

A brief synopsis of the Mansell family and their involvement in 20th century village life

I enjoy the village website very much and was interested to notice, when looking through the old photographs, a picture of a cottage with newspaper billboards outside. Underneath was the message " Does anyone know where this is? " The answer is "yes " as I have a copy of the same photograph and the cottage was the home of my great-grandparents, Thomas and Mary Anne Mansell. The cottage is on the right-hand side as you approach Pulverbatch from Shrewsbury. It was originally called "Lowe Cottage " but my great-grandparents changed the name to "Church View" when they moved there (sometime between 1901 and 1909). When the family had a new bungalow built in the 1930's they named the new property "Church View" and in recent years their former home has gone under the name "Wren Cottage".

Thomas and Mary Anne had 10 children (only 8 survived into adulthood); George, Annie Elizabeth, Thomas Abraham, Samuel Jordan, Martha, Sarah Ann, Walter, Thomas, Mary Janet and Alice Annetta. When Thomas died in 1909, the eldest son George took over the family carriers business and it was he who obtained a franchise for delivering newspapers in the village either in the late 1920's or early 1930's. (My mother can remember delivering newspapers for him).

The whole family was well-known in the village as George ran the carriers business, Samuel had a blacksmiths shop at Brook Cottages (photograph attached) and Walter (photographed in front of Church View), who sadly died at the age of 28, was teacher for the local nonconformist Sunday school. Mary Janet (my grandmother) married Benjamin Small (photograph attached) who came to the village in 1906 from Stafford. He was learning the trade of wheelwright (at that time he was at the "improver" stage in his apprenticeship). Ben later set up his own carpentry business at 3 Brook Cottages, making wheels and also providing the services of an undertaker. It was he who built the bungalow later called "Church View" and added the veranda to the front of the White Horse Inn.

I have very fond memories of holidays spent with my grandparents at 3 Brook Cottages and visits to "Church View" to see my grandaunts Annie Mansell and Alice Roberts. Annie Mansell died in 1964 and Alice Roberts shortly after her husband Alf, in 1972. After my grandfather's death in 1969 my grandmother came to live with us but passed away in 1976. My mother Barbara Willing (nee Small) grew up and went to school in Pulverbatch (her name is on the WWII roll of honour in St. Edith's church) and there are people in the village who still remember her. She will be 89 this year (2007).

Mum and I still visit the village, from time to time, to tend my grandparents' grave and my father is also buried there.

With regard to 'Pulverbatch in the Spotlight', the cottage in which my grandparents lived was at the opposite end to the blacksmiths. My great-grandparents lived there in the 1880's and 1890's before moving to Church View (Lowe Cottage/Wren Cottage) and my grandmother was born there. After my grandfather returned from WWI he bought the same end cottage from the then owner and my grandmother returned, now as a wife, to live in

her old home. In 1945 my mother returned home when she was expecting my sister, so my sister was also born in that house. As you can imagine I am particularly interested in the history of those cottages and Samuel Mansell's daughter told me that they were originally small stone cottages and brick extensions were built on the front, possibly in the 1870's. I can certainly vouch for the fact that the rear of the properties was built in old stone when my grandparents' lived there and I have seen them marked on old O.S. maps but would love to know when they were first built.

The Mrs. Mansell, whose death at the age of 85 was mentioned in the article, was my great-grandmother. My mother was 16 at the time and remembers them all walking behind the coffin to church. I have a copy of the report in the Shrewsbury Chronicle which carried the heading "Death of Village's Oldest Inhabitant". Mr. Fred Griffiths, also mentioned in the article, was the gentleman to whom my grandfather came to complete his apprenticeship and the photograph I sent of my grandfather (Ben Small) was taken at Mr. Griffiths' workshops.

(You mentioned the Reverend Crockett. I do know that he was incumbent when my mother and father were married in 1943 and when my sister was baptised in 1945. I am a member of the Shropshire Family History Society and help out from time to time at the Shropshire Archives, where the parish registers are kept. It just so happens that I will be there next week so I'll check the dates for Reverend Crockett's incumbency.)

I've checked the General Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths and found that the death of Rev. O.G. Crockett was registered at Shrewsbury in the March quarter of 1948. Talking with Mum she remembers her Mum telling her that Rev. Crockett was taken ill one Sunday evening in the middle of his sermon. His wife asked my grandfather to help her get him home. She thinks he may have suffered a stroke and died a short time later at the rectory. When George Mansell's funeral took place on 27th January 1949 the parish must have still been in an interregnum as the officiating minister was a Rev. Newbury and it was Rev. Benson who followed Rev. Crockett as rector of Pulverbatch.

With regard to the date of the article "Pulverbatch under the Spotlight" - the article states "within the last week or so Mrs. Mansell, Church View, died at the age of 85". Mary Anne Mansell died at Church View on Thursday 10th May 1934 and was buried on Friday 18th May 1934. The article must therefore have been written late May/early June 1934. I checked in the Pulverbatch Parish Registers and the first occurrence of Rev. Crockett's name was performing a baptism on 30th August 1931. He followed Rev. John S. Bevan as rector.

Pam Willing
May 2007