

tableaux were selected from the surpassingly rich history of Glastonbury and district. Glastonbury stands out as one of the most interesting districts in the West of England in the matter of historical associations, and this week most successful endeavour was made to "reconstruct" these early and Mediaeval pictures for the benefit of the modern spectator. From the time of Joseph of Arimathaea down through the subsequent centuries there is presented a rich field for the genius of the artist in historical reproduction; and the inhabitants of Butleigh and the neighbourhood have covered themselves with distinction in turning this abundant material to the best possible account in the organisation of tableaux, which seemed to annihilate time and transport the spectator back into those dim and romantic ages when the famous thorn blossomed, when King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were living personages, and when Dane, and Saxon, and Norman were the picturesque figures on the great and bustling stage of life.



**Stand, stage and spectators all gone and the Court returns to its slumbers**



The following newspaper 'clippings' are in approximate chronological order

3) *Uncertain Review 19th June 1906 (Local)*

**SOMERSET VILLAGE PAGEANT**

Never was village pageant more picturesque than the revel at Butleigh yesterday. Stimulated by the example of Sherborne, the villagers were stirred with the desire to present the events of their own historic neighbourhood, to set forth the glorious past of Glastonbury and the Vale of Avalon. The Sherborne pageant was, perhaps, more gorgeous, but it was in its simplicity that the chief charm of yesterday's revel lay. Mr. Neville Grenville placed his grounds at the disposal of the committee, and the large lawn, bordered by forest trees provided an ideal scene. Glorious weather favoured the performance, and there was a huge attendance.

All the characters were taken by villagers. The pageant commenced with the dawn of civilisation in Britain, Phonician traders bartering their stuffs with half-naked Britons in their midst. Then came St. Joseph of Arimathaea, who is received in peace by Arvirargus, King of Avalon and granted land for the first wattle church. After a lapse of four centuries came the Passing of Arthur a gorgeous and impressive scene. Following the cortege were the three Queens, the people and the monks flock around, and little children scatter flowers on the bier. Queen Morgan's part, taken by Miss Mary Berkeley, authoress of the play, was well acted with great dignity and pathos.

Then we saw King Alfred receiving his thrashing from Gundred for spoiling the cakes and afterwards the Peace of Wedmore.

A marked feature was the acting of the crowd. It was a natural crowd, a crowd of individuals who put as much into their parts as the principals. The arrest and trial of Richard Whyting, last Abbot of Glastonbury was certainly the cleverest of the acts. Here too, the crowd acted well as the Abbot and his two monks were drawn on hurdles to their execution at Glastonbury. Monmouth's rebellion was a scene full of historic interest.

Lastly, before the grand procession of 300 performers, came a Maypole dance by boys dressed in green and girls in pink and white. As the Spirit of Avalon, Miss Somerville recited the prologues and introductions to the scenes with great power and clearness of tone, and so through many centuries the part that Glastonbury has played in the rise of England was clearly set forth in a way that the dullest pupil of history could grasp and appreciate.

4) *Daily Mail June 20th*

**PAGEANT OF PAST AGES  
VILLAGE ACTORS IN HISTORIC SCENES**

On the vivid greensward of Butleigh Court, Glastonbury, the ancient Butleigh revels took place yesterday afternoon in delightful weather in the presence of 2,000 spectators gathered from all parts of England.

The numerous historic pageants were exceedingly effective in their charming setting of woodland scenery and bright blue sky. The tableaux represented scenes in Britain's history from the time of the Phoenicians and on through the pre-Christian days to the time of the passing of Arthur and the exploits of Alfred the Great, with special reference to the part which Glastonbury and its grand old abbey played in those great epochs, until the middle of the eighteenth century. The parts were taken by residents of Glastonbury and Butleigh. The costumes were historically accurate, and nothing could have been more striking and beautiful than to see the gaily-attired men, women, and children moving animatedly across the natural stage or dancing merrily on the sward to the strains of an orchestra ensconced in the greenery.

Perhaps the most successful, certainly the most popular, were the pageant and tableaux dealing with Alfred's time. All the parts were spiritedly taken, and the role of the fair-haired hero-king was wonderfully played. The scene where the swineherd's wife rates the king for scorching the cakes' provoked a storm of cheers.

Another especially successful representation was the old English revel on the green, with the man in motley to provide uproarious fun. The dancing by the young men and maidens before King Henry and his Queen aroused great enthusiasm.

The local actors and actresses, trained for some weeks back by professionals, acted their parts one and all admirably, entering into the spirit of the thing with notable tact. Ladies in gay summer toilettes largely predominated in the gathering of spectators, and nearly all the clergy of the three Wessex counties were present.

The final pageant was a splendid historical spectacle, all who had taken part in the various scenes joining in the procession and marching under the grand arcade formed by the boughs of the great trees surrounding the lawn to the martial strains of a military band. So successful were the revels that they may become an annual fixture.

5) *Daily Telegraph June 20th*

**WEST COUNTRY HISTORY.  
GLASTONBURY PAGEANT**

When the Sherborne pageant was over, a few Somerset folk recollected that their county had incidents in its history which would lend themselves to picturesque reproduction. Butleigh, in the heart of Somerset, took the lead, and, being within a few miles of Glastonbury, is rich in historical associations. Butleigh was not so pretentious as Sherborne, and the original idea was to confine the revels to the villagers. But the promoters had to reckon with the district outside the parish. West country men are notoriously patriotic, and a host of natives of the county, especially ladies, flocked to the assistance of Butleigh to make the display worthy of Somersetshire, and the scenes the tableaux depicted. In the representation, however, Butleigh loomed large. It must have been a source of infinite anxiety to the gentleman who staged the show to find room and appropriate parts for half the parishioners. He often against his better judgement had to find room for some rural mummer, or the applicant would go away sorely disappointed. A Butleigh man, woman, or child was a rarity in the audience. They made up the motley crowd on the stage, swaggered about as nobles in doublet and hose, filled in the background as Glastonbury monks, posed as courtiers, or - humble is the lot of some individuals, even in a pastoral scene - were classified as mere "townsfolk." They could not all play the part of Hamlet, though doubtless many considered themselves equal to it. The organisers were wise in giving the principal characters to the leading persons in the parish and



to those from surrounding parishes who had volunteered to give proof of their histrionic abilities. Local talent was confined to displaying how well the stage manager had marshalled the rank and file, and how easy it is to turn the rustic, for two days only; into the knight of other times. Truth to tell, the parishioners of Butleigh if a little heavy in their movements, acted their parts to the manner born. On occasions, it is said, they can be intensely dramatic, but their opportunities in the revels were few.

The pageant was fittingly staged. Mr. Neville Grenville, who has throughout been most active in the arrangement of the details, lent Butleigh Court for the show, and the visitors were allowed to roam over the exquisite park, and enjoy the blaze of flowers. The lawn, which has taken half a century of care and attention to bring it to perfection, was handed over to the performers to utilise as they thought best. The grass was too extensive for stage purposes, and the young boughs of many a tree were cut to form a screen across the centres, and delightful little glades were fashioned into exits for the players. A semi-circular stand to accommodate 1,000 persons at least, was built between the house and the lawn, and a very few yards away stood the Church of St. Leonard's, Butleigh, for which the surplus funds are to be devoted. The tenor bell in the grand old square turret of the church has to be recast, and the vicar and his flock are praying that the fine weather may last over to-day, so that the admission money may be sufficient to send the bell to the foundry. The church is one of the oldest in Somersetshire, and its origin is lost in antiquity. In the porch are two pillars which antiquarians declare to be Saxon. The west window was given to the church by Henry VII who benefitted several other Somerset churches in return for the splendid rallying to his standard by the men of the county.

The tableaux were arranged to educate the parishioners in the stirring events which had occurred in the immediate neighbourhood of their own home and to excite in them a patriotic love for a district full of historical surroundings. All the scenes save one had a distinctly local interest. The exception was the "Phoenician Traders," a representation of Lord Leighton's picture in the Royal Exchange, and that was chosen as indicating the dawn of our history. The old tradition of St. Joseph of Arimathea and the planting of the Holy Thorn was revived, with the vicar, the Rev. G. W. Berkeley, undertaking the part of St. Joseph. Of course, Somerset could not have a pageant without some reference to Alfred the Great. Equally, of course, the fairy tale of Alfred, Gundred, and the burnt barley cakes had to be retold. The scenes which appealed more than any other were those portraying the dissolution of Glastonbury Abbey. Abbot Whyting, the last Abbot of Glastonbury, was accused by the Commissioners of Henry VIII. of treason, in that he protested against the King's divorce, had secreted the Abbey plate, which was badly required to replenish the Royal treasure-chest, and refused to reveal the names of those who supported the northern rebellion with arms and money. One tableau was devoted to the accusation, a second showed the trial in the bishop's palace at Wells, and the third disclosed the procession to Tor Hill, whither the abbot and two prisoners were drawn on hurdles to be executed. Great care was taken to accurately costume the players and the "book," which was cleverly written by Miss Berkeley, the daughter of the vicar, was as historically correct as the records handed down from 1539 would permit. The tableau of seven Butleigh men joining Monmouth at Taunton naturally appealed to the inhabitants, and the performance concluded with a scene of Tor Fair in the olden days and an eighteenth-century view of Glastonbury, in which a group of people jabbered in the quaintest Somerset dialect on the change of style.

There is no question about the success of the revels. The turret of St. Leonard's should receive a sound tenor bell, although the expenses of the production must have been considerable. The principal roles were taken by the Rev. B. Sanders, curate of Street, Mr. Christie, Mr. R. Bath, Mr. R. Neville Grenville who had a rousing reception, the Rev. H. Dawes, Vicar of Baltonsborough, the Rev. Mr. Looke, Miss Berkeley, Miss Somerville and the Rev. G. D'Angibau, the latter taking the part of the Rev. Mr. Cartwright, who died a month ago. Mr. D. Mildred was the general director of the pageant, and some of the scenes arranged by him permitted nearly 300 performers appearing at the same time. Butleigh is a proud little village to-day, and not a soul in it is inclined to return to his work until the revels are over. The hay harvest demands that labour shall recommence tomorrow.

#### 6) *THE TIMES* June 20th

**BUTLEIGH "REVEL."**—Favoured with delightful weather Butleigh "Revel," which came to a close yesterday, was an unequivocal success. Inspired by the pageant held at Sherborne last year the residents of Butleigh, a secluded Somerset village, heartily supported the project to hold a similar festival. The theme of the pageant was the history of Glastonbury from the time of the Phoenicians to 1752. Practically all the villagers assisted in one way or another, and residents in the neighbourhood lent practical help to the festival. The costumes were all made locally, the ladies of Butleigh, holding sewing classes in the winter months, and this of itself pleasantly stimulated interest in the production. Mr. R. Neville Grenville put the grounds of Butleigh court at the disposal of the promoters. The book was written by Miss M. Berkeley, daughter of the vicar. There were eight acts, as they were termed, but they were preceded by a tableau, "The Phoenician Traders" (after Lord Leighton's painting in the Royal Exchange), and followed by a procession in which all those who had assisted in the "Revel" took part. The acts dealt with the coming of St. Joseph of Arimathea and the blossoming of the holy thorn; "the passing of Arthur," showing the burial of the hero king at Glastonbury Abbey; King Alfred and the burning of the cakes; the peace of Wedmore; Dunstan and King Edmund Ironsides; Henry I granting the charter for Tor Fair, which has been held annually for nearly eight centuries; the dissolution of Glastonbury Abbey and the trial and execution of Abbot Whyting, the last Abbot of Glastonbury; Monmouth's rebellion, and his reception of seven recruits from Butleigh, also the presenting of a Bible and a sword to him by the maids of Taunton; and the final act shown by the "magic tapestry" was entitled "The change of style in 1752 at Glastonbury." The director and stage manager, to whom much of the success of the pageant must be attributed, was Mr. D. Mildred, of Cirencester. The incidental, vocal, and instrumental music, and the Morris dances, had, like the tableaux, been carefully rehearsed. Any profit from the "Revel" will be devoted to some public object at Butleigh.

#### 7) *Somerset County Gazette* June 23rd

### **THE REVEL AT BUTLEIGH. A THOUSAND YEARS OF SOMERSET HISTORY ILLUSTRATED. PICTURESQUE PAGEANT.**

**PRAISEWORTHY LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT.** Of all the counties of England none can lay a greater claim to have had take place within its border events having a more far-reaching effect towards the greatness of the British Empire as we know it to-day than Somerset. To the ecclesiologist and the antiquary the Shire has proved itself a very paradise, and this district is the richest in England for the remains of middle-age domestic architecture. Nearly every stick and stone in Somerset brings to the mind stories of a most



romantic character. Therefore it was highly appropriate that, following somewhat on the lines of the pageant at Sherborne last year, an entertainment having the same educational value should be organised for Somerset. There are many districts in Somerset rich with stories upon which spectacular tableaux can be built, but none more so than the "district, of sea lakes," as the country in and around Glastonbury is called. The announcement that at Butleigh Court, four miles from Glastonbury, a "Revel" would be held on Tuesday and Wednesday last caused great interest to be aroused over a large district, and the gratifying reports of the successful rehearsals augured well for the success of the venture. The spacious lawn of Butleigh Court, lent by Mr. Neville Grenville, who played no small part in the pageant, was utilised for the stage, and excellent work was done in the provision of a "book" by Miss Berkeley, the talented daughter of the vicar of Butleigh, who chose a series of tableaux founded on events from A.D. 63, when Joseph of Arimathea came to Glastonbury and, as tradition has it, planted his staff, which immediately blossomed, and does so every Christmas Eve, until so-called "King: Monmouth" received his welcome at Taunton from the Fair Maids, who sent him forth with a Bible, sword and banner on the short career which ended on the field of Sedgmoor. Too much praise cannot be accorded Miss M. Berkeley for the able manner in which she dealt with the various incidents, the dialogue being written without undue employment "of flights of fancy." To sum the "book" up, the authoress contributed some exceedingly telling explanatory verses, and told her stories shortly and simply. The stage management devolved upon Mr. D. Mildred, a nephew of Mr. Neville Grenville, who entered into his task *con amore*, and laboured with so much energy that the local people, who exclusively made up the tableaux, performed their tasks in a manner which was little short of wonderful. The whole of the costumes were made locally, and thus another triumph was recorded.

#### **THE STAGE AND ARRANGEMENTS.**

At Butleigh Court the spacious lawn afforded ideal opportunities for the purposes of a pastoral play, for in a central position, yet some way from the terrace, is a graceful cypress tree, which spread its branches and joined foliage behind in a wealth of soft shadows which, would have been hard to represent artificially. By the aid of firs, cleverly introduced, the movement of the 300 performers in the play behind the scenes were entirely blotted out, and trees on each side lent themselves for wings. On the terrace was an extensive grandstand, capable of accommodating 1,700 persons, and in other portions of the magnificent grounds of the house were provided refreshment tents. On Monday was held a dress rehearsal, and this was largely attended by people of the neighbourhood and the school children, and it is pleasing to note that the attendance on the first day, Tuesday, which was of a fashionable character, was so large that the success of the pageant from a pecuniary standpoint was assured. Large numbers of people were present from Taunton, Wellington, and other towns, motor cars being used by many in preference to a tedious journey by rail but it was a matter of regret that in Taunton and other places, bills announcing cheap excursions were only posted two days before the event.

#### **THE MEANING OF "REVEL."**

The word "revel" has been misunderstood. The following quotation from Warner's "History of the Abbey 'of Glaston" explains its use: - "The wake, or annual revel, so common in our country village, is nothing more than the vigil, or nocturnal watchings of former days, on the eve of the Patron Saint. It is now held by day instead of night, and converted from superstitious uses to the more cheerful form of rustic recreation." In this case, though not the vigil of St. Leonard, Patron Saint of Butleigh, the word was chosen as being old and familiar, and as bearing a meaning too good to be associated only with uproarious merriment.

#### **AVALON'S WELCOME.**

By a happy inspiration the authoress adopted the idea of Avalon, a figure in flowing robes, introducing each scene of the pageant, as Chorus does in Shakespeare's "Henry V." Miss Somerville, of Dinder, essayed with distinct success, the role of "Avalon," and, attired in a gracefully arranged robe in shades of green, she delivered her lines with beautiful expression and clearness of enunciation. A herald having blown a fanfare Avalon recited, with much dramatic effect, the epilogue, in which occurred the lines:—

By the Thorn That blows so fair at Glaston, we'll delight you!  
 We, by our magic, now will conjure up  
 The years long swallowed by Time's restless waves!  
 Show you great Saints, and heroes long since dead!  
 Call to your minds the deeds and prayers of those  
 Who, raising Brittonia from the unknown dust,  
 Have made our Island what she is to-day!

#### **THE PHOENICIAN TRADERS.**

The incidental music, which was admirably selected, was played by the Street Band, and their performances reflected great credit on the members. They were stationed in one of the "wings," and during the playing of Handel's "Occasional" overture the first tableau was shown. Into the arena swarmed a horde of early Britons, clad in skins, and bearing, as weapons of the chase, bows and arrows. Then came the Phoenician Traders, and the wonderment of the Britons at the appearance of the curiously-clad traders was cleverly simulated. The newcomers bartered goods, and then Avalon announced:

#### **THE COMING OF ST. JOSEPH,**

and the planting of the staff, A.D. 63, in the following introductory verse:—

Lo! from the East the dawn of the White Christ  
 Is slowly breaking; Pagan darkness flies;  
 The power of Gwyn, the demon King is broken.  
 To Ynyswytryn's shores, by God directed.  
 Comes now Great Joseph, with his twice-six saints.

The Rev. G. W. Berkeley could not have been improved upon to play the part of Joseph, his kindly feature investing the role with much realism. He entered, with his brethren, chanting monotonously "Weary all," and then was unfolded the beautiful legend of the

Holy Thorn, which sprang from Joseph's implanted staff. Arviragus, the King, arrives, and in answer to his interrogations is told that St. Joseph and the brethren have come to proclaim the new law of peace and love. St. Joseph is given permission to build a temple for worship, and the brethren proceed to erect a structure, being told that Avalon, the island of Apples, is the laud of dead warriors and chiefs, to which St. Joseph replies that the land shall be no longer that of the dead, but of the living. Then is completed the first church in Britain. The building of the wattle house was accompanied by an invisible choir chanting unaccompanied Psalm Ixxxiv., "Oh, how amiable art Thy dwellings."

#### **THE PASSING OF ARTHUR**

was one of the most beautiful tableaux of the afternoon, and it was carried out in a manner which gained the unstinted approval of the audience. As the strains of Gluck's march "Alcestia" floated on the breeze Abbot Benignus (the Rev. G. W. Saunders), making an imposing figure in his white robes, appears, and sees a mournful procession winding slowly from the depths of the tree shadows. The body of Arthur is borne on a richly decorated bier, and behind walks Queens Morgan Le Fay (Miss Berkeley), North Gallis, and Waste Lands. The colouring of this tableau was a conception, of much beauty, and an elegant contrast was afforded by the rich costumes and jewels of the three Queens and the simple garb of the monks. The townspeople are admitted to the Abbey and children crowd around and place flowers on the bier. The King is then borne away to be buried in the Abbey grounds to the singing of Cherubini's "Requiem Sempiternam." The dignified bearing of the Queens and the solemnity of the incident, which Avalon claims to be the scene of, made this a long-to-be-remembered scene.

#### **KING ALFRED AT ATHELNEY.**

The next tableau took us to the year 878, or thereabouts, and without this scene the pageant would have been incomplete. The first bit of humour of the revel was here introduced, for to the hut of Denulf, the swineherd, on the-island of Athelney, came King Alfred, led there by the swineherd himself. Alfred (Mr. E. L. Christie) bore himself in soldierly manner, and is left to watch the cakes, with the result that, as every child knows, they were burnt. The scolding wife, who belabours the kingly shoulders, afforded great-amusement, and the Somerset dialect of the swineherd and her was appreciated to the full, and invested the text with charm no professional actor, except a Somerset man, could have attained to.

#### **THE PEACE OF WEDMORE.**

King Alfred figured in the next tableau, when, peace having been restored, the treaty of Wedmore is signed. Alfred, Queen Ethelswytha, the Royal children, and the Court made a charming spectacle, and Asser, Bishop of Sherborne, introduces Guthrum, the King of the Danes, whom Alfred has defeated, and who has through the instrumentality of Asser accepted Christianity. After the signing of the treaty a pretty incident is introduced in the recognition by Alfred of his old friend the swineherd. Mr. Christie's impersonation of the fair-haired Alfred was a clever study, and the dress and make-up perfect.

#### **THE LATER SAXONS.**

##### **ST. DUNSTAN AND KING EDMUND IRONSIDES.**

The story here takes a jump of 62 years, to that of 910, when Glastonbury Abbey lies in ruins. King Edmund is discovered seated, attended by his nobles. St. Dunstan enters and tells of his dream in which he sees the great church at Glastonbury restored. The King declares that a new and greater church shall rise upon the ruins, and its restorer shall be St. Dunstan. The elocution of the St. Dunstan and the King in this scene made a great impression on those present and a beautiful effect was produced by the subdued music during the recital of St. Dunstan's dream.

This act concluded with a tableau, "The tribute of wolves skins at Edgarley."

#### **KING HENRY'S CHARTER TO GLASTONBURY**

##### **TOR FAIR IN THE OLDEN TIME.**

Another big jump was made to 1127, when Henry I, the Scholar King, visited Glastonbury and granted a charter to the townsfolk and the Abbey to hold a fair one day before the feast of St. Michael and on the day of that feast. The tableau gave the promoters every chance for a spectacular display, and the actors entered into their parts with a zest which made the fair scene a most complete representation. Henry and his Queen are received with shouts of joy by the people, and the Abbot and Monks sally forth, and suitably welcome the Royal personages and the retinue: After the reading of the charter the King and Queen sit and watch the fair and its attendant frolic and fun. The spectator could imagine himself witnessing a typical revel of the middle ages, and the background of luxuriant foliage set off the gaily coloured costumes in a marked degree. The whole formed a picture of rainbow colouring set in a framework of delicate tints of green foliage. The Morris dancers made a brave show, and their gyrations were evidently the result of much practice. In the crowd all was jollity. Vendors of sweetstuffs displayed their wares on trays slung before them, and a jester made free with his bladder on the heads of the luckless individuals who were not aware of his approach. Two old men had an assault-at-arms on their own, but a stalwart monk restored quietness in this quarter, while the Squire of Butleigh, in gay attire, was not backward in his attentions to the ladies, with whom he cut many a rollicking caper. It was first-class acting, and all entered so keenly into the abandon of the scene that spoke volumes for the intelligent interest Mr. Mildred's forces manifested in what, to some of the performers, will be the event of their life.

#### **THE DISSOLUTION OF THE ABBEY, 1539.**

##### **TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF ABBOT WHYTING.**

Richard Whyting, the last Abbot of Glastonbury, who was nominated by Cardinal Wolsey, saw the Abbey in the height of its prosperity, and though remaining firm to his ideals, and vigorously defying the ruling of the King, he suffered an ignominious end with the Prior and Sub-Prior on Tor Hill. Naturally, the last events in the life of the Martyr Abbot proved the best possible upon which the authoress could display her talents. Artistically and sympathetically written, the dialogue dealt with the arrest of Whyting at Sharpham, his trial before Lord Russell, and the procession to Tor Hill. The part of Abbot Whyting was one of the successes of the pageant, and the Rev. H. Dawes, who presented the interpretation, gave a study of the staunch old dignitary which was of a most

forcible character, and he received able assistance from the Prior (the Rev. E. S. C. Lock). Mr. W. Brymer, as the stern and unrelenting Judge Russell, looked the picture of judicial severity in his scarlet robes, and the large audiences hung on the passage of words between him and Whyting with an attention that was in itself a deserved compliment to the actors in the trial scene. The final scene depicted the Abbot and his faithful Prior and Sub-Prior strapped to hurdles and being drawn to Tor Hill, where they were hanged, taken down before dead and beheaded and quartered.

### **" KING MONMOUTH " AT TAUNTON", 1685; TAUNTON MAIDS AND BUTLEIGH YEOMEN'S FEALTY.**

Students of history will remember that so enthusiastic were the Westerners in support of so-called "King Monmouth" that they flocked to serve under his banner being armed only with such rude weapons as flails, scythes, reaping hooks, and other agricultural articles. Parson John Radford, of Butleigh, brought seven to Taunton to enlist under the ill-advised Duke, and a most amusing scene was that in which the parson (Mr. R. Neville Grenville), on his pony, leads his septet of staunch yeomen, clad in smocks and blue stockings to the presence of Monmouth. The Duke accepts the men, and asks Parson John whether he also follows him, to which the old vicar chuckles, and replies, "Not, I, sir. I be a passon, and a wold man! I must go home to my vlock, over to Butleigh, and teach the children their catechism," a speech received with roars of laughter and applause. The make-up of the seven men was capital, and the Somerset dialect rolled out in perfect unison with their garb. The attractiveness of the scene was heightened when a bevy of dainty girls, in white dresses and quaint bonnets, tripped in with the Bible, banner, and sword to present to the Duke. The girls played their parts in most bewitching manner, and Monmouth having returned his thanks, the scene ended with the Duke and his supporters departing to the accompanying cheers and shouts of the crowd, "Long live Monmouth, and the Protestant succession for ever! A Monmouth! A Monmouth! A Monmouth!".

### **CHRISTMAS EVE AT GLASTONBURY ABBEY, 1752.**

Playgoers of the present day demand happy endings to the productions, and it was a wise stroke to conclude the pageant with a dash of comedy, in which the tradition as to the Holy Thorn blooming on Christmas Eve was used as the pivot upon which to work that argument. Mr. Bob Knight was the leading spirit in this scene, and his lusty tones and broad dialect proved a great source of merriment. The people did not like the change in the calendar, and, led by Master Richards (Mr. Knight), the keeper of the Abbey ruins, they visit the Thorn on Christmas Eve, when the following dialogue ensued:

Sally Peters: Cans't hear 'em haffer?

Second Woman: What they buds?

Third Woman: No! I don't hear nowt!

Richards (holding his lanthorne close to the tree): Why there beant no flowers 'pon the tree!

Crowd: No vlowers ?

Richards: Narry one little bud!

Sally Peters: Then 'tidden Chirsmas Eve!

Richards: No, 'tidden Chirsmas Eve!

Sammy Ford: Thee must write another letter to King Jarge, vriend Richards, an' tell 'un Holy Tharn don't blow!

Sally Peters: That's zo'. He must write to King Jarge.

Richards: Why so I wull! I'll warn't we can larn 'un zummat from Zummerzet!

The post of Sally Peters in this scene was also one deserving of the highest encomiums, and greatly delighted the audiences. At the conclusion of this scene the whole of the performers marched in procession, and having arranged themselves in effective manner "Avalon" mounted a dais and, surrounded by some of the leading characters, delivered the epilogue. The performances last three hours, and there was no delay between the acts. At the close of each day hearty plaudits greeted Miss Berkeley as she answered the calls of the audience and bowed her acknowledgment of the appreciation of her literary production. To Butleigh, a parish of just over 700 inhabitants, belongs the credit of having performed a feat of which any large town might well be proud, and all the more creditable was the display seeing that many of the actors were drawn from agricultural labourers on the estate. It was a triumph in every sense of the word, and the villagers can pride themselves upon being, with Sherborne and Warwick, the forerunners in the production of an educational and spectacular entertainment which bids fair to become very popular in England.

### **THE MUSIC**



The Street Brass and Reed Band, under the direction of Mr. P. Huish, performed their share in the pageant in a way which contributed to the success, and they interpreted with ability the various music set to the different scenes. For instance in Act III., when Alfred arrives with Denulf, the swineherd, the music which introduced the opening of the act consisted of Danish folk songs. The interview between King Edmund and St. Dunstan was prefaced by the playing of Mozart's melodious march, "Zauberflote, while the "Old English Pastimes" march sounded crisp and mirth-inspiring as the revellers "tripped it on the green." Sir Michael Costa's grand and stirring march was an appropriate introduction to the scenes dealing with the dissolution of the abbey and the arrest and death of Whyting, while as an entracte was employed Handel's beautiful Largo in

G. Elgar's popular march "Pomp and Circumstance" was used before Act VIII., when the townspeople visit the thorn on the same march. From these remarks it will be seen that much of the beauty of the pageant lay in the judicious selection of the music which in itself almost told the story.

## A MAYPOLE DANCE.

Between the last act and the epilogue a bevy of boys and girls performed a Maypole dance, which was one of the 'best examples of the old May-day practice we have been privileged to witness, and the interlacing of the multi-coloured ribbons was in designs seldom seen.

## THE PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS.

The principal characters were taken as follow: — "Avalon," Miss Somerville (of Dinder); "St. Joseph," the Rev. G. W. Berkeley (Butleigh); "David," Mr. E. Gregory; "King Arviragus," Mr. T. Carter (Butleigh); "St. Beiiignus," Rev. G. W. Saunders (Street); "Queen Morgan Le Pay," Miss M. Berkeley (Butleigh); "Queen of North Gallis," Miss Brymer (Charlton, Mackerell).; "King Alfred," Mr. E. L. Christie (Charlton Horethorne); "Queen Ethelswytha," Miss Turner (Butleigh) ; "Asser," Bishop of" Sherborne, Mr. Eli Davis (Glastonbury); "Guthrum," Mr. W. Higgins (Butleigh); "Denulf," Mr. T. Linham {Butleigh); "St. Dunstan," the Rev. G. DAugibau (Queen Camel); "King Edmund Ironsides," Mr. R. Bath (Glastonbury); "King Henry I.," Mr. A. Prince (Butleigh); "Queen," Miss Prince; Herald, Mr. G. Turner (Butleigh); "Abbot Whyting," Rev. H. Dawes (vicar of Baltonsborough); "Prior," Rev. E. S. C. Lock (Glastonbury); "Sub-Prior," Mr. T. Talbot (Butleigh); "Thomas Horne," Master H. Ebseworth (Butleigh); "Lord Russell," Mr. W. Brymer (Charlton, Mackerell); Monk, Mr. H. Brooks (Glastonbury); "Duke of Monmouth," Mr. R. Bath; "Parson John Radford," Mr. R. Neville Grenville (Butleigh); schoolmistress, Miss Baker (Butleigh); head girl, Miss Staley (Butleigh); "Master Richards," Mr. R. Knight (Butleigh); "Sally Peters," Miss Brown (Butleigh).

## WEDNESDAY

The attendance nearly reached 2,000 on Wednesday, and "was representative of all parts of the county. The excursion trains were well patronised, and motor cars came with parties from all directions. The streets of historic Glastonbury presented a most animated appearance and the decorations in the village of Butleigh made the scene a gay one. Beautiful weather again favoured the performance of the pageant, which went without a hitch from beginning to end. At the close delighted spectators called Miss Berkeley (the authoress), Avalon (Miss Somerville), and the stage manager (Mr. Mildred) to bow their acknowledgments, and the large audience showed its approval in no unmistakable manner.

At the conclusion of the revel a carriage containing Miss Somerville, Mr. R. Neville Grenville, Mr. Stockford, Captain D. Mildred, Rev. and Miss Berkeley, Mr. C. Christie, Miss Perkins, and Mr. Haddock was drawn by the inhabitants of Butleigh round the village headed by the Butleigh band (under Bandmaster Turner), after which the merry party returned and dancing was kept up on the lawn, and was much appreciated by hundreds.

## THE PROCEEDS.

It has not yet been decided to what objects the proceeds of the pageant will be devoted, but it is safe to say that a handsome amount will be at the disposal of the promoters. Owing to the great success of the performances it was decided to repeat the tableaux on Thursday.

### 8) *The Church Times June 29th*

*By Anthony Deane.*

"Give them a circus," said the late Lord Salisbury, when earnest politicians proposed to stimulate the country-folk by the creation of parish councils. That gibe, as they termed it, displeased the earnest politicians, but it contains a good deal of practical wisdom in a humorous form. Parish councils were duly made; for a year or so they had the attractiveness of a new toy; after that period they were regarded with apathetic indifference by the villagers. As Lord Salisbury had the insight to discern, it is the dullness, the lack of recreation in the country, which lures the young men and women to the city. And thus there is a real social importance, there may be even the beginning of a movement destined to influence our whole national life, in the "pageants" so successfully organized within the last year or two. The admirable example shown by Sherborne is being copied. Not only in the provincial town, but in the minute village, is found the material for a performance so dignified and striking as to satisfy the most exigent of critics. And a pageant, as Lord Salisbury would have admitted, is a thousand times better than a circus. Its interest lasts not merely for a week or so but through the many months of preparation. During all that time the whole place where it is to be held is alert, active, pleasurably excited. The pageant it not merely witnessed by the country folk; it is done by them. And incidentally it teaches them something of the historic greatness of the English Church and nation with a force of which no other means is capable.

All this is of real importance. Let the reader consider the "Revel," as it was called, which took place last week in Butleigh - a Somersetshire village, near Glastonbury, of less than 800 inhabitants. It would be easy to limit our view to the actual conclusion, to describe only the fruit of months of preparation, to praise - as indeed they deserve to be praised - the skill, and beauty, and dignity of the performance. Yet we must look further back to estimate aright the real value of the "Revel." Butleigh is, as has been mentioned, a small village; yet from Butleigh and the immediate neighbourhood all the materials of the "Revel" were drawn. Its scene was the garden of the squire, Mr. R. Neville-Grenville; the "director" was the squire's nephew, no professional organizer being employed. The *libretto* was composed by Miss M. Berkeley, the rector's daughter; the costumes were made at local working parties; a band from the neighbouring village of Street supplied the music; a stand capable of seating 1,000 spectators was erected by local labour. And no fewer than 300 residents, including the clergy of the adjacent parishes and inhabitants of every class in Butleigh itself, (the majority being farm labourers and their families,) had actual parts in the tableaux assigned to them. Either in the work of preparation or in the "Revel" itself, practically every inhabitant of Butleigh had a direct share. One need not pause to emphasize at length the social good arising from such a co-operation of every class; all, from the squire to the humblest cottage folk working together with enthusiasm for a common cause.

Held in the neighbourhood of Glastonbury, it was natural that many scenes of Church history should be included in the representation. "*Floreat Ecclesia Anglicana*" was the motto printed on the cover of the "book of words," and the tone of the whole proceedings was one of definite allegiance to the Church. One small and incidental touch may be mentioned here. Act VII. depicted the Monmouth Rebellion of 1685. The Duke appears and, after addressing some recruits, invites the vicar of Butleigh to join his following. But he declines; he is an old man, he replies, and he must return to his flock at Butleigh to keep them free from heresy,



and to teach them the Catechism. Commonplace as that sentence would have seemed in 1685, it has a significance of its own in 1906—a significance swiftly recognised by the audience, who broke into applause so hearty that it would have astonished Mr. Birrell. Among the other scenes represented were the traditional arrival of St. Joseph and his brethren, the burial of King Arthur at Glastonbury, St. Dunstan's restoration of the Abbey, and the mock trial and murder of Richard Whiting when the monasteries were dissolved. In fine, many of the 3,000 spectators who flocked to Butleigh and witnessed these scenes must have departed with enlarged ideas concerning the antiquity and traditions of the English Church.

The whole affair was a triumphant success, Those who attended it, expecting to be bored or find it amateurish, departed with enthusiastic praise, speaking in unqualified terms of its beauty and impressiveness. The greatest praise is due to those who organized the "Revel," and, without exception, to all who took part in it. Miss Mary Berkeley's *libretto* was exceedingly well written. In her old English dialogue she stumbled into the pitfall of mixing "thou" and "you," and for some reason she chose to misspell throughout the name of Richard Whiting, last Abbot of Glastonbury. But these are trifles. The main point is that this pageant, held in a village both small and remote, proved successful in every way, including the making of profits for the parish church and the local hospital. There seems no reason why this example should not be followed by many another village. It would unite every class of the people, it would teach them history, it would promote local industries, and the work of training and preparation would do very much to lighten the dreariness of the winter evenings.

## 9) *The Gentlewoman* June 25th

### *The 'Butleigh Revel'.*



DURING the past week the villagers of Butleigh, near the historic town of Glastonbury, have been carried back into the past, and have been living again the various events of their history since the dark ages before the introduction of Christianity. Although the incidents portrayed in the scenes of the Butleigh Revel are all of local importance, it must not be supposed that those living outside the "Island Valley of Avalon" have no claim in their interest. Glastonbury - indeed all Somerset - has been associated with English history since, its dawn. Before giving an account of the performance, it must be explained that the word "Revel" has no reference to the riotous feasting usually connected with the word; its oldest meaning is "a form of innocent out-of-door amusement," and in this case it was chosen not only because it was less pretentious than "Pageant," but because "Butleigh Revel" was the name of an annual fair formerly held on the village green, and now long since abolished. The Revel opened with a prologue spoken by the Spirit of Avalon (Miss Somerville), and the first scene is the tableau of the Britons trading with the Phoenicians, after Lord Leighton's picture in the Royal Exchange. After a long lapse of years comes St. Joseph of Arimathea (Rev. G. W. Berkeley) attended by his twelve holy brethren. They have been driven from Palestine by persecution, and arrive "weary all" at Nynswytryn, the Glassy Isle, the Glastonbury of to-day. Here, to encourage his fainting followers, St. Joseph plants his staff, which blossoms, and becomes the Holy Thorn of Glastonbury, which each year flowers at Christmas, "mindful of Our Lord." Arviragus the King comes with his warlike chiefs and his baby son, and while St. Joseph blesses the child, his followers build the first Christian church in the land of Britain.

The scene changes, four hundred years are gone by, and Arthur the Blameless King comes to his burial in Avalon. The bier is borne by four chiefs, and followed by three mourning Queens - Queen Morgan le Fay (Miss Berkeley), the Queen of North Gallis (Miss Brymer), and the Queen of the Waste Lands (Miss Hilda Perkins) Morgan le Fay is the sinful sister of Arthur, who has caused his death by stealing "the scabbard of the good sword Excalibur," the possession of which saved him from mortal wounds. Tearful and repentant she makes a public confession of her guilt and is pardoned by Abbot Benignus (the Rev. G. W. Saunders), a disciple of St. Patrick's. The procession moves off, and the next scene, after another long lapse, is the familiar incident of King Alfred (Mr. Christie) and the Cakes, with Miss Friend as Gundred.

Then comes St. Dunstan (the Rev. G. D'Angibau) to beg permission of King Edmund to rebuild the Abbey Church at Glaston, destroyed and pillaged by the Danes. The next scene is Henry I. granting a charter for Tor Fair (A.D. 1127), and close on this follows the dancing and merriment of a mediaeval fair. Act VI. presents a strong contrast, for it gives us the Dissolution of the Abbey, comprising the Arrest, Trial, and Martyrdom of Abbot Richard Whyting (the Rev. H. Dawes), Prior John Thorne (the Rev. E. Locke), and Sub-Prior James (Mr. F. Talbot). Whyting, betrayed by his adopted son at Sharpham Manor, is tried at Wells for treason and theft, and is sentenced by Lord Russell (Mr. Wilfred Brymer) to be hanged, drawn, and quartered on the summit of Glastonbury Tor next day. After the Dissolution we have two incidents in Montmouth's Rebellion. In the market place at Taunton the so-called "King Momuouth" (Mr. Robert Bath) receives Parson John Radford of Butleigh (Mr. Neville Grenville). The next scene is the Change of Style (1752), when the Glastonbury townsfolk, furious at the alteration of the Calendar, throng to the Abbey Ruins on December 25th to consult the flowering Thorn. As the Thorn does not Blossom they conclude that "tidden Chirmas Eve!"

The Revel ends with a grand procession and final tableau, in which all the performers take part. During this scene the epilogue is spoken by Avalon, who has also introduced each scene in its order with an explanatory verse. All the actors in the Revel were purely local, the greater number of the parts being taken by the villagers, who have shown great zeal and interest in the whole proceedings. It has been, reported in several papers that the Butleigh Revellers have had professional trainers. There is absolutely no truth in this statement. The "book" was written by Miss Berkeley, daughter of the Vicar, who is to be congratulated upon the result of her efforts.

**Over** - the holy thorn design by Mary Berkeley



## THE BUTLEIGH REVELS

[A RETROSPECT.]

"Well done, Butleigh!" must have been the encomium of all who witnessed the pageants at Butleigh Court last week. It was a revelation, to find it possible in this secluded part of the country, "far from the madding crowds' ignoble strife," to collect and train such a large number of performers, and render them capable of satisfactorily presenting the various historic scenes and incidents which figured in the programme. The Sherborne and Warwick spectacles, from the extensive resources at the command of the promoters, were, of course, more imposing: but, after all, greater credit is due to the Butleigh one, because the materials which made it a success were locally derived. The organisers, like the actors, were mainly connected with the place; even the book of the words (an excellent literary production) was written by Miss Berkley, the daughter of the Vicar of the parish. All the dresses, too, whether elegant or fantastic, were made in the village, and what a busy time this special work created will be understood when it is known that about 300 persons took part in the Revels. Surely, if you want to put new life into the country side, make the dead past live over again in tableaux with rustics for their embodiment. The bucolic nature has the reputation of being heavy, sluggish, unimaginative, wedded to old ways, averse to change. It is true that a traveller who wrote about the county a century and a half ago credited the natives with some other qualities. "The inhabitants of Somersetshire are (says he) plain, simple, and honest, yet the lower sort, in company with strangers, are constantly boasting of their superiority, and consider the people of other parts of the kingdom as greatly inferior to themselves. Those, however, who have had a liberal education, and whose minds have been enlarged by reading and conversation, are sensible, polite, obliging and affable, very courteous to strangers, and eager to learn the nature of trade in other parts of the island." It is to be hoped that the Butleighans, who have just covered themselves with glory by their masquerading talent, will not exhibit the weakness of considering themselves superior to the dwellers in the other parts of the county. That is not likely. The lesson they have taught is this, that there is latent in the rural population an ability for taking part in dramatic representations which has not hitherto been suspected.

It was a happy thought on the part of Mr. Neville Grenville, and those associated with him to base the pageant on the historic reminiscences of Athelney and Glastonbury, with which Butleigh is identified. They began certainly in primitive times, as the audience were introduced first to the native Briton when "wild in woods the noble savage ran." Armed with bows and arrows, and clad in skins before and behind, a band of these fierce-looking creatures was seen deploying about the lawn in a furtive and threatening manner, as if stalking game. Not so; it was the arrival of some Phoenician merchants on the coast that alarmed the aborigines; but no sooner were the waves of the newcomers shown than hostility gave way to curiosity, and a brisk trade was done. Of a totally different character were the subsequent scenes, which represented the arrival of St. Joseph of Arimathea and his eleven brethren and the meeting between them and King Arviragus and his six chieftains; the passing of Arthur and his burial in Glastonbury Abbey; Alfred the Great and the cake-burning episode, with the signing of the treaty of Wedmore; St. Dunstan and King Edmund Ironsides: King Henry I and the granting of a charter in 1127 for holding St. Michael's Fair; the Dissolution of the Abbey, and the martyrdom of Abbot Whyting; the Duke of Monmouth and the presentation of a Bible, banner and sword to his Grace by the Maids of Taunton; the change of style - the latter a humorous transcript of the dislike shown to the alteration of the calendar in the middle of the 18th century.

These incidents are familiar enough to the readers of historic or legendary lore; but to revive and make them a tangible reality involved an amount of labour and research of which the spectators had little conception. The leading characters had to be studied, the dresses of the period, as worn by different classes, to be ascertained, and something of the manners and customs prevalent to be understood, in order to make the presentment of each episode as perfect as it was seen on the verdant stage the Butleigh Court domain supplied. The auditorium was a substantial wooden erection, crescent-shaped; with seats rising tier above tier, and providing accommodation for about 2,000 spectators. It stood on the north (sic!) side of the mansion in the midst of grounds of great beauty. Immediately in front was a lawn relieved with flower beds, a broad gravel walk, and slightly lower down a wide expanse of greensward, terminated by stately trees and shrubs. It was in this ideal spot that the performance took place. The grand stand, as it may be called, filled each day as it was with many of the elite of the county, and brilliant in colour, formed a striking contrast to the pervading green of the foreground when the Thespians were not in possession of it. A prologue was provided to each act to give the necessary information for the right understanding of what was to follow. The interlocutor, or herald, was Miss Somerville, of Wells, who impersonated the Spirit of Avalon most charmingly. Her dress was of apple green silk, and her train, hanging from the shoulders, was lined with the palest pink, just the shade of apple blossoms, a wreath of which she wore round her hair. In her hand she carried a green staff, tied with ribbons of a delicate pink tone - all admirably in keeping with the title she bore. With stately grace she came and went, each time reciting the part allotted to her with a clearness and expressiveness that made the explanation given audible to all. Indeed, it was not the least enjoyable feature of the entertainment that the speakers of both sexes were so well heard and without straining on their part. Not a word was lost, which is the more remarkable considering the distance that separated the actors from the spectators, and that it was in the open-air. It may have been due to the fact that the "stage" was low down, and to the arc-shape of the grand stand, which, with its covering caught and compressed the waves of sound to the advantage of those who were listening: also to good elocution. In any case the result, however explained, may be worth the attention of those interested in al-fresco ventures.

Some of the characters were impersonated with a dramatic effect not always observable in professionals and rarely in amateurs. First in the order of merit should be placed the representative of Abbot Whyting. The part was played with a dignity, pathos and resignation that, beyond justifying his attitude in refusing to surrender the Abbey and its treasures to the King's commissioners, evinced not the least resentment towards his persecutors. Throughout his arraignment, trial and condemnation, and even when dragged away on a hurdle to the place of execution, the same calm serenity was maintained. It was, in short a histrionic triumph. The aged Joseph or Arimathea, weary and worn, was also admirably portrayed. Alfred the Great was seen, even in his lowly garb, "to be every inch a King," though he meekly bore the thrashing he received from Dame Denulf, after allowing her cakes to burn while he sat on a tub outside the hut brooding over his destiny. Denulf, the swineherd, churlish in manner, but kind, was played to the life. St. Dunstan was seen as an able negotiator with King Edmund for permission to rebuild the great Abbey at Glastonbury. The Duke of

Monmouth showed a dignified affability just suited to one who hoped to wear the purple. He graciously welcomed the "maids of Tauton" with their gifts: a long procession they formed walking two-and-two, and pretty and quaint they looked in their white frocks, blue sashes, and little mob caps. Parson John Radford, the vicar, was great fun. The unconventional manner in which he introduced himself to the Duke in broad Zummerzet and called attention to the recruits he had enrolled for his Royal Highness were greatly enjoyed. His squad of the "Butleigh Decrepids," as they may be called, wore smock frocks, and were armed with hay-forks and similar weapons. Their bent forms when reviewed was not at all suggestive of warriors in embryo. The Duke, who addressed them encouragingly, found it necessary to prop up their heads in front, while the "Passon" was fussily engaged straightening their backs behind. When asked if he was going to take part in the campaign, his reverence pleaded his clerical duties as an excuse, adding that he had to "teach the children their Catechism"—a bit of "gag" that elicited hearty applause from the spectators.

Not the least successful of the scenes was the old Fair an omnium atherum, all classes being represented, including tonsured monks and a jester in traditional garb whose pranks made him the "chartered libertine" of the crowd. More attractive than all was a "Morris Dance," in which a bevy of youths and maidens took part. The former wore loose jackets of dark red hue, over full whites sleeves, black caps of tricorne shape, knee breeches of red plush, black stockings and shoes. The girls dresses were also red, shirts slashed with green, high pointed caps and, shoes with coloured rosettes. "Trip it neatly, foot it feately o'er the grassy turf" was a pervading merit the rhythmic gyrations, though long sustained, were faultlessly executed. In reply to a question, one of the Terpsichoreans stated that they had been practicing the dance two nights a week for three months—a fact that shows the infinite pains taken with all the details of the pageant.

After the Epilogue came a grand procession in which those who had participated in the display joined. When all were grouped on the lawn, "gay with colour, with the sylvan setting of the background, a picture was formed which those who saw it are not likely soon to forget. It is due to state that the chief organiser of the pageant was Mr Mildred, of Cirencester (nephew of Mr. R. N. Grenville), and that the dramatis personæ included the following:—

Abbot Whyting .....	Rev. W. Dawes
St. Joseph .....	Rev. G. W. Berkeley
St. Dunstan .....	Rev. C. F. Montgomery [ <i>Rev. G. W. D'Angibau!</i> ]
King Arthur .....	Mr. G. Silcox
King Alfred .....	Mr. Christy
King Henry I. ....	Mr. Prince
Duke of Monmouth .....	Mr. R. Bath
The Abbot's page .....	Mr. W. Brymer
Parson Radford .....	Mr. R. N. Grenville
Spirit of Avalon .....	Miss Somerville
Queen of Henry I. ....	Miss Prince
Queen Ethelswytha .....	Miss Turner
Ethelfleda .....	Miss Bradden

Looking at the great pleasure the Revel gave to the 5,000 people who witnessed it, it is to be regretted, that greater publicity was not given to it in the northern part of the county. To that fact is probably due that so few persons availed themselves of the cheap trip offered by the Great Western Railway from Bath to Charlton Mackrell. On Tuesday, the day after the full dress rehearsal, an enterprising Boniface sent breaks to the station to convey about 40 passengers to Butleigh. He had only four to carry, and the next day not more than six. However, as there is some idea, of repeating the entertainment next year, it is probable that the opportunity will not be again so neglected by residents in these parts. With brilliant weather like that of last week and more publicity, a second venture would under these conditions, be doubtless crowned with success.

### 11) *Oxford High School Magazine July 1906*

#### A COUNTRY REVEL.

It has been wisely said that "Oft expectation fails, and most oft there where most it promises." Such, nevertheless, was not my experience with regard to the Revel which was held near Glastonbury on the 20th of last month. As my journey thither occupied the space of two and a half hours, including a wait of over an hour at a country railway station, I had abundant opportunity for indulging in "great expectations," but I can truthfully say that those expectations were more than realised. I have been trying to find out exactly what is meant by the term "Revel." When I was staying down in Devonshire I used frequently to hear that such and such a village was having its Revel. This I was told consisted of a series of treats, club feasts, and special services, usually held in connection with the festival of the patron saint of the village. The Revel near Glastonbury, however, was, as the word indicates, simply a merry-making. It was held at the village of Butleigh, about three miles from Glastonbmy, in the grounds of Butleigh Court, which had been kindly lent by the squire of the village, Mr. Neville Grenville, who, moreover, took an active part in the proceedings.

Glastonbury is best known on account of its Abbey, which is now little more than a picturesque ruin. It lies in the midst of a district which is of great historical interest, being the country of Arthur and Alfred, and the scene of many important events occurring between the first and the eighteenth centuries. These events supplied abundant material for the scenes which were depicted at the Revel, the words for the same being written in a most scholarly and graceful manner by the vicar's daughter. The performers numbered about 400 and included the squire of Butleigh, the vicar, and several other clergymen, also some friends of the squire and almost all the villagers. The costumes were made at the vicarage and I was informed that they had been preparing for the Revel for about three months. The performers certainly did credit to those who had trained them. Every one spoke out clearly and distinctly, the exits and entrances were made in the most perfect order, and the grouping and general stage effects were admirable.

I was particularly struck with one of the performers, an old village woman, who gave her lines with great spirit and whose by-play was simply wonderful. A youngster of about twelve years old very much amused me; he had but a few words to say, but, as the time

drew near for saying them, one could see that he looked upon it as the most momentous event of his life. He pulled himself together with a mighty effort and delivered each word separately with great force. This seemed to tickle the audience greatly, but fearing to hurt the feelings of the earnest performer, this turned the laugh into a round of applause.

A stand, covered with an awning and capable of seating 2,000 people, had been erected, and the seats being raised one above the other, it was possible to see and hear well in every part of it. Facing this and forming the stage was a lawn of considerable size, surrounded at the back and sides with beautiful acacia, cedar, and other trees, which formed a most effective background. In fact one could not imagine a prettier or more suitable setting for the various scenes. Where there had been gaps between the trees, these had been filled in temporarily with foliage, so that the performers appeared to emerge on all sides from forest glades. There was a band in attendance, which discoursed sweet music between the acts and during the processions.

The order of the proceedings was as follows: before each act a fair damsel, gracefully attired in flowing garments, came forward and recited a short introductory verse. Then the performers glided out from behind the trees and, grouping themselves on the lawn, went through the scene, at the conclusion of which all again withdrew behind the trees.

The first of the scenes showed the coming of St. Joseph and his monks and the blossoming of the Holy Thorn. Next was represented the passing of Arthur, after which were two scenes showing King Alfred in the swineherd's hut, and the signing of the Peace of Wedmore. Then followed a scene between St. Dunstan and Edmund Ironsides, after which there was a representation of the granting of the charter for Tor Fair by Henry I. Next in order came scenes in connection with the trial and execution of Abbot Whyting, who was the last Abbot of Glastonbury. Then Monmouth was depicted being welcomed by the people of Taunton, and finally there was a scene at Glastonbury dealing with the alteration of the calendar in 1752.

No pains had been spared in the carrying out of every detail in the various scenes, nothing, except what was absolutely necessary, being left to the imagination. For instance, in the first scene, St. Joseph having come to Glastonbury and obtained a grant of land, his



monks at once set to work to build a church. The expeditious manner in which they contrived to do this, was, indeed, worthy of emulation. Some ran in with wooden poles, others with pieces of basket work about the size of hurdles, and in the space of four and a half minutes these were all fitted together and the building was erected. I must also add that these same monks did good service during the entire performance, as it was their province to run in and out with the properties, such as chairs, tables, etc., which were required for the various acts. The scene in connection with the execution of Abbot Whyting and the two sub-priors was a rather exacting one for the principal performers, as they were really tied down with ropes on to hurdles and then dragged along the ground. I need hardly add, however, that we did not see their execution.

One of the most imposing figures in the Revel was King Alfred, who looked very handsome in his flaxen wig, and was, in his general demeanour, every inch a king. In very truth I heard several ladies sighing to be introduced to him, and I afterwards overheard him explaining to one, that having begged the swineherd's wife to give him a "proper beating," he was now feeling quite stiff and sore from the result of her efforts.

One of the prettiest scenes was that of a village fair in the twelfth century. The lawn was thronged with gaily dressed villagers, some of whom executed a set dance very well indeed, while the rest frisked about at their own sweet will in the most natural manner possible. The squire himself took a turn with several of them and seized the opportunity of indulging in a friendly embrace (*see left*).

**The Squire at the Tor Fair**

During the scene in which the people of Taunton welcomed the Duke of Monmouth, Parson Radford, in the person of the squire, created great amusement by the effective way in which he presented the seven men of Butleigh, as recruits, to the Duke. At the same time he spoke the Somersetshire dialect in such a natural manner that he entirely deceived one friend of mine, who afterwards remarked: "What a pity it is that the squire has such a terrible accent! "

At the conclusion of the last scene there was a grand procession of all the performers, who, after marching round the lawn, took up their position on it, forming altogether a most effective tableau. Thus ended, what, to me, was the most interesting and enjoyable entertainment at which it has ever been my privilege to be present.

FLORENCE PLOWMAN

### **12) STREET PARISH MAGAZINE. JULY 1906**

#### **THE REVEL.**

It is seldom that an undertaking has met with such unqualified success as did the Butleigh Revel last month. From first to last the Butleigh people were interested in it and thoroughly keen and determined that it would not be their fault if it did not prove successful. And all that they did proved good. The dresses were good. The acting was good. The speaking out was good. The whole effect was good. The grand stand was good. And the memory of the Butleigh Revel is the best of all.

We saw a living reproduction of Lord Leighton's picture at the Royal Exchange "The Phoenician Traders" as a curtain raiser. Then Joseph of Arimathea and his weary brethren met King Arviragus and by his permission were able to build the first Church in England. Can any of you answer a lady's question - "Why did Joseph seem so much older than his brethren?"

Arthur was carried to his last resting place at Glastonbury. I don't think the scene could have been made more impressive. No, not even if as someone, has suggested it was brought more up to date and Arthur had been carried off to Glastonbury in a motor car.

Then followed the history of Alfred and the cakes and the Peace of Wedmore.

St. Dunstan asks Edmund the Magnificent to be allowed to re-build the Abbey Church and is allowed to do so.

Then we have a highly coloured picture— The institution of Tor Fair in the time of Henry I., and a splendidly executed Morris dance.

Act VI, in three scenes, was devoted to the history of Abbot Whyting and the Dissolution of Glastonbury Abbey. Perhaps the most appreciated and impressive scene of all.

Parson Radford, so determined to teach his children their catechism, and his seven men of Butleigh and the maids of Taunton give their true allegiance to " King Monmouth," and the Revel closed with an act called the Change of Style.

The final procession was admired by all for its grouping and colour, and for effect was as beautiful as anything.

The whole formed a grand object lesson of the close connection that has always, from the first, existed between the English Church, and the English Nation. A connection which, pray God, may never cease to exist.

But where were the Lake Dwellers? Why? Down on Godney moor of course, lying underneath their little mounds. But where were the backs to those seats? Where were they? We expect wood to be hard. But to sit for three hours on hard wood and with no rest to the back is an exercise which Sandow alone would suggest for his students.

But this was the only complaint heard "Well done Butleigh!"

'There is no doubt about the financial success of the undertaking, and the old cracked bell should not continue to ring out discordantly much longer.

When will so many people be seen in the Butleigh Road again? The very next time that Butleigh decides to give the countryside another such a treat.

### **13) THE SUNDAY COMPANION AUGUST 4TH 1906**

#### **VICAR AS ST. JOSEPH OF ARIMATHÆA. AN INTERESTING VILLAGE FESTIVAL AT BUTLEIGH.**

Butleigh, near Glastonbury, has many interesting associations, and the Rev. G. W. Berkeley, the rector, and others in the village thought that it would be a good thing if a festival could be arranged as a reminder of bygone days.

Tradition and local history state that St. Joseph of Arimathea preached in England at Glastonbury, and this incident was therefore included in the festival, the Rev. G. W. Berkeley himself taking the part of St. Joseph.

All the characters were taken by villagers. The pageant commenced with the dawn of civilisation in Britain, Phoenician traders bartering their stuffs with half-naked Britons in their midst. Then came St. Joseph of Arimathea, who is received in peace by Avirragus, King of Avalon, and granted land for the first wattle church. After a lapse of four centuries came the Passing of Arthur, a gorgeous and impressive scene. Following the cortege were the three queens; the people flock around, and little children scatter flowers on the bier.

Then we saw King Alfred receiving his thrashing from Gundred for spoiling the cakes, and afterwards the Peace of Wedmore.

A marked feature was the crowd. It was a natural crowd, a crowd of individuals who put as much into their parts as the principals. The arrest and trial of Richard Whyting, last Abbot of Glastonbury, was certainly clever. Here, too, the crowd acted well as the abbot and his two monks were drawn on hurdles to their execution at Glastonbury.

### **14) The Treasury August 1906**

The revival of Pageantry is to be welcomed for many reasons. Elsewhere I have written something of its social influence for good, of the new life which the work of preparation excites in a village or country town, bringing all classes together, and making them realise their corporate life. Another effect which it has is to destroy the absurd self-consciousness of the average Briton, who is apt to be desperately afraid of "looking a fool." If but a few years ago you had asked the respectable classes of any town - the business men, clerks, and shopkeepers - to dress themselves as ancient Britons or Elizabethan gallants, to walk a mile or so in these costumes to the place of performance, and then to act out of doors in the presence of several thousand people, they would have refused with some emphasis. But now that Mr. Louis Parker has broken the ice, they obey without compunction, and with surprisingly good results. For your average Briton does not like 'dressing up,' but when once his reluctance has been over-come he thinks that he 'may as well do

the thing thoroughly,' and he throws himself into the part with an abandon which astonishes his friends. The acting at Butleigh and Warwick this year was not merely passable, but full of vigour and extraordinarily good. And the performers strode the streets in their costumes without a particle of shame. Some of them at Warwick had a considerable distance to travel. Several miles out of the city a friend of mine met a tall dogcart. It was driven - in broad daylight, of course - by a queen of the sixteenth century, while beside her sat a Norman knight, in full armour! It is a great thing when English people can act thus without feeling desperately ashamed of themselves.

# THE MILLGATE MONTHLY

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15) The Millgate Monthly September 1906 pp. 719-724

## THE BUTLEIGH REVEL.

THE DECAY OF RURAL REVELRY—MERRIMENT AND LAUGHTER DRIVEN FROM THE COUNTRY SIDE—  
SIGNS OF A REVIVAL—WEST COUNTRY TAKING THE LEAD—THE BUTLEIGH REVEL DESCRIBED.  
BY EDWARD JACKSON.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that we owe to our Nonconformist forefathers, there can be no doubt that the wave of Puritanism which passed over the country during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries robbed the people of much that was healthy and recreational, even educational. The robust "Old English" sports, the village feasts and festivals, the spectacular pageant and mummeries which frolicked in the time of Queen Bess, amusing and educating, knitting all classes in a common bond of rough fellowship, and serving to preserve the traditional characteristics of the English people, were abomination to the gloomy sectarian. Added to this, the ponderous vanity of James I., and the stubborn autocracy of Charles, stimulating a cleavage between the upper and lower classes, it is easy to see how that the fraternal becomes merged into the professional, to understand with Taine how that "the proud sentiment of natural life becomes a vulgar appeal to the senses." The decay of rural revelry had begun. The austere Puritan seems to have driven the last trace of genuine merriment and laughter from the countryside, the quips and cranks of the jester, the wit and blythe humour of the lads and lasses gave place to a snuffling psalm-singing of time-serving hypocrites, and a demure prudishness far from natural. Human nature could not stand this for long, and the unmoral excesses of the later seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries are justly attributed to the false piety and mock modesty which passed current during the Cromwellian era; the pent-up mirth and jollity of the people burst forth in feasting and drinking, dancing and singing, looseness and ribaldry in poetry and play, all of which indicate a yielding, body and soul, to the superficial in order to escape from the severity imposed by the deeper ideals seen by the few, but not grasped by the average Puritan. Thus it was that "under the Restoration excess revelled in its low vices and triumphed in its shamelessness."

From the prejudice created during this period, the play has never quite shaken itself free, but there are not wanting signs that this may yet be an important factor in the religious and social education of the people may help to do something to restore the hearty good fellowship and break down the barriers of caste between the classes and the masses.

Mr. Frank R. Benson has been interesting himself in the revival of English village drama, and a census is even now being taken of which Mr. W. T. Stead has said in the *Review of Reviews* "If it is in any way complete it will form an interesting survey of the condition of the drama in Great Britain at the beginning of the twentieth century." Last summer at Sherborne, in Dorset, a gorgeous historical pageant was successfully carried out, all classes of the community taking part. A similar spectacle has been arranged this year in the grounds of Warwick Castle, under the personal supervision of Mr. Louis N. Parker, the author and director of the Sherborne festivities.

Not to be outdone, a small village in Somerset has recently invoked the muse, in the person of Miss Mary Berkeley, the daughter of the Rev. G. W. Berkley, of Butleigh vicarage, and this little community of about 700 has presented their quota to a historical pageantry of Britain's progress.

It seems fitting that the West Country should take a lead in this recrudescence of mediaeval pleasantries, for, says Sherborne, "Before Manchester was, I am"; and our Butleigh villagers can point with conscious pride to the fact that before Canterbury Cathedral or York Minster reared their lofty pile, the Abbey of St. Joseph at Glastonbury had already evidenced the westward march of Christianity.

It is not too much to say that English social and religious history was cradled in the counties of the west, and it is by a study of

western traditions and events that we can learn if we will of the thoughts and deeds which shaped this empire of ours. Butleigh Court, where the revel took place, is the seat of the Grenvilles, and Mr. Neville-Grenville, the present owner, is well known throughout Somerset and the West Country for his courtesy and kindly disposition. He promptly entered into the spirit of the festival, placing his grounds at the disposal of the committee, himself taking the part of a zealous Protestant parson in the scene dealing with the Monmouth rebellion.

Upon the terrace at the south side of the house a stand was erected, with seating accommodation for 1,400, and tickets, ranging from 2s. to 10s 6d. each, were sold sufficient to fill the whole space for two days. The lawn facing the terrace made an ideal arena. With a fairly wide expanse of green sward, a background of dense foliage and wings of acacia in full bloom, the scenes of rural life had a setting such as could not fail to enhance the beauty and faithfulness with which they were represented.

After an introduction from the "Spirit of Avalon," the proceedings opened with a tableau, "The Phoenician Traders," after Lord Leighton's painting at the Royal Exchange, in which the oversea merchants are seen bartering with the ancient Britons their fine cloth for skins. It is just possible that this was really historical fact, for the low marshy country in the immediate vicinity was once an inland lake, and ornaments of Phoenician origin have been found in the neighbourhood. Tennyson speaks of "the island valley of Avilion," evidently mindful that this "land of apples," in which Butleigh is set as a jewel in a casket, was at one time a prominent centre for a community of lake-dwellers. The tableau was ably executed, and the green foliage, if a little inharmonious with the subject, admirably served to relieve a richness and grandeur which might have overweighted less natural surroundings.



By the thorn That blows so fair at Glaston, we'll delight you !

These few words from the prologue refer to a legend with which the first Act deals, the coming of Joseph, set for the time A.D. 63. Joseph of Arimathea with twelve brethren "are said to have been sent by Phillip to establish Christianity in Britain; after much buffeting by wind and wave their frail bark touches our coasts at this Isle of Avalon, then ruled by a warlike British chieftain, Arviragus by name. Seeing the fierce islanders as they toiled slowly up "Weary all" hill, the hearts of the brethren fail them; and expressing their fears, they ask for a sign that Heaven still watches over them. Joseph, with a mild rebuke, yields to their request, and strikes his staff into the ground, saying that " It shall live for ever, proclaiming to unborn generations the message of the Gospel." The staff takes root, becomes a thorn, and blossoms, the miracle being regarded as a good omen. Another legend credits Joseph with bringing the chalice from which Christ drank at the last supper; Tennyson has immortalised both fables in " The Holy Grail."

The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord Drank at the last sad supper with His own,  
the good saint

Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.

A white thorn still flourishes on "Weary all " (Wyrall's) hill, which some of the old men in the neighbourhood have seen blossoming in the frost at Christmas, and a well is shown where the water, percolating through the metalliferous soil, takes on a rusty hue, thus serving to preserve the tradition of the hidden holy cup still red with the ' blood' of Christ.

Arviragus and his tribe draw near, and Joseph and his brethren are questioned by the chieftain. After mutual explanations, permission is granted for a church to be built, and the settlement of the brethren recognised. The Act closes with the building of a rude church from hurdles and wattles, the first Christian church in Britain.

The ancient Britons, naked but for their wolfskins, with ruddy faces and unkempt hair, in striking contrast to the calm and holy pilgrims, impressed one strongly as to the barbarian condition of that age.

500 years pass; in the meantime St. Patrick is said to have replaced the primitive church of St. Joseph with the first Glastonbury Abbey, and now King Arthur of the Isles and the round table is being brought to burial.

Arthur has passed to Avalon! There comes  
A shivering cry of mourning from the west,  
The year is born in bloodshed and in war,  
And all is dark with grief ; but Arthur sleeps  
In bless'd Avilion, thence to come again.

A dignified and most pathetic scene, introducing Queen Morgen lamenting her sin of long ago in stealing the scabbard of Excalibur. She is reassured by the Abbot that " her tears have won her pardon," and the Queen of the waste-lands adds her consolation, mindful of Ancient Merlin's rede that "Arthur will come again." Thus the King in " The Passing of Arthur ":

I perish by this people which I made,  
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again To rule once more.

Another lapse of three centuries, and Saxon and Dane fight for the supremacy of Wessex. We see "King Alfred, Lover of the Truth, once mighty, now robbed of throne and crown by heathen Dane."

Who has not heard of King Alfred and the ' barley-cakes? Here we have the scene portrayed for us, the rude swineherd and his sharp-

tongued wife, the harassed and hunted king, and his forgetfulness of the domestic duties in his concern as to affairs of State. The wrath of the gude-wife and chastisement of the King, the subsequent recognition and contrition, all presented in a homely natural style, with little touches of worldly wisdom in shrill tones from the woman, and a docile acquiescence on the part of the men.

Gradually emerging from the legendary to the historic, next we have the signing of the Treaty of Wedmore in A.D. 878. In this scene Guthrum, the Dane, embraces Christianity, acknowledges the supremacy of Alfred, and receives East Anglia, and parts of Mercia and Essex, as his portion of the spoils of war.



The peace of Wedmore, however, is but a temporary affair; Dane and Saxon again meet in conflict. But sixty years later and Glaston's great church, by heathen hands destroyed, lies desolate and ruined.

It is the time of Edmund the Magnificent, and the saintly dreamer, Dunstan, is his friend. To him is granted the power to rebuild the Abbey, "restored and beautified beyond our powers of imagination." Dunstan is made the first Abbot; privileges are bestowed upon the monastery, and King Edmund chooses this place for his own burial.

With the Norman period we enter upon more solid historical data; a most appropriate event is selected - the granting of a charter by King Henry I., in 1127, to hold Tor fair.

The King attends with his Queen and their courtiers, there is a flourish of trumpets, and a herald reads the all-important document:—

The Precentor of the Church of Glastonbury shall hold a fair at the Monastery of St. Michael de Glastonbury, belonging to the Chantry of the Abbey of Glastonbury, on the day before the

Feast of St. Michael, and on the day of that Feast, with all the liberties and free customs usually belonging to fairs of that sort, provided only that the said fair be not to the detriment of other fairs in the neighbourhood.

This ceremony ended, Tor fair proceeds to business and pleasure, mostly the latter. A troop of morrice dancers perform their pretty evolutions before the King, and the crowd, in which high and low intermingle, enjoy themselves in characteristic Old English fashion. The jester is there with his cap and bells, the friar in his gown and cowl, the itinerant packman with his wares, squires and their dames, lads and lasses jostle one another, exchanging jokes with perfect freedom. All is fun and jollity. At intervals the crowd join with the dancers, and trip the "light fantastic toe" with complete abandon and natural grace. Here is no stiff courtliness, the players one and all enter fully into the spirit of the piece. From the squire to the gardener's boy there is an entire absence of the conventional, and they dance and frolic with rough, good-humoured fellowship. A brilliant spectacle, a perfect medley of old-time revelry.

The scene changes to one of more sombre hue; once more we skip the centuries, and come to the closing scene in the history of the old Abbey. Bluff King Hal, impecunious and licentious, is ravaging the monasteries, confiscating their treasures and endowments, and meting out severity to officials, good and bad alike. There can be no doubt that the majority of monasteries at the time were sinks of iniquity, and the excesses of their adherents warranted stern reprisals; but this Abbey of Glastonbury appears to have been one of the few doing good and honest work, educating the youths and assisting the poor and needy; it was held in great esteem near and far. Richard Whiting, a good man and devout, is Abbot; he was eighty years old at the time, and had done much for the people in his day. But the King coveted the wealth of this monastery, and easily finds excuse for action. Whiting has written books in praise of Thomas a Becket, and has refused to endorse the King's divorce from Katherine of Arragon; further, he declines an invitation to yield up the Abbey plate, or disclose the names in his possession of those who joined the Pilgrimage of Grace. These are the crimes he has committed, and for which he is arrested at the Abbey, his office declared void, the Abbey razed to the ground, and he brought to Wells upon a charge of treason, after a short hearing to be condemned by my Lord Russell to be hung, drawn, and quartered; he and his prior and sub-prior who have faithfully stood by their Abbot. The scene closes with the three saints being drawn across the arena upon hurdles on their way to execution on Tor Hill, amid the lamentations and shoutings of the crowd. A realistic scene, acted throughout with dignity and grace.

Another century passes, and we are mid the stirring times of the Monmouth Rising. Parson John Radford has brought "seven stout lads from Higher Rock Farm, up to Butleigh, to fight for 'ee, Sir, all of 'em strong men an' brave, an' sturdy Protestants," as he tells Monmouth. The cute old parson is loud in his praises of these recruits from Butleigh, but being himself invited to join the forces, rejoins, chuckling, "Not I, Sir! I be a passon, and a wold man! I must go home to my vlock over to Butleigh."

The famous maids of Taunton are also represented in this scene, presenting the bible, sword, and flag to the craven Duke. One's mind instinctively reverts to the treatment meted out to these fair damsels after the battle of Sedgemoor, and we remember the wave of righteous indignation which shivered through the West, finding ultimate expression in the deposition of a cunning and vacillating monarch and a people's vengeance upon a bloodthirsty judge.

For the final scene the authoress has taken advantage of the hubbub which was caused in 1752, when the English calendar was scientifically reformed by a deduction of eleven days from the false reckoning made by the astronomers of Julius Cæsar; this is made the occasion for a dialogue in the broad Somerset dialect. The Holy Thorn is requisitioned to prove the date of Christmas Eve, the townspeople attend at midnight, and a lively discussion ensues. Says one:—

"No! 'Tiddenright—'tidden! An' I've a-written to King Jarge up to Lunnon to let 'un know what I do think o' 'un!"

"An' what did 'ee tell 'un, Maister Richards?"

"Why I did tell 'un vor zure t'was wrong to alter thik there calendar! He do rob honest volks o' their days, an' besides—"

the Lard made they wold days an' tidden right to change 'em. No, 'tidden ! "  
 " Vor zartin zure 'tidden right!- An' how's the Holy Tharn to blow when the clay be changed ? Cassen tell us that, Maister Richards? "  
 " Why, that beant no difficulty, vriends! Vor zure Tharn 'ud blow on the right day o' the year. An' if her don't blow thiky night, then, . . . why then, . . . 'tidden Chirsmas Eve ! "  
 A close examination of the Thorn at midnight reveals no bud; they should." open wi" a crack like, and be heard to haffer."  
 " Canst hear 'em haffer ? " says one. ...  
 " What, they buds ?"  
 " No, I don't hear nowt! "  
 " Why, there beant no vlowers 'pon the tree !"  
 " No vlowers ?"  
 " Narry one little bud! "  
 " Then 'tidden Chirsmas Eve ! No, 'tidden."  
 " Thee must write another letter to King Jarge, vriend Richards, an' tell 'tin Holy Tharn don't blow! "  
 " Why, zo I will. I'll warn't we can larn 'un zummat from Zummerzset! "

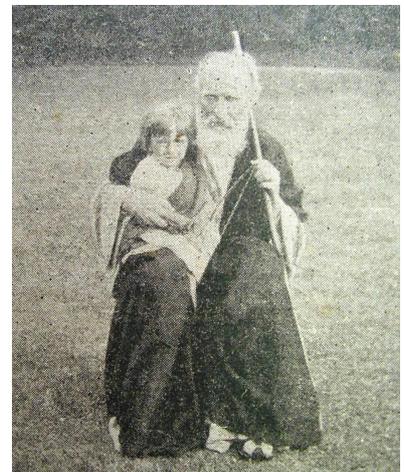
The assembling of the performers on the green and a procession concluded the proceedings, which had lasted some two-and-a-half hours.

The pictures (which by permission of Messrs. **J. Bradden** and **W. Tully**, of Glastonbury, and the Gazette Company, of Glastonbury, we are able to herewith reproduce) only give one a faint conception of the beauty and picturesqueness of the piece. From start to finish it was one kaleidoscope of moving intelligence; even in the serious and otherwise heavy scenes like the passing of Arthur and the trial of Abbot Whiting; a blaze of colour in one place relieved the sombre tints in another, whilst the innocent jollity of the fair scene, with its morrice and maypole dances, afforded a delightful picture of mediaeval rural life. Of the entire population of the village, at least one-third took part in the play itself, and many more were busy helping to dress and in looking after the comfort of the visitors. The dresses were largely home-made, preparations having been going on for some months. Some of the special properties, such as old-fashioned sandals and shoes, had to be made, and these were provided by the local co-operative society through their wholesale works at Leicester. The robe worn by the judge in the trial scene was lent by Mr. Grenville, it being an old heirloom of the family, originally belonging to Sir Richard Grenville, a high court dignitary living about the time of George III.

The vicars of adjoining parishes were pressed into service to fill the role of abbots, and they all, by their perfect elocution and reverent demeanour, did full justice to the parts. It was quite refreshing to hear so many clergymen at once able to speak with clearness and precision. One or two of the principal characters came from other parts of the county, but the little village of Butleigh, with the limited - and in the main rough - material at its command, provided the bulk of the revellers. The Squire, Mr. Neville Grenville, as Parson John Radford (a typical West Countryman), the Vicar as St. Joseph (a truly patriarchal figure), and his daughter, the authoress, as Queen Morgen in the passing of Arthur, were of the locality, and realised to the full all that from their culture one might have expected; but the greatest praise is due to those humbler individuals, the rank and file of the village, for they really and truly made the pageant. The dancers, young and old, trained entirely by the manager of the co-operative society in his spare time, the squire's gardener as King Arviragus, the gamekeeper as King Henry, the scores of men, women, and children called upon to precipitate themselves into an age practically unknown to them, to throw off their twentieth century garments and conventionalities and invest themselves with unusual garb and action. To do all this with grace and ease, speaks an aptitude for adaptation the world has long since forgotten exists in the common people.

We cannot omit mention of Miss Somerville, of Dinder — who as the Spirit of Avalon introduced each Act—for her clear delivery and careful expression won great applause. To Mr. Mildred, of Cirencester, special thanks were due, for the entire management of the revel and the training of most of the performers was upon his shoulders, and he has every reason to be satisfied with the results of his labours.

In comparison with the Sherborne and the Warwick pageants this would be, of course, a small affair; but one cannot help thinking that if such excellent results can be attained in the villages, how much more might be done in the towns. Our land abounds in folk-lore, much of which has helped to make our national character. A gross materialism has so obscured the dreams and ideals mirrored forth in these old-time stories as to destroy their significance to us; but there can be no doubt we should be infinitely poorer without them, and not the least among the signs of the times is the attempt which is being made to re-incarnate the men of old to amuse and instruct the men of to-day.

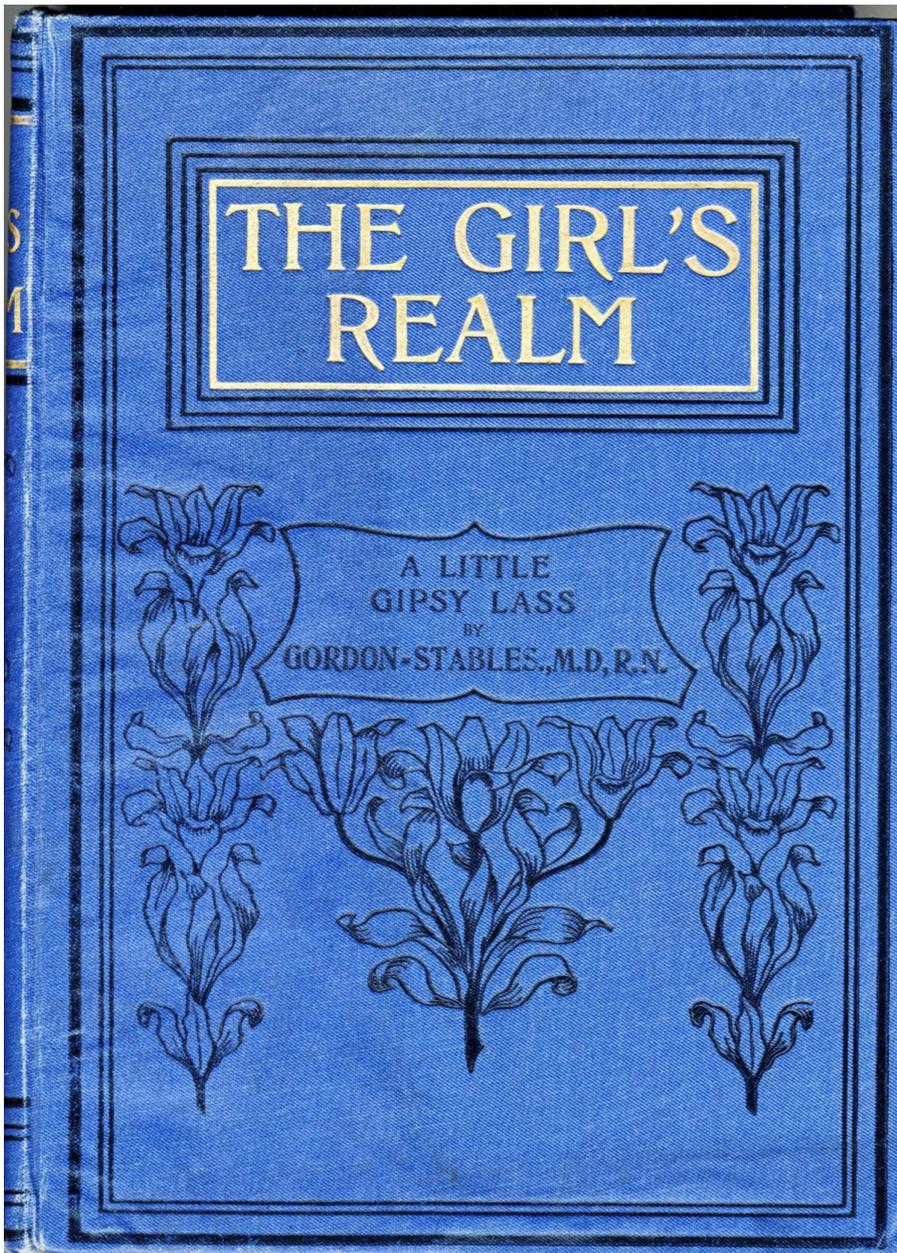


#### 15) *The Girls Realm* October 1906 pp. 989 - 992

VILLAGE REVELS ARRANGED BY A GIRL - AN ACCOUNT OF THE PAGEANT AT BUTLEIGH  
 BY MARY ALBINIA BERKELEY *Photographs by Messrs. Bradden & Tully*

A little more than a year ago, England heard for the first time of that form of play - acting known as the "Local Pageant." All the West Country, and people from other parts of England as well, to say nothing of countless Americans, thronged to Sherborne, athirst for a new experience, to behold there the town's past revived once more, to see the history of Sherborne represented in living scenes, by Sherborne men and women. It was a most wonderful and beautiful sight, and small surprise it is now the Pageant promises to become an annual event in different parts of England.

There were at Sherborne several people from Glastonbury and the neighbourhood - that very cradle of sacred, legendary, and historical romance - and, as they went away, they said to each other: "Oh, if only we could do this at Glastonbury!" They never really dreamt for a moment of accomplishing such a feat. They had visions of the Quest of the Holy Grail, of the Fall of the Abbey, and they told how, in point of historic interest, Glastonbury would outshine Sherborne; but there the matter dropped - or seemed to drop.



Some months afterwards, just before the Christmas Holidays, my mother suggested that it would be a good thing if I were to write a few scenes of local historic interest that the villagers would be able to act in the garden. I did so ; but we soon found that we should be obliged to give the larger and more important parts to our own friends, as they proved when written to be more difficult than we had intended. A gentleman who accepted a prominent part told us that we ought to get an audience of at least five hundred people. We laughed at him; but we did not forget what he had said. We began to hope that he might be a true prophet, and set to work in a way worthy of what then seemed to us such a vast audience. And thus our scheme passed beyond our control.

Everything, however, was purely local. The actors were all either men from Butleigh, Glastonbury, and the surrounding villages, or personal friends. The costumes were all made and designed in Butleigh, the men employed in the erection of the stand were all Butleigh men, and the music was the work of Street, a large village near Glastonbury. Last, but by no means least, the stage-manager, Mr. D. Mildred, was nephew to the Squire of Butleigh.

Imagine a green, West Country lawn, planted with shrubs and screened by four giant acacias in full flower. Behind stretch the flat Glastonbury Meres and the blue Mendip Hills, overhead is a sky without a cloud. This is the scene of the Butleigh Revel.

On to the front of the arena a herald walks, clad in a tabard, blazoned with the old Plantagenet arms. He blows four loud blasts on his trumpet, north,

south, east, and west, and then once more retires, behind the greenery whence he came.

The Revels are opened !

There floats across the stage the Spirit of Avalon—Tennyson's Avalon. A tall, dark lady she is, in a shimmering gown of pale green, crowned with pink and white apple-blossom, and bearing a flowery wand. Silence falls, and she speaks her welcome to the assembled people of the West, bidding them be indulgent, though she will not dream of failure. She reminds them that Avalon is the land of heroes, kings, saints, poets, and she begs a pitying thought for—

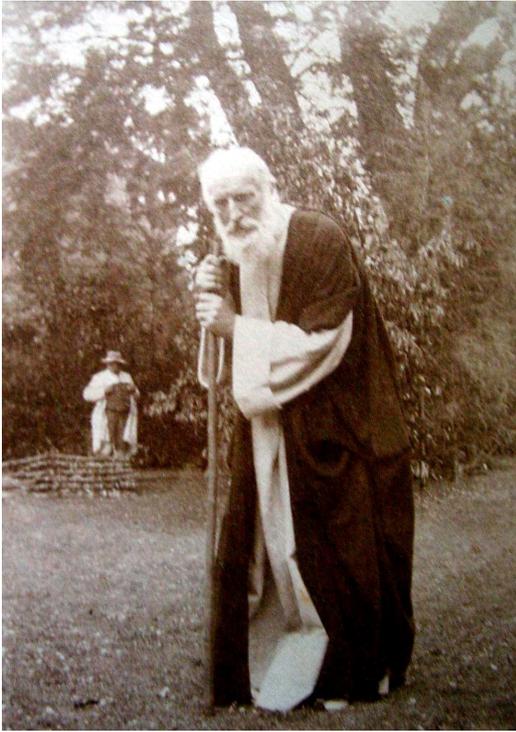
" Richard Whyting, last of our great line Of mitred abbots, who for truth and right Did stand condemned before King Henry's Throne, And die for the great Abbey he held dear!"

So she passes from sight, and soft music strikes up, as a tableau scene, representing Lord Leighton's picture of the Phoenician Traders, slowly groups itself.

They, too, vanish, melting like figures in the smoke, and the Spirit of Avalon (Miss Somerville) begins her work by introducing each scene in its order, with an explanatory verse.

Through the greenery comes a procession of travel-worn pilgrims, and in their midst is an old, old man, leaning on the shoulders of a youth. These are St. Joseph of Arimathea (Rev. G. W. Berkeley) and David, his servant (Mr. E. Gregory). They have had a fierce fight with wave and wind "in a frail and rudderless boat," and they are weary both in mind and body. St. Joseph bids them " give thanks to God that He hath brought us here, and saved us from the perils of our journey " ; so they all kneel in silence, and, for the first time, a prayer to the Christians' God is offered up on British soil.

David, however, is fearful of the demons who haunt the Isle, and, to strengthen his weak faith, St. Joseph gives his brethren a sign that shall live for ever, and shall proclaim to generations yet unborn the Message of the Gospel and the story of our coming." He strikes his staff into the earth, and, lo !—a miracle !—it takes root, and blossoms! It has become a thorn-tree, that every year at the Feast of Christmas bears flowers, to witness to the Coming of Christ.



Then there is seen approaching a band of Britons, headed by Arviragus, their king (Mr. T. Carter) and his baby son. He listens to St. Joseph's tale, and grants him a portion of land, on which to build—  
 "A little church of wattles from the marsh."

Four hundred years are flown, and Benignus the Saint, a disciple of St. Patrick, is Abbot of Glastonbury. Through the greenery, up perchance from "the shining waters of the mere," float the slow, wailing notes of the Dies Irae, as, attended by the three mourning Queens and their ladies, the funeral procession of the great King creeps through the forest. For "Arthur has passed to Avalon." Behind the bier of the dead hero walks Queen Morgan le Fay (Miss Berkeley), the witch-queen, sister to King Arthur. She is followed by the Queen of North Gallis (Miss Brymer), and the Queen of the Waste Lands (Miss Hilda Perkins), and by three ladies-in-waiting. Morgan, lamenting the death of her brother, and frantic with grief and shame at her own part therein, throws herself at the feet of St. Benignus (Rev. G. W. Saunders), and confesses she has brought about the disaster by stealing from Arthur long ago the scabbard of the sword Excalibur, which healed its bearer of all wounds. St. Benignus absolves her from her guilt.

After a long lapse of years, and we have the old familiar picture of King Alfred burning the cakes. The scene is Athelney, the marshy island where dwelt Denulf, the Swineherd, the Gundred his wife. Before a rough hut a group of merry Saxon babies are playing, when there enters suddenly Denulf, their father (Mr. F. Linham) calling loudly to Gundred (Miss Beryl Friend) that he has brought home a guest "whom he found wandering in the marshes." Dame Gundred does not spare her words to her husband on the subject of his follies, nor is she oversweet to King Alfred (Mr. E. L. Christie), whom she sets "to watch the cakes" when she goes out. The details of the story are too

well known to need description.

We pass then to the feast at Wedmore, when Alfred and the Danish King Guthrum (Mr. W. Higgins) sign the Treaty of Peace. Guthrum has for ever renounced the Pagan creed of his ancestors; he has been won to Christianity by Bishop Asser, of Sherborne (Mr. E. Davis), and he casts himself at Alfred's feet, avowing his new faith and confessing himself the "captive of Alfred's bow and spear", but England's Darling will not suffer him to kneel. "Art thou not also a king?" he asks him, and he raises Guthrum up, and together they pass to the Chrisom-Feast.

Again the years have passed, and Glastonbury has been pillaged by the Danes. We see the Court of King Edmund the Magnificent (Mr. Bath), who is expecting an interview with the great light of Saxon days - St. Dunstan. St. Dunstan (Rev. G. D'Angibau) would crave the Royal permission to rebuild the ruined church where he worshipped as a child, and he shows the King a parchment plan of the great Abbey. Edmund hesitates; how can such a wondrous church be built? But Dunstan has been told in a vision how to rear up his church, he has seen every arch, every column as it shall appear many generations after, "and," he declares, "thus shall it indeed be, for so hath God ordained it!"

Then comes a tableau of King Edgar the Peaceable (Mr. C. Higgins) receiving the Tax of Wolves' Heads at his Palace of Edgarley, Glastonbury. This is followed by King Henry I. (Mr. Prince) visiting the town in 1127, and giving the Charter for the Fair known as Tor Fair, which is still held every year. After the Herald (Mr. G. Turner) has read the proclamation, there enters a troop of Morris dancers in red and green, and soon we are lost in the enjoyment and mirth of the mediaeval fair. This is "Merry England!" indeed!

The next few centuries pass, and we find ourselves in the reign of Bluff King Hal, breathlessly awaiting the fall of the old Abbey and her monks. The scene is Sharpham Park, Glastonbury, where Abbot Richard Whyting (Rev. H. Dawes) is conversing with his adopted son, Thomas Horne (Master Herbert Ebsworth). Prior John Thorne (Rev. E. Locke) and Sub-Prior Roger James (Mr. F. Talbot) vow by the staff of St. Joseph that they will never leave their Abbot, but will die with him. Scarcely have they spoken before a terrified monk hurries in with the news that the soldiers are upon them. The three monks are marched away, and the next scene shows their condemnation at Wells, by Lord Russell (Mr. W. Brymer). Next day the horrible sentence is carried out, and we see them being dragged on hurdles through the Glastonbury streets, amidst a crowd of weeping women, wrathful men, and homeless monks. The crowd streams out after the procession of death, and leaves a sad little body of monks kneeling in the centre, praying, with bowed heads, for the passing soul of their dear, martyred Abbot. From the distance comes a dreadful sound - a sobbing wail of horror, mingled with hostile shouts; and the monks rise from their knees, and pass out. They have left Glastonbury for ever.

Taunton Market-place is crowded with eager folk, for to-day "King Monmouth" comes to set up his standard. To the strains of a gay march, and the accompanying cheer of the crowd, the Duke (Mr. R. Bath) enters at the head of his little army. Suddenly a voice is heard to cry in the broad "Zummerzet" dialect: "Let we pass droo, I zay," and the old-world "passon" hustles through the crowd on a grey pony, followed by seven strange-looking men armed with pitch-forks, scythes, and spades. This is "Passon John Radford, of Butleigh, up-handy Glastonbury" (Mr. R. Neville Grenville, the Squire) and he has come to present to the Duke seven recruits, all men working on one farm. The Duke receives him very graciously, and when he has inspected the addition to his army, he asks the reverend gentleman: "Do you also go with us, Master Kadford?" to which "Passon John" replies, with a chuckle: "Not I, Zurr; I be a passon, and a wold man. I must return to my vlock over to Butleigh, to keep 'em true to the Church, and free from heresies, and to teach the children their Catechism!"

Following close on "Passon John" come the Twenty Maids of Taunton, headed by their schoolmistress (Miss Baker). The schoolmistress presented the Duke with a handsomely bound Bible, then the Head-girl (Miss Dorrie Staley) offered him a sword on a crimson cushion; and, lastly, Miss Jessie Stirling presented a silken banner, worked for the occasion by a Taunton lady. Monmouth bowed his exit through a double row of the white-robed Taunton Maids, who threw flowers before him.

The last scene represented eighteenth century Glastonbury. The alteration of the calendar has filled the townsfolk with rage, and the

caretaker of the Abbey Ruins has "a-written to King Jarge up to Lunnon to let un know what I do think o' un:" The people are all anxious to learn if the Holy Thorn will show its disapproval of the change by refusing to blow at Christmas, for— "the Lard made them wold days, an' tidden right to change 'em. Noa, 'tidden !" Accordingly they all flock to the Abbey Ruins on Christmas Eve (New Style), headed by Richards, the caretaker (Mr. Robert Knight), with the intention of consulting the flowering tree ; but—

Richards: " There beant noa vlowers upon ee tree ! "

Sally Peters: "What? Noa vlowers!" Richards: " Narry one little bud!" Sally Peters: "Then 'tidden Chirmsus Eve!" Richards: "Noa, 'tidden Chirmsus Eve!" Sam Ford: "Thee must write another letter to King Jarge, vriend Richards, an' tell un Holy Tharn doant blow !"

" Why, zo I will," said Richards. "I'll warr'nt we can larn un zummat vrom Zummerzset ! "

So the crowd, proved for once to be in the right, breaks up, and the actors assemble for the final tableau.

They are all there—Kings, Abbots, Monks, early Britons, Morris dancers, and Swineherds. They stand silent while the Spirit of Avalon speaks the Epilogue, promising us that our Western home shall yet be glorious.

Then, scene by scene, the actors stream off, amidst the cheers of an appreciative audience.

The Butleigh Revel, after months of preparation, is over at last.

\*\*\* The writer of this article has very kindly consented to give further information to any reader wishing to arrange a Revel on similar lines.—EDITOR.

#### **16) BATH LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASSOCIATION. Nov 3rd 1906**

Annual Meeting.

The annual meeting of the Bath Literary and Philosophical Association was held last evening at the Institution. Mr. G. Norman presided, Macfarlane.—The Chairman proposed the re-electioa of Mr. Mowbray Green, and Mr. Powell seconded, Mr. Green in response remarking that a. great deal of success of the rota was due to the invaluable aid of Mr. Shum.

This concluded the business, and Mr. Plowman took the chair for the remainder of the evening. In introducing **Miss Mary A. Berkeley**, he said they were extremely fortunate in having their session encouraged by a lady, because although they always welcomed them, they did not get so many who would take upon themselves the duty of providing papers as they would wish. There might be a difference of opinion, as to the desirability of ladies' suffrage laughter), but there could be none as to the desirability of hearing from them at those gatherings. They were again fortunate in the subject upon which the lecture was to be given that evening, because it was one that must appeal to all lovers of the county, and it was an up-to-date subject, dealing with an event which only recently was brought into prominence. (Applause). - Miss Berkeley then delivered her most interesting lecture on "The Butleigh Revel," the story of a historic revival. She explained that the idea of the revel was suggested by a visit paid to the historic Warwick pageant of 1905. A wealth of subjects suggested themselves - the promoters had visions of Joseph of Arimathea, King Arthur and his knights, and Dunstan - and eventually eight scenes were selected, which the lecturer proceeded to describe in detail. A master of the revel was found in Mr. D. Mildred, of Cirencester. The lecturer alluded appreciatively to the prevailing spirit of enthusiasm and camaraderie which prevailed. A pleasing feature was the prominence of local talent; the performers being drawn from Butleigh, with some additions from Glantonbury; while the dresses were made by the women and girls of the village. The lecturer was thus able to refer with pride to the fact that, except for the wigs, everything had been made in Butleigh. No colour scheme was laid down; it was only stipulated that everything should be as bright as possible. In conclusion the lecturer pointed out that it was essentially the people's revel. They had come to help Butleigh; Butleigh had not come to help them. She concluded by quoting the words of one who had been present at the pageants of Warwick and Sherborne: "There are many pageants, there is only one revel." (Applause) Mr. T. F. Plowman, as one who had witnessed the performance of the revel, proposed a vote of thanks to Miss Berkeley for her paper, remarking on the amount of dormant dramatic talent that had been thus revealed. Alluding to the rumours abroad of the probable fate of Glastonbury Abbey, and its threatened transportation to America, he said he hoped that an opportunity would, if necessary, be given of making an appeal to the entire country for its preservation. - Mr. Tyte said that if a pageant were held in Bath, he thought it would have to be on a different, scale and of a different class to that at Butleigh, following more the lines of those of Sherborne or Warwick. He did not think that that esprit de corps which had contributed to the success of the Butleigh Revel would be met with here.— Miss Lee hoped that many other villages with interesting historic associations would follow the example of Butleigh but agreed that at Bath it would be better to follow the example of Sherborne or Warwick. Miss Berkeley stated that the cost of the Revel was £749 and £148 10s was realised.

#### **17) Bath Daily Chronicle November 31 1906**

##### **BATH LITERARY ASSOCIATION The Annual Meeting**

The annual meeting of the Bath Literary and Philosophical Association was held at the Literary and Scientific Institution, Terrace Walk, on Friday evening. Mr. G. Norman, presiding over a fair attendance. Mr. Mowbray A. Green, hon. secretary read the annual report which showed that the last session ended with a balance in hand of £5 19s. 5d. after making a grant of eight guineas to the Literary Institution.....

Mr. Mowbray A. Green was unanimously re-elected hon. secretary on the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. G. F. Powell.

In returning thanks, Mr. Green said that really a great deal of the arranging of the rota was due to Mr. Shum, who was so energetic in the matter.

"THE BUTLEIGH REVEL."

Mr. T. F. Plowman presided at the lecture which was given subsequently by Miss Mary A. Berkeley on " The- Butleigh Revel " — the story of a historic revival. In a few introductory remarks the Chairman said they were extremely fortunate in having their session inaugurated by a lady, because although they always welcomed them, they did not get as many who would take upon themselves to provide papers as they would' wish. There was a difference of opinion as to whether ladies should have the suffrage — (laughter) — but there could be no difference of opinion that they should make themselves heard at meetings of that Association (applause). Then they were also fortunate in the subject, because) it was one that must appeal to all lovers of the county, as it was also an up-to-date, subject. It treated of a matter that had quite recently been brought in various directions under their notice and which had excited a good deal of interest.

Miss Berkeley, who was the author of the text of the Butleigh Revel, gave a picturesquely worded paper. In stating that origin of the Revel, she pointed out that the idea emanated from what was done at Sherborne, and some of those who were present at that pageant from the neighbourhood of Butleigh asked one another whether something of the kind could not be undertaken in Somerset. Having briefly told of the historic and traditional interest attaching to Glastonbury Abbey, Miss Berkeley went on to explain the object of the Revel. The matter was enthusiastically taken up by the dwellers around Butleigh, and for the time being 300 individuals lost their personality in one common interest — that of illustrating the life-story of Somerset by living pictures. It entailed a great amount of work, and it grew and was carried out successfully. Miss Berkeley explained the meaning of the word "Revel," remarking that it was more appropriate to call what took place at Butleigh by that name than, to call it a "Pageant." The reader of the paper described the work of preparation, the rehearsals, and the Dress Committee, and gave a short account of the scenes and tableaux. After a short but interesting discussion took place. The Chairman made some apt remarks apropos of the dormant talent that existed in the county, and expressed the hope that Glastonbury Abbey would not be allowed to pass out of English hands.

Mr. W. Tyte said he was very much impressed with the Revel, and he hoped to see something of the kind in Bath, but he thought it would have to be on a different scale to that carried out at Butleigh, for he was afraid that in Bath they would not find the same esprit de corps which had made the Revel such a success.

Miss Lee also took part in the discussion, and it came out that the Butleigh Revel cost £749 and after meeting expenses a profit was cleared of £148 10s.

*Central Somerset Gazette October 19th 1906*

#### THE BUTLEIGH REVEL,

#### A SATISFACTORY BALANCE - HOW IT IS TO BE EXPENDED.

On Friday evening last a crowded meeting of parishioners was held at the School-room, Butleigh, the object of the gathering being to receive the balance-sheet of the recent Butleigh Revel.

Mr. R. Neville Grenville presided, and the attendance included the Vicar (the Rev. G. W. Berkeley), Mr. D. Mildred (the indefatigable organiser and secretary of the Revel), Mr. J. Bradden, etc.

The balance-sheet was presented by Mr. D. Mildred, and this showed that the total receipts amounted to £759, the proceeds from the sale of tickets, books, photographs, etc., amounting to £738 12s. 6d. The expenditure included the following items: Costumes, £118 8s. 6d.; grand-stand and labour, £131 11s. 5d.; Street Band and music, £75 3s. 1 Id.; advertising, printing, etc., £180 10s. 2d.; refreshments for performers, £73 12s. 3d.; hire of wigs and professional attendance, £17 19s. 0d.; police, £5 19s. 9d.; postage, etc., £9 4s. 0d.—leaving a balance in hand of £140 10s. 2d.—Loud cheers greeted the announcement of the balance, and these were renewed when Mr. Mildred formally handed it over to Mr. R. Neville Grenville to be used as approved of by the people of Butleigh.

Following this, Mr. Mildred spoke at some length on the subject of the Revel. In contrasting it with the more pretentious pageants held at Sherborne and Warwick, he stated that the general consensus of opinion was that, although the whole affair was on a smaller scale, the individual acting at Butleigh was greatly in advance of the talent exhibited at the other two places. Also, in averaging the takings at Warwick and Butleigh they worked out at about one per cent, better at Butleigh than in the first-named town. He also paid a sincere compliment to the authoress of the book (Miss Berkeley), saying that, after reading the books of both the other pageants, that of Butleigh was undoubtedly to be given first place. So that, altogether, Butleigh people had every reason to congratulate themselves on the success of the Revel and the part they had taken in it. (Applause.)

Mr. Mildred, whose courtesy and genial manner has gained him the affections of all the parishioners of Butleigh, was frequently cheered during the course of his remarks, and he sat down amid the singing of "He's a jolly good fellow."

The VICAR (the Rev. G. W. Berkeley) followed with a short speech. In touching on the early history of the Revel, he remarked how the inclement weather and other difficulties had discounted all their efforts, but, through the enthusiastic co-operation of Mr. Mildred and the people of Butleigh, they had persevered through thick and thin, and attained great success at tile finish. (Hear, hear.) He also paid a tribute of thanks and praise to Miss Somerville for the great help that she had given. Mr. Mildred in assisting to train the performers and develop the different scenes; and concluded with the remark that if in the future anything of the kind should ever be thought of again at Butleigh, Mr. Mildred had promised to come and give his assistance (Applause).

Other speeches followed, and it was subsequently decided by the meeting that £20 of the balance should be immediately handed over to the **Butleigh Hospital**. A committee was formed who were to superintend the re-casting and hanging of the **tenor bell** at the church, and it was arranged that after this work had been paid for another meeting should be held: to decide what should be done with the surplus, if any, of the money.

The thanks of the meeting were accorded to-

Mr. R. Neville Grenville for so generously placing his grounds at the service of the Revel promoters. It was considered, and rightly so, that this was no small thing, and that it had largely to do with the success of the undertaking.

All those who had the pleasure of witnessing the splendid pageant at Butleigh Court, and were impressed with the undoubted talent exhibited by the performers, and the capable way in which it was carried out will be glad to hear of the financial success of the venture and that such a satisfactory balance remains. It is doubly satisfactory in the sense that it will allow Butleigh to have a permanent memorial of a time and occasion when it put aside the title and reproach of "sleepy Somerset," and showed that, in one village at least, although fully conversant with and appreciating the importance of past events and traditions on national history, its people were also alive to, and capable of following in, the trend of modern events.

*Central Somerset Gazette March 18th - 23rd 1907*

#### AN ECHO OF THE BUTLEIGH REVEL. PRESENTATIONS TO THE AUTHORESS AND MANAGERS

A large and enthusiastic gathering assembled in the Schoolroom, Butleigh, on Monday evening in order to take part in a most interesting function connected with what may be termed the final scenes of the Butleigh Revel.

# BUTLEIGH REVEL.

## STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS.

	£	s.	d.
By Sale of Tickets, Books, Photographs, etc. ...	738	12	6
" Sale of Eleven Dozen Chairs at 18/- per dozen ...	9	18	0
" Mr. Pedwell—Refund off Teas ...	3	13	0
" Twenty-six Yards of Brown Sateen returned to Store ...	0	13	0
" Donations ...	6	3	6
<b>Costumes:—</b>			
To W. Crocker ...	0	11	6
" A. W. Gamage ...	7	18	1
" Mrs. Neville-Grenville ...	5	12	10
" Henry Glare ...	1	17	11
" Burnet & Co. ...	1	1	3
" Fox Brothers ...	0	3	11½
" Quant ...	11	19	0
" G. C. Hill ...	3	2	0
" E. L. Hickman ...	9	11	10
" T. Wallis & Co. ...	5	9	9
" S. Lewis & Co. ...	12	0	5½
" J. Colmer ...	1	4	0
" J. Lloyd & Co. ...	0	6	0
" Bailey & Co. ...	5	2	2½
" J. Brooks & Sons ...	53	10	3½
" Butleigh Co-operative Society ...	1	10	0
" B. Higgins ...	5	0	7
" G. Kenning & Sons ...	118	8	6
<b>Grand Stand and Labour:—</b>			
To H. A. Sheppard ...	1	10	0
" J. Snow & Co. ...	20	0	0
" W. H. Murch ...	3	5	9
" Paull & Co. ...	29	9	8
" E. Latcham ...	39	6	9
" R. Neville-Grenville, Esq. ...	46	14	3
" Insurance on Stand ...	0	5	0
<b>Street Band and Music:—</b>			
To Street Band ...	73	12	0
" Mr. Bradden ...	0	18	11
" Goodwin & Tabb ...	0	13	0
<b>Advertising, Printing, &amp;c.:—</b>			
To Advertising in Papers ...	112	5	0
" Central Somerset Gazette ...	44	10	6
" Bond Brothers—Bill Posting ...	22	12	7
" Advertising in Church Times ...	0	8	1
" J. G. Williams—Bicycle Tickets ...	0	5	0
<b>Refreshments for Performers, &amp;c.:—</b>			
To G. Turner ...	10	16	11
" J. Pedwell ...	53	15	4
<b>Hire of Wigs and Professional Attendance:—</b>			
To W. Waller ...	14	14	0
" Conveyance to Station ...	0	5	0
" Board and Lodging for same ...	3	0	0
<b>Police:—</b>			
To County Police ...	5	19	9
<b>Postage:—</b>			
To Postage ...	8	14	10
To Edmund Authur for loss of time ...	0	10	0
Balance ...	146	10	2
	£759	0	0

They had all seen the balance-sheet of the Revel and knew the balance they had in hand — £146 10s. 6d. of that £20 had been given to the Hospital, and with one or two small accounts to come in, the balance that they now had would be about £125. With regard to the work it was proposed to do in the church tower, the old bell weighed: 17cwt. 2qr. 21lb. At the present price of metal it was valued at £117 12s. 5d. The new bell would weigh 19½ cwt., and would cost £170 12s. 6d. Other items would include quarter-turning, re-hanging the fifth bell, re-easing, and re-inscribing, and in all the cost would amount to £132. Towards that they had £125, so that they would only have to find the sum of £7. (Hear, hear.) He thought that they might congratulate themselves that they had

done so well. It was impossible for them to do anything with the chiming apparatus, as had been suggested. as the money would not run to it. He would now ask their friend "St. Benignus" to address the meeting. (Applause.)

The Rev. G. W. Saunders, who was loudly applauded on rising to address the meeting, said that he was very glad to be present, for it gave him the opportunity of thanking them for the number of times that they appeared to him. They had asked him to tea, with them, to walk and lunch with them, and to revel with them, and now they had asked him to take a prominent part in the winding-up of what was undoubtedly the greatest event in the history of their village - (applause) - and to make a presentation to those who took a leading part in the Revel. He very much wished that instead of being asked to make a presentation on their behalf, he was making presentations to all of them, for they all deserved such for what they had done. But, although he was not able to do that, yet he believed that they had been

#### AWARDED SOME CREDIT

both in the papers and also by being known for having been included in what was called the famous "crowd." When at Taunton with his sister witnessing the South African matches it was noticed that a young lady kept her eyes fixed on him. Not that he was aware of it. (Laughter). He was reading a paper. But his sister told him what was happening (Laughter). When they got back and were having reached Taunton station, the same lady was there and she still kept her eyes on him. Presently she came up and asked if he did not take part in the Butleigh Revel, and whether he was not Benignus." (Applause) They got into conversation, and then the trains came in. She was taken one way and he the other. Returning to the subject of the presentation which he was there to make, one of these would be to Mr. Mildred - (applause) who under took the management of the Revel. Not that he would give him the entire credit, as there were people such as Mr. Chick and Mr. Bowditch who had their claims. A presentation could not be made to all so that it was being made to Mr. Mildred, who represented them all. (Applause). Another was to be made to Miss Berkeley who represented the principal characters of the Revel - and on another point was the authoress, so that she represented, as it were the thoughts of the village (Applause). It was looked upon as the best pageant book that was ever written and none of the words could be altered without spoiling the original. He had tried it! They had also to think of her for her acting and was sure that she must be given praise for the way that she knelt at his feet and looked into his face without laughing. (Applause) He had also a presentation to make to Miss Somerville who deserved all the praise she got. After quoting some lines which mainly described the ability and charm which Miss Somerville carried out the character of "Avalon" in introducing the scenes, the speaker said that if she appeared as such to those in front, what was she to them behind. She was a mighty Amazon - one who ordered about abbots and kings, priests and monks, at her will. They had to think of her as one to whom they could well be grateful, for she kept in touch with the crowd and kept them in the right order. Last of all they had to praise Mr. Mildred. He had had far and away the hardest of the work. They had all heard the story of the Israelites who grumbled at making bricks out of straw; but they never heard Mr. Mildred grumble at having to

#### MAKE KINGS AND QUEENS

out of the people of Butleigh and the county around. (Laughter.) Mr. Mildred had turned them into the people who were speaking real words, and it was one of the greatest points in favour of the Revel that people said that it was so natural. He referred to the crowd, and the natural way in which it came on laughing and talking together. It was the crowd who made the piece - not so much the principal characters - and not only those who formed the crowd, but the way Mr. Mildred took them in hand and brought them on. He took this line in the matter, and it turned out to near perfection as could be, and all that was said of Mr. Mildred was thoroughly deserved.

He had much pleasure on behalf of the inhabitants of Butleigh, in asking Miss Berkeley and Miss Somerville to each accept a silver pin-tray in remembrance of the Revel, and Mr. Mildred a silver drinking mug; and he might say that he considered it a great honour and pleasure to have the opportunity of doing that. (Hear, hear and applause.)

Miss BERKELEY who was heartily applauded said she wished to thank them all very much for it was a most pleasant surprise. It was one of the proudest moments of her life when she received the gift - more so than when she stood before the crowd at the Revel. All the plaudit however was due to Miss Somerville and Mr. Mildred, for they could not have had the Revel without them. (Applause).

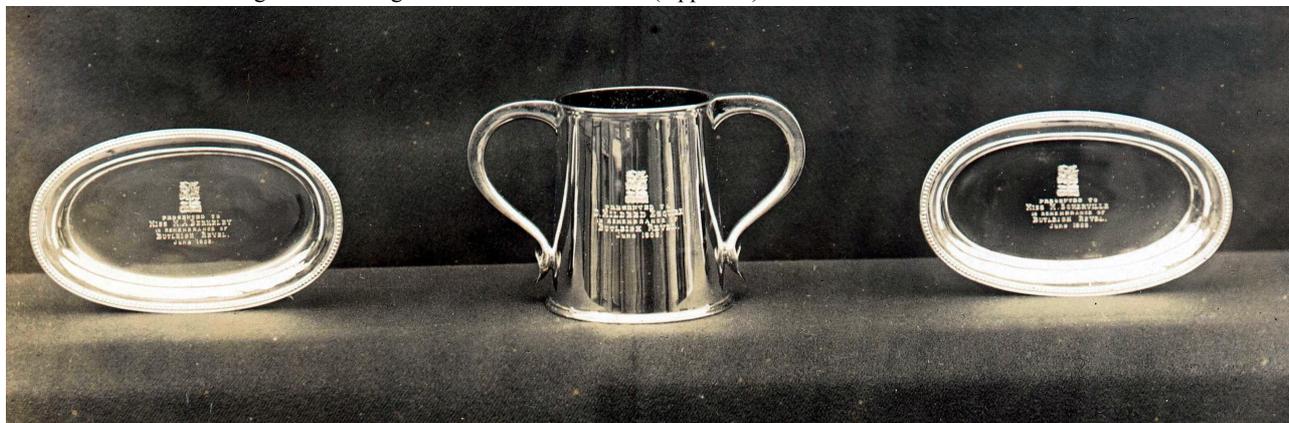
Miss SOMERVILLE, who met with quite an ovation, said that she wished to thank them all very much for the present. She was not deserving of it, as all that she had done had been only a pleasure to her, and she felt that she was the richer by hundreds of friends by coming to Butleigh (Applause).

Mr. D. MILDRED who was also the recipient of a great deal of applause, said that he did not exactly know how to put his thanks into words fit the beautiful present that they had made him. He should always value it for the reminder it would be of those who had given it to him. When he was asked to come and manage the Revel he promised to do so; but when he saw the book his astonishment was that he had ever promised anything of the kind. (Laughter.) But they had all worked hard, and by doing so they had made it a success. He had lately been asked to put up a pageant in Gloucestershire, and he had had much pleasure in declining, as he told them that they could not do it. (Laughter.) He knew exactly

#### WHAT BUTLEIGH PEOPLE COULD DO,

but he wouldn't undertake one in the other part of the country. Mr. Mildred then paid a tribute to the Squire for placing his grounds at their disposal and the assistance that he had given them. It was not everyone who would have done so much. (Hear, hear.) The squire had told them a little while ago that he had heard of what he had heard of what was said about the Revel. He (the speaker) had heard of similar statements being made. People said that there was no acting about the Revel - that it was all so natural that there was no acting in it. (Applause.) Butleigh, had shown the way in Somerset. But he did not think that any village in Somerset would accomplish what they had done. He had a letter from Twerton near Bath, asking advice about a pageant to be held there. They wanted to do it as cheaply as possible. His advice was to give up all thoughts of a pageant, and he believed that that had since been done. There were pageants to be held all over England. but there had only been one Revel. (Applause.) He would like to put in a word for Mr. Haddock who trained the morris-dancers so admirably. In conclusion he again thanked them for the reminder of the many pleasant weeks that he had spent among them, and expressed the hope that he would have the pleasure of doing so again. (Applause.)

Mr. HADDOCK, who was called on to speak said that they had all to praise Miss Berkeley for if it had not been for her book there would not have been any Revel. The book, he might tell them, had been shown to an eminent playwright in London and had won his good opinion. Mr. W. KILLEN said that, on behalf of the parishioners, he wished Miss Somerville, Miss Berkeley, and Mr. Mildred long life and happiness, and if in the future they would not get up another Revel at Butleigh they hoped for their presence and help in some other entertainment. (Applause.) The CHAIRMAN remarked that it was now time for the gathering to come to an end, but he hoped that the memory of the Revel would be retained by them all, and that it would be handed down to their children. (Hear, hear.) They had with them that evening Admiral Neville, who was just off to America to show the Yankees the British flag, and he would be able to tell them something about Butleigh Revel at the same time. (Applause)



The silver pin-trays which were presented to Misses Berkeley and Somerville are very handsome ornaments. They each bear a beautifully engraved representation of the "Holy Thorn" design that appeared on the cover of the Revel book, as well as the words "Presented to \_\_\_\_\_ in remembrance of Butleigh Revel, June, 1906." The handsome drinking cup presented to Mr. Mildred is also similarly inscribed and engraved.

During the evening Mr. BRADDEN stated that a permanent memorial of the Revel was being prepared to hang in the schoolroom [*now lost*]. This consists of an account of the Revel, cut from the "Central Somerset Gazette." it forms the centre-piece in a large oak frame, and the space all round is filled up with photographs of the Revel, taken by such excellent amateur photographers as Mr. Bradden and others at Butleigh. Altogether when finished it will form a very striking and interesting memorial of the Revel and cannot fail to be of interest to future generations of Butleigh children.

There are one or two interesting little details connected with the bell that is to be re-cast, which work is to be carried out by Messrs. Taylor, of Loughborough, Leicester. Mr. C. Higgins the sexton, tendered the information the bell bears the date 1637, and that the inscription on it reads; "At thy departure I shall sound, and ring to bring thee into ground." The curious part about the inscription whether from some mistaken idea about the reading, is that it is engraved backwards and has to be read in that way. It is said that in order to keep up the continuity, the inscription is to be placed on the new bell in the same way.

### **THE TENOR BELL**

**The Bell** [Note about the Bells by Mary Berkeley in her "Book"]

*Long after all other tongues have ceased to wag of the Butleigh Revel there is one that will not be silent - the bronze tongue of the Tenor Bell, to be recast by the proceeds - as it clangs out in years - perhaps centuries - to come, its Bobs and Grant Triples it will ever testify loudly to the memory of a certain "Bob" (short for Robert) who so largely contributed in kind and kindness to that bell's renewed existence. It will tell too of the grand triple result of the Pageant;*

*I The healthful enjoyment of the Players themselves*

*II The very great pleasure their efforts gave to their neighbours*

*III The gift they were enabled to offer to the House of their GOD*

The following pictures show the tenor bell being removed from the tower, the new recaste bell and it being replaced, accompanied by notes on the bells from a leaflet produced in the village at the end of the 20th century.

### **THE BUTLEIGH BELLS**

No-one knows when Butleigh's bells were first hung in the Tower, because the dates upon them mostly record not their original hanging but their recasting. The oldest date is that of the third bell (1596), and there were five bells before 1675, the first year for which our Churchwardens' Accounts survive. What is more, they were already on wheels, for in that year Edward Larcomb, the carpenter, was paid 8s 10d for mending the fourth bell wheel.

Edward Larcomb could repair a wheel, but he could not, apparently, make one, for when in 1689 and 1692 new wheels were required for the tenor and fifth bells, first 'Old Hart' and then John Hart of Long Sutton were entrusted with the work. They charged £1 12s 6d. and £1 6s. 8d. respectively, and the carriage of one to Butleigh cost 1/6d. Shortly afterwards (1694) the fifth bell was recast at Closworth (on the Dorset border south of Yeovil) by Thomas Knight, the partner and successor of the Purdues, a famous family of bellfounders. 347 lbs of new metal were added to the bell, and

the job cost £37 6 10.\* Some Butleigh men seem to have gone to Closworth to help with the casting and they found it thirsty work, for 14/6 was spent on beer to sustain them. Carriage of the bell both ways cost 17/- in all, and in order to get the bell out and in again, the roof of the Tower had to be opened up.



*Terror Bell - at Loughborough.*



### MAKING THE BELL CAGE

The cage or frame which had to be replaced in 1669 was made in 1728. Eighteen oak trees were bought, nine of them from James Periam. Those nine trees yielded 157 feet 6 inches of timber at 1/6 a foot, and the value of the other trees was similarly calculated, the eighteen together costing £19 7s. 9d. Sawyers were paid 1/6 a day, and the bellwrights who made the cage, 2/6 and 1/9. The accounts include the following statement " Ale was allowed by the most part of the chief ratepayers of the parish to the workmen about the bells; one quart of ale for one man and a pint a day for the rest—£3 4s. 8d. "

A further 15/- had to be spent on ale, and 5/- was given to the men who rang first after the bells were hung up. Was it danger money ?

\*It is interesting to note that in the previous year (1693) Exeter Cathedral Chapter employed Purdue and Knight to recast their ' Doome ' bell. For that bell 5831 lbs of new metal were added, and the cost was £49 3s. 0d. The Exeter Chapter also employed a carpenter named Thomas Hart in 1676, ' Old Hart ', perhaps. At any rate one may guess that the Harts were noted wheelwrights.

### THE BELLS IN USE

There seem to have been no great changes in the next hundred years, though expenditure on the bells always accounted for a considerable proportion of

the annual Parish budget. In 1704 five ropes from Yeovil cost £1 7s. 0d. and carriage 2/-, and there are constant references to ropes and leather, not to mention such things as gudgings, plates, verills and sprigs. Occasionally the spelling makes it hard to recognize a word—e.g. oayelle for oil, iregare for iron work, Yoouell for Yeovil.

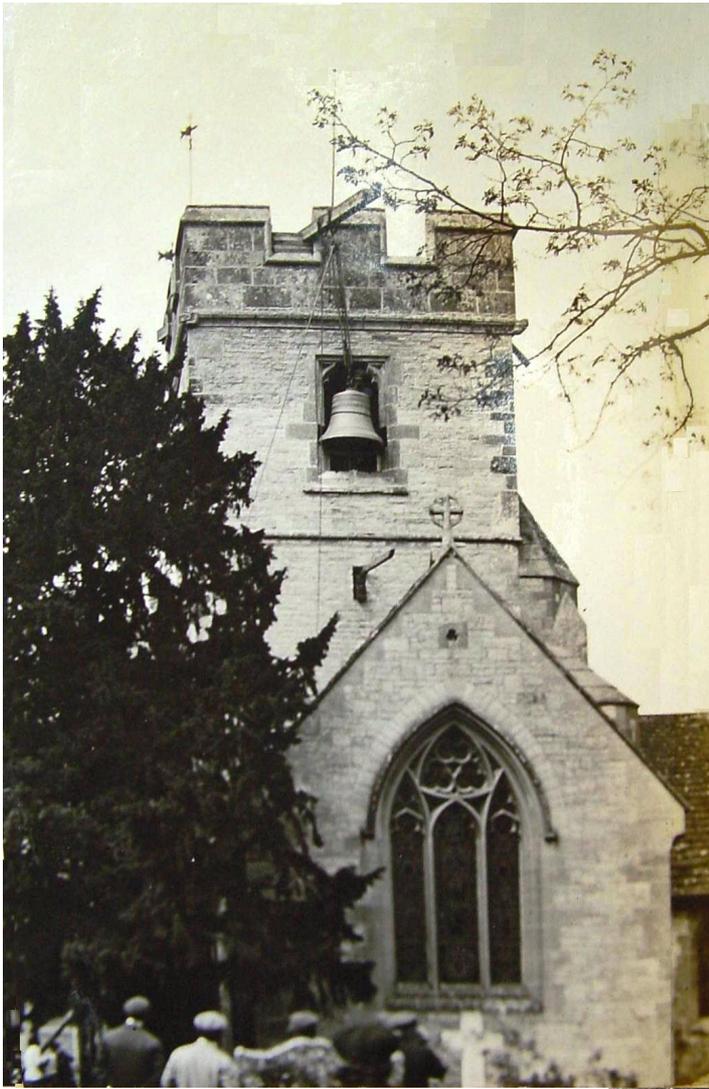
The bells were always rung on November 5th and the ringers were given 10/- a year for this (or beer in lieu) right up to 1938. They were also rung on special occasions, such as, "Crowneacon Day" (1675); the King's birthday (1681) ; for His Majesty's coming home (1716); for victory over the rebels (1746); for thanksgiving at taking Quebec (1759); for the Queen's marriage and Coronation (1840).

*Above and right* – taking the old bell out  
30 Jan 1907

### RINGERS IN DISGRACE

It cannot be said that bellringers were always well behaved. The Bishop held a Visitation in 1826, from the report of which it appears that the ringers used to stand at ground level, and that they had built an enclosure separating the chancel from the nave. The Bishop ordered the enclosure to be removed, and a ringing chamber to be made upstairs.





And three years later the Vestry meeting resolved that "since great irregularities had occurred from any parties which might desire having easily obtained the key of the Church and ringing the bells, twelve ringers were to be chosen for their sobriety and respectability, and the Clerk was to give the key to no one but their President."

### THE LAST HUNDRED YEARS

In 1855 the bells were rung to celebrate the news (which turned out to be false) that Sebastopol had fallen, and during the peal the tenor bell cracked. It was not repaired until the famous Butleigh Revel of 1906 raised the necessary funds. Whether the fourth was cracked at the same time is not recorded, but it was recast in 1857. For the next fifty years the bells could only be chimed and not rung, but in spite of this a new treble bell was bought or presented (there seems to be no record) in 1873, and so we come to possess our set of six.

After the Revel referred to above, as a result of which the tenor was recast and its weight raised from 17.5 to 19.75 cwt, all the bells were quarter-turned and rehung, and proper ringing was resumed. Now it is our task to put them in good order once again, so that for another three or four hundred years they may ring out the joys and sorrows of men and

proclaim the enduring presence of God among His people.

In 1871 the inscriptions on the bells were as follows (Ellacombe - Church Bells of Somerset):

2. E.C.I.T. 1619.

3. Geve thanks to God Anno Domini 1596.

4. Taylor and Sons Founders Loboro 1857.

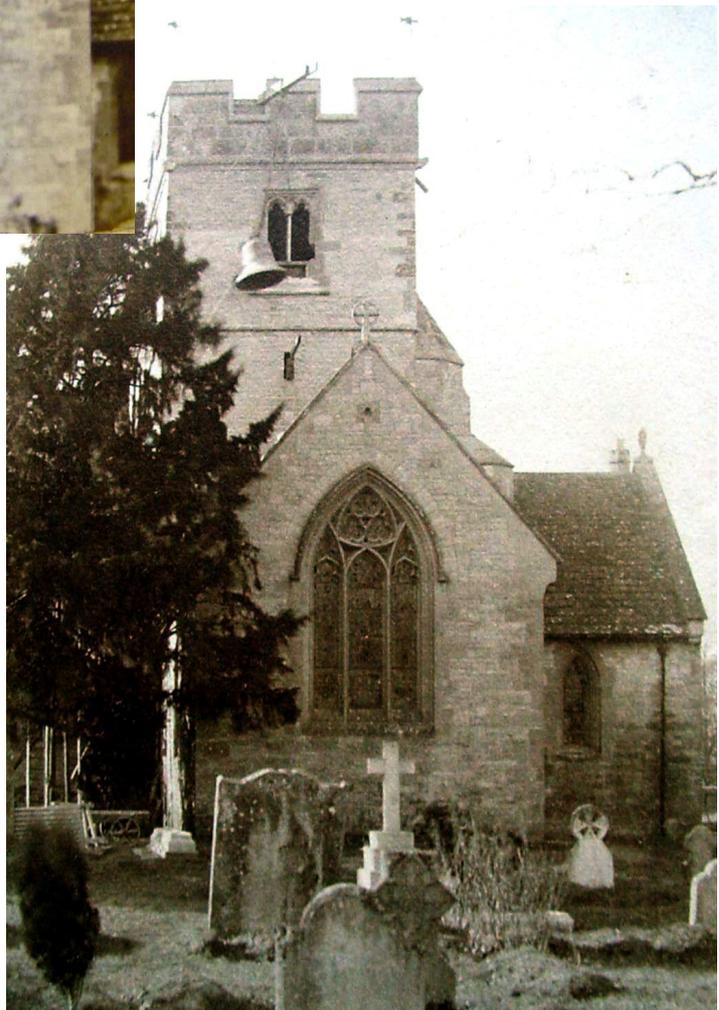
5. T. P. John Kelway George Hooper Anno Domini 1694.

6. **DNUORG OTNI EEHT GNIRB OT GNIR  
DNA DNUOS LLAHS I ERUTRAPED YHT TA  
1637 W.K:R.P.** (This last one was cast backwards).

*Above and right* – installing the new tenor bell  
16 May 1907

### Hanging the Bells

**1907** There follows a newspaper account of the removal and then replacement of the tenor bell after it was re-cast;



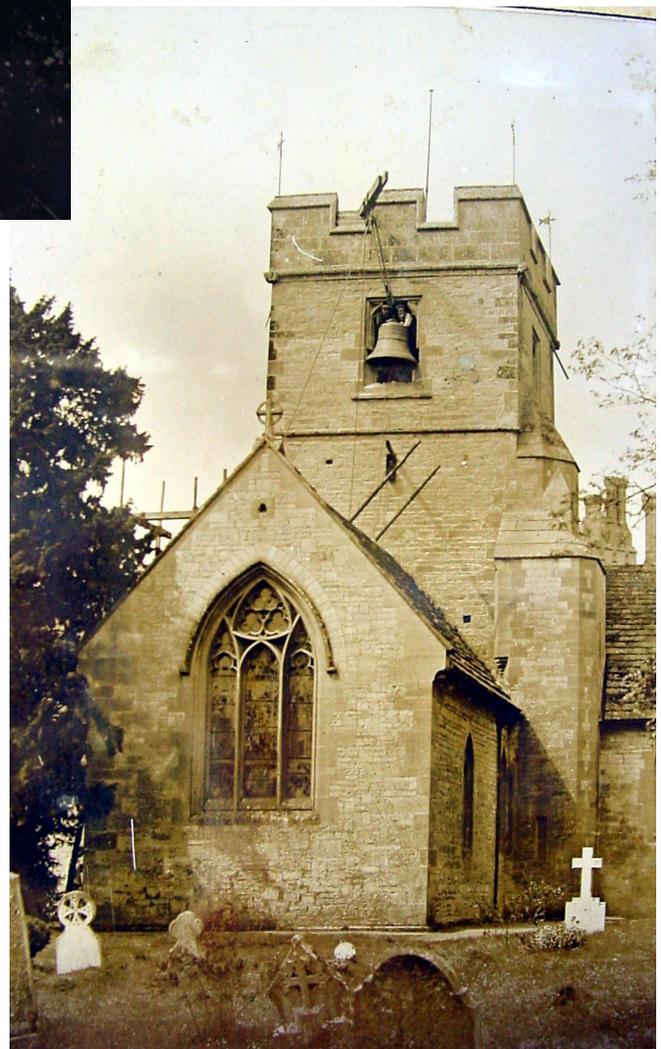


“ **The Church Bells** - The work of removal for recasting the tenor bell of St. Leonard's (the parish) church was begun recently. Mr. H. Treppeck, of Butleigh, has been at work erecting a scaffold outside the south-east corner of the tower. It had been found that the bell was too large to lower inside, so this scaffolding was necessary, as the bell had to be taken through the east window of the tower. On Wednesday of last week, in the sight of many of the villagers, the bell was taken through and out of the window, lowered on to a trolley, and drawn to Glastonbury on its way to the bellfounders (Taylors of Loughborough). Report has it that it will be back home and ready to be rung within a month. The surplus from the "Revel" of last June is the source of the fund for defraying the expense.

**30<sup>th</sup> January 1907**

**The New Tenor Bell** - On Saturday last, the new tenor bell, the cost of which, as has been previously mentioned, was met with the proceeds of the Butleigh Revel, was placed in the church tower, and probably, after a trial on Saturday next, the new bell, in conjunction with the other five, will be formally rung in an opening peal on Sunday morning next. The new tenor, which weighs 19 cwt., is slightly larger than the old bell, which only weighed 17 cwt. In order to inaugurate the event, the vicar (the Rev. G. W. Berkeley) is giving a supper to the bell-ringers on Saturday evening next.”

**May 16<sup>th</sup> 1907**



52, Part I, No. 53419

Stationers' Hall.

17 APR 1906

M<sup>rs</sup> Mary A. Berkeley

has this day Registered the undermentioned Book:

The Butleigh  
Revel.

*[Signature]*  
S<sup>ecy</sup>

N.B. - This Memorandum is for reference only  
The Stationers' Hall Entry 52

Fee

/	Original Entry	...	...	...	...	5
	Certificate	...	...	...	...	5

*[Signature]*

Mary Berkeley registered a copy of the "Butleigh Revel" with Stationers Hall in 1906

## After the Revel was over

The Butleigh Revel was not repeated and nothing like it ever took place in the village again. Alice Buckton, who had acquired Tor House and gardens, Glastonbury, in 1912, now "The Chalice Well", became involved with the occultist Dion Fortune and composer Rutland Boughton to found the Glastonbury Festival. In 1922 she made a silent film along similar lines to the Revel with the actors wearing some almost identical costumes.



The Reverend George W. Berkeley left Butleigh in 1919 and died in Wimborne in 1925. His wife Katherine died there in 1929 and their son died in 1957. Mary Albinia Berkeley also never married and died at Wimborne in 1961.

Daniel Mildred appeared living with his mother and two spinster sisters at Preston House, Gloucestershire, in 1911. He was a magistrate. During the Great War he was a Captain in the Gloucester Regiment on the Special list. He never married and died in 1923. His great-nephew Peter Awdry inherited his camera, photograph albums and the silver tankard awarded to him for his directorship of the Revel.

Robert Neville-Grenville was 60 years old at the time of the Revel and still had many productive years in front of him. Apart from his interests in cider and fruit propagation, fish farming and steam engines he also owned a steam yacht "The Otter" built in 1903 by Cox & Co. of Falmouth and pictures of him sailing the ship in 1906 – 1909 exist. Unfortunately the era of the landed squire was coming to an end and the Great War was the first nail in its coffin. After the War less people worked on the land or were servants in big houses. The squire and his wife were childless and as they aged they seem to have made no effort to involve their nephew heir in running

the estate. Sadly the heir, Ralph Neville died on 4<sup>th</sup> August 1936, Gertrude Agnes Neville-Grenville on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1936 and Robert on the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1936. The son of Ralph was Richard Neville born 1922 and only 14 years old in 1936. From 1936 Butleigh Court was left empty and the estate only 'managed' until after the War. The estate was sold off in 1947 and the Court became a ruin. The indigenous inhabitants of the village who were descended from generations of Butleighonians slowly melted away and within a century of the Revel hardly anyone survived in the village who had a family connection with it in any way.

