

DOYNTON



AND ITS

SINNERS



'If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves'

This section and the companion one on 'Saints' should be considered as one extended fragment of the history of the village. If we 'Saints' stray under the classification of 'Sinners', then many of us would be prepared to argue about the sin and most of us would hope not to be found out.

Avoiding discovery seems to have been successful here in this village. Few Doynton names appear in the records. In a village, where the lord of the manor was resident at a distance, perhaps few misdemeanours were recorded in manuscript. This principle of not 'sneaking' to authority was not invented by the public school but by the rural peasantry. The conception still reappears, sometimes under strange circumstances; in July 1988 the *Sodbury Gazette* ran a light-hearted article about a stalker, the lower half of his body painted red, who ran down the High Street, scaled the wall of Brook House where, since he had already stripped himself, he now stripped off the roof tiles instead. The Police Station at Chipping Sodbury was flooded with phone calls. A resident of the High Street, when interviewed, was quoted as saying, "He is a local chap but you won't find anyone in the village who will tell you his name." Much of

the story may be artistic creation but the idea of 'keeping mum' is true for the village.

During the mediaeval period justice was administered by the local Hundreds and, of these, no records remain directly. At that time, however, it was the custom that, when a writ was issued for a Commission of the Peace, or King's Bench, in a county, then all unfinished cases in inferior courts had to be sent on to that King's Bench. A summary of the case was then written in Latin on long rolls of parchment and stored in Westminster. Offences were classified as felonies or as trespasses; felonies included murder, larceny and rape. Larceny - crime against property, goods or chattels - formed by far the largest group in a period of social and political turmoil under Richard II.

One case came before the justices at Pucklechurch in 1384 when two frequent offenders from Abson were accused of stealing three oxen, valued at 40/-, from 'Iohanne in the Wolde de Churchesleye and Ricardo Reed de Exton iuxta Bristoll'. The Churchleigh here is probably that in Abson next to Bridgegate Common and the Exton could have many examples in the Bristol area but here it is likely to be Cold Ashton since Read is a family name in Doynton 1327-1658. That Doynton lay at the centre of their crimes is underlined by one of the jurymen at the same court being Thomas Hoddes. This name died out in Doynton in 1606 but the family had given its name to a manorial tenement, now known as Hillview. Doynton has had few Justices of the Peace listed through the years but, 600 years after the 1384 court case, Hillview was the residence of a modern J.P., Joan Cottrell.

The outcome of the case is not known. The lawless character of the period was such that the accused would often not reappear before the court to receive judgement. He would then be declared 'outlaw' and as a wanderer add to the chaos of the time.

It is easy for us to forget how important a role was played in the past by Ecclesiastical Courts. They dealt with Canon Law, which was concerned with heresy, church behaviour and attendance, the conduct of church officers, payment of parish dues and the definition of the parish boundaries, betrothal and marriage, immorality, slander and perjury. Despite the wide range of jurisdiction the main weight of the work was dealing with immorality and the court was sometimes known as the 'Bawdy Court'.

No really early case has survived for Doynton itself but, in the Hockaday Abstracts in Gloucester City Library, there is one that dates to 1552 for the parish of Abson, the next parish to the west. The scribe has employed the freedom of spelling that belonged to that period. The report seems largely verbatim and attempts to give the local accent. Readers with a musical ear can try to reconstruct the accent of Abson and Doynton five years after the death of Henry VIII.

The first witness in this 'case of matrimony' had been born in the year that Columbus 'discovered' America and died in 1557 at the age of 65, but his will makes no mention of either Fydler or Hyll.

Marriage was considered a form of commercial contract. The coin, a noble, was worth six shillings and eightpence (now 33p). The 20 nobles or 10 marks gave a total value of £6-13-4. This may not seem much but it was the same as the marriage portion of the eldest daughter of the principal farmer in Doynton at the time. The passage contains delightful details of travel to market and the purchase of love tokens.

JULY 1552 FYDLER v HYLL

Witnesses on Behalf of Margaret Fydler of Abston

William Hardyng, 60, of Abston:

On the Monday afore Witsontday last after sonnesettyng Fydler desired hym to come forth of his howse, there was oon that wold speak unto hym. Deponent came fourth and found William Hyll without the wall on the street syde there at the wood pyle of this deponent, and said 'William what is your will with me' 'What is yor will I shuld doo' Deponent said 'Marie with her' Than Hill said 'I will not tak her with nothyng' and deponent said 'she is not so offered unto thee, for thou hast had money offered with her of her frends, and she shall be mad worth 20 nobles. Than Hill asked when he shuld be payd of his 20 nobles. Deponent answered 'at the day of yor mariage.' After that Hill willed that he myght speak with Fydler agayne. Deponent called for her and she came and Hill said 'Margaret yor master and I have commond together of the mater and I trust that ye will love me never the worse for the thyng that is past.' Margaret answered 'As for love there is no lack in me, I will love you never the worse.' Hill said on Suneday next he wold be asked with Margaret in the Church. Further he cannot depose, but says that Richard Clerk of Abston recognised the contract. Said Hill is related and was brought up by him.

Elizabeth Grome, 17, of Abston, where she has lived nine months, has known Hill 5 yrs. And Fydler 9 mnths.

She knoweth of no contract, but the Moneday afore Witsontday last after sune setting deponent as she came from mylking met with Hill by chauce in his father's crosse, and Hill asked where Margaret Fydler was, and deponent said, she left her within whan she went to mylk, and Hill willed her to bydd Margaret come forth and speak with hym.



Richard Clerk, 30, of Abston where he has lived 13 years, has known Hill 13 years, and Fydler 2 years:

He knoweth of no contract, but upon the Tuseday afore Witsunday last in the afore noon betwixt nine and ten o'clock deponent came to a stone quarre where Hill did work, and said unto hym that married men did get up all the money that syngle men can get noon. Than Hill answered 'not all maryed men.' Deponent said to Hill 'ye are well toward.' Than Hill came forth of the pit and said 'William Hardyng doith burden me with his servaunt, that I shuld get her with child.' Than deponent said 'Thou canst tell whather thou hast or hast not.' Hill answered 'I am not the first that hath played the foole, nor shall not be the last; my mother wold me to marie with her rather than to forsake the countrey.' Deponent said 'If thou diddest the deede, I wold thou shuldest marie with her. More he cannot depose.

Margaret Fydler - Personal answers:

William Hill is the father of the child that she goythe witheall. Misconduct took place the Suneday night after newe yeres day in the howse of William Hardyng, and 10 weeks after in the first week of cleanelent on Moneday, Thursday and Suneday nights misconduct was repeated. Examined what tokens she receyved of Hill, she answered a pece of gold of five shillings, and a

lace of greene silk brought from Bathe fayre at candellmas last, and a payre of gloves geven at Christemas last. On a Saterdag in lent, that day they rode together to Bristoll, Hill overtakyng her and wold not scantly knowe her. Examined whan was the last tyme she spake with Hill, she saith on the Thursedaye in Witson week last afore Sir Walter Dennyse, Knight.

The judge 'monished' Hyll to marry Fydler after banns called in the parish church before the Feast of St. Bartholomew (August 24th). Unfortunately the surviving registers do not start for nearly 150 years so we cannot be certain that they followed the admonition. Nevertheless the Hyll line did continue, for the will of a Wick yeoman in 1639 mentions that John Hill of Abson, limeburner, shall enjoy the rent of a ground called Cleeves.

As late as 1739 the Consistory Court still dealt with similar cases in this area. On January 23rd that year the Bishop under seal enjoined all 'clerks and literates' in the diocese of Gloucester to cite George Toghill of Pucklechurch to appear before the court in the cathedral in Gloucester on Thursday Feb 7th concerning:

the health of your soul and the lawful correction and reformation of your manners and especially the crimes of fame and violent suspicion of fornication incontynency or adultery by you committed with Sarah Robins of Doynton, spinster.

George was married twice but not, as far as we know, to Sarah Robins.

If we examine the register of baptisms for Doynton in 20 year periods we get the following table :-

Baptisms or Live Births			
	A	B	B as % of A
	In marriage	Out of marriage	
1570-89	87	0	0
1620-39	133	1	0.75
1658-77	132	0	0
1700-19	160	7	4.3
1780-99	175	10	5.7
After this date population mobility during and after the industrial revolution masks the figures for the village			
1945	Percentage for England & Wales		9.4
1960	Percentage for United Kingdom		6.0
1986	Percentage for United Kingdom		21.0

From this we can see that in the period up to the Restoration the pressure of Church, State and custom was successful in providing a family background for the children and that Margaret was more likely to have married in 1552 than Sarah in 1739.

These difficulties with marriage as an event or a non-event and forms and formalities due to it were not exclusive to members of the Anglican Church.

The Packer family, resident in Doynton at least from 1529 to 1849, owned the Cross House in 1671.

There Roger, married to Ann Atwood, had a family of 5 sons and 2 daughters. One of the latter, Susanna, was to be involved in deception of the Quaker Meeting in Bristol in 1678. (BGAS xxvi, Bristol Friends Men's Minutes.)

First of the 5th month (July)

Richard March & Susanah Packer signified their intention of marriage, & to proceed therein in the way of friends, Richard March the father of the said Richard was present, soe also was Ann Packer the mother of said Susanah, who signified their concent & aprobacion on thir intended marriage; yet in as much as said Richard is an inhabitant of Kingsbridge in Deavonshire, tis expected that he procure a certeficate from the meeting there, towching his conversation & clearness from such ingadgement to other persons; also tis expected that Susanah procure a certeficate of her father's aprobacion.

13th of the 7th month

Richard March have procured a certeficate from friends on his part & also from her father of his aprobacion, but for that the certeficate from her father hath noe names subscribed as wittnesses tis returned him again to have better testemony.

23rd of the 7th month

.... a certeficate aproving their intention was brought in (signed by her father).

The 'certeficate' however was a forgery but the marriage was valid. It did not last long; the bride's death in 1679 was followed by that of her husband in 1681.

The history of the Bolwell family in the mid-eighteenth century conveys hints of internal family strife. The family earlier had been graziers, moving into Lower Ledge Farm in 1704, 153 acres with a rent per year of £105. With this as a base the next generation spread also to Hamswell and Box. The generation after that is the one that flourished briefly in Doynton. Robert Bolwell farmed 2 tenancies of the Langton estate - Bowd, 83½ acres and Saunders, 61 acres. These he occupied until 1750, when he moved to farm in Westerleigh. He had married twice and had five children in wedlock and then, a widower, started to father nine further children on his resident housekeeper, Ann Stratford. By his last will, dated 1759, he appointed two trustees - his brother James of Doynton and Robert Hathway of Westerleigh - allowing them to sell land or for his brother to sell personal effects for the 'maintenance, breeding & apprenticing of my natural children born of Ann Stratford to the age of 21'. The rest and residue of his real estate was to go to his two legitimate daughters, Grace Snailum and Sarah Green. Robert Bolwell left with Ann Stratford and her children:

A close called Woodmead from his father in 1729.

Toghill, Wick, 5 acres, freehold from brother Richard 1749.

A house in St. Michael, Bath, under a 99-year lease.

A mare.

2 calves sold by James to cover funeral expenses and a small debt to himself for their keep.

One cow and some household goods and implements of husbandry, worth £7.

but they were soon in need of support.

Robert Hathway requested James Bolwell to join him in applying for probate which he refused to do. This may be the point in 1760 at which the children of Ann Stratford were split up; 4 going to Doynton and 5 remaining in Westerleigh under an order signed by Thomas Haynes, J.P.

Three years later, in 1763, because the trustees were not of one mind the matter went to the High Court of Chancery, but while the case was in preparation the two parties reached an agreement.

The sale of the lease of the house in Bath for £80 was completely absorbed by £12 arrears of rent to the Langton Estate and by the costs of the legal action.

On June 5th, 1763, Robert Hathway received probate in London.

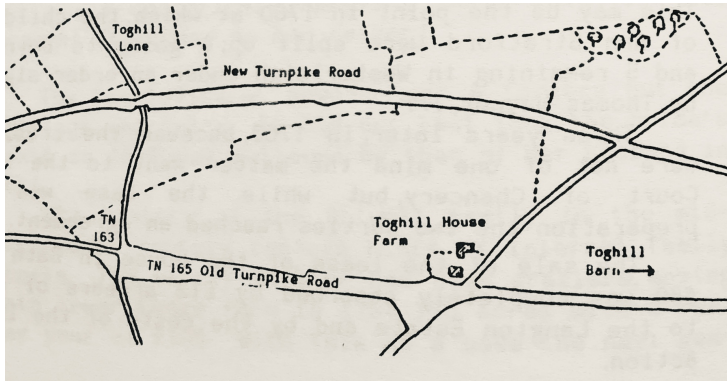
On June 29th, 1763, Grace Snaylem¹ and Sarah Green sold the Toghill freehold for £98 (£2 to James, £48 each to Grace and Sarah). The purchaser was Thomas Haynes son of the J.P. who signed the settlement examination and movement order in 1760.

In later years one child died in her teens, two others were apprenticed - one as 'housewife', the other as butcher and he died young - two others were committed to Bridewell. The father's good intentions towards his natural children had been thwarted.

Assault and bodily harm enter the records only in the eighteenth century. Three illustrations all concern the old road from Bristol to Marshfield up Tog Hill. The present modern surface follows the toll road, which was realigned and regraded in 1808 after, according to village oral history, a stagecoach descended the hill from Toghill House farm, went out of control and crashed at the bottom in Toghill farm.

¹ Presumably a variant spelling of Snailum

The map at the start of this section is based on that of A. Robertson, published in 1792, before the crash, and shows the staging inn at the crossroads with the Bath-Cirencester road, now Toghill House Farm. That area is also shown in the following map, based on the 1839 survey, which reveals both the old and the new road.



The following item of news in Farley's Journal for August 14th, 1762 was of a type that appeared as frequently then as items in today's papers on the theft of car phones or radios. But already the two centuries that have passed give it a period flavour.

Last week as Mrs. Jefferies of Malmsbury, Wilts. was returning home from Far in a Post Chaise, by way of Marshfield, it was overturned near Toghill and while the boy was gone for Assistance, two Footpads made up to her and demanded her Money etc., and on her refusing, one of them drew a long knife and with many Imprecations threatened to murder her, unless she delivered it that instant, and were proceeding to put their bloody Intentions in Execution, when a gentleman fortunately coming up, the Villains made off without their Booty.

Two weeks later, on August 27th, William Murray was buried in Doynton churchyard. The register adds 'An Irishman who was found murdered in Mr John Whittington's ox-house in a ground called Langton's Leaze'. Probably called later Toghill Barn on the old road just over the border into Cold Ashton.

Rookery Lane used to be known as Lutons Lane. This keys in with the family that, for about a century, used to farm at Frank House, later Burnt House, now Trunk House. The present Rookery Farm was not built until about 1729 by Pointz Fox, who had married the eldest daughter, Edith Luton. On a field, Great Lease, inherited by his wife, he put up the new farm. The eldest son, Tobias Luton, who seemed to be based in Chipping Sodbury as a carrier, had inherited the former family farm. Here, in 1727, took place a murder that was sufficiently impressive for details to survive to the end of the 20th century in oral tradition and for it to have taken space in the Bristol papers.

The register of christenings for Doynton in 1701 has the entry - Roger Bryan, son of John and Edith, June 10th. Just below this, in another handwriting, is the comment 'hanged in Chains for Murder and Robbery, 1727'. Roger is not entered in the burial register but his victim, Hannah Williams, is entered for April 5th that year. However there is no comment written in after her entry.

The oral tradition was told to Lawrence Fisher as a child and in 200 years seems to have become used as a story for moral instruction on justice and retribution. The murdered girl was thrown into the well and the suspected murderer could not face looking down it. After this he was taken for summary judgement in the Three Horseshoes. When found guilty he was tied facing backwards on a mule and taken directly up Toghill Lane to where the lane met the old toll road. On the corner stood the gibbet in a triangular piece of land, called Roger's Patch (TN163) after he had been hanged there. It is remarkable that an oral tradition containing so much detail should have lasted 250 years.

However the narrative in Farley's Bristol Newspaper (Price Twopence) on three separate occasions differs from the oral tradition but also differs internally between the various entries. Local newspapers had existed only some 20 years and relied for their information on the accurate reports, sent by carrier or courier, from their correspondents.

Bristol, April 14th. Issue d/d 22. 4. 1727.

We are informed that Roger Bryant who was apprehended on suspicion of murdering Hannah Williams, a servant of Tobias Luton, of the parish of Dighton, in the county of Gloucester, 5 miles from Bath, and made his escape, has been taken at Wotton Undredge, where he was entered for a soldier being a Deserter before. This Fact was committed when all the Family were from home, and she being found all bloody, wounded with a knife behind one Ear, and her Neck twisted. The Coroner's inquest having viewed the body, gave in their Verdict of Wilful Murder, and a Mittimus was made to convey Bryant to Gloucester Goal. They obliged him to handle and stroke the dead body, which he readily did, with great imprecations of his innocency: And notwithstanding all this, 'tis conjectured by much of the Neighbourhood that Bryant was not the Person that did the Fact; nor was there any Thing found upon him th'o the [Farm?] was robbed of Money, Plate and other Effects.

Bristol April 29th. Issue d/d 6. 5. 1727.

Roger Bryant, who murder'd Farmer Lewton's Ma [.....] of Dign'ton, is apprehended and committed to Gloucester Goal; he was discovered by a Gold Ring, which he sold to a Woman near Tedbury or Cirencester; --- contest the whole nature of the Fact, and gave directions where to find the Plate, Money and Rings, which he had buried 2 foot deep in the corner of a Field.

Bristol, August 12th. Issue d/d 19. 8. 1727.

On Wednesday last, Roger Bryant, was Executed and Hang'd in Chains on Tog-Hill. At the Place of Execution, where he was attended by two Divines, we hear, he acknowledged himself to be guilty of the Murder of Anne Williams, as also of several robberies, for which he was very sorry; but what troubled his Conscience as much as the Murder, was the Cause of his Hanging an innocent Man; for having some time ago stole a Watch in Company, and being accus'd of it, he conveyed it into the Man's Pocket, where it was found, and the poor Man executed for the same - What is further remarkable of this wicked Wretch, he being to lie at Sodbury the Night before his Execution, Mr. Luton got some friends to endeavour to make him confess where he had dispos'd of the Plate, which he had always before equivocated. He said, unless they would give him Five Pound, he would not discover where it lay; who finding no full Prevallance would do, was obliged to give him his Demand, £4 of which he gave to his wife and the other part to his child; and as he rode along to the Gibbet he shewed them the Pond wherein the Plate was conceal'd under the Root of a Willow Tree, consisting of a Silver Tankard, Cup, Salter, Spoons etc.

The reality of the murder probably formed yet another version. Doubts could begin to exist about automatic belief in the printed or spoken word. It is interesting that the Doynton Tithe Map of 1839 gives two fields named Roger's Patch: the one mentioned above, and the other (TN 1) alongside the Bowd, next to Snowdens Lane and now called Snowdens. This could well have provided the willows under which he buried the silver.



There has always been a groundswell of minor misdemeanour: from the curate who, in 1575, refused to wear the surplice provided for him because it was too torn, to misbehaving choirboys in the 1930s who so worried the PCC; from our only transportee, Thomas Davis, who was sent on the 'Tortoise' transport to Van Diemen's Land in 1841 to Aaron Francombe who was charged in 1793 with using a gun and dog to destroy game.

Nevertheless, when the whole year of 1944 was searched in the local paper, no sins were encapsulated in print - Doynton only appeared as contributing to the Rural Pennies collection for the Red Cross or to the War Savings Week to buy the hull of a submarine.

Those who had to administer and execute the law are fading from record. Without a longstanding dominant family in the village, it was the Haynes family in Wick who were our local Justices of the Peace. One of our Rectors, L. B. Clutterbuck, was a J.P. but he left the village when he went bankrupt. Yet another clergyman, C. R. Davy at Tracy Park, was a J.P. but he held no benefice.

The original keepers of the peace in the village, the petty constables, were sometimes given the Saxon name - tythingmen. One of their tasks was the collection of local taxes, the delivery of summonses, regular attendance upon the magistrates and holding a prisoner in their own homes, if there was no lock-up in the village. In theory this was an unpaid duty that devolved upon every inhabitant in turn, but it was a duty as unpopular as being drawn for the militia. If it were possible financially, the better off paid someone with a low income to do the job for them. This did not bring the greatest talents to the task and Shakespeare's Dogberry would probably not have been out of place in Doynton.

Only with the survival of the records of the Overseers of the Poor in the early 19th century do we get any names given to the Petty Constables and these had more standing in the community than in many other villages:

1809-13	Thomas Sloper	Farmer of 6 acres.
1823-24	George Wigmore	A bachelor shoemaker who lived on the Fernbank site and owned two cottages where Doynton House drive is now.
1826	William Lils	Mason.

This was the period of the whipping stocks in Doynton; in 1789 and 1810 the churchwardens paid the blacksmith for repairs to the ironwork on the stocks (possibly sited near the Poor House).

By the 1820s law enforcement was considered at a low ebb. In the 1830s a Commission headed by Edwin Chadwick took three years to consider how to reform the policing of the rural areas. Fears of rioting accelerated acceptance by Parliament in 1839. The Act permitted the magistrates of a county to institute a unified police force. The authorities in Gloucestershire did this straight away despite the objections from many villages including Doynton.

No one in Doynton can now remember a resident professional police officer in the village. The new force very often made a point of using officers who did not belong to the locality. There is one here in the census of 1851 - William Smith, aged 31, labourer and constable, born in Toppenband, Wilts. By 1861 he is no longer mentioned as 'constable' and was obviously one of the many recruits who did not stay more than a few years in the force. In 1871 it is surprising to find the Vestry meeting chose 'persons qualified and liable to serve the office of constables for the ensuing year. The following were elected to serve: - William Packer, Geo. Jones, Alfred Rawlings, Jn. Hinton'.

This is the only occasion that it appears. It is not a mix-up with 'Overseers' and it is puzzling to consider why it should appear some 33 years after the county force was set up.

For many years 'The Law' was stationed in Wick and would be called over to Doynton when needed and would arrive majestically on a bicycle. They were shrewd and knew their territory. They would apply common sense and a rule of thumb psychology that generally defused any threatened punch-up.

With the Second World War, regulations multiplied with the speed of cancer cells and an enlarged band of special constables had to be created to deal with the situation. After 50 years we have difficulty in identifying all the individuals in the illustration. Based on 'The Lawn', Wick, they covered the area of Upton Cheyney, Wick and Doynton, led by Sgt. Wm. Orchard and guided by P.C. Gill. Ralph Fussell, who had been a farm pupil at Doynton, was a 'special' stationed at Staple Hill during the war and from there, in pairs, they would cycle off around Pucklechurch, Tolldown, Codrington, Westerleigh – a circuit of 16/17 miles. None of the children of the specials in Wick remembers quite such long rounds although they generally had a regular partner. Part of their duty was to check that no pub served beer after hours - beer was in short supply in the war. Or they had to count the number of chickens kept by a farmer - in the days of free-range birds, the latter found it easy to divert attention.

Food was also short, even in the country, and during the raids on Bristol there was a nightly exodus from the city. People slept in their cars or in the village hall, which was opened to them. This created a pressure on the food supplies of the village and the Ministry of Food sent extra meat pies to the Cross House for sale there. All this was needed despite the generous supplies of waste food for pigs that Archie Carrow used to bring in from the Bristol hospitals. Many returned to bartering, hoarding (which many regarded as forethought) was made a crime, black marketeers flourished but they would have claimed that they operated market forces. In an enclosed village some of the ill feeling lasted 30 years.

Two other organisations came into being with the needs of wartime - the ARP and the LDV. The fear of the effects of bombing had been aroused by the Spanish Civil War. An organisation of Air Raid Precautions was set up in the UK before the outbreak of World War II. In Doynton the Warden's Post was at Home Farm under the control of Norman Nicholas, who in World War I had been in the Canadian Forces. His 12 year-old daughter, Mary, acted as messenger on her bicycle - strictly in daytime. Messengers were a vital part of all organisations when there were so few phones in the village. The village was fortunate that although 13 bombs fell in the parish there was only minor damage and no casualties. The bombers were probably lightening their loads on the way back from Bristol and not dropping bombs because some 'sinner' in the village had ignored "Put that light out!" Still some fines were made for breaking blackout regulations.



War-time special constables stationed at The Lawn, Wick		
Back row L-R	Middle row L-R	Front row L-R
1 William Amos	1 George Mizen	1 William Woodman
2 Arthur Hemborough	2 Clifford Beale, Upton Cheney	2 Frank Rossiter, Doynton
3 William Packer	3 Arthur Drewett, Beach	3 William Symes
4 Rowland Packer	4 Harold Spill	4 Frederick Kembry
5 Gilbert Watts, Beach	5 Dean Amos, Doynton	5 William Orchard
6 Edward Dix	6 Wilfred Bryant	6 Gilbert Eacott
7 Charles Luker, Upton Cheney	7 Samuel Sprules, Doynton	7 P.C. Gill
	8 Walter Stowe	8 John Snailum
	9 Albert Kidner	9 Ronald Wright
		10 Alex. Amos, Doynton

When the mauled and nearly weaponless British Army was evacuated from Dunkirk, Anthony Eden formed the Local Defence Volunteers - drawn from the inhabitants of a locality to defend that locality. The LDV had no weapons at all, except for broomsticks, pitchforks and a few shotguns. In Doynton House the children of Capt. C. E. Pitman were stickily but delightedly busy in the stable making Molotov cocktails, using strips of old Pathé film stock as fuses. Not used throughout the war, these home-made petrol bombs added to the blaze of the victory bonfire. At this early stage the major scares were of invasion by air from parachutists dressed as nuns. During one such scare, an RAF officer in uniform and his wife were driving to Bridgegate to fetch petrol. There they were stopped by a figure brandishing a shotgun. The officer proved his identity but his wife did not have her identity card - a great sin in wartime. The wife was threatened with arrest despite a husband and a petrol station to vouch for her.²



At Wilton Old Farm 3 members of the H.G. arrive for an exercise			
Front	Charles Bryan	BCX 437	BSA.
Middle	Alan Matthews	CPR 194	Rudge Special. Released from the Army after Dunkirk and joined the Home Guard.
Back	John Watts	HW 4545	1929 Water-cooled Scott. Later called up into RAF and spent time in Cocos Islands. H.G. messenger.
Note: Headlamp covers, whitewash on car wing – for the blackout.			

As the LDV changed to the Home Guard, so they acquired uniform and equipment - Lee-Enfield rifles and Brer Guns. Their centre was the village hall in Wick. Here, in winter, the first task was always to get a red-hot fire going, sometimes with disastrous Incendiary results. The command post was at Wick Court under Capt. Brown and later under Major Eaton, headmaster of Kingswood Grammar School.

The young men, in reserved occupations, enjoyed it but the older ones found that, as an activity, it interfered with farm work. When we invaded Europe in 1944 many Home Guard were being dressed down or even taken to court for not attending parades. Still, by then, many exercises had given them a certain sparkle and they had even considered building a strong point in Bury Lane. More publicly they took part in the parades in Chipping Sodbury at which Queen Mary used to take the salute.

The criminality of war-time breaches of regulation has faded quickly in the public mind and is one illustration of the changing nature of 'sin'.