

## A “Redmarley Gallimaufrey”

[O.E.D. “Gallimaufrey” - a heterogeneous mixture, a jumble, a medley.  
Shakespeare - “They have a kind of dance which the wenches say is a  
gallimaufry of gambols” - The Winter’s Tale, IV iii  
(cf. French “galimafrée” - a ‘nonsense’, a ‘hotch-potch’ stew - Rabelais)]

**“Murder most foul”** (Hamlet V.iv). In the 1790’s a certain Thomas Goode owned a (now demolished) house called ‘Alfords’ near The Lottery. On his death the property was to pass to his nephews Richard and John Lane. They could not wait for his natural death (he was only in his 30’s and with a young family) so they murdered him by shooting him in a field near “the Chapel” (farm?) in October 1799. Owen, the village constable, pursued them and arrested them in Bristol. After the trial at Worcester Assizes they were hanged at ‘Gallow’s Brook’ in the north of the parish on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1800. Details of the Goode family, including the burial of the unfortunate Thomas, are in the Parish Registers.

**“Jolly boating weather”** (“Eton Boating Song”) In 1789 Richard Hall, surveyor for the “Gentlemen Promoters” of the *Hereford and Gloucester Canal Company* proposed a route (and made a few exploratory ‘digs’) from “Haw Passage” (Haw Bridge did not then exist) via *Tirley, Corse, Eldersfield, Redmarley\** and *Dymock* - thence onward to Ledbury and Hereford. [\*A contemporary map in *D. Bick “The Hereford and Gloucester Canal”* (1994) shows that the “canal” was planned to pass north of the village near Bury Court.] A year later Hall surveyed an alternative route from *Over* via *Rudford* and *Highleadon*. It was this second route which Josiah Clowes (Chief Engineer) recommended to shareholders in April 1790 - at what later proved to be the “optimistic” cost of £69,997 - 13s - 6d.

**“Let the train take the strain”** In the 1860’s the inhabitants of Redmarley joined a petition supporting the proposed *Worcester, Forest of Dean and Monmouth Railway*. Acts of Parliament authorizing preparatory work were passed (UK Legislation - 27 Vict. c.cxcv) in 1864 and (28 Vict. c.cccix) in 1865. John Noake (Guide to Worcestershire - 1868) writes in his section on *Berrow*, (Page 28) “the beautiful seclusion has been broken into by the spade of the ‘navvy’ as the railway will pass through *Berrow*, and a station (and goods shed, though he doesn’t say so) is to be erected at *Rye Cross*, on the parish boundary between *Berrow* and *Birtsmorton*”. (His entry on *Redmarley* (Page 308) makes no mention of the scheme). He continues enthusiastically, “the line will be a great advantage to the neighbourhood. A church, a station, a hydropathic establishment and some villas would form the nucleus of what might be called *South Malvern*”. Nothing more seems to have been heard of this ambitious design. It presumably shared the same fate as a great many others in the era of *Railway mania*.

**“Trial by Water”** In former times this was the ‘standard test’ for a woman (it was usually a woman) thought to be guilty of witchcraft. It was “reasoned” that water, being the symbol of baptism, would wholly ‘embrace and welcome’ the innocent woman and she would sink; if she were guilty, the water would ‘reject’ her as a servant of the devil, and leave her floating on the surface to await the dire fate of burning at the stake, or (later) hanging. The ‘accused’ had her thumbs tied crosswise to her opposite big toes and she was then thrown into the local pond. Redmarley has the dubious ‘honour’ of being the scene of the last recorded trial of this nature - at least in Worcestershire if not further afield. In 1820 William Lygon, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl Beauchamp was riding through the village when he encountered ‘a throng of excited rustics’ about to throw an unfortunate ‘accused’ into the pond (presumably the ‘pond’ on the land now occupied by the school buildings). “The rustics resented his protestations and assured him that they were following established

practice. Only by using his authority as a County Justice was he able to save the wretched woman from ‘proving her innocence’ by drowning”. There are many accounts of this event, virtually all in the same terms.

**The postal system in the 1820’s** was in its infancy. For many the receipt of a letter was a rarity, sending one even rarer. Owen, the village postman, lived at Rock Cottage. (Was he related to Owen the village constable mentioned in the “murder affair” a generation earlier?) He walked to Newent three times a week to collect the mail, but considered it no part of his duties to deliver it. Letters remained at his house ‘until called for’. News was passed by word of mouth that Mr and Mrs So-and-so had a letter - if they liked to collect it. In this period before Rowland Hill and the pre-paid *Penny Post* of 1840, account books show that not infrequently the recipients had to pay 8d or 9d (no mean sum at the time) before the items would be handed over.

**Redmarley Wakes** were officially “hiring fairs” for labourers in the hop-fields. The Rector, Rev. H.M. Niblett, writing about 1902, says that “it is to be feared that the Rectors at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century did not set their face against all the quarrelling and drunkenness; indeed tradition says that they actually encouraged the fighting which was not confined to the village green, which was unenclosed until 1838. Rustics would climb into the surrounding pear trees, both for safety and the better to view the animated scene. Drunkenness and bad language were the order of the day at the (old) Rectory itself at the Tithe Audits; the ringers spent Christmas night carousing in the Belfry. ... Little wonder when the Rector himself cared for little but farming”. Doubtless true, but fortunately it may be added that by the middle of the century a series of Rectors emerged, beginning with James Commeline jnr who, with their families (especially daughter Laura) devoted much effort, and a good deal of their own money to improving the lot of their predominantly indigent, generally illiterate ‘labouring class’ flock. Drunkenness was still one of the major problems facing these later clergy. The *Rose and Crown* appears already on the 1838 Tithe Map, but encouraged by the *Beer Act* of 1830 at least three ‘beer-shops’ also flourished in the parish until the closing years of the century (see *Kelly’s Directory* and others).

**Redmarley Park** was the venue for steeplechases organised by the *Ledbury Hunt* between 1885 and 1920. The course was 3¾ miles. After 1920 the races were held at Longdon, “owing to Mr Browning objecting to their taking place in the Park”.

**Payford Bridge** “*Payford*” is first recorded in 1413. Its derivation is uncertain. Was a “toll” payable there, or was it (more likely) a “*paved ford*” to facilitate the passage of wheeled vehicles - many fords were unpaved. It is not known when the first bridge was built, but in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a rickety wooden structure, which soon collapsed completely.. To save money, the Parish came to an arrangement with a Mr. Stokes in 1815 to use the adjacent ‘private’ stone bridge which he had recently built. This was presumably the bridge which was washed away on the last day of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Leadon being in full flood. Rebuilding in 1900 cost £429 - 11s. The County Councils (Glos and Worcs) each contributed a third, the balance came from the rural districts of Redmarley and Newent. The present bridge dates from 2003.

**Gloveresses** In the 19<sup>th</sup> century over half of the British glove industry was centred on Worcester. The principal firm to emerge was *Dent & Allcroft* (linked with the *Dents* of *Sudeley Castle*, Winchcombe from 1837, and distantly with the *Dent-Brocklehurst* family today). The industry relied heavily on a vast army of out-workers operating from home. In Redmarley in 1868, “most of the women and girls are *gloveresses*” (Noake p.308), and see also 1851 Census. The company agent called at the *Rose and Crown* (cf Young; “Alice Elgar”) twice a week, collected the completed hand-sewn gloves and brought supplies to be ‘worked on’ for next time. Wages were a

pittance, but even so it is said that a total of £80 to £90 changed hands per 'visit'. Increased mechanisation later in the century largely killed this 'industry', though the 1891 Census shows a very small number were still thus employed, and one woman at Playley Green at the turn of the century claimed she made gloves for Edward VII.

**Longevity.** Dr Percy Young (above) tells of Richard Purser, said to have been a native of Redmarley, who died on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1868, aged 112 years ! ["Photographic World" (no.38) also ran an article on him in August 1986]. Though there is no record of his birth in the Parish, this man was known to Rev. James Commeline snr, when he was Curate of Hempsted, Gloucester (before becoming Rector of Redmarley in 1800). Richard Purser was at this time employed as a cowman at a farm on nearby Robinswood Hill. Commeline, who was born in 1762, thought that Purser seemed to be a few years older, so 1756 could be a reasonable year for his birth. (It was one Commeline's daughters who recounted her father's acquaintance with Purser). Eventually Purser worked as a general labourer in Cheltenham until the age of 98. On his death 14 years later, his son, then aged 63, said that his father had married late, when well into his forties. All very convoluted, but the 'dates' seem to suggest that he could have achieved this remarkable age.

**Alice Roberts (later "Elgar")** aged seven at the time, "gave £3" in 1855 to the Subscription Fund for the rebuilding of St. Bartholomew's Church. Her father, Major-General Roberts, gave £10. The three largest donors were the Patron of the Living, D.H. Niblett (£200), Earl Beauchamp and the Rector, Rev. E.H. Niblett (£100 each). Of the 85 subscriptions listed (totalling £1137 - 0 - 6) thirty-three were smaller than Alice's. (Was this perhaps her first "public duty" ?).

**The "Great Reconciliation" that wasn't.** In his book "*Elgar the Cyclist*" K.W. Allen cites an interesting example of Estate Agents' "hype". (Elgar had his own views on the profession). Apparently, when *Hazeldine / Pfera Hall* was on the market in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Agent's prospectus assured prospective buyers that local legend has it that "*Alice eloped with Elgar in 1886 and married him at Brompton Oratory in London. The Roberts family became reconciled with Elgar*" at a meeting in the 'dining-room shortly before the Major-General's death in 1887'. "*To this day the dining-room is known as the Reconciliation Room*" confides the Agent. In fact, the gallant General died twenty-seven years earlier, and Lady Roberts died well over a year before Alice and Edward were engaged, let alone married. As for "eloping", such a thought would have been quite out of character for both of them.

**"Pfera Hall"** is considered to be an acronym derived from the *Pankerton-Fenton* family, whose three daughters were called *Elsa, Rosa* and *Anna*. Alice Elgar (as she was now) sold "*Hazeldine*" in 1891 to the Misses Fenton; in 1904 it passed to a Mr Hignett and in 1907 the Misses Newbury arrived. A 1" O.S. Map of 1922 shows "*Pfera Hall*". How long the P-F family had been in residence is not clear, nor is their date of departure. Two Directories in Worcestershire Record Office (1935 & 1939) list "*Hazeldine*" again, while the writer's copy of 1" O.S. Map dated 1953 clearly shows the site as being called "*Mansion House*" (very odd!). An inspection of the deeds, if they exist, is probably the real answer. (Other sources, including personal memories are not necessarily infallible). On 17<sup>th</sup> December 1986 there was a full-page spread in *The Citizen* for "the newly refurbished *Pfera Hall Convalescent Home*" (Matron -Mrs Paula Bayliss, wife of one of the owners). The success of the enterprise was short-lived and in the early 1990s the house was up for sale. Very briefly it had the name-board '*Hazeldine*' outside again. Before the present owners arrived it was badly vandalised. It is said that there was 'a biscuit factory' at one time in the grounds and later there was some light engineering.

**Public transport.** Percy Young (above, p 31) tells of the Gloucester - Hereford four-horse

coach calling at Redmarley in the 1850s. It is not certain when the service was discontinued. Horses were changed at Staunton and Ledbury. The coach arrived each morning “between eight and nine o’clock, depending on the horses and the weather”, and returned at nine o’clock in the evening. It is not clear from contemporary records whether the route from Staunton lay via Haw Cross and The Lottery, or via Rock Pitch, - both involved using the very narrow lanes. Passengers alighted or boarded at the *Post House*, not to be confused with the nearby *Inn House*, nor with the village post-office, which early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see postcards) was in today’s *Church House* opposite.

In the later half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (exact dates again are uncertain) a “carrier service” operated twice a week to Gloucester from the *Rose and Crown*. In 1868 the “carrier” is listed in the Post Office Directory as the landlord, Samuel Jones. Presumably the service was still functioning in 1891, when the *Census* records two men working as “carriers”, whether both worked for the same firm or not is not clear.

The first bus service from *Gloucester* to *Ledbury*, via Redmarley (Playley Green) started in August 1921. It was operated by the *Bristol Tramways Company*, known to everyone as “Bristol Blue” from the predominant colour of its livery. This name still persisted when the livery changed to green in the late 1930s - early 1940s. The service was withdrawn well before the 1980s. At present (2005), by carefully picking the right day of the week (!) it is possible to travel by bus from Redmarley to Ledbury, Gloucester (via Upleadon or Staunton) and Cheltenham (this last very circuitously!).

The first telephone was installed in Redmarley in 1908.

Electricity arrived in the village in December 1955 - conveniently for Christmas! Before this some properties had their own generators. The (old) Rectory generator was installed as recently as 1951.

Mains sewers arrived, creating great chaos, in the mid-1970s. Initially, because of the expense, some householders preferred to retain their old septic tanks. Most have changed since.

The Village Well. The original “Anchor Well” at Cob Hill had long been a great bug-bear. The villagers had to make the long up-hill return journey with heavy full pitchers in all weathers. The well was on private land and in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the owner sought to forbid its continued use to the villagers. About 1860 Miss Laura Commeline, daughter of the Rector James Commeline jnr, ‘bought’ the well for the village. Parallel with this, a number of villagers had started to dig their own wells, and the use of the Anchor Well declined.

Forty years later, in 1904, bore-holes being drilled at Bromesberrow Heath by the Malvern Water Company spelt disaster for owners of wells in the village, many of which either dried up or were polluted. The owners of those which ‘survived’ shared them with their less fortunate neighbours. A few of these well-heads still exist today. The Well used by most villagers may still be seen behind the cottage at the beginning of Green Lane, opposite the Church.

On the opposite side of the main road, Sir George Bullock at the Down House was one of the first to have a ‘private pipe’ from Bromesberrow. In 1925 the (old) Rectory wells were found to be contaminated, and Sir George arranged for a pipe to be laid at his expense from the Down House to the Rectory. More problems arose when the water-table dropped as the result of deep borings for a large American Army Hospital at Welland in WWII. Gloucester Corporation brought some mains water to the area in 1949, but most properties in the village had to wait until 1954.

Trades and Occupations. The Rector in about 1902 counted the following in one of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century *National Censuses* for Redmarley :- 6 tailors; 13 shoemakers; 15 masons; 18

carpenters; 5 thatchers and 7 blacksmiths. The census returns at that time did not distinguish between those who were 'employees' and those who were 'employers' or 'working on own account'.

**Population** A *Church Census* for the *Province of Canterbury* in 1676 quoted for *Redmarley* parish: Total population 314 - ("Conformists" - 302: "Non-Conformists" - 3: "Papists" - 9). Specimen *National Census* population figures include: 1801 - 689: 1851 - 1192: 1861 - 1265: 1901 - 875: 1951 - 739. The conspicuous increase in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century is attributable to a large extent to the short-lived *Chartist Development* at Lowbands.

**"Upper School" → "Village Hall"** By a deed dated 8<sup>th</sup> October 1860 the Rector, Rev. E.H. Niblett, formally conveyed to the Archdeacon of Worcester, representing the Diocesan Board for Education, "*a piece or portion of (Glebe) land known as Sheppard's Close... for the erection of a School for the education of Children or Adults or Children only of the labouring and other poorer classes of the Parish of Redmarley.....in accordance with the principles of the Established Church .... also in connection with the Diocesan Board for Education and under the sole direction and Management of the Rector of Redmarley for the time being.*" Generally known as the "*Upper School*" it cost £200 to build, and was to complement the school completed earlier by Rev James Commeline jnr at Lowbands following the *Chartist Development* debacle of 1846. Initially it was an "all-age" school. After reorganisation in 1929 some 'infants' and all 'seniors' remained at the "Upper School" while some 'infants' and all 'juniors' went to Lowbands. When it closed in 1937 it had seen the statutory school leaving age rise from 10 years in 1880 to 14 years in 1918 (it was still 14 in 1937). In 1937 the 'infants' moved to Lowbands and the 'seniors' (11 - 13+) were 'bussed' to Picklenash. Those who "passed the 11+" went to Newent Grammar School. After the Upper School closed the building remained church property and served initially as the Church Hall. Funding difficulties arose, however, and by a Conveyance dated 10<sup>th</sup> May 1966 the Worcester Diocesan Board of Finance made over the property to the Trustees of Redmarley Village Hall. (Signatories A.R.G. MacMillan and J. Arnall - witness Gwen Cooke).

The present Redmarley School was built in 1967 on land described on the 1838 *Tithe Map* as '*Inn Orchard*'. The first pupils moved in on 28th February 1968 and the 'official opening' on 30th September 1968 was performed by *Sir Gerald Nabarro*, the 'colourful' M P for Kidderminster and South Worcestershire (1950 - 73). As a *Church of England Primary School* it retained its links with the Worcester Diocese until 1<sup>st</sup> January 1978, when the Parish was transferred into the Gloucester Diocese (Glos.Dioc.Yearbook). The Parish had been in the *administrative* County of Gloucester since 1931.

(Eric Smith - October 2005)