began in 1889, and the Vicar of the parish in 1890 stated, “These

magazines may, in years to come, prove of the greatest interest. They make up in fact a simple history of the life of the parish, and many amongst us, who may be spared to live, will often turn over the pages of such a book, and recall, we trust, with ever growing thankfulness, memories of the past, which is not in reality a past”.

Mike Davy. 8th January 1994.

**ABBOTSHAM COURT FARM**

Mr W Hooper begs to announce that he has received instructions from the

Proprietor RD Beste Esq. to sell by Auction on Monday August 13th 1860 at

6 O’clock in the evening at the “Heart of Oak” Inn, Abbotsham Town, the

Pasturage on the Estate as follows:

To March 1st 1861 A R P

Lot 1 Grass, the Lawn. 6 3 29

Lot 2 Grass Vesper Ridge, Flag Staff, Ivy Green. 11 0 35

Lot 3 Grass West Down and Boat Lake. 24 1 21

Lot 4 Grass Two Lower Yarnsborough. 10 3 3

Lot 5 Grass Two Upper Yarnsborough. 11 2 33

From 1 st Oct. next to March 1 st, 1861.

From 6th Oct. East Down and Pinnecombe 19 2 19

N.B. The back road alone to be used for all the Lots except the Lawn; a right of way to the others is reserved through each. The purchaser of each Lot to keep his own fences, and to have the right to kill rabbits on his Lot. The swedes now growing on the Estate together with the straw will be hereafter sold, to be consumed on the Estate, and preference will be given to the Renters of the Pasturage.

(August 7th. 1860. - Bideford Gazette) hereafter known as 8G.

**ABBOTSHAM COURT FARM**

Mr Hooper will sell by Auction at the Heart of Oak Inn, Abbotsham on

Wednesday September 5th at 6 o’ clock in the evening The Growing Crops

and Hay on the above farm, the property of J.R.D. Beste Esq.

**WHEAT**

A R P

Broad Park 13 1 30

Bountice 12 0 15

Long Down 7 2 1

**OAT**

**E**wes Close 8 1 3

Piccabridge 4 3 14

Landy Hay 7 tons Clover 6 tons

The straw may be removed and the Purchasers may Stock the Ground

Mr. James Bird at Abbotsham will show the Crops.

(September 4th. 1860 - E3G)

**KENWITH EARM ABBOTSHAM**

**TIMBER FOR SALE**

Mr Frederick Lee has received instructions from the Rev. E. Dansey to sell

by Public Auction at the above Farm on Wednesday 6th day of March next at

2 o clock in the afternoon, about 100 ELM TREES together with many Lots of

good BEECH and ASH trees now lying around and about the said farm, and

well calculated for Shipbuilders and Carpenters use. The use of the Saw Pit

on the estate may be obtained.

(February 26th. 1861 - BG).

**COMBE COTTAGE ABBOTSHAM**

**FARM STOCK AND FURNITURE**

Mr Frederick Lee has received instructions from Leonidas Montezuma Esq. who is leaving the neighbourhood to Sell by Public Auction at the above cottage on Monday September 9th. the following Lots:

Mahogany table, twelve chairs, two kitchen tables, flour hutch, salting tub and cover, brewing tub, pickling pans, water casks, two pig troughs, pigs form, plate rack, bar iron, ladder, cheese press, chaff cutter, patent mangle, one pair wheels and fittings for hay cart, saddle, bridle, harness, prime rick of hay, pig, cow, heifer, two calves, four wheel basket carriage and various other articles.

(September 3rd. 1861 - 8G)

**TENDERS FOR ABBOTSHAM CHURCH**

Tenders are required for New Slating the North side of the Nave of Abbotsham Church, together with materials, lead, gutter etc. The tenders to

include the carriage of materials, and to be sent to the Vicar on or before 1st of September next.

Kenwith. August 8th. 1860.

(August 14th. 1860 - BG).

**KENWITH FARM NR. BIDEFORD**

Mr F.Lee has been instructed by the Rev. E. Dansey to sell at the above farm on Wednesday the 26th day of February next the following PRIME FARM

STOCK, together with Farm implements Produce etc.

Eleven prime cows,(Guernseys and North Devon), half fat bullock, 44 sheep,

6 pigs, useful bay horses, quantity poultry rick of prime landy hay, rick of straw, mangolwurzel, carrots, potatoes, swedes etc.

Dinner will be provided at 12 0’clock and the Sale to commence at 1pm.

(February 18th 1862 - BG).

**THE PARISH CONSTABLES**

The parish Constables appointed at the Magistrates Meeting on Wednesday

last were as follows:-

Edward Moase, Robert Brock, Abbotsham.

(May 13th. 1862- BG)

**ABBOTSHAM N.DEVON**

To be let by tender for a Term of 7,11 or 14 years from Mìchaelmas next all

that excellent FARM with the LIMEKILN thereon called ABBOTSHAM COURT situated in the parish of ABBOTSHAM, DEVON.

Late In the occupation of Mr Robert Tacon as tenant thereof, and now the

proprietor (except the mansion house, with two coach houses stables, courtlage and walledgardens and the lawn and plantation in front, which are

not to be let), all which premises (except as aforesaid) containing 138A 2R

28P or thereabouts and lie within a ring fence.

The Limekiin on the estate will be put in working order in which the taker may burn lime for his own use and for sale.

(June 24th 1862 - BG).

**ABBOTSHAM**

Baptist Chapel - On Wednesday last an interesting service in connection with the close of Harvest was held in the above place of worship. At 5 o’clock a goodly company partook of a bountifully supplied tea, after which a thanksgiving meeting was conducted. Hymns of praise were sung and prayers of thanksgiving were presented. The Rev. George Williams preached the sermon. The Chapel was well filled with attentive and earnest hearers of the Gospel, and the proceedings of the evening were considerably enlivened by the excellent choir of the Bideford Baptist Chapel.

(October 14th. 1862 BG)

**DEATH**

2nd December 1862 - On the 30th ult. at Abbotsham, Marìa wife of Mr Joseph Heywood, aged 53 years.

(December 2nd 1862 BG)

**ABBOTSHAM SUSPICIOUS CASE**

On Friday evening last some sensation was created by a report that some men had been poisoned at Abbotsham. About 7 o’ clock in the in the morning Thomas Copp and Andrew Robins, farm servants of Mr Cork of West Pusehill

Farm, partook of some breakfast consisting of pork broth. At about 10o’clock however they were seized with pain and vomiting, and werereturn home. At 2pm Dr. Ackland was fetched and relieved them with a stomach pump. It appears there had been some unpleasantness once between the men and the servant who prepared the breakfast and she was suspected No poison has been discovered from the contents of their stomachs. It is however noticeable that a part of the broth was taken from a large boiler in which it was made and used by the family the day before without ill effect, while this was put by the servant in a smaller one specially for these men. There was a report that the servant had put some hair oil in the broth to which report some circumstances lend colour, so that she may have wished to sicken the men wìthout intending to poison them.

(January l3th 1863 BG)

**THE COTTAGE GARDEN SHOW**

The Cottage Garden Show was held at Abbotsham on Friday last in the

National Schoolroom which was decorated with flowers and evergreens, a very pretty device being formed of a “V.R.” and “CROWN” in lovely flowers. A number of the gentry of the neighbourhood were present. The women showed some good specimen of their knitting. The display of vegetables was better than last year, the carrots being good, the potatoes fine, and the turnips quite remarkable. E.U. Vidal Esq. President, gave away the prizes. The spade given by Capt. Wren for the best basket of vegetables was gained by James Glover. Seats were fitted up under “the old oak tree” for the visitors, and the village was very lively, the bells ringing merrily.

(July 14th 1863 - BG).

**DEATH.**

On 8th inst at Peppercombe - Mary Jane Yates - a lady aged 45, who, whilst very warm, put her feet in the sea water to cool them, became paralysed and never spoke afterwards. She was much lamented.

(July 21st 1863)

**MARRIAGE.**

On l6th inst at Abbotsham Church by the Rev. Dansey - Mr John Abbot of the firm of Abbot and Son, iron merchants of Bideford, to the eider daughter of Mr Christopher Pedler of Bowood, Abbotsham.

(September 22nd 1863 - BG).

**ABBOTSHAM - THE ROYAL MARRIAGE**

This little parish we find has not been behind in their rejoicings on the festive occasion of the Royal Wedding (between the Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra). It was proposed to give a dinner to the school children, the singers, the clerk etc in the schoolroom near the Church. On the day in question the village put on quite a gay appearance, the neighbourhood of “the old oak tree” and the schoolroom being neatly decorated with flags, laurel etc. About 3 o’ clock the little ones with truly happy faces began to assemble, anxiously awaiting the word of command to be given for them to enter the schoolroom. When everything was ready the party took their seats around a plentiful supply of beef, mutton, meat pies etc. These being duly decreased, six bouncing plum puddings made their appearance. Each person had afterwards a glass of wine to drink the health of the young married pair. Two hymns were sung, “God Save the Queen” and “God Bless the Prince of Wales”. The young party then adjourned to a neighbouring field to have a game of play. In the evening a large bonfire was lighted on Gainsborough Hill, a high piece of land, commanding a very extensive view, bounded by Clovelly and Hartland Point on the west, by Exmoor on the east, by Lundy Island and the sea to the north, and by Dartmoor on the south. Some fine balloons were let off, and also a quantity of fireworks. At the conclusion several cheers were given for the Queen, the Prince and Princess of Wales, Mr Vidal and Mr Dansey and others. This terminated a day which we hope will have a consolation to our widowed Queen, and a blessing to the country at large.

(March 17th 1863 - BG).

**DEATH**

On 19th inst - Richard Turner Esq. of Rixlade, Abbotsham, formerly of the

Grange, Bideford - aged 79.

(April 24th 1866- BG).

**ABBOTSHAM**

**HARVEST HOME TEA**

A very happy meeting took place at Rehoboth Chapel on Wednesday evening. The Baptist friends, who have kept up Divine Service in the Chapel against many difficulties, have a most commendable custom in connection with the thanksgiving services universal after the gathering of an abundant harvest. In order to counterbalance these harvest feasts, where strong drink is the exciting agent, if false enthusiasm, and where the Giver of good gifts is scarcely thought of, they hold a tea meeting annually, where good fellowship may be enjoyed without much fear of evil results to follow. Such a meeting was that of 1863. There was a capital brewing of the cup that cheers, the Chinese leaves being most liberally used, and the delicious Devonshire cream softening the “strong cup”. Large numbers kept flocking into the little Chapel, and it had to be “tea and turn out”, but a few showers did not disturb the comfort of those who had finished, for Mr Glover most kindly turned the Post Office parlour into a reception room. After all had been attended to, lights were brought, and the company arranged themselves to hear theaddress by the Rev. George Williams of Bideford.

(September 29th 1863 - BG).

**ABBOTSHAM - TEA MEETING**

On Good Friday a public tea meeting was held in the Baptist Chapel in this

village, the proceeds from which were devoted to the Baptist Benevolent Society for the support of the sick poor of all denominations. Early in the

day large numbers made their way to the romantic cliffs at Abbotsham, where merry picnic parties were formed. The sweet music of the birds, whose thrilling notes resounded through hill and dale, and the rich foliage embowering the rural cottages, told of the coming joy of spring. In the evening a public meeting was held, the Bideford Baptist Choir being present, and Mr G.C. Williams on the harmonium.

(April 10th 1866 - BG).

**TO BE LET WITH IMMEDIATE POSSESSION**

A small convenient Cottage situate at Ricards Down, Abbotsham - for further

particulars apply Mr John Turner, Coombe, Abbotsham.

(May 15th 1866- BG).

**EAST LANGDON ABBOTSHAM**

SALE OF CORN, COW, PIGS ETC.

Mr R.C. Holman has been instructed by Mr John Penny who is about to decline Business, to offer by PUBLIC AUCTION on Thursday August 2nd by 4 o’ clock in the afternoon at East Langdon :-

WHEAT A R P

Part of Higher Path Field on Little Langdon 1 3 0

BARLEY

Part of Lower Field on Little Langdon 1 0 0

Part of Square Close 1 0 0

Little Plot 0 1 0

OATS

Langdon Path Field 4 0 0

Part of Higher Pathfield on Little Langdon 1 1 0

Part of Lower Field on Little Langdon 0 2 0

DREDGE CORN

Part of Square Close 1 2 0

Also a good Milch Cow, Sow in Pigs, 2 Slip Pigs, a good donkey with Butt and harness; Butt; Long Cart; Stone Roller; Wood Roller; 2 PIoughs; 4 stone Pigs Troughs; wood Pigs Trough; Grinding Stone; Harrows; 2 Ladders; 2 Pigs Forms; Cheese Press, and sundry implements.

(July 31st 1866- BG).

TO BE LET FOR A TERM OR OTHERWISE

A COMFORTABLE COTTAGE - LIKE RESIDENCE CALLED RIXLADE  
IN THE PARISH OF ABBOTSHAM DEVON

With convenient and appropriate Buildings and Sufficient Land if required to keep a horse and cow. The premises are near the village of Abbotsham,

about 2 miles from Bideford, only half a mile from the Bristol Channel where there is excellent sea bathing.

For particulars apply to the owner Mr G. Turner, Solicitor, Bideford.

N.B. About 30 acres of grassland on this Estate will shortly be advertised.

(May 15th 1866- BG).

COTTAGE GARDEN SOCIETY.

The 23rd. annual Summer exhibition of the valuable society, which was established for the purpose of improving the condition of the labouring classes by offering rewards for industry and care in the cultivation of cottage gardens etc was held on Friday last in the National Schoolroom, which was decorated for the occasion. There were some fine specimens of peas, beans, potatoes, turnips, onions, rhubarb, flowers etc. The prizes were given by E.U. Vidal Esq J.P., the Hon. Secretary, in the open air in front of the School.

(July 14th 1868- BG).

**BIRTHS.**

On 11th Inst at Peppercombe, the wife of Mr J. Colmer, prematurely, of a

daughter.

**DEATHS.**

On 14th inst at Peppercombe, Mrs Colmer, lady superintendant of the Hope

Printing Press and Home for Young Women, of consumption.

(August 18th 1868 - BG).

**ABBOTSHAM.**

To be sold at Auction by Mr R.E. Holman on Thursday the 3rd. of September next by 6 o’ clock in the evening (on the premises) two FREEHOLD COTTAGES AND GARDEN situate in the village of Abbotsham in the occupation of John Friendship and Samuel Witheridge. Also the household furniture in the cottage in the occupation of John Friendship, comprising of -

iron bedstead, feather bed, bolster and pillows, mahogany chest of drawers,

looking glass, washstand and ware, round mahogany table, deal table, nine

kitchen chairs, easy chairs, two washing trays, boilers, saucepans and other kitchen requisites.

(August 25th 1868 - BG).

**MARRIAGE.**

On the 24th inst. at Abbotsham Church by Rev. E. Dansey, - Mr James Brown, of Monkleigh to Annie the only daughter of Mr. J. Heywood of Abbotsham.

(March 30th 1869 - BC).

**FREEHOLD HOUSES AND GARDENS FOR SALE.**

To be sold by Auction by Mr. F. Lee, Auctioneer, at Pridham’s “New Inn”,

Abbotsham on Wednesday the 17th 1869 at six in the evening by order of the

Mortgagees, the following Desirable Premises, either together or in Lots-

Lot. 1. A dwelling house comprising, Front Kitchen, Back Kitchen, and two

good Bedrooms, with the Garden, Pighouse, Privy - premises situate near the

Vicarage in the village of Abbotsham, in the occupancy of Phillip Tucker at

rent of £4.lOs per annum.

Lot. 2. Dwelling House - front kitchen, back kitchen, two good bedrooms, with Garden, Pighouse, and Privy - in the occupancy of James Bird, at rent of £4 per annum.

Lot. 3. Dwelling house - front kitchen, back kitchen, two good bedrooms,

with Garden, Pighouse and Privy - adjoining Lot 2, in the occupancy of J.

Taylor at the rent of £4 per annum.

Lot. 4. Dwelling House - comprising Front Shop, Kitchen, two large back

kitchens, pantry, coal house, Potato House, and four bedrooms over. Garden, pighouse, Privy, stable, adjoining Lot 1, in the occupancy of Mr G. Squance - yearly value £7.

As the above must necessarily be converted into money immediately, an excellent opportunity is offered to persons seeking a compact little property in a healthy district, either for residence or investment.

(February 1869- BG).

**ABBOTSHAM.**

The Cottage Garden Society which was established in 1845 is the oldest institution of its kind in the neighbourhood. it has continued owing to the indefatigable exertions of the respected founder Mr E. G. Vidal of Cornborough. The Show takes place twice a year ¡n July and September, and prizes varying from 2s.6d downwards are given. A spade for the best basket of vegetables was given as usual by Captain Wren.

(July 13th 1869- BG).

**ABBOTSHAM.**

A meeting on behalf of the Society for the Propogation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts will be held in the Schoolroom at Abbotsham on Friday the 24th at 7 o’ clock in the evening when the Rev. G.L. Towers, Travelling Secretary to the Society and other clergymen will attend. Edward Dansey. Vicar.

(September 21st 1869- BG).

**ABBOTSHAM**

To be Let by Tender for a term of 7 or 14 years from Lady Day next, all that messuage, Tenement, Farm and Premises called - KEENS situate in the parish of Abbotsham, containing by Tithe measurement 15 acres of good Arable, Meadow and Pasture Land, together with a convenient Dwelling House and Outbuildings, now in the occupation of Mr Robert Brock as Tenant. For viewing the same apply to the tenant or to Mr J. Turner of Coombe, Abbotsham, and for further particulars to Mr G. Turner, Solicitor, Bideford.

(October 5th 1869 - BG).

**DEATH.**

On 11th inst at Abbotsham, Mr Thomas Glover aged 59.

(October 19th 1869 - BG). .

**DEATH.**

On 9th inst at Moreton House, Mrs Catherine Northcote aged 73.

(January 18th 1870 - BG).

**ABBOTSHAM.**

The 25th Annual Show in connection with the excellent Cottage Garden Society of this parish took place on Friday when it was made the occasion for a general celebration at Kenwith in aid of the Church Restoration Fund. Kenwith is the residence of the Vicar, the Rev. Edward Dansey. The castle which has been connected with so many historical events has been removed, but the ancient mansion still remains as a relic of this once famous habitation, and on Friday the lawn ¡n front of the residence was the scene of a large somewhat fashionable, and most agreeable tea meeting. The show, to which the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, as well as the cottagers have been invited to contribute, took place in a tent and building at the rear of the house, and the produce was sold to the visitors in aid of the fund now being raised for the restoration of the church. The amount equired for the restoration, which is now in progress, is about £300, and of this um upwards of two thirds has been realised. We find on perusing the ubscription list that a sixth part of the £300 has been given by the worthy squire of Cornborough, Mr E.U. Vidal, and that the Vicar is among the principal donors. The proceeds of the show on Friday amounted to £19.6s.7d.

(September13th 1870- BG).

ABBOTSHAM CHURCH

TO BUILDERS AND MASONS.

Persons desirous of tendering for the Slating of the Roof of the Church may see the specifications at Mr C. Pickards, Pitt, Abbotsham, any day between the hours of 10 and 12. Tenders must be sent to him on or before Tuesday 22nd May. The Parish Authorities do not bind themselves to accept the lowest of any tender.

(May 15th 1866- BG).

MARRIAGE.

On the 29th ult at Abbotsham Church by the Rev. Henry S. Eyre, Vicar of Newington, Kent, assisted by the Rev. E. Dansey, Vicar of Abbotsham - Aurthur Luscombe Poole Esq. of the Inner Temple, Barrister at Law, of Brent

Knoll, Somerset, to Margaret Seally second daughter of Edward Urch Vidal

Esq. of Cornborough.

(September 3rd 1867 - BG).

**MARRIAGE.**

On the 26th inst at Abbotsham by Rev. E. Dansey - Mr William Pearce of St. Mary Cray, Kent, to Melinda, seventh daughter of Mr Leonard Woodcock of Abbotsham.

December 28th 1870 - BG).

**DEATH.**

On 2nd inst at High Park, Abbotsham - George Reynolds Esq.

(March 14th 1871 - BG).

**DEATH.**

On 24th inst at Coombe, Abbotsham - Mr John Turner, Jun.

(April 25th 1871 - BG).

**ABBOTSHAM.**

To be let from Michaelmas next a GENTEEL RESIDENCE with Garden called CHALTABOROUGH consisting of a Parlour, Kitchen, Five Bedrooms, also a

Stable and Coach house if required. The house is well sheltered, distant about two miles from the celebrated watering place Westward Ho, and within a quarter of an hours walk of the sea.

The taker can also be accommodated with an orchard and a field.

(August 30th 1870 - BG).

**MARRIAGE.**

On 8th inst at Abbotsham Church near Bideford - Francis William Chapman Haslam of St. Johns College, Cambridge to Rose St. Barbe, only daughter of Lt. Col. St. Barbe Browne, late of Bombay, Army.

(August 15th 1871 - BC).

**BIRTH.**

On 23rd uit. at Abbotsham, the wife of Mr. W. Barnes of a daughter.

(February 1st 1881 - BG).

**ABBOTSHAM.**

The Rev. R.W. Sealy Vidal, M.A. Vice Principal of the Theological College, Ely, has been presented to the Vicarage of Abbotsham on the resignation of the Rev. P.R.P. Braithwaite.

(February 15th 1881 - BG).