

## The History of William Samuel Cleverley

William Samuel Cleverley was born in 1820 in Heddington, Wiltshire - 2 miles south of Calne. He was the son of James Cleverley (1787 – 1864) and Elizabeth (1788 – 1873). He fell in love with Alice Gifford (1828 – 1904) of Sherrington Manor, Wiltshire<sup>1</sup>. My father has a silver snuff box that was a gift from Elizabeth to William. Apparently however the Gifford family did not approve of William. The couple subsequently eloped and were married in Bath, Somerset.

They had five children together: Melinda (Lilian) Gifford (b1855), George Gifford (b1858), Madeline (b1861), William Samuel (b1863) and Rosamond (Rosie) Bessy<sup>2</sup> (b1866). Curiously Lilian and Madeline married brothers.

William eventually farmed as much as 3,000 acres of land around the villages of Chitterne and Bratton in Wiltshire. This included Manor Farm in Chitterne village, where he lived at All Saints Manor house (pictured below) from at least 1885.



Pictured: William Samuel Cleverley (1820 – 1893) and his wife Alice Gifford (1828 – 1904) at All Saints Manor, Chitternewhere they lived (1891 census)

Two stories have passed down my family from that period, both of which need to be corroborated with evidence! The first is that he was returning from the bank with the wages for the farm labourers when they were accosted by highwaymen who attempted robbery. William had a riding crop<sup>3</sup> with a heavy brass handle. He whipped the two Highwaymen and killed them. He was accused of manslaughter, but justifiable homicide was eventually settled upon. The riding crop was kept and we still have it in the family today.

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<sup>1</sup> According to local residents of Sherrington the manor is the house at Lat, Long 51.152237,-2.059175 and is currently occupied by a French lady.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly spelt "Bessie"

<sup>3</sup> Resembles a whip

The second story relates to coal and his ultimate demise. Apparently William purchased some land at a high price because he thought a coal seam ran underneath (the story has been told that it was the land All Saints Manor stands on!). He was to make his fortune mining. However when travelling by pony and trap from the manor into the village, he fell and was seriously injured. We believe the location of the fall was at or around the small bridge where the original drive of the manor meets Townsend Lane. The coal never did materialise and William died sometime after the accident in 1893. According to Bratton Parish records he was buried on 10<sup>th</sup> October 1893 at All Saints Chitterne. The land was sold at a loss, probably its true market value, and by 1895 John Collins was recorded as the farmer in residence<sup>4</sup>.



Oliver, Gina and Amy Cleverley at the fateful bridge in Chitterne



All Saints Manor, Chitterne in April 2012 (Lat, Long: 51.197533,-2.014221). The current owners Arthur and Sarah Gooch, who bought the property from the Ministry of Defence in 1987 have maintained the house in excellent order.

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<sup>4</sup> According to Coates Directory Warminster District 1903

A further story emerged courtesy of Sue Robinson, local resident and historian of Chitterne. William, or his 2<sup>nd</sup> son of the same name, was involved in the Election Riots of 1885 (which is how we know they were at the manor then). On Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December 1885, following the declaration of the poll results for the parliamentary election for West Wiltshire, a group of farm workers threw stones at the homes of some of the village farmers, smashing windows and frightening the occupants. The story was reported in the Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1885, edition of the Bristol Mercury and Daily Post which stated;

“At the Police Court on Saturday, George Alford, John Poolman, Thomas Moody, Frank Cooper, Abdon Poolman and Joseph Grant, labourers, of Chitterne, were charged, under the Malicious Damages to Property Act, with doing damage to the property of Mr. R. Blake, Mr. C. Burbidge, Mr. W. S. Cleverley, and Mr. Geo. Blake, farmers of the same place, on Saturday, the 5<sup>th</sup> inst., on the occasion of the declaration of the poll for West Wilts.”

and (of the rioters) ;

“...they proceeded to Mr. Cleverley’s, where they broke several windows, a shutter, and a door...”

William and Elizabeth’s first son, George Gifford, trained as an auctioneer in Salisbury. He settled at New Farm / Hill Farm in Bratton, Wiltshire. He farmed 300 acres of arable land and 300 acres of down-land on a tenancy from the Earlstoke Estate. In 1915 in search of a more populous area they moved to Wolverton, Hampshire and then Butlers Farm, Herstmonceux, East Sussex.



George Gifford Cleverley (1858 – 1940) and his wife Alice Froud Keevil (1863 - 1939) at Hill Farm, Bratton. I believe the children are Alice May Cleverley (with the maid) and Winifred Froude Cleverley.

*By Chris Cleverley (Great, Great Grandson of William)*

May 2012; Wells, Somerset