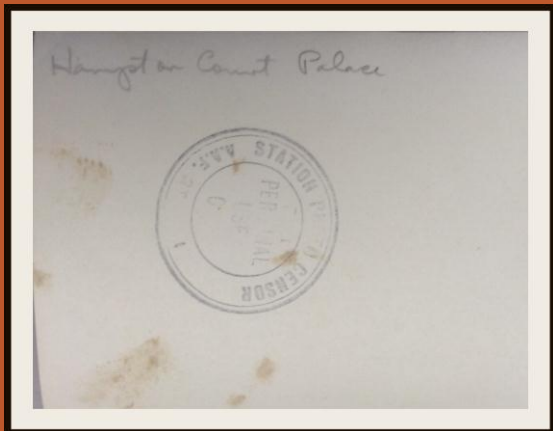
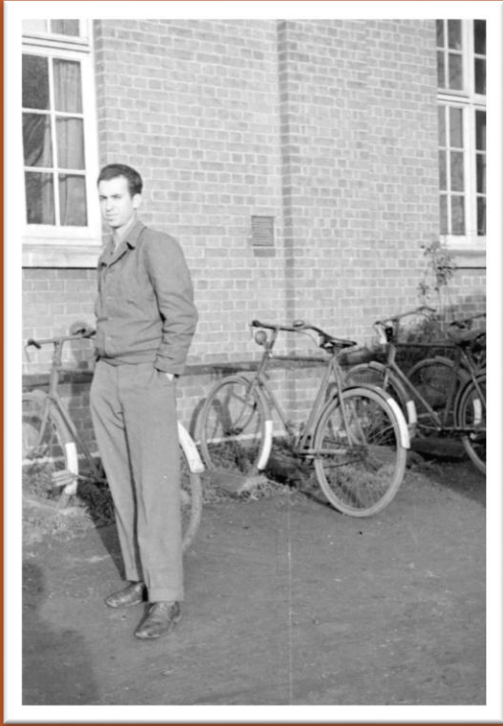


Bob's Furlough by bicycle - The Cotswolds April 1945

©MICHAEL CLAYDON

Introduction



Robert (Bob) Parsons died on April 10th, 2000, while sorting through his papers I found a typewritten journal written by him in late April 1945. It is a record of a bicycle journey through the Cotswolds, starting from Oxford and ending at Owlpen Manor, at the southern tip of the Cotswolds.

Bob was an American who came to England as a soldier during the Second World War and was stationed in Essex. During furloughs, (leave of absence from the army) he would explore England. The journal was written for his mother and father, a way of telling them about his time in England, with the journal he would send photographs of the places he describes, his photographs would first be subject to the scrutiny of the censor!

Through the English-Speaking Union [fn1], Bob had been given letters of introduction to various owners of English country houses, armed with these Bob would introduce himself at the front door and ask if he may be shown the house. Being an American, he was often not only invited to look over the house but treated to wonderful hospitality.

Bob, who was twenty-five could not have guessed that two and a half decades later he would be living in his own English country house, Newark Park, just a short distance from Owlpen Manor. Bob's achievements in rescuing Newark from dereliction are written into the history of that corner of the Cotswolds.

The words of the journal are as Bob wrote them and capture a young American's impression of England seventy-five years ago. A later investigation by me of Bob's 35 mm negatives and transparencies revealed the photographs he had taken in April 1945 and I have used them in this edited version of his journal. The original manuscript is in the collection of Gloucestershire Archives ref: D8667/2/2.

Michael Claydon

1. International education charity established 1918

Oxford

Radcliffe Camera



The first night I went to Oxford by train and then planned to begin the cycle tour from there the next day, the first day of the furlough. I just missed train connections (I had to cycle miles through London between stations) so arrived in Oxford quite late and consequently did not get up early to begin the tour. Actually, I had planned to take the train to Charlbury to see the estate [fn1] there and from there go by cycle, but I arose too late to get the early train so decided to leave it out. So, I cycled about Oxford for a while, taking photographs, and fortunately I did for the film came out into the camera. I managed to find a dark basement room in the Red Cross and rewound the film. While I was at the Red Cross, I was talking to one of the ladies there (voluntary worker of course) and was discussing my plans. She was quite interested and suggested several places to see, etc.

I. Cornbury Park

The First Day

My cycle was loaded (even so I was not too well supplied for nine days) - there was the musette bag and the bag Chorlertons [fnI] gave me tied on top, both being in front on the handle bars, and my shaving bag and several things wrapped in my raincoat and tied behind. I was going through one village and in the traffic got mixed up with a Gypsy caravan; so no doubt the people thought I (with the well draped cycle) belonged to the caravan - most embarrassing!!

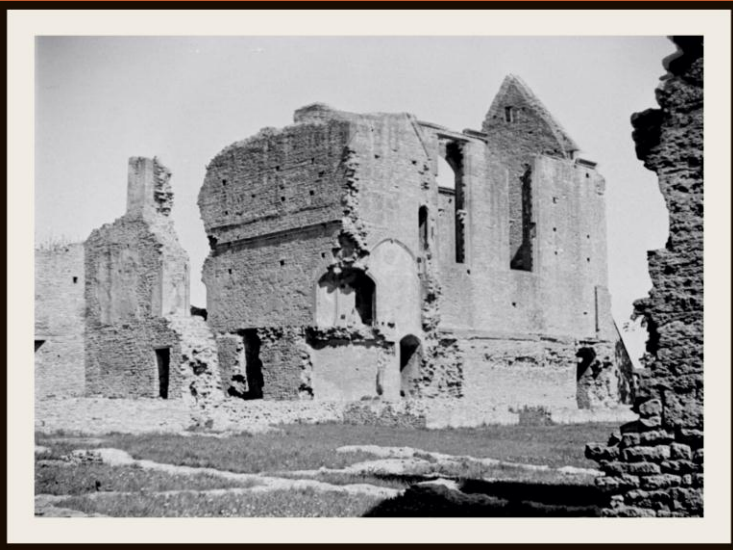
I.Friends of Bob

Gypsy Caravan



Minster Lovell

Ruins of Minster Lovell Hall



On the way to Burford, I stopped at the charming village of Minster Lovell. There is a little stream (now dry) running along the main (and only) street, a number of ancient houses, a nice old church [fn1], and last and most important the fascinating remains of an ancient mansion [fn2]. Unfortunately, the remains are not more than remains. However, some of the walls remain and have windows with beautiful stone tracery. Of course, the house has its legends and this one might easily be true. The owner was one of the officers on the losing side at the battle of Bosworth [fn3] (I think it was Richard III [fn4] who was defeated but forget for the moment - this will no doubt be full of misinformation). After his king's death this man disappeared completely. A number of years ago a secret chamber was found in this mansion and in it was a skeleton. From the things in the room it is supposed that this was the owner and that after the battle he had himself sealed in here and was fed by a trusty old servant. The servant alone knew the secret; so, after his death the master starved - I see I neglected to mention the servant gave him his meals through a small opening.

I. St Kenelm, 2. Minster Lovell Hall, 3. I485 4. I452-I485.

Burford



Above - A40 near Burford, Swinford in the distance.

Burford - High Street



Then delightful Burford. I was going to see a Miss Redmayne and she was (whether she was asked to or not) to plan my trip. However, she was not at home. Also, I was to make arrangements to see Burford Priory on the weekend for its owner, Sir Archibald Southby [fn1], is a Member of Parliament and thus only home on weekends and he was to show me around and then I was to lunch with him. I supposed he was not married so stopped to say when I would return and found Lady Southby [fn2] there. She is a lovely, charming lady and said she would be glad to show me about. She was working in her beautiful garden but insisted I see the house and stay for tea. The home was in quite a deplorable condition when they bought it and they beautifully restored it, fortunately finishing the process just before the war. Originally the house was a Priory (as the name shows).

I. Commander Sir Archibald Richard James Southby 1886-1969

2.nee Phyllis Mary Garton

Continued/



Burford Priory

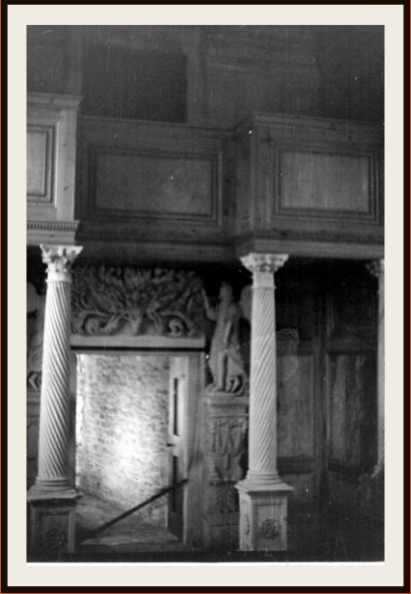


At the Reformation it was given to a family and was rebuilt and made a large manor house. Later it was sold to Lenthall [fnI] (speaker of the Long Parliament that finally did away with Charles I). He wanted to make a large picture gallery so brought two bay windows from the side and put them in front and then built a Jacobean entrance between. Also he removed one wing from the house. Then a number of years later, Charles II and Nell Gwynne spent the night there on their way from the races at Bibury so a chapel was built at the South of the house to commemorate this "great" event.

About a hundred years ago the wing was largely destroyed by fire, the chapel decayed and became a garden store room, and the main part of the house gradually deteriorated so that when the Southby's bought it was not fit to be lived in. An architect friend and the Southby's worked together to restore it. Only one corner of the wing remained but there was enough to show the type of windows so it was rebuilt, the interior being worked out to suit then. The government requisitioned part of the house so they now live in this wing. Downstairs is a lovely big living room, also several small rooms. Then upstairs there are several bedrooms and modern baths. They found the most beautiful marble Adam mantel in a disused room and have made it the key to decoration of one bedroom - the room is all in white and has copper pink as the only touches of colour - it was such a picture I was almost afraid to go into it. The lovely panelling and the fine Queen Anne stairway of the requisitioned part have been covered with plywood for protection. However the two front rooms on the second floor have not been taken and have the beautiful old panelling. One room is that where Charles II slept and has a portrait of Nell over the mantel. The other is the gallery and is a magnificent room. Beneath a leatherette paper and beneath layers of paint was found the beautiful panelling. The mantel is a very fine Jacobean one (though hardly beautiful in the way the Adam one is) and the ceiling is one of the finest in the country (the room is two storeys high). The chapel was designed by the architect who helped Sir Christopher Wren with St Paul's Cathedral, and it had the same defect - no foundations.

I. William Lenthall I59I-I662

Burford



The Chapel – Burford Priory, above interior of chapel



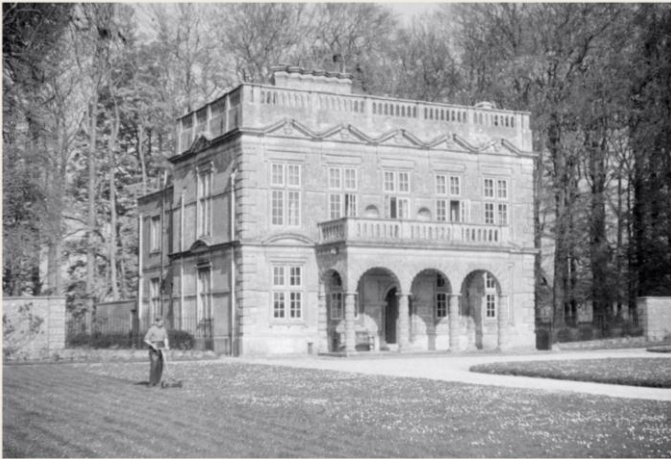
The chapel was, as I said, used for garden storage and was quite ready to collapse. So, one wall was taken down stone by stone and rebuilt exactly as it was after a foundation had been built. All the panelling was gone with the exception of a fragment in one corner, but there was enough to show what it had been so the panelling, while new, is as it was. Likewise, the stone ceiling was gone except one corner which again was enough to determine the restoration. Most of the floor stones were found in the garden. There is a balcony in the chapel for the owners of the house and is reached by crossing an arcade. There are two rose windows, one on each side, in the chapel and are obviously from older buildings; however, the end window is designed to carry out the motif of the Rose windows.

Lodge Park

I began the ambitious southward loop. My first stop was at Lodge Park. It is a gem of Renaissance (Jacobean) architecture and was once the Lodge (of two rooms) of the Deer Park of neighbouring Sherborne Hall. Not only is the building lovely, the situation is too. The vast deer park is surrounded by a high stone wall and lines of trees - of course there are many acres and there are hills and valleys and many trees. The two huge rooms (one above the other) have been made into smaller ones and then a wing has been added so now the Lodge is a comfortable though not large home. It is owned by the Christopher Harris family [fn1]. The name was on my ESU list and I had to see it. There is a huge gateway with house on either side, then the drive goes up and then loops (in front of the porch) around a small fountain.

I. probably rented as the Sherborne Estate was then owned by 7th Lord Sherborne, National Trust acquired the estate in 1987.

Continued/

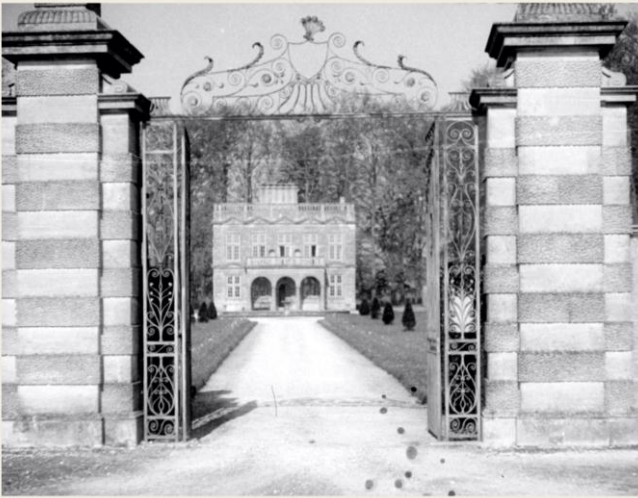


Lodge Park

There was an elderly lady and a little boy on the lawn, so I went up and introduced myself, presented my case, and asked if she were Mrs Harris. She was Mrs Harris's mother, Mrs Murray^[fn1] (Mrs Harris is rather young, and the baby was hers). Mrs Harris was away, and the mother was there for a time and was staying in a cottage near the house. She was quite distressed that her daughter was not at home for she was sure that the daughter would want to "put me up", and Mrs Murray would herself had she a spare room in her cottage. At any rate she would give me coffee so she called to her maid and told her to make some "American" coffee. First, she showed me the downstairs of the Lodge - the room had been made into two very nice rooms (living and dining) with a hall between; in the new wing were the kitchen, etc.

I. Ellen née Hopkinson

Continued/



Lodge Park

Then we went to her cottage and had coffee (not made the American way) and had a nice visit. Her daughter went to Oxford with the daughter of an ambassador to England (Horton or some such name) and had then gone to the USA with the daughter - to Boston and Washington - and was royally entertained. Then Mr Murray is the head of Exeter University and has been to the USA any number of times and also has been royally entertained. So, Mrs Murray feels that she can't do enough for Americans and was certainly the most hospitable person I've yet met. Mr Murray [fn1] was upstairs but not yet up, but she wanted me to meet him so had him come down in his dressing gown. So then the two of us had a long and interesting talk. The Murrays (as everyone else I met) really mourned Roosevelt's death. They have a large home near Exeter which is now full of evacuated children.

I. Dr John Murray 1879-1964 Principle University College of South-West England.

Continued/

Lodge Park

They have a large home near Exeter which is now full of evacuated children. Mrs M was planning on flying to South Africa that week for her son has recently lost his wife and has four small children; so Mrs Murray was finally arranged to fly down to take over and, I suppose, eventually bring them back. She told me to be sure and stop in to see him (the husband) if ever in Exeter and she said that he would be delighted to see me "Wouldn't he" - and what else could he say but "yes". She then gave me their names and addresses and told me to be sure to call up that night if in the neighbourhood for her daughter might be back from London and would certainly want to put me up. (But I did not call.) She had given me an envelope with her name on it - it said Mrs Harwood Murray, yet his name was John. But I found that she was a widow of a Mr Harwood when in 1921 she married Mr Murray, and the children evidently are by her first marriage.

Aldsworth



St Bartholomew



My next stop was Aldsworth which has a small church [fnI] that is noted for its ancient stone carvings. “There is, besides an astonishing buttress carved with niche, ogee canopy, pinnacles, and finial, a corbel-table round the nave and tower of even greater wonder. It carries enormous heads and symbols - a mantichora, a roaring head in an Egyptian cap, a griffin, bestiary animals, a sick and distorted cherub, a huge bearded face with staring eyes, and other glorious monsters. The Rabelaisian riot of this string-course is indescribable; the floribunda genius of the middle ages expresses itself here in a moth-stretching guffaw.” (Unquote!) Also, there is a Maltese cross on the porch. Nearby is an Elizabethan house which is supposed to be quite fine and to have good proportions, but I thought the proportions not very good.

All the churches are surrounded by graveyards - the graves of the dead for centuries past. Often to get a photo of the church, I had to walk about the yard - and there are not always paths. And unfortunately, the ground is rather soft and springy - decidedly unpleasant to walk on! (I feel that each step I can hear a corpse groan - horrible!!)

I. St Bartholomew

Eastleach

Church of St Andrew



The next stop, after a long ride, was at the two Eastleach villages - Eastleach Martin and Eastleach Turville (just across the stream from each other). The churches are both interesting and are just a short distance apart. The more interesting was East Turville so I decided to draw it. I sat in the churchyard and sketched and ate some of my "provisions" for lunch. It was terribly hot (actually!) day; so, the brief stop was welcomed. The church had a very good Norman doorway, which is hidden by the porch (in the picture).

Great & Little Barrington

St Peter & St Paul Northleach



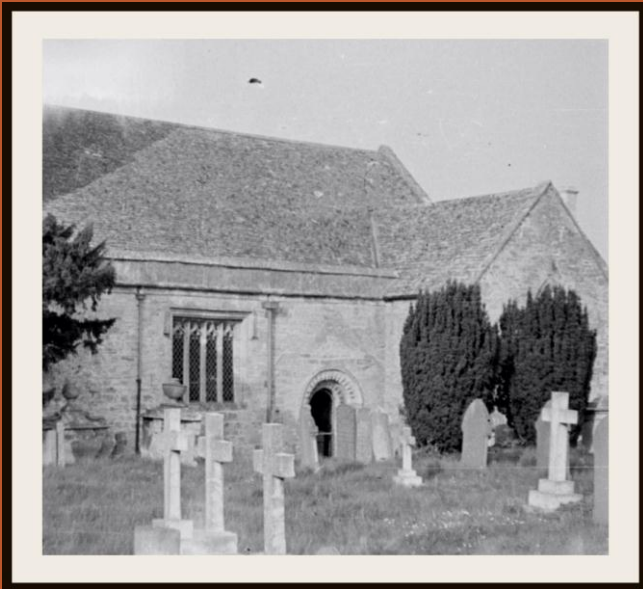
I had made ambitious plans but decided, because it was late, to go to Northleach for the night (about 20 miles further) and then make a loop back the next day. I went up the Windrush valley, stopping first at the church [fn1] at Great Barrington, at the edge of a great park. The church is largely perpendicular but has a Norman chancel arch and Early English arcading between the north (and only) aisle and nave. There are a number of 17th and 18th century monuments (tombs of sorts) in the church.

Next was Little Barrington church [fn2], which was rather away from the village. I heard music in the church so didn't go in but walked around the outside. I was startled by a yell - a little girl calling and asking for gum! The choir, made of girls, was practicing and had seen me so practically adjourned to get gum. The church, with a Norman south doorway, was very small.

I. St Peter & St Paul 2. St Mary

Windrush & Farmington

St Peter, Windrush



Next was Windrush. The church [fn1] was locked but it didn't matter for it was too much restored, though it has a fine Norman doorway which is on the exterior. The church is nicely located on high ground at a crossroads. Next was Sherborne which has a great ugly house [fn2], largely hidden from the road by trees. There were two old women walking down the road there and one asked if I were going home to my Mom - I guess she thought from my equipment that I had packed up and was heading for home!

I next went to Farmington. The church [fn3] has been much resorted but has a Norman doorway and some good Norman courses (cornice) on the south side of the churchyard (all churchyards are cemeteries) and a very large and not very attractive 18th century house across from the church.

I. St Peter 2. Sherborne Park 3. St Peter

Southrop

I then went to Southrop, which has a particularly interesting church [fn1]. It has some herringbone stonework which is quite unusual and was “handed as tradition” from the Saxon to this 13th Century church. There is a good north Norman doorway and a remarkable font of the 12th century (1160) which is supposed to be one of the finest in the country.

Near the church is the manor house, which is very ancient, being 12th century as well as partly Tudor. The exterior of the front looked quite new (but it had recently been refaced). The back part looked particularly fascinating. I went up the drive and could see some children watching me so decided to ask to see the place. The housekeeper said that Mrs Richardson [fn2] was away so she could not show me the inside but that I could walk about the outside. So while I was in the back Mrs Richardson drove up. I explained why I was there; so she said that she would be glad to show me the house though she didn't know quite as much about it as her husband did.

I. St Peter's 2. Gwendolen née Goschen, Wife of Captain Alan Joseph Macdonald Richardson d.1963

Continued/

Southrop

Mrs Richardson daughters.



She was very friendly and nice but not quite as “aristocratic” as many of the ladies. The entrance from the terrace is into a large room which has all sorts of lovely old furniture and which could be used as almost anything. To the left is the large living room which has a fine marble (both cream and white) Adam mantel. Towards the back from the living room is the stair hall and beyond it is a room with beautiful panelling and with a Jacobean mantel (actually taken from a neighbouring village). The door into the room has a rounded Norman arch (very rare in a house). To the right of the entrance is another room with beautiful panelling and still farther to the right is a small Queen Anne room, known as the court room. Many years ago, the introduction of farm machinery infuriated the labourers; so they destroyed it. There was quite a trial, and this was the court room because it (being lower than the rest of the house) had a short flight of stairs and a landing - which was used as the stand. Mrs Richardson told me to wander about the inside and outside as much as I liked. Of course, I - a stranger - wouldn't do much wandering about the interior. Then when I was ready to leave, she wanted to give me some cider or beer to drink - I was thirsty but wanted and asked for water. She has two little children - they are all blondes - so I took their photos.

Lechlade



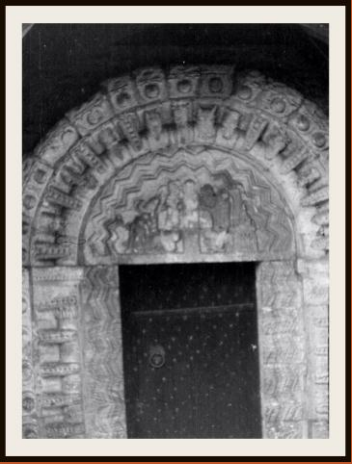
Above – Butlers' Court, Below - St Lawrence Church



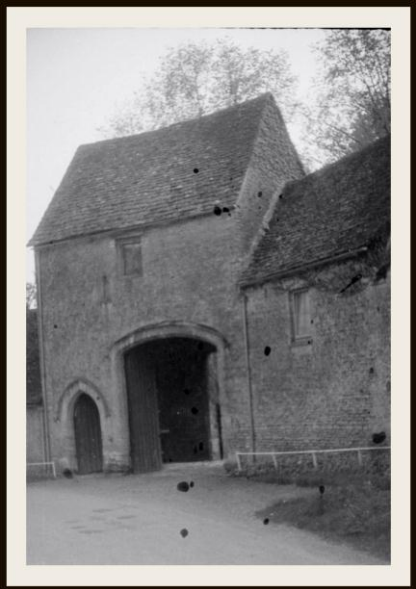
The next stop was Lechlade which (perhaps because of the hot day) seemed a dirty place. There is quite fine church [fn1] though it didn't seem particularly interesting. I went out to Butlers' Court, which is supposed to be a perfect Elizabethan building. It is charming and in excellent condition though it is a farmhouse. It is owned by Oxford and is let to this farmer who said that I could look around. While I was walking about an old man came out. He was an evacuee from the coast and had been there for four years but was hoping to go home very soon. First, he said that the house was built to stand centuries and that they didn't build them that way anymore. However, his father had bought the home of a builder so got one that was really well built. Then began a long story about the house and how much he had made when he sold it after his father's death - all very confidential, with "Friend" frequently put in! (I told Miss Midgley [fn2] that I had evidently been associating with Quakers too much for this strange man kept calling me "Friend"!) Then he began telling me about his boat, how he had bought it, all about the new engine, how it was stored during the war, how he would get it home, etc, etc. I thought he would never stop. We were standing in the glaring sun and against a stone building, and I was hot, hungry, thirsty, and tired; and I actually thought I would pass out. And I couldn't say that I had to be going for I had not yet seen the house. Finally, he let me go - and I did not spend much time looking at the house!

I. St Lawrence 2. Friend of Bob.

Quenington



Above – Norman doorway St Swithin's
& below gate house of preceptory



I then went to Quenington. Originally there was the preceptory of the Knights Hospitallers. Only the beautiful gate house remains and it is now used for the gate house for the large house. The church [fn1] is small and terribly “restored”, but it has two very fine Norman doorways. From there I went to Coln St Aldwyn (from now on I go along the Coln valley) and remember little other than that I rested for a while in the cool church [fn2]. There were rows of delightful stone cottages and what I could see of the large manor house from the churchyard looked interesting - it was Elizabethan.

I. St Swithin's 2. St John the Baptist

Bibury

Bibury Court



Next was delightful Bibury - it was quite a favourite. There is a stream running along the side of the main road and there are rows of lovely cottages. The church is quite interesting, having some Saxon work (including a small round window) and much Norman work. There are many interesting tombs in the yard of the wool staplers - the tombs are like great ornate stone chests and then have wool staples (of stone) on top. I asked a man working in the yard about Bibury Court and if I might have a chance of seeing it. He said that he thought so for Lady Clarke [fn1] was an American - the cousin of President Roosevelt! So, I went up!

Sir Orme Clarke [fn2] was walking about the grounds with two ladies when I rode up. So, I joined them in their walk, and from time to time he would tell me a bit about the house. (Sir Orme is tall, thin and very good looking an aristocratic aristocrat - and looks quite young though he is well over 60.) After a short time, we left the ladies and he showed me about and told about the house. He said that he was married to an American so had travelled about in America a good bit but had not been to Texas. So, he got his Atlas out to see where Wichita Falls was. Afterwards he said that I could wander about and take photos. I was in back preparing to take some photos when I saw a lady in a long black silk dress coming out to me - it was Lady Clarke. She is about 60 years old (but not nearly so young looking as her husband) and is quite nice looking. However, she is a bit dramatic - she had long earrings and spoke very softly. However, we had quite a nice chat - they were having some sort of celebration for the men of the village who had been prisoners of war and were now returning. It was she who told me about the tombs. Then I had the two little terriers (an unusual kind) to accompany me about - they were very affectionate and friendly - also there was a Peke.

1. née Elfrida Roosevelt 2. Sir Orme Bigland Clarke 1880-1949

Continued/

Bibury

Arlington Row



Bibury Court was originally a monastic building, and some of the farm buildings remain. The oldest part of the house was an Elizabethan house - quite small - and it makes the right wing. Then in 1623 the main part of the Great House was built for Sir Thomas Sackville. Then later, according to legend, Inigo Jones put the entrance on. It is quite plain but is huge. It is situated on the floor of the valley and has a stream and then a hill on the left side. The sun was behind the house so the photos aren't too good - both Sir Orme and Lady Clarke said that I should go the next morning to get a good view of the front for a photograph, but of course I couldn't. Sir Orme bought the house and modernized it - it now has ten baths. Evidently there was nothing good downstairs for the panelling in the large hall, while old, is not the original - I think that there had been a fire. His study is French Modern - a very good modern. The hallways are Georgian.

Neither of them said that she is President Roosevelt's cousin. But I found that she is the daughter of Alfred Roosevelt of NY; so I don't know how close a cousin she is.

Ablington



Ablington Manor



The next village, Ablington, is supposed to have a lovely manor house. So, I asked a woman (who was getting water at the village pump - many of these little villages have no running water in the house - the pump is not a hand pump) about the house. She said that her husband works there and could tell me so insisted I go in the house. The husband was a surprise for he was quite well educated (if probably, self-educated) and she was very common. He spoke with a reasonable facsimile of an Oxford accent, too. He is very keen on archaeology and brought out cases of his collections - which were quite good considering. There are a number of Roman remains about so he told me about them, about his friends, in fact he talked at some length (he is one those people who would like to be someone but isn't and knows it yet tries to be more than he is anyway - like me). He then took me over the grounds of the manor [fn1], and they are beautiful, the nearest to pre war of any I have seen. Then he had to rush off to the meeting about the returning prisoners of war - that Lady Clarke had mentioned. When he heard that my name was Parsons, he was very interested for part of the Parsons family at his Devon home had gone to Mass in the 16 hundreds - the family was a good one in a small way, owning land and a small manor - "like his". This was yet a different - and interesting - visit.

I. Ablington Manor I590

Winson & Fossbridge

Winson Manor



From Ablington, I went up the Coln Valley towards the Foss Way. This is a particularly lovely valley, especially at this time of year - all sorts of fruit blossoms, wisteria on the yellowish grey stone walls, bluebells growing wild everywhere - an indescribable picture.

There were several little villages along the way, but I stopped at none. One, Winson, has a very attractive Georgian rectory. The Foss Way is a modern road built on the site of a Roman one - the Roman roads are the only really straight roads in England. There was an inn at Fossbridge; so, I stopped, hoping to get some supper - it was after eight, yet I had had nothing since lunch. I could get only beer so thought it would refresh me, at least. I had a pint of ale and went out feeling (temporarily) much better. It was still light, and I wanted to see the Roman Villa at Chedworth, as well as the village. The roads there were terrible - straight up and straight down. To make matters worse, I began to feel peculiar; in fact, I began to get rather drunk. So, I really had a headache in more ways than one. The villa, national monument, was not open that late nor was the very interesting church in the village. I was disgusted! However, I finally managed to get back to Northleach. The woman cooked some supper for me, and then I collapsed into my bed.

Notgrove

Then I went to Notgrove - I had a letter of introduction to Sir Alan Anderson [fn1], its owner. He had been taking a hunting dog for exercise so happened to be out in front of the mansion. He is about sixty - a tall man, with a strong face and bushy eyebrows. I had not heard of him but soon discovered that he is very important, in the government as well as in the business world. He was quite friendly and said that he would show me around if I would first go with him to put the dog in his kennel. On the way we met Lady Anderson [fn2], a very charming person, quite beautiful and quite tall. She insisted I stay for lunch, but I refused; so she told Sir Alan to see that I stayed. The whole time I was there (and I was there several hours) Sir Alan talked with me about world conditions, national conditions, village conditions, his family, etc, and he talked in a man-two-man way which was most complimentary. First, he took me through the huge kitchen garden (vegetable and fruit gardens). Then he showed me the village, which is in the valley below the house, and told me all about it. He installed a water system and put running water in each house, but now the springs are drying up so they are very short of water and don't know just what will have to be done. He explained about the various buildings, the improvements and the new ones. They experiment by building some brick cottages - which have the right proportions and character but the wrong color. They know the color is not right but now know how to do it the next time.

I. Sir Alan Garrett Anderson 1877-1952 2. née Muriel Ivy Duncan

Continued/

Notgrove

All about the village was interesting as well as instructive. He is also quite a farmer so next showed the farm. He told about the different experiment on the various fields, etc. Also, they have a big chicken farm - before the war they sold over a million and a half dozen eggs annually. However, they haven't many chickens now, which is just as well because of the water shortage. Then he showed me the small but very nice church [fnI]. There is much ancient work in it, and it is one of the few that have no East window (above the altar). There are some interesting tombs with the stone effigies on the stone coffins - two of priests (one is supposed to be the last Bishop of Gloucester - the figure has no crosier and the last Bishop would have none because he was put out by the Reformation. However, this coffin is actually of an earlier date.) Then there is a double tomb of the uncle and aunt of Dick Whittington, who once owned the manor. We were finally back at the house which is quite large and obviously modern. There had been an ancient manor house which the Anderson's "predecessors" had enlarged. After the Andersons bought it, it burned almost completely down; so, they rebuilt it. Over the door is the stone relief of the Phoenix rising from the ashes, symbolizing the rise of the house from the ashes of the other. Also, there is a stone gander on the peak of one gable - Sir Alan is AG Anderson so was immediately nicknamed Gander at Oxford. There is still some old work, in particular the fireplace in the living room.

I. St Bartholomew

Continued/

Notgrove

There is still some old work, in particular the fireplace in the living room. We sat in the library for a while waiting for lunch (I finally said that I would stay - I've no willpower). We had a delicious lunch in the beautiful big dining room - we had fish, "chips" (we say French Fried Potatoes), etc, and some rather strong wine.

At lunch were Sir Alan, Lady Anderson, their daughter Diana (quite attractive but not nearly so lovely as the mother), and a son's daughters Catriona and Lindsay. The daughter is in her twenties and the grand daughters about ten and four. The son had some British government job in Washington DC and had his family with him (though the government neglected to give enough salary to maintain the family); the younger child was born in Washington. Sir Alan made no attempt to "Impress" me, but in our talks, I discovered that he has had and has all sorts of important jobs. During the last war he was food supervisor or something and dealt with our Mr Hoover. Now he is supervisor of the railroads and may soon be supervisor on the continent as well; he is president of the International Chamber of Commerce; he has something to do with food and farming. He said that this would be the third time he has helped rebuild the Navy, so evidently has some big job there. He did not tell me but he is one of the heads of several big shipping companies.

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Notgrove

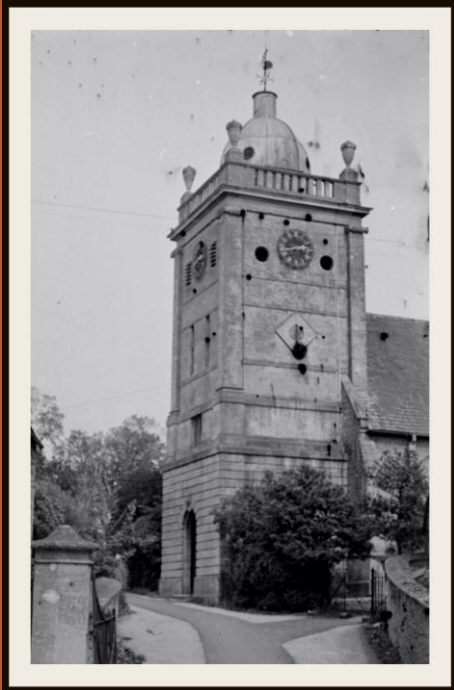
Sir Alan, his wife, daughter and grand daughters with poodles, Victoria and Hamlet.



They have a big London home, but went to their Notgrove Manor when the bombing began. However, Sir Alan is seldom there; so I was very fortunate that I stopped in during one of his stops there. After lunch (really dinner) we sat in the Library for a time - and had coffee. Then I took some photographs of them, with the two poodles that are aptly named Victoria and Hamlet. I had come un-announced, yet they were so hospitable and treated me not as a guest but as a friend; and needless to say I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of the visit.

Bourton-on-the-Water

St Lawrence



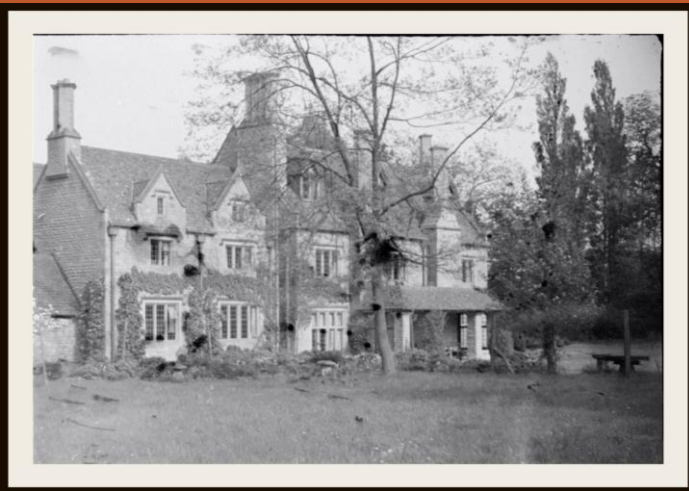
Eventually I left and went on to Bourton-on-the-Water (pronounced Borton). It is a peaceful and clean place - the river runs through the town. I had a letter to Mrs Albino who lives in the large Manor house in the town. I went there at once so that I wouldn't be there at teatime. Mrs Albino [fn1] is a very nice rather elderly lady. She has not been well and has been away for her health. She had just recently returned and had no real help in the house so that she couldn't do much for me but to come back in an hour for her son, who is interested in architecture, would be there then, and we could have tea. So, I looked about the town some more. The church [fn2] was a lovely Queen Anne one although it had an ancient Gothic chancel. So, the "good" Victorian architects had to destroy the good Queen Anne and put up horrible Victorian Gothic so the church would be in harmony! Fortunately - I can't understand it - they left the tower as it was. Also, there is now some good modern Gothic woodwork, etc. In the garden of one of the inns is a model village of Bourton, with real trees, water, etc. The buildings are of stone and are about a foot high - I'm sure I once saw it in National Geographic. Over the river in the centre of town are several old stone foot bridges - with no handrails.

I. née Hurlbutt 2. St Lawrence

Continued/

Bourton-on-the-Water

The Manor House



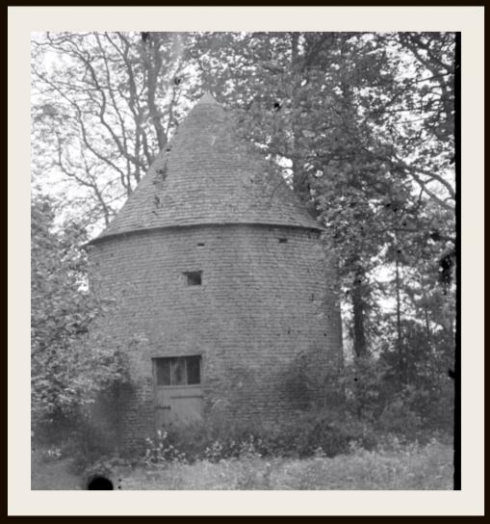
I found that Mrs Albino had called her son and had him come from his home in the neighbouring village, and that she had suggested that I return in an hour for she thought I wouldn't want to have to visit with her for that time. Of course, I did impose on them and apologised so she then felt that she had given the impression that I did so insisted that it was a great pleasure to have me. We had a very nice tea on the porch on the garden side. The son [fnI] is a very friendly average man of the upper class. He has been collecting all available information about the old crafts, particularly building, in the Cotswolds and was ready to publish a book when the war began. Also, he was planning a lecture tour in America and still may go after the war (he took my address so you may have a visitor!) He had to leave for a short time after tea, so Mrs Albino took me about the garden. (She is evidently having trouble with her eyes and can't see well. But she said nothing so I felt it best not to offer my arm or to show in any way that I knew - I just lifted branches above the path and watched to see that there would be nothing in her way that they she might not see.). The river runs along the back of the gardens, and in the garden is an enormous tree that is centuries old.

I. Harry Hurlbutt Albino 1889-1957

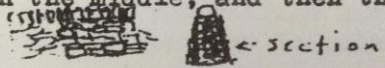
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Bourton-on-the-Water

Manor House Dovecote



that I could never have found in books--the masons had names for all the shapes of stones, those in the roof are of stone shingles and they have different names near the surface and are called presents; the stones have such name. He told how the stones were found, how they were laid, how ~~some~~ stone walls were made (he showed me that), how hedges between fields were made, how they tapered towards the top, stones are more or less fitted on the outsides, then rubble is put in the middle, and then thin stones are arranged on end along the top.



been almost entirely rebuilt though it was original parts of the house and then up onto the roof and the eaves, etc. Then he took me about the dovecote. And he, like as everyone else, told me that I should try to see on my journey. I had a visit and had learned more about the Cotswold architecture and was better prepared for the rest

The son returned; so, we left Mrs Albino, and he began telling all about the Cotswold architecture and showing me about. He first showed me their huge and ancient round dovecote. Centuries ago, only the lord of the manor could keep and eat pigeons; so every manor had a large dovecote. On the inside the walls looked like checker boards for there were square holes every foot apart for the birds - room for thousands. Then later everyone could keep them so eventually the lords stopped. A wealthy American once asked the former owners to sell the dovecote to him for \$10,000 - and then he would have taken it down stone by stone and rebuilt it in the states. Mr Albino told me all sorts of interesting information about the buildings that I could never have found in books - the masons in the different villages had names for all the shapes of stones, those in the villages differing. The roofs are of stone shingle and they have different names - the larger ones are found near the surface and are called presents; the smaller are prendiles or some such name. He told how the stones were found, how they were prepared, how they were laid, how stone walls were made without mortar (Sir Alan had showed me that), how hedges between fields were trimmed, etc. The stone walls are tapered towards the top, stones are more or less fitted on the outsides, then rubble is put in the middle, and then thin stones are arranged on end along the top.

Upper & Lower Slaughter to Stow- on-the-Wold

I then went on my way and first went to Upper and Lower Slaughter, particularly lovely villages. One had the most beautiful Elizabethan manor which was, unfortunately locked for the duration. Then I went to Upper and Lower Swell, similar villages. I was thirsty (it is so cold now that I can hardly believe that I had hot weather for my furlough) so I stopped at an inn and had a large glass of cider, feeling sure it was not intoxicating, but even it made me rather dizzy - as had the wine at noon! I decided that I was becoming a drunkard!!

From the Swells there was a long, steep climb to Stow-on-the-Wold (I had had another long and steep one to Notgrove, too). It was getting late, so I just rode through and went on to Moreton-in-the-Marsh (fortunately all downhill) for the night. I stayed in an ancient but modernized - and very nice - inn, the White Hart. While reading over my notes I discovered that Charles I had spent the night there just over three hundred years ago - but it had no influence on my sleep! The town has a very wide tree-lined main street, and in the centre of the street in the middle of town is the old Town Hall.

Another full and unbelievably wonderful day - and only my third.

Chipping Campden

Tower of St James



I was rather behind in my planned trip so skipped some side trips here, including a visit to Chaslleton House, which I had permission to see. Instead I went first to Bourton-on-the-Hill, which has a fine Tithe barn as well as many charming cottages. From there I went through Blockley and Broad Campden to Chipping Campden, the loveliest village in the Cotswolds. I was there on my first furlough and have sent some photos of it already. It is so beautiful that it almost hurts; it is impossible to do it justice. There is a magnificent church [fnI] and near it the ruins of the great estate. The town is almost entirely along the one main street and is a complete picture.

I.St James

Broadway

From there I went to Broadway, the favourite of the Americans. I went the wrong route so missed several charming places along the way. Broadway is lovely but is “self-conscious”! There is a wide main street with grass parking at each side, unusual for England and very nice. But every other building has an antique shop which immediately brands it as a tourist town (and for wealthy Americans). The Lyggon Arms Hotel is in a beautiful old manor house.

Lygon Arms, Broadway



I stopped in Broadway for just a few moments and went on my way. I next went to Stanton, another particularly attractive village that still retains much of its Old-World charm. There is a large manor house - I did not go up and ring the bell and am now rather sorry that I did not. The church [fn1] is not particularly interesting but has a fine font - someone was playing on the organ Schubert's "Serenade" while I was there. The village has many lovely old houses and has an ancient Market Cross, though the head is modern.

I. St Michael & All Angels

Stanway

Stanway House



I then went to the neighbouring village of Stanway. Stanway House is a particularly fine place so I planned to see it. It is the home of Earl Wemyss [fn1], but it has been let during the war to a girls' school. I had a note of introduction to the headmistress. The girls were away on holiday and the headmistress was in the gardens someplace; so, the maid told me to wander about the gardens and that perhaps I would find her. I couldn't see her but wandered about anyway, and presently a lady (who is probably one of the teachers) came out and said that she would show me about until the Headmistress came in. Actually, there said there are two headmistresses, sisters, but one is the boss. They are both very charming and nice looking and were well dressed; one is very friendly and the other is more the businesswoman. I soon met both but at different times, while I was seeing the house and they invited me to have tea with them after I had seen the house and the barn. So, I had tea with two headmistresses in a room full of priceless furniture, paintings, etc - all of the old furniture is still in the downstairs rooms.

I. Francis David Charteris, 12th Earl of Wemyss 1912-2008

Continued/

Stanway

Gate House - Stanway



Stanway house was originally a monastic building and then became a home after the Reformation, coming into possession of the Tracy family. It was enlarged in the time of James I, the fine bay window was built on the Hall, and the gateway was built, supposedly by Inigo Jones. One goes through the gateway to a gravel court. At the right is the house (just off the road) and on the left the churchyard and church. At the right of the entrance hall is the Great Hall with the Bay Window. In the Hall is a tremendously long ancient table, various other ancient pieces of furniture, and old family portraits (there are now many small tables, too, for the students' meals). Beyond the hall is a huge drawing room with a very fine ceiling - it looks like Chinese Chippendale. There is a pair of sofas with Chinese Chippendale canopies (of wood though they look like drapes) which make them look like single beds - they are very valuable. Farther back in the wing is a rather small library with a valuable collection of books and various other rooms. Then to the left of the entrance hall is another lovely room in which we had tea; beyond it are the kitchens, etc. In the grounds is a very fine 14th century Tithe Barn, it had been fitted up as a theatre. The church is plain and uninteresting although it was restored in the 18th century instead of the 19th.

Hayles Abbey

I took the wrong road from there so missed another nice village and went on to the ruins of Hayles Abbey. The Abbey was founded in about 1250 and was very important for it was supposed to have a bit of Christ's blood; so, every year there was a great pilgrimage to the Shrine of the Holy Blood. It was largely destroyed at the Reformation, and then the destruction was completed at the time of the Civil Wars. Then fairly recently the farmer who owned the land did some excavating; then it was properly excavated and became a national monument. About all that actually remains are about a dozen arches of the cloisters, although there are various foundations. There is a small museum with the lovely stone sculpture, etc that had been found there. Hedges are planted along the foundations of the chapel to show how it was.



The village church - at Hayles - is even older than the Abbey and is one of the most interesting little churches I saw. It is a tiny church with only nave, chancel (alter section) and side porch. It was built in the time of Stephen and has not been altered a great deal. Gothic windows have been inserted and there are 14th century paintings on the splays of the chancel windows. There are some ancient tiles on the floor.

Cheltenham to Winchcombe

From there I went on to Winchcombe, an attractive and larger town, and called Major Dent-Brockelhurst [fn1] and made arrangements to see Sudely Castle the next afternoon. I then went on to Cheltenham, walking miles uphill before I could go downhill again. Cheltenham is quite a “Spa”, becoming important in the time of George III. There are rows and rows of lovely Georgian and Regency houses. At the end of the promenade is the large hotel, with big portico, Queen’s Hotel, and it is now a Red Cross (American).

I spent the night there and then went to Mass the next morning (Sunday) so got a rather late start. I had planned to first see Deerhurst, which has a complete Saxon church [fn2], but was given the wrong direction – I went “straight” as I was told and missed it. It is probably just as well for I didn’t have a great deal of time.

1. Major John Henry Dent-Brocklehurst 1882-1949

2. St Mary



Tewkesbury



My first stop was Tewkesbury, a particularly interesting and historical town. There was a great and wealthy abbey there which was to be destroyed at the Reformation. But the village people managed to buy the abbey church from the King before it was destroyed. It is a most impressive building; it has massive Norman piers and arches in the Nave, made more impressive by a rather insignificant and not too lofty roof. The chancel is beautiful Gothic, and around it are many chapels and tombs. One important tomb is in a tiny chapel between chancel and xxx and while it has been, mutilated, it is still a gem. The town is full of quaint and impressive half-timbered houses. The more ancient ones are small, but there are larger ones (some leaning way out over the street) and elaborate ones. I had dinner in one of them. Perhaps the real fame of the town is not in its Abbey or the Battle of Tewkesbury, but in the fact that it is the setting for the very popular novel, John Halifax, Gentleman by Diana Mulock Craik. (I remember reading it years ago). The picturesque "Bell Inn" is the building that was used as the home of Abel Fletcher; nearby is the ancient mill, in fact all of the places in the book can be found here (the name was not Tewkesbury in the book, it was Norton Bury). Also, Mr Pickwick stopped at the "Hop Pole" on one of his famous journeys.

Sudeley Castle

Mrs Dent-Brocklehurst



I then had to hurry to be at Sudeley Castle by 3 o'clock so didn't stop at any of the little villages along the way but went straight to Winchcombe and then up to the castle.

I went through the entrance archway into the courtyard. There were about a dozen doors on the court and all were exactly alike. Then I saw that there was another entrance to the court and realized that it was the main entrance. The very pretty daughter of about 20 and the son of about 12 met me and began showing me about the ruined part of the castle. Then the daughter went in to get the key for the chapel, and while she was gone a beautiful woman, Mrs Dent-Brocklehurst, [fn1] and her black poodle came out. Mrs DB is very young looking, very beautiful, very refined, and rather tall - I think the most attractive English lady I've met. The children didn't know too much about the place so probably she came out for that reason; also she wrote the little booklet on the place and really knows the history. We all went to the chapel, then she showed me the rest of the grounds, including the ruined barn. The interior is all comparatively modern, so she showed me the rooms that had good paintings. The room over the gate house is largely 15th century and has beautiful old panelling though the panelling had not always been in the castle. It is a lovely big room and has a number of fine paintings as well as antique furniture. Part of the castle is used to store paintings from a big museum (Tate) and the place is not nearly so large as it looks. One wall of the courtyard was covered with wisteria in bloom, and it was magnificent. Some of the paintings were from her brother's house and were there for the duration.

I. née Mary Morrison b.1902

Sudeley Castle

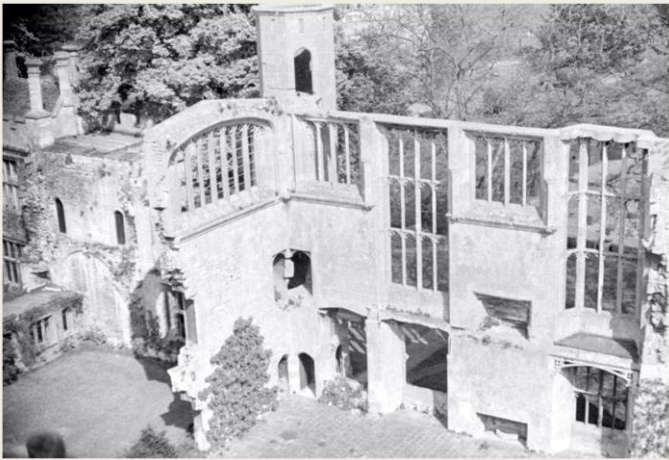


I have the booklet on the castle (with plan) and I took photos so need not tell much of its history. There was originally an ancient manor house, but all was rebuilt in the early 15th century. Henry VIII's last wife, Katherine Parr, married Lord Seymour after Henry's death, and they lived at Sudeley, which had probably been renovated. She soon died in childbirth, and eventually her traitorous husband was put to death. The castle was given to the Chandos family. It was largely destroyed by parliament in the Civil War and stood in ruins for almost 200 years. The Dents bought it in 1837 and began the restoration and gardens. Then in 1862 the chapel was restored by Sir Gilbert Scott. The Dents had no children; so, left the castle to relatives (Brocklehurst) on the condition that they add Dent to their name. In 1935 the present owners remodelled the interior of the Eastern range - they raised the floor for it had been on the ground and in other ways made it more attractive and liveable. The chapel is detached from the house and is a lovely piece of architecture. Katherine Parr was buried there, but eventually the chapel became a ruin. It was used as a pen for animals and then one day the coffin of Katherine was found. It was opened and she and clothes were found to be in perfect condition. She was put out for "exhibition" but the air and the curio seekers soon ruined her, so she was put back and then the chapel was restored and she was given a new casket.

Continued/

Sudeley Castle

The exterior of the chapel is original and has some interesting stone figures. The interior is completely new but is very attractive. The three sides of the outer courtyard are the restored portions of the Castle. The inner courtyard is yet in ruins (although part is used as garage, etc) and makes the place most romantic, especially because the ruins are so beautiful. At the far corner is the Dungeon Tower - a very high tower and restored. So, after Mrs DB had shown me about, the son took me up into the tower; so I got a wonderful "bird's eye" view of the castle and surrounding country.



Southam Delabere



I had a letter to Mrs Ratcliff, who lives at Southam Delabere so went up to the house. The cook was outside and told me that Mrs Ratcliff (who is over 95) has recently become an invalid but that she would find one of the daughters. Either she did not find them, or they said that she should show me about for she took me over the house and gardens. She constantly apologised for not knowing the history of the place - it used to be shown on occasions for charity, and the maids would show the people around; but she, being the cook, did not have to so did not know of the history, etc. She was a rather fat but sweet and jolly middle aged woman and seemed to enjoy taking me about although Sunday afternoons are the only times when she is not loaded down with work - she wasn't complaining about the work but said she should be thin like me with the work she has to do. Though she did not know the history of the house, she knew the family, which made the tour rather amusing.

Continued/

Southam Delabere

One maid who used to show the people around was just going out so couldn't take me around, but she did tell me about a few of the portraits in the Hall and wrote a few notes which I now quote: "The house was built in 1501, it was bought by Lord Huddleston a man from the North who had a property in the north, so left it to his daughter who married a Delabere living in this part, so the combined arms of the Huddlestons and Delabere over the fire place in the drawing room. Lord Ellenborough was the next to live here who built the three towers which takes the Tudor look of the house off they are about 100 years old. Note tiles in porch, which was the original entrance door, which came from Hayles Abbey.!!" I shall attempt to clarify and explain.

About all that can be seen from the road are the towers, one being four stories high and having a huge room on each floor. The towers at first glance make the place seem much older and make it look much more important though it is actually a huge place. It has more gables and eaves than most houses of its size so is more charming.

Continued/

Southam Delabere

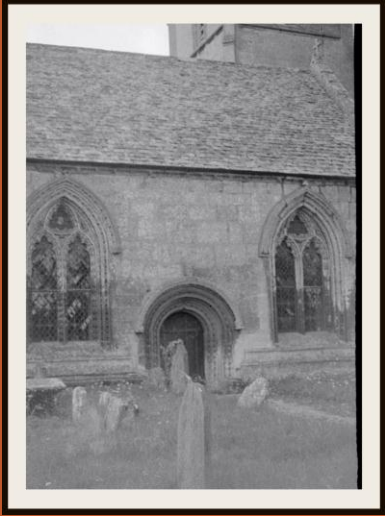
The entrance is on the garden side, and the entrance is paved with the tiles from the ruined Hayles Abbey. It leads into the Great Hall which is lined with portraits, and it has beautiful panelling, a minstrels' gallery, etc. (The house is only leased by the Ratcliffs - it still belongs to the estate of the descendants of the Lord who built the towers though there may be no living heir. The paintings, much of the furniture, etc, belong to the house, too. The rent is actually very small, but the tremendous upkeep makes up for that.) There are of course portraits of the Lords and Ladies of the house for generations, and I was pleased to see a portrait of Bess of Hardwicke - the noted ancestor of the Dukes of Devonshire who built all the houses. To the right of the Hall is the Drawing Room with more beautiful panelling, furniture, and paintings. There is another similar room adjoining it which might have originally been part of it. Farther to the right is a large wing, but I could not see it for Mrs Ratcliff lives on the ground floor of it.

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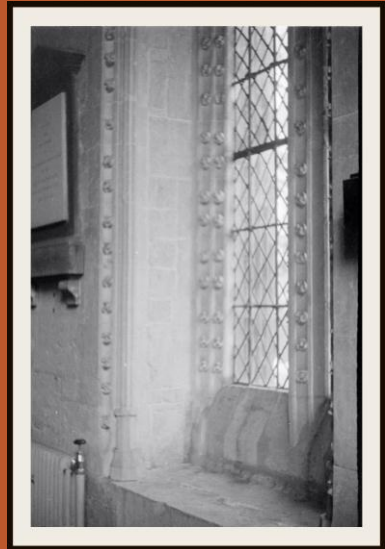
Southam Delabere

Mrs Ratcliff had three daughters (none married) and two sons. Each daughter had her own part of the house with her own possessions (much to the disgust of the cook) so they lived completely private lives. One daughter is now dead - she was a masseuse to the Queen. One daughter is a magistrate and is quite important locally. One son doesn't live there but the other one does. And since the last war he has become a hermit in his rooms, with only a butler and liquor as companions. He never takes his meals with the others, never sees anybody except perhaps the family so leads a completely useless life. There is another woman who lives with the family, and she evidently thinks she is someone. I was particularly amused for the cook took me in all the ladies' rooms and showed me their things. This woman has quite a collection of loving cups (for tennis and boating, I believe) and the cook said that she was so proud of them that of course I had to see them. Some of the bedrooms had the old poster beds while others had more modern furniture. We went on top of the large tower, so I got a good view of the house and gardens from above. Then she showed me the old kitchens, storerooms, etc, and then the garden - her husband is one of the gardeners. She constantly apologized for not being able to tell me the history of the house, the subjects of the paintings, etc but I know enough to tell the periods of the rooms, furniture, and paintings so it didn't really matter. And I enjoyed having her show me about for while she is above the average servant, she is rather a character.

Badgeworth



Ball & Flower motif , Holy Trinity
Badgeworth



I went on to Cheltenham for the night, again. The next day was the least eventful of all but was not wasted. The first stop was Badgeworth, a small village. There is a lovely church [fn1] of the late fourteenth century; it is particularly noted for its fine ball and flower motif around the windows and doors (in stone of course) and for several stone heads on the exterior. I next went through Churchdown - incorrectly named for the church [fn2] is way above the village, on a steep hill. And I hadn't the energy to climb up to it. The next village was Brockworth, and it has a rather interesting manor house, the Court. I was taking a photo when two women (mother and daughter) came by - they said that I could get a much nicer view from the other side, they then said that they formerly lived there; so I asked about the present owners and if I might be able to see the house. They said the woman would be glad to show it to me, and the daughter went up and asked her. The house is really just a farmhouse now (the owners are not aristocrats).

I. Holy Trinity 2. St Andrew & Bartholomew

Brockworth

Brockworth Court and Church



But the woman was very nice and was please the house was originally connected to the priory of Llanthony [fn1] and was built by the last prior, Richard Hart - there is RHP on a beam in the attic. After the Reformation (not long after it was built) it became a home of the Guises. (Anne Boleyn is supposed to have slept there!) With the exception of one side, which is beautiful half timber, the house is not particularly interesting. The front side (where I would get the good view has a Victorian front - the rooms opened one onto the next, so a hall and new front was added in front of the older part. The woman took me upstairs to show the window that was on the hall, thinking I had seldom seen anything like that - when actually the window was on the outside until the Victorian addition, and that she did not know so I said nothing. There is a fine and huge old barn near the house. And there is a fairly interesting church, with a Victorian tower.

I.Lianthony Priory Monmouthshire

Painswick

I then went on my way to Painswick and had to walk miles more uphill; however, the view of the valley was lovely if hazy. On the way I passed lovely Prinknash Park, in a little valley, now a monastery. Painswick is another particularly beautiful and interesting stone village - the stone being greyer than that in the parts I had seen.

Painswick is largely Tudor and Georgian, and any newer buildings already look as they belong for the stone mellows fairly soon - the yellower stone takes years and years to mellow if it is well dressed. The town is situated on the hillside so more or less rambles around. There is a large church [fn1] in the lovely churchyard. The churchyard is famous for its Yews; it is tradition that more than a hundred trees will not grow but there are more than a hundred. Also, every year there is a tree clipping festival but the trees are actually clipped the day before, now. Also, the churchyard is full of very nice tombs, the kind that look like large stone chests.

I.St Mary



Painswick

The Court House



The Court House is near the church and is now a school for young children. I did not know it was a school but wanted to see it; so, I went up to the gate. There was a little boy of seven at the gate - he was rather shy and had big almond shaped eyes. He explained that it was a school and told me how to find the "entrance". A very nice young lady, a teacher, came to the door and said that she would be glad to show me the house. But she suggested I see the grounds and return in about 15 or 20 minutes for there was a violin lesson in the lovely "Court Room". In the garden I again saw the little boy - he was to be seven the next day. With him was another cute younger boy, and they were discussing plans for the birthday party - they talked like old men; so, grown up! Almost all the children were away on holiday - I think the students are girls up to about 12 or 14 years old and only the very young boys, up to about 8.

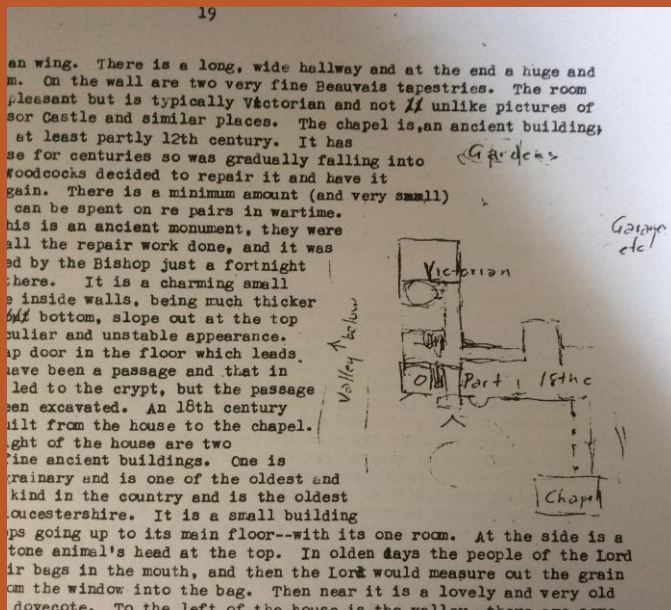
The house is on the hillside, so the gardens are terraced. The house was built in the 16th century and a wing was added in 1620, and it was in this wing that Charles II held court, thus the Court Room. Then the one who took the house over for the school added a back wing on the right, quite in keeping with the rest of the house. Then the young teacher took me all about the house. To the left of the entrance is a panelled room painted in white. Beyond it is another panelled room, a much larger one. Then beyond it in the 17th century wing is the lovely Court Room, a big airy room with fine panelling and mantel. The house was not a great formal one so is more charming. The upstairs rooms are the students' bedrooms. Most are painted white and are clean and cheerful. However, one has the old panelling - the room in which Charles slept. The attic rooms are also very nice and have the ancient beams. The new wing on the right is in keeping architecturally and is fresh and modern inside, the basement, which opens on the rear garden, has a number of large classrooms. So, I really saw the place from top to bottom.

Lypiatt Park

Tuesday morning I rode by train back to Stroud. From there I went to Lypiatt Park - I had a letter of introduction. It was two miles from Stroud and uphill all the way! So, I was considerably delayed. The house is most picturesquely situated above a small valley. Judge Woodcock [fn1] came out as I cycled up. He said that he would be very glad for me to see the house and that his sister likes to show people about and would show me the house when she came down. Since she would not be down for half an hour, he suggested that I walk about the grounds until then. So, his sister, a very nice elderly lady, showed me the downstairs of the house. Then on our way to the garden, she introduced me to her nephew whom I thought to be rather curt and rude. But he certainly wasn't (he was rather abrupt and just seemed that way) for he then followed us out and took over as guide. After we had seen the various buildings around the house, the aunt went in and young Mr. Woodcock showed the gardens, so we had nice long and interesting talk. His wife is an artist and is very interested in architecture, as is he. Then they insisted I have some cider and cake before leaving. While I had it they asked about my plans from there and then told the histories of the various places and told me what to be sure and see. They were most hospitable and interesting so I had another enjoyable visit.

Lypiatt Park

Bob's sketch



Lypiatt park is (quite obviously) largely Victorian Gothic. However, the left corner of the house was originally a rather small Tudor house. This was enlarged in the 18th century and a castle-like stable etc was built at the rear. Then in the last century the whole place was greatly enlarged and rebuilt so is now not unlike a Victorian castle - and it is rather good and interesting Victorian. The old part, now rather dwarfed, is typically Tudor with its gables, small windows, and lovely bay window. The old and newer parts are all of gray stone. In the centre of the old part is a typical entrance porch, but I think it is not original. Downstairs on the right is the Hall, with the bay window. Then on the left of the entrance is a lovely panelled room and above it is a still nicer one. Beyond the old part is the large Victorian wing. There is a long, wide hallway and at the end a huge and very nice room. On the wall are two very fine Beauvais tapestries. The room is light and pleasant but is typically Victorian and not unlike pictures of rooms at Windsor Castle and similar places. The chapel is, an ancient building. I think it is at least partly 12th century. It has not been in use for centuries so was gradually falling into decay, so the Woodcocks decided to repair it and have it consecrated again. There is a minimum amount (and very small) of money that can be spent on repairs in wartime. But because this is an ancient monument, they were able to have all the repair work done, and it was formally opened by the Bishop just a fortnight before I was there. It is a charming small building. The inside walls, being much thicker at the bottom, slope out at the top and give a peculiar and unstable appearance.

Continued/

Lypiatt Park

There is a trap door in the floor which leads to what must have been a passage and that in turn probably led to the crypt, but the passage has not yet been excavated.

An 18th century cloister is built from the house to the chapel. Then to the right of the house are two particularly fine ancient buildings. One is some kind of grainary and is one of the oldest and best in Gloucestershire. It is a small building with stone steps going up to its main floor - with its one room. At the side is a niche with a stone animal's head at the top. In olden days the people of the Lord would hang their bags in the mouth, and then the Lord would measure out the grain and pour it from the window into the bag. Then near it is a lovely and very old small circular dovecote. To the left of the house is the valley - there are some terraces and then the side slopes almost straight down. Along the side of this is a stone wall made to look like the ruins of a castle. The old part of the house is so obviously old and Victorian part so obviously Victorian that I did not object to it at all. However, the old part is really ruined by the overpowering Victorian.

Owlpen Manor



I was expected at Owlpen at 3:30 that afternoon, and all the hills had slowed me down considerably. So, in spite of the heat, I increased my speed so I could cover the dozen or so miles in time. I took the shortest route which went up a great hill and found the road had been closed. So I went back down and the long way which was at least through the valley for about eight miles. But from then on the going was difficult - at one time I had to go a mile up the steepest road I've ever seen. Eventually, an hour late, I arrived at Owlpen, the most remote place. But it is so lovely - it is considered the Gem of the Cotswolds, and rightly so.

Continued/

Owlpen Manor

I shall quote a rather nice description of it from Massingham's Cotswold Country:

"Taking care not to miss the road to Owlpen I came from Uleypen, the head of the water. Or to the end of the world, a very secret place, where a small house and a small church are screened by an abrupt, wooded, conical hill at their backs and a massed guard of trained yews in front. In summer, flame colored Clarkias are, or used to be, ranged under the grey walls of the front. But in winter the many gabled little manor is of so transparent a grey between the dusky shapes before and behind it that it is owlsh indeed in its seclusion, in its mysterious greyness with the hill impeding at its back and the soft water meadows in front and the composure of a beauty that steals in so quiet a way upon the senses. This rare Cotswold treasure - most of the Gloucestershire manors are of 17th century - was built in 1516, very plainly and so sparing of ornament that the slight decoration at the apices of the gables are all that the eye picks out. It depends like all true Cotswold houses upon line and proportion and the treatment of space, so that individual triumphs like the rounded steps leading up to the gateway in the wall are all gathered up into the graciousness of the whole. How pompous and overgrown appear many an Elizabethan and Jacobean mansion in comparison with the early Tudor of Owlpen whose architectural courtesy gently rebukes their overbearing manners! There is good reason for this. Owlpen was built before the mob of Italian artificers pushed in to spoil with their exhibitionism the discreet, the native style. The late Renaissance manors were few of them either native or domestic and their building material was imported. Half of the loveliness of Owlpen is in its craftsmanship and the other half in its grey stone, the very spirit of its local countryside, and in the weathering and hoariness of its stone tiles. Since the first half was itself a local product, the two halves together make the perfect whole."

Continued/



Owlpen Manor

Mrs Bray



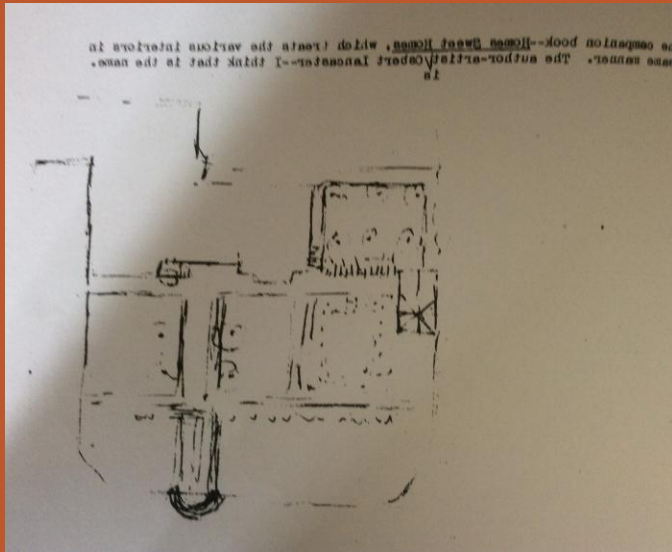
First Mrs Bray [fnI] and I had tea on the lawn. She insisted that I stay for the night and told a woman who comes in now and then to help with the work to make up a bed for me. After tea, she showed me about the house and grounds. She is an interesting and brilliant person but is rather a character. And she began talking and hardly stopped! It will be quite difficult to properly describe her for I should have to repeat our conversations, etc, and I haven't the necessary memory. At any rate, presently I shall tell you more about her.

hen War was declared, she at once notified the authorities that Owlpen would be open for evacuees. In short order (and much to her surprise, I dare say) her offer was taken up and about twenty evacuated children were sent there. There were also a number of women and perhaps the twenty included them. Then gradually the number decreased until there were only about eight. And at last all are gone with the exception of one of the little boys for whom she is now legal guardian. The last to go left just after I did - a young woman and her two children. This woman is from one of the much-bombed cities and left there just after the bombing began - her husband had just died at the beginning of the war. She went to Scotland and then to several other places before going to Owlpen. She was a paying guest there until the help left, and then she took over the job of cook. She also had worked at an estate where there were a lot of American soldiers, and they were all very nice to her, so she likes Americans. And for that reason, she did not object to fixing nice meals while I was there although she was busy packing - and I tied up her many trunks the next morning. So, Mrs Bray was to be left alone, and she has never cooked a thing in her life. However, a woman called about the job while I was there, so perhaps she is not starving!

I. née Barbara Cory 1884-1973

Owlpen Manor

Bob's sketch



Her mother is a remarkable and handsome lady in her nineties and is evidently a real autocrat - she and Mrs Bray do not get along too well. There was a brother, but he died when twenty-one. Mrs Bray is not beautiful, but she is good looking (she said she is in her late fifties).

My room was a lovely room - with beautiful old panelling, fine old furniture, and several old paintings - one the copy of the triple portrait of Charles I. And I read in bed for a while before going to sleep. I read an old American Architectural Review which had the history, measured drawings, etc of the house - the architect had made the drawings before the house was restored; so when he heard of it, he sent a copy of the magazine to the new owner, Mrs Bray. Also, I read the most delightful book on architecture - From Pillar to Post, a clever witty, and all too true brief account of each period of architecture, with cartoon-like drawings to illustrate each. I had seen Arthur Braithwaite's copy of the companion book - Homes Sweet Homes, which treats the various interiors in the same manner. The author-artist, Osbert Lancaster - I think that is the name.

Bob visited Dursley, if he had taken the road from Dursley to Wotton under Edge he may possibly have stumbled upon Ozleworth and Newark Park, had he done so this is how Newark would have appeared in 1945.



Post War



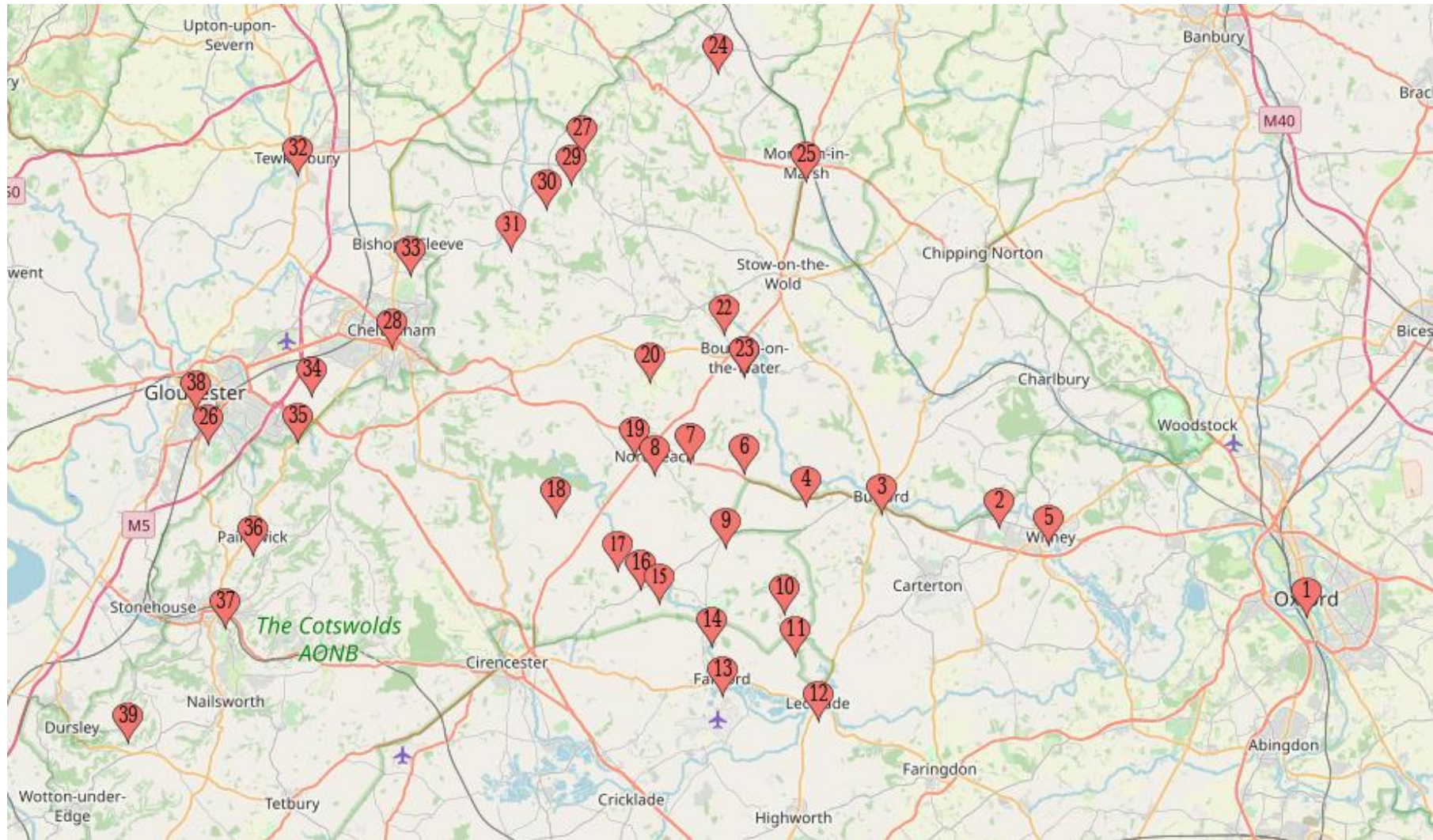
Above – Bob's military unit in front of the equestrian statue of Louis XIV at the Palace of Versailles. Below Bob with his camera at Versailles.



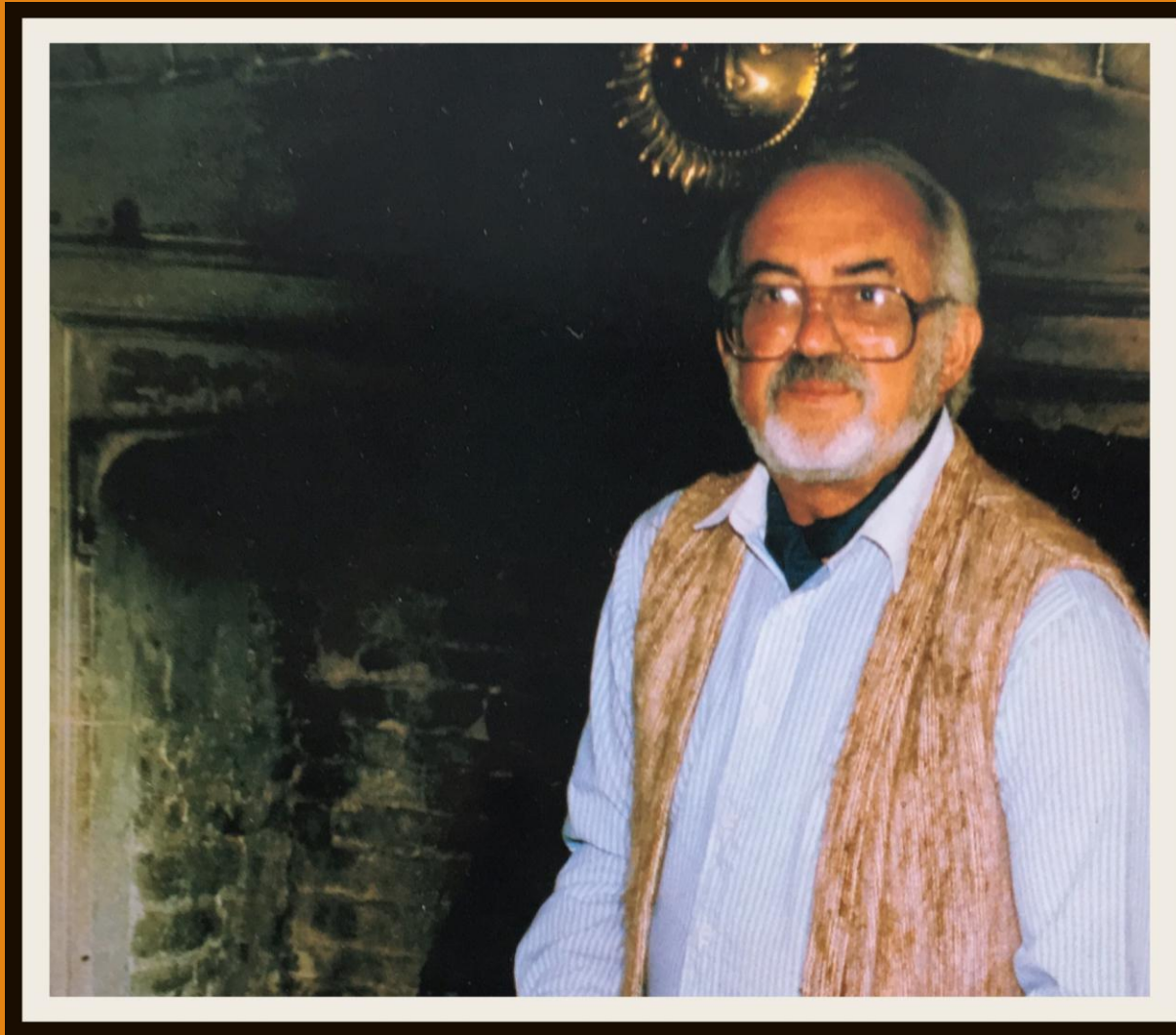
Corporal Parsons served in the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron of the 65th Fighter Wing of the Army of The United States Of America and from June 1944 was stationed at Saffron Walden Essex. Bob was honourably discharged on 30th November 1945. It was during his tour of duty in England that Bob started his love affair with England, eventually making England his home.

The journey through the Cotswolds was one of many furloughs it is the only one that survives in written form. From researching his photographs I have discovered that he journeyed as far as Rotherham where he visited Wentworth Woodhouse, he visited many places in the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Kent, Derbyshire, Hertfordshire, Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. He travelled to Bath, Salisbury, Wells and Bristol.

After the war, Bob made frequent journeys between America and England, usually travelling by sea, Bob continued to seek out country houses and architecturally interesting buildings. He was officially granted permission from the Home Office to stay in England in February 1961.



Bob's journey from start No1 to end at No39



1920-2000