

## **East Brent Parish History Group**

### **Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013**

#### **Meeting Notes**

The Parish History Group held a meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2013 when we had two presentations.

#### **The Turnpike Road through East Brent Parish**

John Rigarlsford and Nigel Lloyd-Jones have been researching the times when the main route through the Parish was under the control of the Bristol Turnpike Trust. From medieval times to the end of the 1800's, maintenance of roads were the responsibility of the Parish. Due to increasing traffic and costs, Turnpike Trusts were formed from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. About 150 trusts were established by 1750 and by 1825 about 1,000 trusts controlled 18,000 miles (29,000 km) of road in England and Wales. Bristol Turnpike Trust was finally established under an Act in 1747 with the stretch through Somerset ending near the Fox & Goose where the Bridgwater Turnpike Trust (1730) took over and carried the Bristol road south across the Somerset Levels. New routes were turnpiked across Sedgemoor by the High Ham & Ashcott and the Wedmore trusts in (1826/7) and the Wells & Highbridge road (1841).

The Somerset trusts were affected by the arrival of the railways and after a period of steady decline they were progressively wound up in the late 1870s onwards and the roads transferred to local Highway Boards and later the County Council in 1888.

The only evidence of the Turnpike Road now remaining through the Parish are two milemarkers. These possibly replaced milestones in 1837 with more durable cast iron. Unfortunately, even these are being damaged and deteriorating despite actually being Grade 2 listed items. These two pictures show the one between Brent House and the A370/A38 roundabout in 2000 and the present day. There is evidence of the original milestone behind the milemarker.



There is a further milemarker in Rooksbridge, mostly hidden by undergrowth (4 miles to Cross). Early maps show a further marker should be on the A38 opposite Mill Batch Farm (5 miles to Cross) but this probably disappeared during the building of the M5 and the bridging of the A38.

Further details are available on the East Brent Parish Council website or the Internet in general.

#### **The Clock at St. Mary's Church, East Brent**

George Frost and Nigel Lloyd-Jones have been investigating the clock at St. Mary's. In the ringing chamber there are wooden steps to a trap door in the ceiling where, on an ancient wooden support structure made from recycled roof beams is the Church clock of a type known as a "side by side birdcage".

Birdcage is the name given to a frame made, usually by a blacksmith, of wrought iron in the form of a large cage supporting the trains of gears. This clock has two trains, the "Going" (moving the clock

face hands) and the “Striking” (rings the bell), and are arranged side by side, hence the name. Features of the clock, such as the “recoil” escapement driven by a pendulum suggest that it was made in the early 1700’s.

The clock came second-hand to East Brent, probably around the mid 1800’s where it may have replaced an earlier clock. Church clocks pre-1700 usually had no hands or dial and only struck a bell at the hours and possibly the quarters. Brent Knoll church had a “Strike Only” clock and therefore it can be assumed that East Brent also had the same type. This type of clock was known for its poor time keeping and difficult to maintain.

Replacement parts were made in 1950 but over the next 50 years the clock became more and more difficult to maintain. In 2005, a generous donation was given to enable the clock to be repaired and cleaned and in July, the clock was dismantled and taken away. 4 months later it was brought back and re-assembled. What went away encrusted with hardened oil and grease and rust returned with a green painted frame, iron gear wheels painted black and gleaming brass gear wheels.



The striking and going trains are driven by lead weights suspended on steel cables that drop down the tower, taking 3 days to reach the bottom. The clock is wound every 2 days so as not to wear out the winders and to correct the time. The aim is to keep the time to within less than one minute of the most accurate time. Hours are sounded by a hammer, controlled by the striking train, striking the tenor bell.

Many church clocks today have had automatic electric winding but it would seem more fitting to continue the tradition of the last 200 hundred years to wind the clock manually. Therefore, if there anyone who would like to join the existing band of winders and take care of a 300 hundred years old clock they would be most welcomed and it's only takes 15 minutes to do.

#### Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held in the Village Hall on **Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013** and thereafter on the first Wednesday of each month (except August). A scanner can be made available to scan any documents/photos.

Pat Hase will give a talk about George Reed (Lord of the Manor of East Brent) on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013 and there will be another Parish History Group Exhibition on 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2013.

All are welcome, please come along.

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Parish Council Website: <http://eastbrentparishcouncil.org.uk/>