

Wimborne Community Theatre Meeting – Pamphill School January 2006

WCT invites local residents to a meeting at the school to find out more about WCT and its plans for the play and to ask them about their lives in Pamphill. Most are long time residents in the village of Pamphill, and one couple arrived only recently and live in Pamphill Manor.

This is a verbatim transcription of the conversation.

“We’re Nicky and James Pain and we just moved here six months ago, and we’re new to the area.

Jim: 71 years and I’m fourth generation and my family lived here. And my son is now actively involved as the fifth generation. I live at Sturminster Marshall now but I’ve been farming out of Chilbridge Farm which is right opposite Kingston Lacy House.

I’ve lived here 42 years, all my life, and I’m fourth generation that’s lived in the village and myself and my mother went through this school and I went to this school, my children went through this school and I hope my grandchildren will. My name is Wayne.

And I’m his other half, Debbie, and we’ve been married 10 years. Wayne literally moved down the road to where we are now.

I’m Marge Cherrett and I’ve lived in the village 79 years ‘cos I was born at Chilbridge and I’ve lived in my house on Pamphill Green where I’m living now, for 51 years. And when I got married I moved to my little cottage and so I went to school here and my two sons went to this school but not my grandchildren cos they didn’t ...

I’m Marge’s sister, born in Chilbridge, and I did move away but then I came back.

Marge: My oldest sister just died on Boxing Day, 87 – not bad ...

8 females in a little tiny cottage. We all came to school here.

Just always been happy here, got no intention of moving. Just like it, it’s a nice place. It’s a very nice village.

Village is spread out. Not a proper village like Sturminster Marshall.

Not a community now, like it used to be because there’s all strangers now and we’re part of a big family.

Church was at the centre, and the farms – we all worked in the farm. We knew everybody in the village, all the way round, Cowgrove and Chilbridge and they all lived here, born here. Actually, the National Trust put the rents up too high for village people to stay so the village people had to leave and the young ones can’t afford it.

They can’t do anything. What can you do about it?

Marge: I hope they’ll let me stay in my cottage.

As long as you pay your rent, you’ll be alright. It depends how high they put it up.

I believe that the greatest change, what in the last 30 odd years, is the fact that we no longer have a landlord, we have a land owner but there's nobody ... but many of us didn't know the Squire well but you recognized him and he would recognize you as one of the minions but everything centred round the Squire, really, he was the figurehead.

He was a reclusive type of man, you see, his father died in '04, I think, and the Squire was only small so he was under his mother's wing or thumb, which ever it was, for a great deal of time, and the family were not, well, there are plenty of books will tell you this, they were not a happy family in a lot of ways, but the Squire was a perfect gentleman and the tragedy was, in a way, was that his son, John, was the image of his father, he looked like him, he sounded like him, and he was a complete gentleman but they had a falling out. John Bankes, Ralph was the father. So John never inherited and that's when the estate came to the National Trust – but, yes, I know you people all feel that there's something missing and it's very strange and just out of interest and this is the sort of thing that used to happen, I've got a ... How many pages of paper you would need to be accepted as a tenant of the National Trust, (*hands round letter*) I am not certain but that is a little tiny letter signed by Mr Bankes, which says how pleased he was to accept me as a joint tenant with my uncle, that was in 1962, and there's another extraordinary thing (*hands round pen*) here - if you've got good enough light and good enough sight, you would find on that bit in the middle it has Mr Bankes' initial and it says "To F. R. Richards, Chilbridge Farm, etc." – that's inscribed, that's a little gold propelling pencil and there is a wee letter here from my grandmother and all that I know about it is that she didn't think here sons would value it too highly so she sent it to her advisor and it was given to Dad long before I ever met him for doing a kindness to an old friend, and that's the best I know of it, for doing a kindness to an old friend. And it's a lovely little relic, that meant, all right, that the Squire knew everybody one way or another ...

Marge: My husband worked for Bankes all the time – he didn't work anywhere else. He was in forestry.

Harry was the only one who knew where he was half the time (*Laughter*).

Carriage walk. Harry's walk. That's my husband, past the church.

But we've still got our village hall.

Marge: That's still going strong. My husband had the MBE for that, for his community work.

Man: Services to the village hall and the village. Well, you should have a bar to that in a minute. (*Laughter*)

Marge: I helped Harry all the time, didn't I? In the winter we have skittles, then we let it out for weddings, parties, Summer time a lot of people from Bournemouth come out for barbeques, and they think it's lovely. Cricket club?

Oh yes, that's all part of the village – not so many villagers play cricket. It's not the villagers now. Once it was all cricket. We all played there at one stage or another.

It used to be a real village. And we had a good football team, played on the green. They had a league. They had a team until about 3 years ago. Then the pavilion got into disarray and the teams moved elsewhere and they sort of disbanded 'cos they didn't have the changing rooms ... and it's not going again.

And the Trust rebuilt the pavilion – and they haven't come back yet.

I don't think they'll come back.

Not many children – if we didn't have outside children our school would close, we hardly have any village children.

When we went to school there was all village children. Jim's grandchildren here now ...that's only the village children who are there ...

Are you going to encourage grandchildren to stay?

If they can. Be nice to think they would.

What themes would you like the play to show? Like the fact there's not many children, people coming in, the Trust, are these important things we should look at?

Man: Well, you could certainly look at the child population, certainly in Margery's neck of the woods just over the road at Eye Bridge. I used to walk a mile down from the farm to get there and become a member of the community more or less, but you would always, you could pick two teams to play football ...

Well, you could ...

Over 30 children in this one length, yes, well, there were 9 of them (*Laughter*) there were 10? Cherretts and Baggs?

I married my neighbour, I went to school with my neighbour and I married him and my sister married his brother.

Well, you only courted across the road!

People didn't travel. We couldn't get around because there were no cars, were there, and we'd go car spotting and there'd be the vicar, and the Squire's car, and that was about all the cars we seen, until the army came.

And the land girls were here.

We used to have some nice times then, I knew quite a few of them.

You weren't worried about them stealing your men?

The Americans were here then in Kingston Lacy park.

What about the Vine, the pub – strong part of the community?

Yes, it's a very strong part of the community and it's great strength in my view is that it's still exactly the same as when it was when I went there aged 17 and the same family still run it.

Pity it's not a bit bigger.

There was a landlord called Eli in those days.

Yes, there was.

And the lady who's there now is his granddaughter.

Prices gone up!

Well, they have a bit. But it has a charm all of its own because of its simplicity – and I mean the only staff there are all family.

Yes, and Yvonne does go and help her sister. She lost her husband, didn't she?

Local people still go to the Vine. Lots of cyclists and walkers, and you can't move down there in summer time.

What do you think about it, people coming in ...? Are you pleased?

No, not a lot. There's always people about now – I used to spend hours on the green, in the wintertime you wouldn't see anybody on the green – you could walk about looking for squirrels and that,

Yes, but they don't care about it, do they?

But there's always people there ...

They come here, it's a beauty spot and they go home, they leave their rubbish, leave their car tracks ...

But they do bring a certain amount of prosperity to the village because wherever they camp, they do spread their spend around somewhere.

And there's the farm shop, isn't there?

Indeed, they try to keep that going. *(Laughter)*

And it's nice to hear children playing on the green, isn't it?

Oh Lord, yes, there's hundreds of them playing there sometimes, it's incredible, isn't it?

These are all visiting children, are they, come in cars?

Oh, yes.

(To newcomers) What brought you here to Pamphill?

We nearly moved here 13 or 14 years ago to the Manor and it just came on the market again and we responded and came here. We've got quite a lot of interesting things here *(in file)*. It's got a ghost. We've never seen it *(laughter)*, but I expect you have.

Oh yes, I used to work there when Adrian and Mrs Batten lived there, when my daughter was about 2 and I used to live just across the green and work there and she'd seen the ghost lots of times. Green bathroom up the stairs to the visitors' bedroom and round the bathroom and the bedroom ...

How does it manifest itself?

It goes in the bathroom quite a lot. *(Laughter)*

We've had quite a few electrical problems - blame it on the ghost.

When Julian Homer lived there, that was ages ago, his radio used to go on and off, and his dog ...used to move along the ...

We can hear someone being dragged through the hall.

I haven't heard anything.

I don't know whether Diane and Michael heard anything?

They did. Michael said nothing. Diane said there was a couple of odd things happened that she put down to the ghost.

She used to say going in the front hall there was a mark because that was the blood coming out. *(Laughter)*

That was what Diane told us when we come across it.

We bought my boy a pool table for Christmas and sometimes I hear "William, are you playing pool?" and he says "No, I'm down here somewhere", and I know I've heard the ball and then you start to think you're going mad because no one else has heard it. I don't have any problems and the children are usually quite sensitive about these things and they are totally at home. Children or pets.

It's supposed to go up the windy stairs that go up the roof above the kitchen. At top.

It's very frightening, isn't it? *(Laughter)*

Not really.

No, I've no idea. Someone had a child there years ago, and they had to kill the baby.

They had to what?

They had to kill it, and that's supposed to be buried there.

Why did they have to kill the baby?

Because it was the boss's child to like the maid.

Oh, I see – a bastard. Actually, that probably fits in because when we were about to move in years ago, someone said the story of a mother crying for her baby. So that probably is it.

That's the story I've always heard anyway.

Long years ago, hundreds of years ago, 16th century.

Yes, they had to kill the baby.

Has the house always been somewhere that has intrigued the villagers?

? He was friendly. I used to go there on a Saturday to help him cut his grass.

Blatovs married 52 years ago. He married a

He was the vicar of the church?

The first vicar was Benniston, was it not? And he was a sort of second son and he had considerable means and had two daughters who lived there as spinsters for a long time.

I was named after them. One was Miss Margery and one was Miss Aileen.

(Laughter)

Then when he retired or died or whatever he did, Harry Evans arrived and he unfortunately had nothing at all and he relied entirely on his stipend which was granted by the Squire and would not have been that generous, I suspect, and he did suffer a bit, I think, because of his lack of means.

He died of mouth cancer.

Yes, he did, I thought that was a dreadful thing for a vicar to be afflicted by.

Do you remember his wife? She used to feed the robins and put the food in her mouth and the robin used to come and pick out of her mouth.

We used to have to fetch the milk from the dairy and I was showing off with the milk, like this and the lid came off! *(Laughter)* Oh dear, I had to go and get some more and then my mum found out because we had a bigger bill than usual, you see ...oh dear!

We had a plane come down, didn't we, out in the field down back, a German plane, we weren't allowed to go across, a field called Bounds, just opposite what was the vicarage – it crashed and we weren't allowed to go there in case he jumped out. It may have been a glider. At the top of the avenue there was an air field built specially there to accommodate the gliders that were going to be needed on D Day – the whole of the avenue both sides under the trees, absolutely crammed with military bits and pieces, trucks and guns and goodness knows what, and on the following day they'd gone, all gone, all taken to Tarrant Rushton and put on gliders and taken over to France – an amazing operation.

Summer fair – helpers at the fair – we all have been involved.

What was the most significant thing that happened?

The day Ralph Bankes died.”